Responses to Children's Crying: Emotion Socialization in a Swedish Preschool

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PART I

Introduction

This thesis explores children's crying in a Swedish preschool setting. Approximately 85% of children in Sweden attend public preschools (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2019a). This means that preschools play an important role in children's everyday care and emotional socialization. According to the Swedish Curriculum for Preschool, Lpfö18 (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2019b), preschools must deploy a holistic perspective on care and education and integrate this perspective into their everyday practices. During a typical day in a preschool, there are many situations and many reasons why children might experience distress. They could accidentally hurt themselves, or start crying because of a conflict with peers (Lipponen, Rajala & Hilppö, 2018). Therefore, children's crying can be seen as a potential emotional and moral concern for both educators and the peer group. The educators can respond in various ways: they can offer comfort and consolation or discipline the crying child. Such responses may be connected to various sociocultural norms about what are considered appropriate emotional displays and in which situations crying is appropriate (Lo, 2009; Ahn, 2016). Similarly, peer-group responses to crying are relevant and socially meaningful actions in relation to the child's distress (Johansson, 2008; Caplan & Hay, 1989).

Notably, children's empathy and ability to show compassion are foregrounded in early childhood education in Sweden. More specifically, early childhood educational settings are required to give "children the opportunity to develop their ability to express empathy and consideration for others by encouraging and strengthening their compassion for and insight into the situation of other people" (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2019b: 5). In other words, preschools are responsible for fostering, supporting and socializing children to act in solidarity and to feel empathy with others and in this way to support their ability to act in morally appropriate ways. However, research on children's emotional and moral socialization has primarily been carried out in family settings (Denham, Bassett & Zinsser, 2012), which means that important insights into children's emotional concerns, as well as educators' daily practices

and responsibilities while providing care, are missing. These insights could be provided by research that explores in detail children's participation in everyday preschool activities (Hedegaard, 2019) from an emotional and moral perspective. In this thesis, I explore everyday situations of children's crying in a preschool setting.

Children's crying

Children's crying has received attention from various developmental and social research perspectives. It has mostly been studied within the field of psychology, where pioneering work on infants' crying has suggested that it plays an important role in creating a social bond between the child and caregivers (see Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, Bell & Strayton, 1971 on "Attachment theory"). An infant's distress is an important indicator concerning his/her overall well-being and it serves as a vital resource for communicating essential needs, or signaling pain (Berducci, 2016). A child's crying is something that is not easily ignored, especially by caregivers, who try to find its source and alleviate distress (Dunn, 2003; Vingerhoets, 2013).

A definition of crying can be highly technical when referring to its biological manifestation: it can be performed in different ways and may vary in intensity, from sobbing to crying out loud or screaming. However, this type of description "does not take into account the fact that emotional tears have an additional meaning, in that they serve to convey a certain message" (Vingerhoets, 2013:2). Crying can be used for different social purposes; for example, it can signal unfair treatment, be a call for help or invite sympathy from others (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2003). It can therefore be directed towards different recipients according to how they would respond: "most criers are careful to address their demands for empathy to people who are likely to answer them: We tend to cry only to a receptive audience" (Lutz, 1999:245).

With this said, crying can be defined as a complex sociohistorically and culturally informed behavior that changes throughout a person's lifespan (Vingerhoets, 2013). However, although it is indicated that crying plays an essential part in a child's emotional and social development, studies of children's crying have mostly focused on infants (Vingerhoets, 2013). In particular, children's crying in educational settings has not been investigated to any great extent and rarely constitutes the main analytical focus.

Aim

The present thesis focuses on children's moral and emotional socialization by examining situations involving children's crying in a Swedish preschool setting. The overall aim is to gain an understanding of crying and responses to it as interactional and sociocultural phenomena in an early childhood educational context. More specifically, I address the following questions:

- What are the social functions of crying in children's peer conflicts?
- How can preschool children's responses to peers' crying be understood in relation to institutional norms and values, and children's peer-group cultures?
- What characterizes the emotional and moral socialization potential of educators' responses to children's crying?

Outline of the thesis

The thesis is structured as follows: In Chapter Two, I will describe the theoretical perspectives that inform the current research. In Chapters Three and Four, I review previous research on children's negative affect in caregiver-child interactions, and compassion and empathy in educational settings. In Chapter Five (method), I describe the data collection and analytical procedures, as well as methodological and ethical considerations. The thesis also includes three articles that I summarize in Chapter 6 before the concluding discussion (Chapter Seven).

Theoretical perspectives

This thesis combines inspiration from two perspectives: one sociocultural and the other social interactional, which are both grounded in the social constructivist notion of human sense-making as *situated*. These perspectives perceive the world and human intersubjectivity as dialogically constructed (Bakhtin, 1986). Accordingly, human actions, emotions, socialization and cognition are viewed as co-constructed within social practices. Meaning-making is interactively accomplished and unfolds on a moment-by-moment basis:

Human language, cognition and action consist of a situation in which multiple participants are attempting to carry out courses of action in concert with each other through talk, while attending to both the larger activities that their current actions are embedded within, and relevant phenomena in their surround. (Goodwin, 2000:1492)

This means that social actions are embedded within wider sociocultural and institutional contexts, and also constitute a part of local “communicative projects” (Linell, 2009) that have particular aims and that participants mutually accomplish within the interaction. In this sense, the dialogical theoretical view on communication, emotions and cognition emphasizes the collective aspect of human sense-making, rather than the individual’s subjective experiences or traits (Goodwin, 2000).

Socialization and social interaction

This study is inspired by a language socialization approach (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012; Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2007), which combines close attention to social interactional processes, including the use of language and bodily actions, and a dynamic, sociocultural view of socialization (Vygotsky, 1986; Rogoff, 2003). It embodies a perspective on children’s learning and development as situated within a social and cultural context. This socioculturally informed perspective

is characterized by a specific focus on how language use, cultural expressions, emotions and everyday morality are related.

According to a dynamic, interactional view, socialization can be described as a social process through which children or other “novices” become competent members of their particular community by participating in everyday social encounters (in both families and institutional educational settings) (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012). Accordingly, socialization is connected to local and wider societal norms (e.g., regarding appropriate or inappropriate emotional displays). These norms and ideologies are embedded and reproduced within the specific sociocultural context and community.

The processes of socialization are both explicit and implicit. Children, by participating in communicative practices, are guided, either explicitly (through instructions, disciplining or corrections) or implicitly (with no explicit guidance), to use language and embodied actions in ways that are considered relevant and appropriate for their community. Despite the asymmetry in knowledge between the participants, socialization practices are viewed as dynamic and bidirectional, rather than as a top-down process that move from adults to children. Accordingly, children and adults co-construct and negotiate the meaning of everyday social practices, in ways such that children also influence their caregivers (Kuczynski, 2003; Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012).

From a language socialization perspective, an examination of children’s participation in everyday communicative practices is crucial for our understanding of how they gain cultural knowledge and become competent members of a community (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012). This process entails an interpretative appropriation of local and societal norms, values and ideologies concerning how to “display knowledge, express emotions, perform actions, constitute persons, and establish and maintain relationships” (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012:7; see also Corsaro, 2003 and Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2012 on children’s peer group socialization).

Notably, as argued by Hedegaard (2009, 2014, 2019), when considering the sociocultural dimensions of children’s learning and socialization, family is not the only significant context. It is equally important to recognize the institutional activities that children participate in and “to follow how the child’s orientation in the world interacts with the demands that the child meets in the different institutional settings” (Hedegaard, 2019:33).

Additionally, in educational settings, children socialize each other within their peer groups and become agents of their own socialization through different

practices whereby they creatively “construct their own ideas of values, behaviors and identities” (Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2007:280). This means that children use language and other embodied resources in their co-constructed activities (e.g. play) to negotiate friendship, hierarchies and social and moral orders (Goodwin, 2006; Evaldsson, 2007).

Accordingly, children’s emotional and moral socialization are viewed as social processes that involve them learning how to express emotions and present themselves as moral persons according to what is considered normatively appropriate in a particular sociocultural setting; for example, in everyday life contexts, such as families, and early childhood educational settings (Hedegaard, 2009, 2014; Goodwin & Cekaite, 2018).

