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A noisy silence about care: Swedish preschool teachers’ talk about documentation

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Abstract
This article investigates what happens to institutional narratives of care in Swedish preschool when a policy on increased documentation is introduced. Questions deal with preschool teachers’ professionalism as expressed through the teachers’ talk about documentation. The analysis is based on theories in education policy, teacher professionalism, and institutional narratives. The results show that the few references made by the teachers to narratives of care are subordinated narratives of learning. A major conclusion is that narratives of care are in a process of becoming a noisy silence, which influences teachers’ professionalism as well as shaping our common society.

Introduction
Human society is built on the relationship of being cared for and care for others (Bauman 2007). In different situations and stages of life, all of us have needs that we cannot fulfil ourselves. Interdependence has generated institutions such as childcare, hospitals, and eldercare. It has been suggested that the professions involved in such welfare institutions are based on an ethics of care (Sevenhuijsen, 1998) that for preschool has been described carefully by Osgood (2012). However,
these institutions have existed for a long time and have developed their own narratives about what is important, and they are regulated by policies that introduce new ideas of what counts as their task. The policy of documentation and quality control is now a part of the everyday realities for most institutions in the Western world, and it strongly influences what is said and done (Ball 2006). This article revolves around issues of what happens to the institutional narratives of care in Swedish preschool when a policy of increased documentation is introduced.

Documentation is nothing new in the preschool teaching profession. Changes in the context, however, including requirements for visibility resulting from increased government control and marketization, bring new dimensions with implications for the preschool teaching profession (Löfgren 2014). It is evident that teachers frequently refer to institutional narratives about learning in their talk about documentation (Löfgren in press; Löfdahl and Folke Fichtelius 2014). But a relative silence about care in the teachers’ talk about documentation in the data indicates that the demands on documentation tend to downplay such aspects of the teaching profession (cf. Halldén 2007). This shift of interest is also indicated on a policy level (Folke-Fichtelius and Lundahl 2015). Care is treated to a fairly similar extent in the two previous versions of the national curriculum, whereas learning is more frequently addressed in the latest version (Lpfö 98; Lpfö rev. 2010). In this article, preschool teachers’ stories about their experiences of work with documentation are investigated. Through a narrative analysis, I examine how what I refer to as the noisy silence of care takes shape in the teachers’ stories.
The aim of the article is to study how a noisy silence of care takes shape in relation to institutional narratives in preschool in teachers’ talk about their work with documentation. Questions in the article deal with: How do preschool teachers ‘do’ professionalism in their stories? How can the process of silencing institutional narratives of care be described? What are the consequences in society and for the preschool teaching profession if preschool teachers no longer refer to narratives of care?

**Theoretical strands**
The article is based on theories that deal with relations between changes in society, changes in the education system, and changing perspectives of teacher professionalism and pedagogical work in the preschool (Ball 2006; Osgood 2012). Theories of institutional narratives (Linde 2009; Sommers 1994; Law 1994) are used in the narrative analysis. Specifically, Lindes’s reasoning about ‘noisy silences’ (2009: 196-220) is addressed as a way to systematically deal with the ‘lack of’ references to ‘narratives about care’, which I argue are parts of the ‘core stock of stories’ (Linde, 2009: 89) within Swedish preschool.

*Policy translations and performativity*
Education policy is considered something not only shaped by policymakers but also translated and enacted by the subjects in local contexts involved in solving the problems stressed by changing demands in policy (Ball, Maguire and Braun 2012). Performativity is viewed as a technology, a culture, and a governance model (Ball 2006), through which quality reviews and comparisons are used as incentives to control and change. The governance model is based on accountability and competition, where the visibility of preschools has a key function. It allows control from not only local and central governments, but from parents as prospective
customers. In preschool, demands for transparency, control, and competition are dealt with by teachers’ work with documentation. This is the backdrop against which we can understand teachers’ stories about documentation as versions of an organization intended for external assessments (Ball 2006), as well as methods to translate policy in ways coherent with institutional narratives in preschool.

