Barriers of sentiment
Identity -formation, -regulation and subjectification in preschools

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Abstract

This thesis studies preschool socialization in terms of identity-formation, -regulation, and subjectification. Both the methodology and theoretical backdrop draws on Critical Management Studies, and the contribution to research comes from studying a subject otherwise non-prioritized. I have performed a qualitative study entailing interviews of pedagogues and preschool chiefs working within the same company in the Stockholm region. The study indicates that preschool discourse emphasize the importance of social competences and rituals, and moreover that the institution also accentuates its role in setting the proper ‘preconditions’. Furthermore, the study demonstrates how pedagogues – using mechanisms such as individual discourses, the children’s agency, and the milieu – try to form individuals who are: social, independent, self-reliant, have a strong ‘self’, joyful towards learning, and ‘can do it themselves’. I make a liaison between the aforementioned ideals and certain trends discussed by managerial literature, like for instance currents towards: self-management, neo-normative control, self-entrepreneurial attitudes, ambidextrousness, and the ‘principle of potential’ (Costea et al., 2012; Fleming & Study, 2009; Holmqvist & Spicer, 2013; Maravelias, 2011; Pongratz & Voß, 2003). Finally the thesis concludes by firstly underscoring that the Discourse of for example ‘joyful learning’ and ‘independency’ in preschools tend to demolish physical modes of control in place of psychological ones; and secondly, by discussing historical practices, the thesis brings attention to a shift from safekeeping children to preparing them for industrial, urbanistic, and capitalistic social existence.

Keywords: Critical Management Studies, socialization, subjectification, identity formation, identity regulation, neo-normative control, preschool, learning, pedagogy.
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An excess of childhood is a seedling of poetry. We would laugh at a father who for the love of his child would “take down the moon”. But the poet does not retreat in front of this cosmic gesture. He knows, in his ardent memory, that this is a gesture of childhood. The child knows very well that the moon, this big blond bird, has his nest somewhere in the forest. 1

– Gaston Bachelard (2016: 85)

Question: What is a child?

Answer: A child, for me, it’s... I’m almost becoming a bit touched because it’s so remarkable... It is a person full of happiness, open doors, and I have, as an adult, such an incredible power over this, to not shut those doors. You pushed a button there... A child is so remarkable. It’s so much happiness and running, so much fun; and joyfully, I only rejoice in the possibility of being able to work with, as I often say, Sweden’s future. I want to meet the children as I myself want to be met. But yes, they are incredibly interesting. Very competent, but as I also usually say, just a bit too short; a meter too short, for us adults to respect them for the person they are.

– Preschool pedagogue (for untranslated original, see Appendix)

1 My translation, original: Un excès d’enfance est un germe de poème. On se moquerait d’un père qui pour l’amour de son enfant irait « décrocher la lune ». Mais le poète ne recule pas devant ce geste cosmique. Il sait, en son ardente mémoire, que c’est là un geste d’enfance. L’enfant sait bien que la lune, ce grand oiseau blond, a son nid quelque part dans la forêt.
Commentary on the translation: « décrocher la lune » is a French expression that has the semantic meaning ‘to do the impossible’. However, since the quote hinges on the trope of the moon I’ve decided to translate this literally.
1. Introduction

In a project from 2013 called ‘The spark – entrepreneurship in education’ (swe. *Gnistan – entreprenörskap i utbildning*) the authors make the following observation:

Within the frame of the training investments being done in preschools and schools, we have seen that questions of entrepreneurship and business so far have not been prioritized. Neither within the frame of teacher’s education are these questions made visible. We thus see a big demand with the pedagogues, big needs within the educational system in Uppsala municipality of work being done on the entrepreneurial learning.² (see Kjällander & Selander, 2013:6)

I would like to turn the statement and argue that the opposite is likewise true: questions of pedagogy, education, and learning have not been prioritized within business and entrepreneurship, at least not with regards to preschools and children below six years old. And considering the surging interest regarding exposed groups of people within said fields of study, this is fairly surprising. For out of all the different societal groups who throughout modernity have been subject to different legal, moral, and social debates, children occupy a rather unique thematic. In comparison to the lived experience of women, certain social classes, functionally disabled, and maltreated ethnicities or groups, the lived experience of being a child is something that every human-being submits to. That is, almost all adults have childhood memories, and almost all can identify or contrast themselves to children living today. However, notwithstanding this ontological fact, how we’ve treated children and what we’ve believed to be their rights and responsibilities has differed throughout the ages (DeMause, 1988; Halldén, 1990). As John Wall puts it “Even the concept “childhood” itself is grounded in particular histories, meaning different things in different times and places.” (2010:13)