Language, embodiment and socialization

Language has traditionally been conceptualized as an essential tool for human meaning making; socialization therefore comprises “socialization through the use of language and socialization to use language” (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986:163). In other words, socialization is viewed as learning to use language in cultural settings where “nurturing arrangements are motivated by a community’s repertoire of shared and varied cultural beliefs about social reproduction, including personhood, sociality, emotions, knowledge, and human development, which are given materiality through language and other semiotic forms in everyday life” (Ochs & Shieffelin, 2012:10).

Recently, embodied aspects of socialization have been foregrounded as important characteristics of socialization (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2000; Rogoff, 2003; Cekaite, 2010). Participation in cultural practices requires the use of not only language, but also bodily conduct (Goffman, 1963, 1971). Bodily conduct is shaped through participation in everyday sociocultural practices: it includes learning such mundane “bodily techniques” as how we eat, sleep or walk (Mauss, 1973). Embodied practices constitute an essential part of caregiver-child interaction and, in addition to talk, gaze and spatial orientations, touch is significant in adult-child relationships and everyday practices of care, including comforting children’s distress (Goodwin, 2017; Goodwin & Cekaite, 2018). Touch a crucial resource that communicates intimacy, trust, receptivity and affection, and scaffolds the child’s embodied conduct.

Having said that, the body is considered as not merely an object for socialization but also as taking an active part in socialization and meaning-making

practices (Goffman, 1963; Merlau-Ponty, 1964; Crossley, 1995; Goodwin, 2017). Accordingly, embodied practices are situated within a specific sociocultural context; they are shaped in different ways and can gain different social meanings in different contexts. Socialization for participation in educational settings, such as preschool, involves learning both to use communicative linguistic practices and embodied conduct (Ben-Ari, 1997).

Social interaction and emotions

From a social interactional perspective, emotions are conceptualized as interactional phenomena that are closely linked to social actions or, as described by Wetherell (2012), “situated affective practices build psychologies, identities, reputations and subjectivities as they make meaning, just as they build social orders, histories and institutions” (Wetherell, 2012:90). In interactional approaches, emotions are primarily examined as interactionally manifested verbal and nonverbal expressions, i.e., emotional stances, that are displayed, interpreted and responded to in social interaction (Ochs, 1996; Goodwin, M. H., & Goodwin, C., 2000; Goodwin, M. H., Cekaite & Goodwin, C., 2012; Du Bois & Kärkkäinen, 2012). In other words, emotions are linked to stance-taking, that is, dialogical and organized interactional practices whereby “participants perform operations on the displays, signs and, embodied material produced by their coparticipants” (Goodwin, M. H., Cekaite & Goodwin, C., 2012:24). Accordingly, both children and adults are held accountable for their emotional displays, and children are socialized according to the prevailing notions of what it means to be an emotional and moral person (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984). The cultural context provides a framework for how emotions are defined and interpreted; emotional expressions are linked to various social and cultural norms (Levy, 1984; Russel, 1991; Heelas, 1996; Illouz, Gildon & Shachak, 2014), and emotions and morality are thus closely interconnected in everyday interactions.

Culturally specific views on emotions are connected to the notions of morality, and thus they also define the ways in which individuals are regarded as responsible and able to control their emotions (Heelas, 1996). For example, in Western contexts, emotions tend to be regarded as individual internal subjective experiences within a broader narrative that “value reason and the struggle for rational control” (Wetherell, 2012:41).

The social interactional perspective on emotions makes it possible to study how various interactionally manifested phenomena, such as children’s crying,

are made relevant to the participants themselves. The social meaning of crying can be examined by focusing on the participants' social orientation to each other and to each other's social actions, i.e., how peers and educators respond and orient to the crying child. Notably, micro-analyses of everyday practices and communication are informed by the considerations and contextual characteristics of the cultural and historical context of practices (Linell, 2009).

Research on children's negative emotions and socialization in caregiver–child interactions

According to a sociocultural perspective on children's emotional socialization, children are encouraged to act as competent members of specific cultural and social contexts (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984). This also includes socialization into values and norms about what are considered appropriate emotional displays of negative affect (distress, anger, sadness etc.).

Research on children's emotional socialization in families

Research on children's emotional socialization has largely relied on interviews and self-report studies with parents, focusing on how adults (and, at times, children) talk about emotions (see Wingard, 2019, for related criticism). Practices through which caregivers socialize children's emotions, including negative emotions, constitute a focus of ethnographically informed studies in the field of anthropology and, especially, linguistic anthropology and language socialization (see Ochs & Schieffelin, 1989; Duranti, 1997). This research tradition examines how various communicative practices, along with discursive and linguistic resources, situated within social interaction, are used to cultivate children's interpretation of emotional expressions and their negative emotional displays (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012; Cook, 2012; Burdelski, 2013). In addition, studies examine how children are socialized into moral responsibility. They show, for instance, that caregivers in various societies have different expectations of children's behavior, abilities and responsibilities (Ochs & Izquierdo, 2009).

Several ethnographic studies have examined how parents in various sociocultural contexts react to children's negative emotions, such as anger or distress. They demonstrated that caregivers' practices for dealing with children's negative emotions and their parenting views and ideologies about childrearing were closely related to the local and wider societal norms and expectations. For instance, Miller and Sperry (1987) examined young children's (2.5 years old) socialization of anger and aggression in an urban working-class context. The study shows that these mothers did not label their children's emotional states of being angry or distressed as being "sad" or "upset". Rather, they emphasized their children's negative affect in relation to actions that could serve as appropriate ways of engaging in self-defense. In this way, mothers emphasized the importance of being and acting in accordance with local norms of the traits that were important for the child's development. Depending on the social situation, displaying anger could be justified (when defending oneself in peer conflicts), or prohibited (when in disputes with their mothers) (Miller & Sperry, 1987).

Similar patterns were found in Kusserow's (2004) ethnographic study of parenting and parents' notions about children's negative emotions in various socioeconomical areas in New York. The study shows that adults in working-class neighborhoods used verbal disciplining, shaming or teasing as culturally relevant ways of encouraging a sense of toughness, and cultivated their children's abilities in verbal self-defense, rather than acknowledging their expressions of "sadness" or distress. In a middle-class context, caregivers expressed contrasting ideologies regarding children's emotional development. The child was described as a sensitive "flower" under cultivation, with unique potential and ambitions that needed to be protected from critical discipline (Kusserow, 1999, 2004). Overall, the study suggests that different parenting ideologies and practices instantiated different societal notions of hard versus soft individualism characteristic of American society.

Interactional studies of children's negative emotions in family contexts show that caregivers' social orientations accomplish socioculturally specific notions of subjectivity and position the child as a particular social actor. Demuth (2013), in a comparative study on the responses of farming Cameroonian Nso mothers and German middle-class mothers from Münster to their three-month-old infants' distress, shows that the German mothers oriented towards their infant as a quasi-equal partner by using certain politeness strategies (for example, a cooperative pronoun "we"). In this way, they accomplished a synthesis of solidarity and social control. The Nso mothers, on the other hand, displayed an

orientation towards obedience and respect, by using strategies such as rhetorical questions as a way to communicate to the infant that there was no reason to cry (Demuth, 2013).

Overall, previous anthropologically inspired studies highlight sociocultural dimensions and how various cultural contexts exhibit different notions of the child as an emotional and moral person. Emotional displays and everyday morality are interconnected as children are socialized into moral accountability regarding the appropriateness of social conduct.

Socialization of emotions in early childhood education settings

Preschools are important educational institutions that incorporate specific cultural notions of the child, as well as collective and institutional values and rules (Ben-Ari, 1997; Kusserow, 2004; Markström, 2005; Cekaite, 2013; Ahn, 2016; Karlsson, 2018; Lipponen, 2018). Children's emotional socialization constitutes an integral part of their everyday lives in early childhood educational settings: it takes place during everyday interactions with educators and peers. According to a holistic view of children's development, care and learning in early childhood education, educators play an important role in supporting children's social competences (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2019b). The abilities to express and articulate one's own feelings and to understand the emotional expressions of others are seen as crucial, and these processes are present in early childhood institutions as well (Garner & Estep, 2001; Ahn, 2010; Denham, Bassett & Zinsser, 2012; Karlsson, 2018; Cekaite & Ekström, 2019).

Research based on interviews with educators shows that educators articulate various views about what constitutes appropriate conduct and emotional expression for children. For instance, depending on the reason for children's crying, the educators were prone to either discipline it (Hsuenh & Tobin, 2003) or to comfort the crying child (Rossholt, 2009). The normative appropriateness of children's crying in peer interactions and their more extensive crying, according to educators, was also important for children's status and their social attractiveness among peers (Rossholt, 2009).