Swedish preschool has been investigated in a series of articles (Löfdahl and Pérez Prieto 2009; Löfdahl 2014; Löfgren 2014) that analyse the teaching profession and the conditions in preschool in terms of performativity and ‘fabrications’ (Ball 2006: 692). In these articles the documents produced in Swedish preschool are described and analysed as fabrications and versions of a best practice. The documents are used in assessment situations as ways to deal with policy demands, and they contribute to changes in the daily work of preschool teachers (Löfdahl and Pérez Prieto 2009) and in the development of professional strategies (Löfdahl 2014; Löfgren, in press).

In the teachers’ stories about the focus of their documentations, they translate and give meaning to the policy of documentation as significant for what is priority and what is downplayed in praxis (Ball, et. al 2012). Obviously these translations are influenced by policy documents, but also by the mix of core stories including narratives of care and learning the teachers shape themselves in local contexts.

Professionalism as a matter of care
In the center of descriptions of a preschool teacher’s ‘professionalism from within’ (Osgood 2012: 130) stand descriptions of the teaching profession as an emotional
labor based on an ethics of care (Sevenhuijsen 1998). Osgood (2012) argues that the most highly regarded attributes referred to in preschool teachers’ constructions of professionalism were associated with the affective domain, whereas she finds no evidence for traits like accountability and measurability. Emotions (Ashforth and Tomiuk 2000), social relations (Pedersen, Gravesen, Hansen and Lorentsen 2013), and care for children (Simpson 2010) have been stressed as the main traits of professionalism in preschool.

However, in Sweden care is given a more subordinated position for the preschool teaching profession. It has been argued that care has been overemphasized at the expense of pedagogics (Johansson and Pramling Samuelsson 2001) and that distinctions between care and education have damaging implications for the shaping of preschool teachers’ professional identities (Dahlberg and Moss 2005). This has been the stance in the national curriculum and in the official reports that preceded it, and is an important argument in the professionalization agenda for preschool teachers (Halldén 2007). Important in the struggle for professionalization of preschool teachers is to stress that no activities in preschool are about ‘just’ taking care of children when their parents work. In policy care is given attention only if described as an aspect of learning, which ultimately contributes to a subordination of the concept

Halldén (2007) argues for a more independent role for care and rejects mundane understandings of the concept, such as taking care of children so that parents can work, social authorities’ care of children, and an idealized kind of care from a
mother in a safe home (Dahlberg and Moss 2005). If we accept that all people, including preschool children, have needs, care relates in a respectful way to children as ‘beings’ in contrast to children as ‘becomings’ that is estimated in the concept of learning. In this sense, care is subordinated to learning, according to Halldén (2007).

The flow of changing policy demands implies a sense of professional insecurity (Ball 2006). Osgood (2012) addresses this insecurity and stresses the central role given to care in the relations between parents and preschool teachers. This relation is marked by distrust, she notes, because parents are worried about the teacher’s care abilities. She convincingly describes how teachers refer to discursive narratives of motherhood to gain professional legitimacy. Clearly preschool teachers’ problems combining professional ambitions with ideas of care and motherhood that are highlighted in international research (Vincent and Ball 2006; Osgood 2012) are also relevant in a Swedish context (Löfdahl 2014; Löfgren, 2014). Evidently, the policy demands for increased documentation are linked to a professionalism based on accountability where teachers feel responsible for children as learners (Löfgren, in press). However, what happens to care in the preschool profession in Sweden appears to be a matter of how the teachers themselves refer to narratives of care when they translate new policies.