In Philippe Ariès’ famous book *Centuries of childhood* (1960) he even argued that the very notion of childhood was created with modernity. This doesn’t mean that it’s only in modernity that people started having childhoods, but rather that it’s at this time children started to matter as a societal group or population. In other words: in the eyes of the law, the state, and society at a whole, a new subject was created. Ariès argued that it’s with modernity that we started to consider children as something else than either infants or adults, and he demonstrates this with aid of historical currents flowing through everything from art to institutional behaviour. Paintings, clothing, philosophers such as Locke and Rousseau, and the new educational

² My translation, original: *Inom ramen för de fortbildningssatsningar som görs i förskolan och skolan har vi sett att frågor om entreprenörskap och företagsamhet hittills inte varit prioriterade. Inom ramen för lärarutbildningen är heller inte dessa frågor synliggjorda. Vi ser alltså en stor efterfrågan hos pedagogerna, stora behov inom utbildningsväsendet i Uppsala kommun av utvecklingsarbete inom det entreprenöriella lärandet.*
institutions dedicated specifically for adolescents, connotes according to him a change in society’s view on this group of people. Wrapped up, one might see his endeavours as the erection of a road-sign pointing towards the creation of a categorical group in the societal consciousness, or as a manifestation designating the birth of a *Discourse*.

What is alluring with Ariès study, even though he has been criticized by other historians for his source-critical accuracy (see e.g. DeMause, 1988), is that he observes how western society at some point in time started to regard individuals of certain ages differently; started to talk about them differently; started to behave differently towards them; started to put them in different spaces; started to represent them differently; to think that they inhibit contrasting esthetical values; and it started to organize their lives differently. One might say that a distinct attitude emerged, one that was frequently more humane and at times more appreciative but also, invariably, more differentiating. In light of this, Ariès study can be seen as a precursor of Michel Foucault’s *Surveiller et Punir* from 1975, where he distinguished more or less the same process, but aligned it with a broader societal movement including more categories: like the sick, students, workers, criminals, etc. (2015f; 1987:161). With modernity, Foucault argued, western societies reorients its power apparatus and commences to separate certain individuals from others; it creates hospitals, prisons, schools, and mental institutes, and it establishes procedures, routines, and rules, as well as scientific frameworks of proper organization and management: e.g. psychology, psychiatrics, criminology, pedagogy, and didactics. This new outlook, this Discourse of sick, students, criminals and children, which is found in science, politics, law, and philosophy, marks what Ariès identified as the creation of *childhood* and Foucault as the *disciplining society*.

In some measure, this Discourse persists to this day, albeit in changed form. We don’t discipline children as they did in the 18th and 19th century, nor do we paint romanticized paintings of them in the same fashion. Yet we live with the heritage passed down from those times; both with regards to pedagogical underpinning and institutional structure as well as, to some extent, our views on what constitutes a child. We shield children more readily from society’s threats than other citizens – something which the early preschools are emblematic to, since they were founded to protect children from the threats emanating from urbanization and industrialization (Riddersporre and Persson, 2010). Additionally we are to this day keen on discussing what we consider the proper treatment of children; by way of which we also have to distinguish them from other categories of human-beings. Legally speaking, they are not adolescents, adults, or aged; they are ‘minors’, prohibited by law from entering potentially
harmful activities, e.g. work or certain forms of consumption, but also excluded from specific rights and responsibilities, e.g. voting. Activities, rights and responsibilities which are all available and sometimes even, like in the case of war, imposed on other groups. With this in mind, it is probably no surprise to find that some of the early forms of institutions dedicated to care and education of young children and infants in Sweden was not actually grounded in pedagogical doctrine but in ideas that children needed safekeeping: the Swedish ‘salvation-houses’ (swe. räddningshusen) and ‘child-cribs’ (swe. barnkrubba) are examples of this (Bjurman, 1990; Simmons-Christenson, 1997).

However, on some level there’s reason to believe that aforementioned Discourse or ‘safekeeping’ of children might be changing, at least concerning the association between work-life and childhood. Western societies of course still predominantly differentiate children and manual-labour, delineated by its various reactions to child-labour in so called developing countries. But progressively, and earlier down the ages, children are being prepared for a life in modern-day capitalistic work conditions – which does not anymore imply developing the appropriate tricks of the trade as much as the au courant social competences and attitudes. Today there are even international companies dedicated to teaching children – through roleplaying – the ‘values’ of working (see 7.0 Suggestions for Further Research for an extended case description). But the arguably major force in propelling this development forward, as for instance discussed in Mikael Holmqvist’s recent book on Djursholm (2015) and illustrated by the ‘entrepreneurial learning’ permeating the research project mentioned above, is the educational system and parental pressure. In a pamphlet from a Stockholm based preschool/ ‘småbarnsskola’ it’s written “The small-child-school is needed because children in today’s society no longer live near and in daily contact with adults in work and spare-time, the natural role models are gone.”