Studies that explore children's moral and emotional socialization in educational settings by examining situated social interactions show that, in various contexts, educators respond differently to children's negative emotional displays (involving a broad category of embodied and verbal acts, including anger,

distress, sulkiness and others). Several studies show that educators use verbal and embodied, explicit or implicit, strategies towards children's expressions of negative affect, both in adult-child interactions and in conflicts and distress within the peer group (Lo, 2009; Ahn, 2016; Cekaite & Ekström, 2019; Moore, in press; LeMaster, in press; Burdelski, in press).

Educators' responses to children's crying or screaming can be constructed in relation to culturally specific norms of "affective hierarchies" between children and adults (Lo, 2009; Ahn, 2016). As demonstrated in studies from Korean classrooms, children's crying could be framed by the teachers as problematic behavior in relation to teachers' own feelings, e.g., "If you cry I'll get really upset" (Lo, 2009:226). An "affective hierarchy" can also be related to children's age, whereby crying is viewed as shameful and something that "babies" do (Ahn, 2016). Such social organization can be seen as illustrative of Confucian values of how affective displays are linked to social hierarchy (Hsuenh & Tobin, 2003; see also Lo & Fung, 2012 on adult-child shaming practices).

Children can also be prompted to verbalize their feelings instead of screaming or crying. Such interactional practices are demonstrated in a study of American preschool (2.5–6-year-old, middle-class) children (Ahn, 2010). When responding to peer conflicts and crying, the teachers encouraged children to use "emotion talk", and explicitly verbalize their feelings, teaching the children to say that they are "scared". Various forms of emotion talk were also intended to provide children with discursive tools to display niceness and support their friendship relations.

Teachers' verbalization practices in relation to children's emotional expression were explored in a study of affect (and gender) socialization in a Japanese preschool (Burdelski & Mitsunashi, 2010). The teachers "glossed" – interpreted and verbally described – the children's actions towards peers as thoughts or feelings, scaffolding peer-group social relationships. Reported speech allowed the teachers to specify and indicate how to interpret the other child's nonverbal actions as being, for instance, kind, playful or upset (Burdelski & Mitsunashi, 2010).

Research also shows that educator-initiated play was used as a way of distracting a child's attention away from the emotional distress (see Pursi, 2019 on a Finnish toddler classroom). Make-believe play not only involved the crying child, but also extended to a multi-party engagement among several children.

Overall, previous studies on children's emotional socialization in educational settings have explored a range of communicative practices and resources that

educators use in the socialization of children's negative (and positive) affect. They show that these practices are connected to institutionalized values about appropriate conduct and young children's emotional displays. Emotion socialization in early childhood education is multifaceted: children's negative emotional displays may be treated as undesirable by educators, because children are expected to use other, more appropriate communicative resources in their peer interactions. Conversely, children's crying might be ratified and acknowledged. However, children can use and re-interpret the cultural knowledge about appropriate emotional displays for their own social purposes in the organization of their peer group.

Peer-group cultures, social and moral orders in preschools

Interactional studies on children's peer-group cultures in early childhood educational settings demonstrate that children actively negotiate social and institutional rules and norms, in relation to the expectations of both adults and peers. Children's disputes, exclusion from and inclusion in play, apologies, and conflict interventions are examples of social interactional activities where children use discursive and embodied resources in their negotiations of the social and moral order, as everyday practices of morality *in situ* (Tholander, 2003; Goodwin, 2006; Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2007; Martin & Evaldsson, 2012; Cromdal & Tholander, 2012; Karlsson, 2018; Björk-Willén, 2018). Everyday moral concerns are negotiated and communicated through various discursive practices. By participating in these practices, individuals are held accountable for their thoughts, feelings and actions with regard to the normative expectations of the sociocultural context (Goffman, 1971; Goodwin, 2006). This means that children hold each other accountable, in various ways, for "their local understandings of social norms" (Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2007:286).

Educators are not the only socializing agents in early childhood education. Within children's peer groups, they also hold each other accountable for using appropriate emotional expressions (Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2007). Research on children's peer cultures shows that children interpret and use cultural emotional knowledge as a way of negotiating relationships and activities and maintaining social alliances during peer-group interactions, such as play (Goodwin, 1990; Corsaro, 1979, 2003; Ahn, 2010). Notably, children can use their knowledge

about affective displays for their own social purposes. For instance, as demonstrated by Ahn (2010) in a study of an American preschool, children used various affective stances as a way of excluding, or displaying alliances with, each other. Children used adult-solicited emotion talk, for example, saying “I love you”, and created alliances in embodied ways (by hugging) within their peer group, while simultaneously excluding other peers from play (Ahn, 2010).

Play conflicts constitute recurring social events in peer-group cultures, and they serve as important social sites for children’s re-organization of the social order and their negotiation of ownership or play space. Studies on peer play conflicts demonstrate children’s skillful use of various verbal and embodied communicative strategies to defend their position or property, and to protect peer activities. In many cases, conflicts concern the ownership of toys or other play objects, and children can claim ownership over such objects of “desire” by using justifications or physical force (Corsaro & Maynard, 1996; Corsaro & Schwarz, 1999; Cobb-Moore, Danby & Farrell, 2008; Kultti & Pramling, 2015).

During play, exclusion is frequent because children protect their interactive spaces and try to keep the play activity intact (Corsaro, 2003; Goodwin, 2008). For instance, children (in a Swedish preschool) used withdrawal strategies by constantly moving and creating physical distance from peers (Skånfors, Löfdahl & Hägglund, 2009). These functioned as ways to protect physical play spaces and, at times, to exclude intrusive children from joining the play activity. Children protected their play space and escalated the conflict by, for instance, physical acts, such as pushing away the intruders (see Bateman, 2012 on 4-year-old children in a preschool in Wales). In contrast, they used other, intimate, embodied actions and touch, such as holding hands, as a way of demonstrating friendship and creating alignments.

Children can escalate conflicts through displays of negative emotions, actively avoiding educators’ conflict mediation. As shown by Danby and Baker (2001), young boys referred to threatening creatures such as crocodiles, robots and sharks to upgrade threats within the play framework, and in this way, they established social hierarchies when educators were absent.

In various cultural contexts, children’s peer disputes and play conflicts are something that educators treat as requiring intervention and conflict mediation (Bateman, 2015; Karlsson, 2018; Burdelski, in press; Moore, in press; LeMastier, in press). Children themselves have been shown to use numerous discursive and embodied strategies to recruit adults to mediate in their disputes with peers

(Danby & Baker, 1998; Cekaite, 2012; LeMaster, 2010; Bateman, 2015; Burdelski, in press). As demonstrated in several studies, children orient towards educators as a moral authority and can threaten each other with teachers' attention (see also Church & Hester, 2012, on children's threats in disputes). When formulating accusations about peers' normative transgressions and calling for intervention by educators, children used emotionally charged reports (using a whining voice, or crying) about the problematic event (Cekaite, 2012). The teachers responded by using various question formats ("what's happened?" or "why did you do that?") that positioned the children as guilty or gave them the opportunity to tell an alternative version (Cekaite, 2012; see also Cekaite, in press). Although children were expected to give an account of their actions, it was usually the educators' version of the conflict that became the sanctioned one (see also Theobald & Danby, 2012, on Australian early childhood education).

In relation to disputes and conflicts, apology practices can serve to re-establish the social and moral order within the peer group (Goffman, 1971). Apologies can be prompted by adults (Burdelski, 2013), or initiated by children themselves (Kampf & Blum-Kulka, 2007). However, children and educators may have different social purposes. As demonstrated by Björk-Willén (2018) in a study of children's apologies in a Swedish preschool, educators encouraged and requested the children to apologize and scaffolded their performance of verbal and embodied rituals (requesting that they say "sorry" and hug each other). Children re-created and transformed apologies in their peer play practices by including or excluding their peers from the group (Björk-Willén, 2018).

To conclude, previous research on peer-group cultures shows that children use numerous verbal and embodied strategies to create alliances and protect their ongoing play practices, objects and spaces, especially because participation in play is negotiated and it can be difficult for children to gain access to other children's ongoing play (Corsaro, 2003). Children adhere to specific – peer group, and institutional – norms about how to act as a good friend; for instance, by including others into their play and participating as expected in conflict resolution and apologies.