**Expressions of professionalism in narratives**

Some studies emphasize that professionalism develops differently in different contexts (Karila 2008; Vincent and Ball 2006) and that teachers themselves express professionalism in their life stories (Pedersen et al. 2013; Löfgren 2014). It
has been argued that teachers ‘doing’ professionalism ‘from within’ is a matter of how teachers in their life stories deal with policy demands in creative, and sometimes personal, ways (Löfgren in press). The teachers’ stories serve as performative accounts where they use personal experiences and a repertoire of institutional narratives when they deal with education policies. It has also been described how teachers use goals in the national curriculum and personal experiences to gain professional trust (Löfgren 2014), and how they use references to institutional narratives of learning as a professional strategy when dealing with demands on accountability (in press).

Studying narratives within institutions contributes to an understanding of actions and identities as relational and as socially situated (Sommers 1994: 621). Narratives help members of institutions arrange and organize their activities and interpret their conditions (Law 1994: 50). Narratives told about an institution within the institution are expressions of a repertoire of stories that exist within the institution. When institutional narratives are retold, their evaluative points are repeated. They are both retrospective and prospective and construct breaks and continuities with the institution’s past. They are used by policymakers, senior representatives, and other members as a means to govern the institution (Linde 2009). Telling institutional narratives is a ‘rhetorical mode of discourse, and is a part of the work of knowledge management in organisations’ (Ball et al. 2012: 51). Typically institutional narratives are known by everybody within the institution and they are frequently retold or referred to.
The *noisy silences*, however, are narratives everybody knows but seldom retells (Linde 2009: 197 ff). The reason they exist is that the institution needs to process them because they are told outside the institution. Noisy silences can be neutral, oppositional, or for the benefit of the institution. They concern the members that need to relate to them in one way or the other. Another feature of noisy silences is that they refer to subjects that advocates for the institution would rather not talk about in public. Typically, a noisy silence is never completely silent but can be spoken about in some situations (Trouillot 1995). Silences can be imposed officially or as the result of a process of a more informal ‘forgetfulness’, where some questions and stories are toned down in favor of others.

Here I explore the few references to institutional narratives of care in the data in terms of noisy silences. I argue that care as a trait of professionalism for Swedish preschool teachers is a contentious issue in a gentle process of getting silenced. I analyse noisy silences about care narratives that are downplayed in the teachers’ talk about documentation, but still are acknowledged as parts of their daily work.

**Care as part of the core stock of stories in preschool?**

Before presenting the results, we deal with the question of what can be discovered about care in an investigation of different records from Swedish preschools. Specifically, the focus is on the national curriculum for preschool (lpfö 98 revised 2010) and historical accounts of preschool.

Ever since the beginning of common organized childcare in Sweden in the mid-19th century, narratives of care have intertwined and been part of the core stock of
stories in Swedish preschool. Early public childcare for working-class children was organized within infant schools and crèches (Westberg 2011). The industrialization process in Sweden made taking care of children an issue. The crèches were introduced to take care of children while their parents worked. Later the number of crèches and kindergartens increased, and the role model for activities in preschool was the family rather than the school. Preschool teachers were supposed to be leaders and ‘mothers’ rather than teachers, and an informal curriculum that emphasized the good home dominated (Vallberg Roth 2001).

However, in the last decades of the 20th century, preschool activities focused on preparing children for school by strengthening children’s skills in maths, reading, and language (Skolinspektionen 2012). Further, the use of different tests for the assessment of individual children’s learning, especially regarding their linguistic abilities, has increased (Folke-Fichtelius and Lundahl 2015). This educationalization of childcare (Kagan and Kauerz 2007), paired with the professionalization agenda discussed earlier (Halldén 2007: 75), places narratives of care in a more vulnerable position.