Compassion and empathy in preschool settings

Empathy, compassion or emotional concern for the suffering of others all describe the human ability to feel and act in solidarity with others. However, these concepts can be used in different ways (Verducci, 2000), or they are grouped together as “other-oriented feelings”, such as feeling emotional concern for another (Goetz, Keltner & Simon-Thomas, 2010). Some conceptualizations clearly differentiate empathy from compassion. Empathy is defined as a social skill related to being able to understand others’ experiences and being able to feel what the other person is feeling (Goetz, Keltner & Simon-Thomas, 2010). Compassion “goes further in leading to actions such as helping, including, caring, comforting and sharing” (Lipponen, 2018:40). Compassion has been conceptualized, and compassionate acts have been explored, within various academic fields. Within psychological approaches, compassion is defined as pro-social behavior (Hoffman, 1981; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). Within ethics or moral philosophy, it is discussed as a principle for moral judgement (see, for example, Nussbaum, 1996).

Compassion and empathy are foregrounded as essential in children’s “moral” education, especially in “educare” and “social pedagogic” approaches and policies for early childhood education (in, for instance, the Nordic countries) (Williams, Sheridan & Sandberg, 2014; see also Hilppö et al., 2019 for a related discussion on compassion in ECEC). Generally, theorizing about young children’s emotions and moral development, including their empathic skills, has highlighted the cognitive and universal aspects; for instance, by examining children’s verbal moral reasoning at different ages (Piaget, 1960; Kohlberg, 1976). Children’s ability to understand the perspectives of others is conceptualized as something they learn as they mature and develop (Piaget, 1960). However, this approach to children’s development has been questioned by a socioculturally informed paradigm that instead foregrounds children’s learning and development as related to their social environment (see Vygotsky, 1986; Rogoff, 2003;

Hedegaard, 2009). Research has also pointed out considerable differences between children's moral reasoning and their actual behavior in situated interactions, where complex everyday moral issues can be raised.

Children's moral development in relation to their social competence in peer interactions and their prosocial behavior has been approached by, for instance, quantitatively examining their responses to others, i.e., peers' distress in nursery and preschool settings (Phinney, Feshbach & Farver, 1986; Denham, 1986; Howes & Farver, 1987; Farver & Branstetter, 1994; Lamb & Zakhireh, 1997; Gardner & Estep, 2001). A study of toddlers' attention to peers' distress in several daycare settings (for 9–27-month-old children) coded a child distress situation according to its cause, caregiver response, intensity and kind of distress (Lamb & Zakhireh, 1997). Much like several earlier studies on children's responses towards peers' distress, it shows that children's prosocial responses were relatively few (Phinney, Feshbach & Farver, 1986; Howes & Farver, 1987; Farver & Branstetter, 1994; Lamb & Zakhireh, 1997). Young children were more likely to respond to crying events in which the cause was "moral" (e.g. conflicts) than if it was "nonmoral" (accident, injury). Also, the children attended more often to crying events to which caregivers responded. Caregivers, as suggested on a speculative note, played an important role by using children's crying as examples of how to show concern and care for others. Young children's prosocial responses towards peers' distress and their beliefs about bystander intervention were explored by Caplan and Hay (1989) in an interview and observational study of 3–5-year-old children's responses to peers' distress in a preschool. The study showed a low rate of prosocial actions by children; in interviews, the children said they did not think they were supposed to help because adults were expected to comfort the distressed child (see also Johansson, 2007, who suggested that preschool children's attitudes or moral reasoning may not say much about how they actually act in their everyday social interactions with peers and adults).

Overall, although these studies were conducted in and examined naturally occurring situations in early childhood institutions, they did not offer detailed analyses of children's prosocial behavior or other kinds of social orientation towards peers' distress. Notably, they suggest that educators' conduct is important for children's prosocial behavior.

How compassion is displayed and accomplished in everyday preschool practice

Educators' work is guided by educational policies, which may explicitly foreground the task of scaffolding children's development of solidarity and empathy with others (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2019b). According to preschool educational policies and the "social pedagogic" approach (Williams, Sheridan & Sandberg, 2014), children's rights and agency are viewed as fundamental both in how the preschool should be organized and how these values should be communicated to form democratic future citizens who can show empathy and act in solidarity with others (Emilson & Johansson, 2018). For instance, educators argue that it is important to support the development of empathic skills in children and that this is something they can primarily develop through their interactions with peers (see Williams, Sheridan & Sandberg, 2014, for educators' interviews on the Swedish preschool curriculum). Notably, educators' normative expectations and beliefs about children's social competences can be complex and fluid (Markström, 2005). Educators may have different views on how institutional values and goals should be addressed and implemented in everyday pedagogical practice and they use different – both explicit and implicit – ways of communicating institutional values (Sigurdardottir, Williams & Einarsdottir, 2019). Moreover, these values and institutional "rules" can be seen as something that educators and children negotiate in their everyday interactions and social practices.

Children's compassionate conduct as an interactionally manifested phenomenon is explored in several video-recording-based studies on compassion in educational settings (see Johansson, 2008, 2017; Lipponen, 2018; Hilppö, Rajala & Lipponen, 2019; Pursi, 2019; Hilppö et al., 2019). For instance, Johansson (2008, 2017), in her studies on children's morality and empathy in Swedish preschools, shows that young (1–3-year-old) children did occasionally approach a distressed peer, to caress them or give them a soothing object (see also Kidwell, 2013, on nursery children).

Caregivers and educators can use embodied comforting responses with the aim of alleviating a child's distress (Kidwell, 2013; Bergnehr & Cekaite, 2018; Goodwin & Cekaite, 2018; Lipponen, 2018). Lipponen (2018) shows that compassionate acts were usually performed by educators towards children and were less frequent between children in preschools in Finland. The most common acts of compassion that educators directed towards children were acts of comforting.

Close and intimate soothing conduct, especially in cases of physical injury, involved the spontaneous use of hugs, embraces and stroking. These actions alleviated the child's distress and sustained affectionate and intimate close relationships between the educators and the child (Bergnehr & Cekaite, 2018). In Lipponen's (2018) study, both educators and children tended towards an institutional "rule" that educators are the ones responsible for offering comfort and dealing with children's distress. Considering children's infrequent acts of compassion, Lipponen (2018) argues that they need to be guided to express empathy more actively and that educators should promote children's acts of compassion towards each other to a greater extent (Lipponen, 2018; see also Taggart, 2016; Hilppö et al., 2019, on compassion and pedagogy).

Likewise, it is important to consider how children's compassionate acts towards each other are embedded within their preschool experiences. In a study of how children in a preschool setting show compassion towards each other, it was shown that the children used the same strategies as their educators. The children "could be seen as doing independently today what they did cooperatively and with guidance yesterday" (Hilppö, Rajala & Lipponen, 2019:91). In this way, children "took up and reproduced the compassionate practices that are endemic to that particular community" (Hilppö, Rajala & Lipponen, 2019:91).

To conclude, previous studies on educators' and children's empathetic or prosocial behavior, especially responses towards a child's distress, show that children often lean towards an "adult norm" in which educators are seen as mainly responsible for comforting children. With this in mind, it becomes important to consider how the institutional setting and practices in preschool are organized, and how they can enable or in other ways influence educators' and children's prosocial actions. Likewise, it is equally important to consider children's own peer-group cultures and related socialization practices: how children may display compassion towards each other as part of the cultural practices of their peer group, and also how they relate and adhere to the institutional norms of when and how to act with compassion, and who should do so.

5

Method

Data and preschool setting

The data for the present study consists of 68 hours of video recordings of everyday interactions and activities in a Swedish preschool. The preschool was attended by 1–5-year-old children and was located in a middle-class area in a large Swedish city. The children were divided into separate groups according to their age: three groups aged 1–3 years old, one group of 4-year-olds, and one with 5-year-old children.

Video recordings were made in two different groups, one of the 1–3-year-old groups, and the group of 4-year-old children. I conducted recordings in one of the 1–3-year-old groups on three occasions over an 18-month period (56 hours of recordings). During the last two occasions, 12 hours of video recordings were also made with children in the group for 4-year-olds.

Participants

In all, 38 children and nine educators (three male and six female) participated in the study. The majority of participating staff were qualified preschool teachers. The study was specifically designed to follow a group of focus children in their daily participation in everyday activities at the preschools during a consistent period of 18 months.¹ The focus group consisted of five children: three boys (Henrik, Gustav and Oscar) and two girls (Neah and Stina). The focus children were chosen due to their age: they were between 18 months and 2 years old at the beginning of the recordings. Four of the focus children's families agreed to extend their participation in the study and made extensive video recordings at home during the three time periods.²

¹ This study is part of a larger research project *Communicating emotions, embodying morality*, with the aim of studying 2–3-year-old children's emotional and moral socialization in Swedish preschools and within their families. The project was financed by the Swedish Research Council (VR), PI Asta Cekaite.

² The families' recordings are not included in this study.

During the fieldwork, three of the focus children appeared to be good friends (Oscar, Henrik and Gustav) and played with each other on a daily basis, hence they were frequently video recorded when playing together.

Data collection: Video recordings and preschool activities

Because my research interest was to document children's everyday participation in preschool, I chose to video record activities that would represent a typical day. The days were organized in the same way in both of the groups for which the video recordings were made. Below, I will describe the organization of a typical day in the preschool.

After breakfast (that was served for the children that arrived early), the children were usually given the opportunity to engage in "free play" or other activities in spaces that offered various play materials and play equipment (such as puzzles, drawing materials, building blocks or Duplo). The children usually moved freely between their play and teacher-led activities and, sometimes, some of the children went outdoors to play together with some of the educators.

Inside the preschool, the children had access to different rooms and areas for play and other activities. For example, there were several rooms with various artefacts for construction-inspired play activities. There were also areas furnished with child-sized furniture and objects such as dolls and things that could be used when playing family, hospital or supermarket.

During the midmorning, the educators and children gathered for circle-time, had a fruit snack and sometimes sang songs or played games together. After circle-time, the children could choose to participate in outdoor play, creative activities, or play with peers inside. Sometimes there were more educationally structured activities (e.g., thematic work, such as learning about seasons).

During the video-ethnographic fieldwork, I took my point of departure in the focus children's participation in recurring daily activities: play ("free play") and organized activities together with the educators (circle-time, reading books and mealtimes). The recordings were not limited to the focus children; rather, they included most of the children who attended the two preschool groups. Similar activities were documented in both groups.

The video recordings were made using a portable digital camera. All recordings were made by me, except for one mealtime episode that the educators recorded themselves using a tripod. I usually started the recordings before or just

after breakfast and stopped filming before or after lunch (after lunch, the children usually had a nap). Occasionally I video recorded in the afternoons. I usually spent three or four hours at the preschool on each day of recordings. I chose to schedule the recordings in this way because children from all the different groups at the preschool spent time together before breakfast, and in the late afternoons.³

The preschool can be characterized as a multiparty setting in which children moved between different participant constellations and activities that were often located within the same room. This meant that children's play was easily interrupted and sometimes of short duration because many children moved between different activities and rooms. This was often the case during both "free play" and educator-organized activities. The children were allowed considerable freedom to choose activities and play spaces for themselves, but they were also required to move between activities during the day.

As a part of my fieldwork, I made daily notes of which activities and participating children were video recorded. I also looked through my recordings and made notations about activities and situations that were related to children's emotional expression and might be relevant for future analysis. At this stage, children's crying was one interesting phenomenon that I noticed as being a characteristic part of these children's everyday life at preschool.

Analytical focus and procedure: Children's crying

Crying occurred frequently among all the children, in various situations and for different reasons (distress during conflicts, injuries and separation, among others). Children's crying was consequently something that I found especially interesting during my fieldwork, and I soon decided that crying would be the analytical focus for the whole dissertation. Initially, when looking through all the video-recorded material, I made a collection (Sidnell, 2010) that included all crying situations and I wrote short descriptions of each crying event.

The children's crying in this thesis involves a broad category of displays of distress, such as crying with tears, whining, sobbing, or crying out loud. From the recordings, it was apparent that many of the crying situations were temporally extended and could involve different levels of intensity and characteristics of distress. The same crying situation frequently involved not only crying (with

³ Children from other groups were not part of the study.

tears) but also prolonged whining, sobbing and re-starts of crying, all in the same crying sequence. Because the analytical focus of the present thesis was the overall social and interactional organization of crying events, i.e., what the children accomplished with their crying and how the co-present children and educators responded, I chose to use a broad categorization of “crying”, rather than identifying the embodied and vocal specificities of various displays of distress.

In total, 83 events of crying were identified in the video-recorded data from the two groups⁴ (one group with children aged 1–3 years and one with children at the age of 4). I categorized all the crying events according to the children’s age and the reason for crying (see Table 1). I also categorized how the educators and co-present children responded to the crying (see Table 2). Conflicts were identified both in peer interactions and in children’s interactions with educators.

Table 1. Crying situation and children’s age

Crying situation	1–3 years old	4 years old	
Conflicts	66	1	80%
Separation	3	1	5%
Accident	7	1	10%
Unknown	3	1	5%
Total: 83			100%

The crying event that represented the largest situational category (80%) in the table above was children’s crying in play conflicts. At a later stage, the co-present children’s responses to the crying peer in conflict situations were categorized and analyzed (see Table 2 below).

⁴ Study 2 includes one example (Extract 2) that is from another data-set collected within the research project.

Table 2. Children’s responses to other children’s crying during peer conflicts

Responses		
Actively engaging with/approaching crying child		
Continuing the conflict	18	11%
Compassionate acts	15	9%
Criticizing the perpetrator’s actions	4	2%
Disciplining peer’s crying	2	1%
Not engaging with crying child		
Observing the crying child	78	45%
Playing (alone or with other peers)	55	33%
Total number of responses	172	100%

Several responses during the same episode were identified because: i) on average, several (two to four) children participated in play or were in the close vicinity of each crying event, and ii) the children sometimes changed their conduct and produced various responses during extended crying situations.

I made transcripts of the majority of the crying sequences using a simplified Jeffersonian system (Jefferson, 2004). I repeatedly viewed the video-recorded data, focusing on both the verbal and embodied aspects of the communication.

Situations of crying

As shown in Table 1, the reasons and situations for children’s crying were various; for example, the children might occasionally cry when parents left in the mornings, or when they hurt themselves. Notably, the most common reason for crying were peer-play conflicts concerning, for example, the possession of toy objects. Crying in peer conflicts occurred in all age groups. Conflict resolution was mediated by the educators, not only in the group of younger children (see Study I and Study II), but also in the group of 4-year-old children.

In an extended extract from a 4-year-old children’s group, we can see the educator’s responses to distress and crying, which was very similar to the practices used with 2–3-year-olds (see Study I). Here, two girls start a dispute about

a card game. The dispute escalates into a conflict involving whining and attracts the educators’ attention. Soon, an educator approaches and asks the children to each tell their version of the conflict. One of the girls, Sally, gets upset and starts crying while hiding her face.

Excerpt 1

Participants: girls Lisa and Sally (4 yrs. old) and the educator (E).

1	E:	Kan du berätta för mig vad som hände Sally
2		va
		<i>Can you tell me what's happened Sally?</i>
3		((Sally covers her face with both hands))
4	E:	vad [bråkade ni om från början
		<i>What did you fight about from the beginning?</i>

5	Sally:	[e::HH
6	Sally:	(0.6) E:::H E:::H
7	E:	jag kan inte höra vad du säger när du gråter
		<i>I can't hear what you're saying when you cry</i>
8	Sally:	E::HHH E::HHH
9	E:	((turns to Lisa)) vad bråkade ni om
		<i>What did you fight about?</i>

This example demonstrates how crying is treated as a problem by the educator and becomes an obstacle in the conflict resolution, because Sally displays unwillingness to engage in conflict resolution. Her way of crying and hiding her face makes her unavailable for face-to-face interaction, which is an important element in the conflict resolution (see also article 1 on 2–3-year-olds).

Another common reason for crying involved cases when children disagreed with the educators. In such situations, the educators’ responses differed from peer conflict mediation (see Excerpt 1). These crying situations were not included in the detailed empirical studies of the present thesis, and therefore are briefly presented and discussed here. In Excerpt 2, a 2-year-old boy starts crying

loudly when he is not allowed to attend the reading group activity with some older children.

Excerpt 2

Participants: Boys August (2.5 yrs. old), Albin (3 yrs. old), girls Karolina, Stella, Saga (3 yrs. old). Educators 1 and 2 (E1, E2).