In 1996 Swedish preschool became a part of the national school system, organized under the Ministry of Education and Research and later got its own curriculum that stressed that documentation and evaluation are not about the children’s performances but about the quality of the preschool. The documentation should gather knowledge about how the quality in preschool ‘can be developed so that each child receives the best possible conditions for learning and development’
(Lpfö98, rev. 2010: 14). It has been argued that the national curriculum represents a model mixing a comprehensive approach that stresses general goals for activities in preschool with a readiness for school approach emphasizing specified learning goals for the children (Folke-Fichtelius and Lundahl 2015). There are specified goals in the curriculum but they are articulated as ‘goals to strive for’, not as ‘goals to reach’. The curriculum thus accommodates a tension between pedagogical interests of providing quality as a result of socially situated processes and administrative purposes where quality is defined by levels of goal attainment. It has been described as a result of negotiations between competing discourses emphasizing on the one hand ideas of assessment and accountability, but on the other a resistance to ideas of measuring quality by external criteria (Folke-Fichtelius and Lundahl 2015). This character of consensus in the curriculum have somewhat blurred the picture of what kind of qualities should be documented and how this should be done (von Greiff, Sjögren and Wiesselgren 2012). As a result of this we find a wide range of methods on a continuum reaching from ‘pedagogical documentation’ that focus on social processes of learning closely linked to the children’s interests, to external evaluations based on standardized criteria in Swedish preschool. Obviously this curriculum and the somewhat unclear demands on what to document and how to do it opens for different policy interpretations among teachers in different preschool contexts (Löfgren 2014). However, in more general terms I argue that in the policy documents and the national curriculum, narratives of care are subordinated to the strong emphasis on learning.
Further, two shifts of emphasis regarding care can be noticed in official reports. First, the emphasis has been shifting from perceiving adults giving care as something problematic that makes children passive to an emphasis on children as active subjects that ‘meet’ adults and jointly develop empathy and relational competencies (Lindgren 2001). A second shift of emphasis concerns the needs that the care is supposed to fulfil, shifting from physical needs (dressing, eating) to spiritual needs (how to be in the world) or psychological needs (communication). These shifts have been described as an intellectualization of the concept of care in preschool and hence an approach to learning (Lindgren 2001).

Method
The analyses in this study are based on narrative data collected through life history interviews (Goodson and Sikes 2001; Mishler 1999). Open-ended questions were asked about the interviewees’ personal and professional histories and their present work that focused on their experiences of documentation. The interviews had a character of ‘conversations’ with the intent to capture the preschool teachers’ experiences of documentation in preschool. The teachers’ stories about themselves and their experiences of documentation provide data about the use of documentation in Swedish preschools from a teacher’s point of view. The questions departed from a broad definition of the concept of documentation, including everything that the teachers themselves defined as work with documentation. The forms of documentation included in the data are here described in short. Quality reports, activity plans, and documents of commitment are mainly a task for the preschool managers and are usually made public in official
homepages and reports. *Wall-documentation* is when teachers collect pictures or take photographs and exhibit them for parents and children, often accompanied by a quote from a goal taken from the national curriculum. *Pedagogical documentation* is a certain form for documenting children’s activities with roots in the Reggio Emilia philosophy. The method is common in the data and is taught in certain courses and described in literature (Åberg and Lenz Taguchi 2005). *Triple logs* are a method based on a template that serves to facilitate teachers’ systematic common reflections on activities in preschool. *Individual performance reviews* and *portfolios* are focused on individual children’s development and learning. Often examples of children’s work are collected in a binder.

*Sample and access*

The sample provides examples of how teachers handle documentation in different preschools. These examples serve as arguments from a teacher's perspective towards the discussion on the shaping of the preschool teaching profession. Between the years 2012 and 2013, I conducted twelve interviews with seventeen preschool teachers in seven preschool settings in two mid-sized towns in central Sweden. All interviews were conducted at the preschools where the teachers were working. In four of the interviews, two preschool teachers were present, and for the others one teacher at the time was present. The interviews lasted between 0.45 and 2.04 hours. The total time was 18.45 hours. Four of the preschools were ‘ordinary’ community preschools with no specific profile. One was a less-regulated ‘independent’ community preschool with a Reggio Emilia profile. Two of the preschools were parent cooperatives, and one of those had a Reggio Emilia profile.
The participating teachers were volunteers. The preschool managers were contacted and they informed their staff about the project. I then contacted all the teachers who expressed an interest in participating. I explained the project along with the practical and ethical terms of participation. All the teachers agreed to participate, and no one withdrew.