1	E1	nu är det bara Albin, Karolina, Stella
2		<i>now it's only Albin, Karolina, Stella</i> och Saga som ska följa med <i>and Saga who will join</i>
3	Robin	var ska du? <i>where are you going?</i>
4	E1	vi ska upp till <u>Stenen</u> (.) ((hand on
5		<i>we're going to 'Stenen' (.)</i> August's back))
6	August	jag vill <u>också:::</u> ((whining voice)) <i>I want to:::</i>
7	E1	ja men du ska stanna här så får du
8		<i>yes, but you will stay here and then you can</i> också följa med en <u>annan</u> gång <i>join another time</i>
9	August	jag <u>vill</u> inte vara här EHH:::~::~:
10		<i>I don't want to be here</i> ((tilts his head back))

11	Albin	du får <u>inte</u> <i>you can't</i>
12	August	EHHH:::~::~:
13	Stella	en annan gång <i>another time</i>
14	August	E:::~::~:H:::~::~ ((tilts his head back))

15	E1	((tries to say something to August))
16	E2	A::gu:::st
17	E1	det hjälper inte att du skriker så <i>it doesn't help when you scream like that</i>
18		((shakes her head))
19	August	e:::hh:: ((whining))
20	E1	((leaves with the other children))
21	August	jag vill också följa me:::d di::g <i>I want to come with you</i>
22	E2	((sits down beside August, embraces
23		him))

August's crying becomes even more intense when the educator again refuses to allow him to join the reading group. Later, when the group leaves, the boy is comforted for an extensive time by another educator (lines 22–23). Excerpt 2 illustrates that the child's crying is treated as inappropriate conduct by the educator, who makes it clear that "screaming" is not going to help (line 17), especially not in order to get his own way. However, August continues crying when the reading group leaves, and the other educator starts to comfort him (lines 22–23). Interestingly, although August's crying is initially treated as problematic behavior because it is used in an attempt to get his own way, soothing by the other educator indicates that the child is allowed to show that he is upset and that it is acceptable to display such disappointment.

Analytical approach

The present study combines a multimodal interactional analysis (Goodwin, 2000) and video-ethnography of everyday practices (Goodwin, 2006; Evaldsson, 2009). It combines longitudinal ethnographic fieldwork and a detailed analysis of social interactions. This means that the analytical focus is on both the verbal and nonverbal aspects of social interaction, such as talk, gaze, gesture, use of artefacts and spatial orientation that are studied as social actions. Analytical attention is directed towards participants' perspectives (Garfinkel, 1967); i.e., participants' social orientation to each other's actions (on a turn-by-turn basis) as sense-making practices within the social interaction (Pomerantz & Fehr, 1997). Notably, the detailed analysis of interactional situations is informed by ethnographic knowledge of practices and the sociocultural context (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012). This analytical approach allows me to attend to both a micro-interactional perspective and macro-societal discursive practices, and makes it possible to study socialization practices as situated processes within a socioculturally configured setting (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012:2).

Methodological considerations

By focusing on children's participation in recurring everyday practices and social interactions across an extended period of time, the design of the study made it possible to gain an understanding of how educational and institutional activities constitute an important site for socialization (Hedegaard, 2009; 2014; Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012). The detailed analysis of naturally occurring social situations provided important insights into the practices that constitute a significant part of children's everyday lives in an early childhood educational setting. By engaging in detailed analyses of recurring social interactions, the study contributes to practice-related research on how institutional responsibilities for children's social, emotional and cognitive development (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2019b) are accomplished within everyday practices at a preschool. Ethnographically informed methods, combined with a detailed analysis of everyday practices, provide ecologically valid knowledge about the children's social competences and emotional concerns.

Some of the constraints on the present in-depth analysis and preschool video-ethnography concern its limitations regarding general and generalizing statements about children's crying or emotional development. It is important to bear in mind that only one preschool was studied. However, the qualitative approach

adopted made it possible to explore socialization and children's participation in everyday activities in depth. This exploration allowed me to discover, analyze and describe socioculturally anchored ways of conducting institutional practices (e.g., responding to children's crying due to conflicts or painful injuries). This discovery of recurring practice patterns can contribute valuable knowledge to several different academic fields (Demuth, 2017), as well as to the practitioners' knowledge within early childhood education.

Moreover, Swedish national education policies (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2019b) stipulate the common goals and values that pre-schools should implement in their everyday practices. Therefore, tentatively, it can be suggested that it is possible to discuss the empirical findings of the present thesis in general terms (but without making generalizing claims).

Ethical procedures and my role as researcher

The data collection procedure was approved by The Regional Ethics Board⁵ and written consent to participate was obtained from parents and educators. I gained access to the field by contacting several preschool principals (responsible for different preschools). I introduced the aim of my study and, after getting a positive response from one of the preschools, I started to establish contacts and met the educators who were interested in participating in the study. These educators distributed information about the project and consent forms (to the parents), which I collected before starting the fieldwork. The participants were assured of anonymity and were informed that they could withdraw their participation at any time. The names of teachers and children that are used in the studies are all pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. Images have been anonymized and only the relevant general features of embodied actions are represented.

Before starting video recording, at the beginning of my fieldwork at the preschool, I spent time building rapport and establishing a relationship of trust with the educators, the children and their parents by introducing myself, without video recording. During the first few days at the preschool, I introduced myself to all parents and made sure that I was available if they had any questions or considerations regarding the study or their children's participation. Most of the

⁵ Regionala etikprövningsnämnden i Linköping. Avdelning för prövning av övrig forskning. (Regional Ethical Board in Linköping, Section for probation of general research). Dnr 2014/383-31

parents were positive and interested in the project and often engaged in spontaneous conversations with me during my visit. One of the families did not give their consent for their child to participate in the study. Therefore, when I started to record the children, I made sure to direct the camera so as not to film that particular child.

In addition to gaining the adults' formal consent, I thought about the children's consent as an ongoing process. In many cases, the children seemed to pay little attention to my presence while I was recording them. I tried to be sensitive to their reactions when filming and stopped if they displayed any signs of discomfort. I also stopped filming when I was asked to do so by the educators. I did not intervene in the children's conflicts, knowing that the educators were always in close proximity. Crying was very common in children's play conflicts and educators usually approached the children in these situations, or the children approached the educators themselves. During the recordings, none of the play conflicts evolved into physically aggressive, serious situations, in which I would have needed to intervene. If the children sought my assistance, I encouraged them to approach the educators.

During the data collection, some of the older children asked me questions about the video recordings, and I told them about my plans and allowed them to look at and try the camera. The younger children were curious about my presence during the first few days. I showed them the camera and its display, which was the element that most interested them. I soon became familiar with the children and they did not seem to pay much attention to me or take much interest in my activities. I tried to keep a low profile, but at the same time be friendly and show interest in the children's actions and questions.

Because of my educational background and my previous professional experience as a preschool teacher, I found it rather easy to gain access and be accepted as part of the setting. I had knowledge of routines and common practices and I could plan my visits in a way that would not negatively affect the preschool practices. However, in addition to the positive effect of my previous professional background, it could sometimes have the opposite effect. At times, I experienced the context as being almost too familiar. This may have affected how I interpreted the practices that I was analyzing in the video recordings since I could identify myself with the preschool educator's actions from a professional perspective. For this reason, the collective data sessions together with my colleagues in the project group were of great value and gave me additional perspectives on the video-recorded social situations.

Summaries of studies

Study I

Children's crying in play conflicts: A locus for moral and emotional socialization

Malva Holm Kvist

Published in *Research on Children and Social Interaction*, 2(2), 153–176.

This study examines young children's play and adults' responses to children's peer play conflicts that result in crying. It shows that educators' participation in the resolution of children's play conflicts constitutes socialization practices that focus on the moral and emotional aspects of children's conduct. The study highlights the moral work carried out in emotional socialization practices in Swedish preschools, and contributes to research on children's verbal and emotional accounts in peer play conflicts.

The study adopts social interactional and sociocultural perspectives on children's development and learning. It is based on video ethnography conducted in a Swedish preschool for children aged 1–4 years. The findings demonstrate that young children used crying as a communicative act that invited an active response from educators to a moral transgression committed by a peer. The children's crying in peer conflicts was repeatedly addressed to educators, and used together with other embodied resources, such as gaze, body position, changes in intonation and gestures such as pointing. The children upgraded the noteworthiness of their crying by employing various techniques, such as using pauses, postponing crying, and moving to a location that was more noticeable to others, particularly adults. An educator responded to the crying in most of the cases documented. The adults responded to children's crying in play conflicts in various ways, some of which endorsed the crying, while others criticized it. For

instance, a child's crying was legitimized by describing it as an emotional stance of "sadness", or it was criticized in terms of the child "being grumpy" and not having a reason to cry.

The findings show that persistent crying, when the adults responded and initiated conflict resolution, was problematic and was viewed by the adults as inappropriate. Because the adults had acknowledged the problem and the conflict that occasioned the child's crying response, they expected the child to engage in conflict resolution in a proper way. The children were expected to show their willingness to restore social order by apologizing (Björk-Willen, 2018), showing remorse, or agreeing with the terms proposed by the educator. Persistent crying and whining during these social rituals were viewed as problematic conduct, and the adults glossed (Burdelski & Mitsuhashi, 2010) it as "screaming" (Miller & Sperry, 1987).

In sum, the study shows that children configured their crying as an embodied and publicly visible act that was intended to be noticed by educators, whose responses then accomplished the moral framing of play conflict.

Study II

Compassion and emotion socialization in children's peer play conflicts: Responses to peer crying

Malva Holm Kvist & Asta Cekaite

Submitted to *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*

Taking its point of departure in social interactional and sociocultural perspectives, this study examines 2–3-year-old children's responses to peers' crying in a regular Swedish preschool. By analyzing video recordings of the children's everyday activities and frequent situations of crying in peer play conflicts, the study describes a broad range of children's responses to peer distress.

Children's orientation and attention towards a distressed peer were displayed in various ways. Sometimes, they actively engaged with the crying child by such actions as approaching them and showing compassion, disciplining a peer's crying, or simply continuing the conflict. Notably, in the majority of cases, the co-present peers did not approach the child. Rather, they oriented to the conflict and distress by staying at some distance, albeit in the vicinity of the crying child.

Children's orientation towards a crying peer is discussed in relation to their social concerns, relationships and the social organization of preschool play activities. The children's most common orientation to a peer's crying was to stay away from the child in distress, to simply observe him or her (looking at the child), or to continue playing. Children actively engaged with the crying child by continuing the conflict or, on rare occasions, showing compassion and trying to verbally and/or nonverbally alleviate the crying child's distress. Compassionate conduct constituted only a rather limited fraction of the children's responses. Rather, the co-present children frequently adopted the position of bystander (Goffman, 1979). They stayed in the vicinity or moved farther away and monitored the situation of distress. Bystander responses can be seen as complex and productive social acts within the framework of play conflict, especially because, due to the institutional organization of preschool, intervention by the educators was normatively expected, although the adults did not hurry to approach the distressed child.

Children's responses to peers' crying can be discussed in terms of collective socialization practices, related to children's peer-group play concerns, and the institutional concerns of educators. The findings suggest that responses to children's crying constitute sites for emotional and moral socialization and (re-)produce specific cultural values about the regulation of emotions, emotional displays, and compassionate conduct.

Study III

The Comforting Touch: Tactile Intimacy and Talk in Managing Children's Distress

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This study examines young children's distress management in situ, focusing on situations of crying and educators' embodied-haptic-soothing responses in pre-schools in Sweden. The primary analytical focus is on the multimodal organization of the crying–soothing sequence and the use of comforting touch. Soothing is defined as a set of responses characterized by the caregiver's regulation of emotions through the use of positive emotions (talk and haptic means). The interactional organization of soothing in an embracing formation comprised: an initiation/invitation and response, the submergence of two bodies into close haptic contact, and coordinated withdrawal from haptic contact.

The educators responded to children's intensive crying, and when the manifestation of distress interrupted the flow of the main institutional activities (e.g., play, educational activities, mealtimes). Management of the child's distress became the main interactional business of the caregivers, who responded to crying as part of their institutional duties to take care of and sooth the children and to ensure the progression of institutional work.

Haptic soothing (embraces, stroking, carrying) was used to ameliorate a child's distress, and the caregiver and child established a problem (crying)–remedy sequence, which started with the problematic event that had occasioned the child's crying. Soothing was terminated when there was a marked decrease in the child's distress and when the adult received reassurance from the child that s/he had been soothed and was able to return to other activities. Rather than trying to quickly bring the child back to the main course of activities or to discipline them (Hsuenh & Tobin, 2003), the caregivers choreographed nuanced corporeal support and soothing through intensive bodily togetherness, thus developing the child's adeptness at intercorporeal intersubjectivity (Merleau-Ponty, 1964; Meyer, Streeck & Scott Jordan, 2017). The embracing formation

temporarily suspended the requirements for the child to act like a responsive listener and speaker. Moreover, the educators used a face-to-face formation to reestablish conditions for the child's interactional co-presence, and children were positioned as co-decisionmakers concerning when they were ready to re-enter the neutral emotional order.

Concluding discussion

This thesis has examined children's crying in a Swedish preschool. The main focus was on 2–3-year-old children, their everyday activities and their distress, as manifested during a variety of social situations. By adopting a sociocultural interactional perspective, the thesis aimed to study preschoolers' crying in order to gain a wider understanding of how distress is manifested and managed in an early-childhood educational context. By conducting a detailed analysis of children's crying and the responses of educators and peers, this study contributes with knowledge about how, in multifaceted ways, crying events can constitute sites for children's moral and emotional socialization in the preschool setting.

Children's crying in play conflicts: Interactional sites for moral and emotional socialization

This thesis shows that children's crying served multiple social purposes and was most common in play conflicts during free play. As shown in Study I (Holm Kvist, 2018), children used crying as a communicative act in order to attract the educators' attention. Crying was important in conflict situations where children positioned themselves as unfairly treated, and educators were called upon to resolve the conflict. Educators were shown to orient towards such crying as an indication of trouble that precipitated the conflict-mediation and problem-solving events (see also Bateman, 2015). Children's crying signaled a transgression within the peer group and disturbed the social and emotional order in the preschool setting (Holm Kvist, 2018; Holm Kvist & Cekaite, submitted). Notably, children's crying in these situations was not always endorsed by the educators. In particular, continuous crying was no longer accepted once the educator had initiated conflict mediation between the children (Holm Kvist, 2018).

Considering the findings of this thesis from a sociocultural socialization perspective, it can be argued that educators' responses to crying, and especially the questions they asked during conflict mediation, acknowledged and endorsed the

involved children's perspectives. Educators' responses to children's conflict-related crying were characterized by a child-focused, everyday democratic approach (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2019b). Peer conflict crying usually initiated conflict mediation by educators, i.e., a problem-solving event. The educators could hold the child accountable for crying by asking for an explanation, or evaluating and assessing the child's crying as unnecessary, by saying: "there's no need to cry". In these ways, educators did not explicitly criticize the child, and they did acknowledge the child's negative emotions. These findings are similar to and illustrative of so-called "soft" individualism, as demonstrated by Kusserow (1999) in her study of middle-class families in New York. According to this child-rearing ideology, children have the right to express their negative emotions and caregivers avoid explicit shaming and harsh disciplining. At the same time, as demonstrated in the present study, through the educators' responses, children were socialized to act within the context of the common institutional rules and values, which foregrounded children's individual perspectives (see also Markström, 2005). Moreover, they were expected and taught to act according to the institutional expectations that children must adhere to the institutional emotional and moral order (Karlsson, 2018), within which extensive crying becomes a problem for participating in social activities.

The communicative and social meaning of crying

This thesis shows that, in situations of distress, educators were usually positioned as responsible for managing children's crying. The educators offered comfort or investigated the reasons for crying. This suggests that children's crying held multiple communicative and social meanings; it was a communicative resource that solicited help from others (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2003), especially from educators. As demonstrated (Holm Kvist, 2018), children addressed their crying (they turned, looked, walked) towards educators, and the adults responded to this crying in most of the documented cases. In these embodied ways, in situations of conflict-related crying, the children revealed their attention towards the educator's presence and invited, or anticipated, the educators' potential intervention (Holm Kvist & Cekaite, submitted). The educators, in their responses, sometimes treated the crying as a sanctioned communicative resource that was used in order to get the adults' attention. In addition, children were also scaffolded and prompted to use other, more appropriate, ways of displaying affect (see also Ahn, 2010) and to negotiate and resolve their conflicts

with each other. In this way, the educators oriented to the children as emotional and moral actors, who were being held accountable for their own and, at times, their peers' emotional displays.

Moreover, the educators' responses to the children's distress highlight the importance of scaffolding children's conduct by guiding them in how to verbalize their emotional experiences. Such scaffolding made the child's negative emotions valid or rational, and manageable for the child. In this way, responses to the children's distress served as sites for socialization whereby links between distress and certain events were made explicit, and some type of events were interpreted as appropriate situations for crying.