Analytical procedures

All interviews were recorded and fully transcribed. An initial analysis of all transcribed interviews drew attention to the frequent references to narratives about learning in preschool (Löfgren in press). But there were surprisingly few references to narratives of care when considering the strong position these narratives had in Swedish preschool history. This finding was analysed by applying five questions suggested by Linde (2009: 198) as ways to find and deal with noisy silences:

- What can be discovered by the investigation of the historical record outside the institution?
- What kinds of stories might we expect in such a situation?
- How does one account compare to another?
- What unofficial stories and counter-stories exist?
- Who is not present in the story?

These questions guided the new readings of the data and resulted in a conclusion that the institutional narrative of care in preschool emerges is in a process of becoming silenced. In the following, results and the arguments for this conclusion are presented.
A noisy silence of care in teachers’ talk about documentation

**Care as an expected narrative in stories about documentation**

According to Linde (2009), we need to ask what narratives would be expected in a certain situation. Should we expect that preschool teachers who are interviewed about their work with documentation would refer to institutional narratives of care? I argue that we should. A first argument for why we should expect references to institutional narratives of care is the very existence of them in Swedish preschool, described earlier in this article. Historically, they have roots in the 19th century and have been frequently addressed earlier when reforms have been introduced and changed the professional conditions for preschool teachers (Westberg 2011). Further, research on teacher professionalism often highlights emotional work in general and care in particular as traits of professionalism that are of certain importance in preschool (Osgood 2012; Taggart 2011; Simpson 2010). Such reports serve as a second argument for the standpoint that references to institutional narratives of care should be expected in the teachers’ talk of documentation. Finally, I argue, the introduction of a preschool market and the need for preschools to position themselves on that market could be a reason for teachers to highlight the caring abilities in their own preschool as a way to promote their preschool. This way of reasoning is in line with research that stresses performativity in preschool (Vincent and Ball 2006) and with the conclusion that ‘being professional could be to be good at positioning oneself’ (Löfdahl and Pérez Prieto, 2009: 405). But still, when analyzing data in this project there is little evidence for references to the institutional narrative of care.

**Care as a matter of learning**
Linde (2009) suggests a comparison between different accounts as a way to catch sight of noisy silences. Different fragments of an institutional narrative can be found in different accounts. A result of such data analysis shows few references to narratives of care that can be identified and compared. These references are about how the teachers in different ways try to teach children to take care of each other. The link between learning and care is obviously expected (e.g. Halldén 2007). One teacher says that they have highlighted social goals from the national curriculum in the activity description of the department.

We have highlighted some goals ... to socialize, stand up for who you are and what you think ...... dare to say what you want (Silvie)

To ‘socialize’ and ‘stand up for who you are’ refer to an intellectualized interpretation of care where children need to learn about themselves and about relations to others. The care for children’s spiritual or psychological needs are highlighted and linked to ideas about training children to be independent and tolerant.

One teacher tells how they use pedagogical documentation with a ‘certain purpose’, in this case as a way to deal with a problematic situation that occurs when the children dress to get out. She explains that they document specifically what happens in the situation where two children get into conflicts. Later they reflect on it together, suggesting a change where they let two children get out first and later evaluate whether the situation is better. It is clear that the purpose is to
learn what is wrong in the situation and find socially related solutions that refer to an interpretation of a narrative of care about physical needs where active children meet adults and jointly develop empathy and relational competencies (cf. Lindgren 2001).