Notably, the educators' social orientation and actions in soothing and in situations of conflict resolution can be seen as a project of retaining the normal state or a neutral emotional order (Cekaite & Holm Kvist, 2017:119). For this reason, temporal aspects of how adults responded to children's crying were significant. Because educators did not immediately approach the child who was crying due to conflict (Holm Kvist, 2018), crying could become a prolonged embodied act that might even be carried through the preschool space. This embodied design tells us that the children were actively seeking adults' attention to their distress, and we observed that they even changed their spatial position in order to approach the educator (Holm Kvist, 2018). The adults' responses to children's distress can be seen as something that re-created the social or practical order but, at the same time, they created a disturbance in the children's ongoing play activity.

Educators' comforting touch as a response to crying

In cases of injury or accident involving children, the educators' embodied comforting responses clearly indicated that the child had the right to express intense negative emotion (Cekaite & Holm Kvist, 2017). The educators positioned themselves as responsible for helping and comforting the child and soothing the negative emotional experience. These practices were both corporeal (extensive touch was used) and verbal, in that the educators included verbal labeling that described the child's experiences and feelings, and connected them to the event that had caused the accident and upset. Considered through the lens of socialization, in such soothing situations, the child was positioned as a co-decisionmaker concerning when it was appropriate to end the soothing. Through gaze and touch formations of mutual engagement, the child was invited to

demonstrate his or her willingness to return to the play activity (Cekaite & Holm Kvist, 2017). Notably, in contrast to adults' soothing, in situations when peer-group members initiated soothing, the crying child did not usually accept the compassionate act, but continued crying and oriented towards assistance from an adult (Holm Kvist & Cekaite, submitted).

Children's responses and orientation towards peers' crying

The detailed analysis of video-recorded everyday situations involving children's peer conflict crying provides important insights and contributions to such areas as quantitative psychologically informed studies of children's prosocial conduct (Phinney, Feshbach & Farver, 1986; Caplan & Hay, 1989; Lamb & Zakireh, 1997). As demonstrated in the of children's responses to peers' crying, educators and peers showed different social orientations and responsibilities towards the crying child (Holm Kvist & Cekaite, submitted; see also Caplan & Hay, 1989; Lipponen, 2018). Often, the children demonstrated expectations that adults must handle conflicts and children's distress.

The various types of children's responses to peers' crying draw attention to the importance of the contextual interpretation of social actions and children's development. That is, we can better understand children's actions in relation to their institutional context (Hedegaard, 2009, 2014), where adults and children orient towards different social expectations.

Usually, peers themselves observed the crying child or engaged in other activities, such as play. Children frequently withdrew, created spatial distance from the crying peer and observed the situation. Such conduct can be interpreted as the children feeling uncomfortable due to their peer's distress, as well as revealing their awareness that they might potentially be held accountable for it (Holm Kvist & Cekaite, submitted).

This study (Holm Kvist & Cekaite, submitted) illustrates that children's crying is a mundane and rather common phenomenon in the preschool setting. Crying was regarded as something that interrupted play activity and signaled a moral transgression. Interestingly, such peer responses can be interpreted in terms of, and related to, children's peer culture and the appreciation of play (Corsaro, 1979, 2003). The young children's infrequent employment of soothing engagement or other types of social orientation to the crying peer need to be seen as serving certain social purposes within the preschool context. It can be

suggested that ignoring a peer's crying (a common situation) could allow the children to continue their play.

The children's infrequent prosocial acts towards peers do not have to be seen as indicating a lack of social competence or not knowing how to act with compassion. Rather, this thesis demonstrates that these young children had a rich knowledge of the institutional social and moral expectations and responsibilities; for example, the educators' institutional responsibility to attend to crying. Moreover, the children displayed their knowledge of how to use crying for their own social purposes in order to attract an educator's attention and recruit the adult for conflict intervention (Danby & Baker, 1998; Cekaite, 2012; LeMaster, 2010; Bateman, 2015; Burdelski, *in press*.)

Crying served multiple purposes during children's play conflicts. It solicited help from adults but at the same time it was not always a "good strategy" for continuing peer activity because it disrupted the ongoing play and, in many cases, it was ignored by peers, who continued playing without the crying child.

It is worth noticing that, although video recordings from the 4-year-olds' group were less extensive, crying was rare among these older children (see Table 1). On a speculative note, it can be suggested that 4-year-olds might potentially have learned other ways to act during conflicts; for instance, by arguing their case (Goodwin, 2006). Yet another tentative explanation is that the use of crying to attract the educators' attention is seen as less appropriate for older children, because educators expect these children to handle conflicts by themselves to a greater extent (as suggested and confirmed by the educators during informal conversations during my fieldwork).

In sum, these studies demonstrate in detail the intricate ways in which educators and peers respond to children's crying during everyday activities in an early childhood educational setting. The crying, and the multifaceted – educators', as well as peers' – responses, constitute rich approaches for children's moral and emotional socialization. These common social interactional situations mediate sociocultural and institutional expectations that combine children's peer cultures with their emotional concerns as well as educators' responsibilities for managing children's distress, and developing children's solidarity and compassion.

Implications for educational practice

Preschools have a responsibility and a goal to promote children's sense of empathy and compassion by using a holistic approach to education and care (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2019b). The holistic approach comprises a perspective on children's learning, wellbeing and development that perceives them as interconnected and located in everyday practices. This thesis has approached daily life in preschool in relation to how these goals and responsibilities can feature in educator-child and peer-group interactions. It shows that situations where children cry serve as sites for their moral and emotional socialization, and are interactional sites where empathy and compassionate conduct come to the fore. While both this study and previous research (Lipponen, 2018) show that it is primarily the educators who respond to distress, I would like to suggest that educators can use these situations as an opportunity to let the children take a more active role in relating to peers' distress (Lamb & Zakhireh, 1997). This can be done by including other children in the soothing practice and making soothing a collective, extended and collaborative practice (Holm Kvist & Cekaite, submitted). Such situations highlight the importance of educators being attentive to crying, and to other children's attempts at soothing. It is also important to pay attention to who is the designated comforter chosen by the crying child: frequently, as demonstrated in Study II, the crying children solicited comforting from an adult. This is an important part of children's experience of trust and security relating to educators in the preschool setting.

I would like to argue that professional reflexivity in considering how to manage the mundane situations of children's crying is something that could be actively used and developed in early childhood education. Everyday crying events, when reflected upon, provide excellent opportunities for engaging children in more active talk and acts of compassion towards another's distress. Considering that children's crying was frequent in peer play conflicts, it is fruitful to acknowledge the fact if, for example, some children cry more often than others. In such cases, educators can develop and use various ways to help the child to successfully participate in peer interactions. Educators can provide various strategies for the child, or scaffold the child's participation in play.

This thesis highlights the essential role that educators play in relation to managing children's distress. It is particularly important to acknowledge the importance of educators providing embodied soothing. As demonstrated, embodied soothing between caregiver and child is made possible by close social relations and embodied trust. Given that young children frequently address their

crying to adults and solicit them as the main soothers, it can be seen that the children themselves are demonstrating their close and trusting affectionate expectations and relations. It is important to reflect upon and acknowledge these factors, especially because children's right to bodily integrity is something that is emphasized by educational policies (Piper & Smith, 2003; Cekaite & Bergnehr, 2018; The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2019b). It is also central to acknowledge the importance of children being able to experience embodied soothing and affection in their daily lives in preschool, because these emotional responses play an essential role in being recognized and acknowledged as a social and emotional person.

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PART II

Papers

The papers associated with this thesis have been removed for copyright reasons. For more details about these see:

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Tears can be associated with various emotional states, such as grief, happiness, empathy, frustration, sadness or anger. It is perhaps because of this multifaced nature that crying as a cultural phenomenon has fascinated humans throughout history. Crying, and especially children's crying, is often associated with vulnerability and helplessness, although it could also be a potentially powerful resource since it is something that others find difficult to ignore. Within the preschool context, children's crying is something that both educators and children experience and witness multiple times during the day. In this way, children's crying can be seen as a potential emotional and moral concern for both educators and the peer group. This thesis focuses on children's moral and emotional socialization by examining examples of children's crying in a Swedish preschool. The overall aim is to gain an understanding of crying and responses to it as interactional and sociocultural phenomena in an early childhood educational context.

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