One preschool teacher photo-documented children who played with toy cars, illustrating how narratives of learning and care intertwine. The teachers had noticed that only the boys were playing with cars and that the play often led to conflicts. One day she gathered a group of six children (both boys and girls) in the assembly room, gave them ‘a huge paper’ and pencils, and asked them to draw streets. When she asked ‘where the cars lived’, the children drew houses. After a while, some cars started to bump into each other, but this time the children talked about how to rescue the cars; the teacher quickly supplied them with pieces of fabric and asked if they needed plasters. The children then started to bandage the cars and played doctors, and the teacher picked up her camera:

And I documented, and it was very enjoyable to see this empathy that existed in the game with these little metal cars, and it became a whole different game, and where they played together, they drove together, they made their roads, they made the houses where the cars would be, and they brought these cars. (Bertha)

When asked what she did with this documentation, she said she talked with her colleagues about it but nothing else and that this is what usually happens. She reflects that documentation is a powerful instrument for change because it directs
the focus to the children. In this story we find some fragments of a narrative about care, as the teacher documents empathy between the children, but the point of the story refers to learning, documenting a successful learning situation directed by the teacher.

I have conducted a close analysis of all data to find these three examples of rather explicit references to institutional narratives of care, and there are just a few more in the data. Evidently, when comparing these cases, we learn that when the teachers talk about their work with documentation, the references to care are few and are linked to references to learning. However, according to Linde, there may be unofficial stories that can guide us as to why some narratives are not spoken of.

*Unofficial stories that privilege care*

I can find no evidence for a standpoint where any teacher is openly critical of the strong focus on learning, and no explicit answers to why so few teachers refer to care in their talk about documentation. But the following quote stresses a position that documenting learning is important, but that everyday realities that often contain elements of care are an overriding priority. The teacher was asked what was most important in her preschool.

> We want it to be the best, we want the children to get something out of being here, that they’ll learn things, preferably all the time, every day. However, today, we had to clean up the department because of head lice, so today there has not been so much learning. (Mary)
Evidently, learning is inextricably linked to ideas of best practice. Although it is preferable to spend time and energy on children’s learning, taking care of children in a basic physical sense sometimes takes over the agenda in everyday work. In this case, taking care of children’s needs in a sense of ‘being’ overrides the agenda of children as ‘becoming’, linked to narratives of learning (cf. Halldén 2007).

Some teachers are critical that documenting learning, and preparing and reflecting on it, takes time. This time is taken from the daily interaction with the children, and the teachers recognize some consequences. A few teachers say that when they have to leave large groups of children with fewer teachers, this reduces the quality of the pedagogical work and they describe their work in these situations in terms of ‘babysitting’ or surveillance. Another teacher claims that there is a risk that teachers hide themselves behind documenting learning.

That one hides behind a documentation, for that; in order to avoid having to be so much with the children, maybe they are hiding behind a camera. (Bertha)

In this case the care involved when being together with the children stands out as a kind of hard work without a performative value for preschool teachers. Documentation ‘behind the camera’, on the other hand, becomes a way to distance oneself from the care of children’s needs.
In sum, in the data few stories prevail about narratives of care or could be interpreted as critical to documenting learning. However, it is obvious that documentation, which was in focus for the interviews, is only a part of the teacher’s daily work. On a daily basis they deal with tasks like cleaning up lice or maintaining control over children’s activities to prevent accidents or conflicts. And even if it is evident that teachers privilege learning when they talk about documentation (Löfgren in press), I argue that the results presented here indicate that there is a conflict between the caring aspects of the teachers’ daily work with the children and the more performative work of documenting learning in preschool, but that this conflict tends to be downplayed or obscured by the central position given to references to learning in teachers’ talk about documentation.

Who is not present?
Finally, Linde’s (2009) exploration of noisy silences suggests an investigation of who is not present, or who is marginalized, in stories in the institution? In the data it is evident that a category of the staff that lack academic education, called ‘child carers’, is marginalized. The teachers rarely mention them, and when they do they are given an obscured position. The national curriculum states that the preschool teachers are responsible for the pedagogical work and for documentation in the preschools, whereas the child carers, who are mentioned just twice in the national curriculum, do not get any defined responsibilities. The distinction between responsibilities is also reflected in the preschool teachers’ talk about documentation. One teacher emphasizes that the responsibility clearly was laid on the preschool teachers and that it is not a problem.
Now ... we have very few child carers here, I have not experienced this as a problem. And in my department, we are only preschool teachers.

(Silvie)

Further she stresses that preschool teachers take a university exam and therefore that they are better suited to take the pedagogical responsibility for work with documentation. Another teacher mentions the child carers as a marginalized group in a story about how the work is divided in her preschool. She is worried about how the work with documentation takes preschool teachers’ time from the children and is angry about how ‘hygiene routines’, such as cleaning and washing, also become a concern for the regular staff instead of the cleaning company. In the same story she is upset on the behalf of the child carers at her department.

Sometimes in preschool one manages to turn them [the hygiene routines] to the child carers in the first place, but it may well not be in the child carer’s job description. (Henny)

It is evident that she does not consider the care of the physical environment a part of either the teachers’ or the child carers’ working tasks. But it is also obvious that other teachers consider this kind of task a part of child carers’ responsibility. She also describes how the number of child carers has decreased, and that this is a problem because they spend more time with the children than the preschool teachers, who are supposed to have more time for individual planning, documenting, and reflection.
In a final example, a preschool teacher describes a conflict she had with an older colleague, a child carer, that made her leave a preschool. She said that the colleague did not listen to her when she came to the preschool as a young teacher and that she wanted everything to be the same way she was used to.

Then it was about to happen [...] that it would be more that the preschool teachers would get more responsibility. There was probably a lot of talk that the child carers would take care of the care part. A friend of mine is the educational leader; she does not handle any kind of care part with the children [...] But she handles performance appraisals and parental contacts and stuff, which she may think is a shame because you lose a little contact with the children. People thought. ‘oh no, will it become that way’? (Patty)

It is highlighted in this example that there sometimes were conflicts when preschool teachers and child carers translated the policy that gave a certain responsibility for documentation to the teachers. Some concern about who should be responsible for the ‘care part’ is indicated. Should the child carers be the main suppliers of care for children as ‘beings’? It is evident that she, and others in her context, were worried that preschool teachers might lose contact with children and become administrators with responsibility for reporting images of children as ‘becoming’.

*Conclusion: To avoid references to care and become a professional?*
A major result presented in this article is that the preschool teachers rarely refer to institutional narratives of care at all when they talk about their work with documentation. However, on the few occasions they refer to care, they also refer to narratives of learning. For example, they help the children learn how to become empathic or how to develop social skills, which is in line with descriptions of an intellectualization of the concept of care (Lindgren 2001). The analysis in the article illustrates how institutional narratives of care are in a process of becoming out of line with current policy and accordingly being toned down or ‘out of fashion’ to the teachers. I argue that this process can be described as the becoming of a noisy silence of care.

A conclusion that can be drawn for the preschool teaching profession is that the obscuring and intellectualization of care when teachers talk about the daily work with documentation in preschool stand out as a way to ‘do’ professionalism without addressing care as a main professional trait. This way of practicing professionalism clearly is demarcated from narratives of domestic duties, babysitting, or maternalistic discourses and is in line with agendas of professionalization in preschool (Dahlberg and Moss 2005; Johansson and Pramling Samuelsson 2001).

A conclusion for the future preschool children if this process of silencing continues is that they likely will have teachers who focus more on their learning skills and intellectual development as becoming adults than on their well-being as being children. A final conclusion regarding the idea that society is built on our abilities
to take care of each other and to be cared for is that the future Swedish citizens who have attended preschools are trained to focus more on their own development than on their own and others’ well-being. Obviously this is in line with descriptions of the norms in the individualized society (Bauman 2007).

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