There are several interesting lines of inquiry to the development mentioned above, and in this thesis I focus on thematizing one of them. In terms of socialization, understood as an interplay between discursive goals and mechanisms, I look at the educational preparation of children to become ‘functioning’ societal members. In other words, I look at the social education of children, the arguments for it, and the techniques employed in the process; such as Subjectification and Identity Formation & Regulation. I have gathered empirical data from the first and foremost institution responsible with this task, i.e. the preschool, an institution that

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3 My translation. original: Småbarnsskolan behövs därför att barn I dagens samhälle inte längre lever I nära daglig kontakt med vuxna I arbete och fritid, de naturliga förebilderna är borta.
according to the Swedish State’s curriculum (*läroplan*) is charged with “laying the foundation” so that children “long-term actively will participate in the societal life.” The thesis merits its place within the field of organizational and managerial studies in part since the ‘future active social participant’ inferred in the curriculum foreshadows many ideals researched in such literature of recent (see e.g. Costea et al., 2012; Fleming & Sturdy, 2009; Holmqvist et al. 2012; Holmqvist & Spicer, 2013; Maravelias, 2011), and additionally in light of the previously discussed preparation towards work-life. Furthermore, the time seems ripe for studies that combine questions of socialization, subjectification, and identity with institutions of education and pedagogy. First and foremost for the reason that it fills a gap in the research, but also since it helps to invigorate the aforementioned terms.

There has been a recent upsurge within organizational studies in Sweden towards researching education; not least at the very institution from where this thesis originates (see e.g. Berglund & Holmgren, 2008; Holmqvist, 2015; Larsson & Löwstedt, 2010). However these studies tend to target primary-education and upwards, and, as Larsson and Löwstedt put it, they’re more about analysing “the schools’ leadership and the teachers work in the classroom and in collaboration with colleagues” (2010:20) than the socialization of children – Holmqvist’s work is partly an exception to this, since it entails a distinct outlook somewhat akin to mine: “… preschools and schools embody many of the notions and ideals that permeate Djursholm” (2015: 527). Moreover, the literature on questions of socialization, subjectification and identity has grown vast and reached a certain maturity (see e.g. Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Barker, 1998; Bauman, 2004; Bergström & Knights, 2006; Collinson, 2003; Deetz 1994; Holmqvist et al., 2012; Hsu & Elsbach, 2013; Knights & Willmott, 1989). It’s even come to the point where it’s fair to ask whether the line of thought have not, to use Paul Du Gay’s words, “run out of steam” (2007:1). To apply the concepts in a setting otherwise periphery might be exactly what is needed to bring back some vigour to the field. Thence, by both adding a new perspective to our understanding of the institution at hand, thus filing a research gap, and rejuvenating these analytical concepts, I hope to licence my contribution.

The main theoretical and methodological angle in this thesis comes from Critical Management Studies (CMS), but it also takes meta-theoretical/ methodological inspiration from Ariès and Foucault. Organizational studies in general, and CMS in particular, draw much upon these

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4 My translation, original: *att lägga grunden /.../ på sikt aktivt ska delta i samhällslivet.*

5 My translation, original: *skolors ledning och lärarnas arbete i klassrummen och i samarbete med kolleger.*

6 My translation, original: *... förkroppsligar förskolorna och skolorna mange av de föreställningar och ideal som präglar Djursholm.*
authors; especially Foucault (Knights, 2009; Thomas, 2009; Scherer, 2009). However, the focalization typically revolves around notions found in *Surveiller et Punir*, e.g. discipline and normalization (see e.g. Casey, 1999; Sewell & Wilkinson, 1992; Fernie & Metcalf, 1998; Winiecki, 2006), which has led to a scenario whereupon studies in the field often take on a somewhat polemic appearance, appointing itself the task of correcting perceived injustices in society. Robyn Thomas writes for instance “The raison d’être of CMS is its political imperative. Its call to arms is twofold: first to document and challenge forms of exploitation and oppression in organizations; and secondly to engage in research oriented towards changing things for the better” (2009:178). Oftentimes this is without a doubt true, and at times the ‘challenge’ imperative is indeed a just cause – the most common citations being gender, ethnic, and class oppressions. Nevertheless, I’m not positive that this is always CMS’ raison d’être, and assuredly not with regards to this thesis.

There is a tendency to forget that it was not only Foucault’s ability to challenge oppression and exploitation that made him such a compelling author. He also found oppression and exploitation where no one had ventured to look before. The terms archaeology and genealogy, frequently applied by him, testifies to precisely this. Archaeology, as Foucault talks about it, is the method to analyse historical, local and subjected discourses, and genealogy means putting the understandings within said discourses into play (2008:27). Put more simply, first one needs to *dig up*, *trace* and *activate* discourses, before one can do anything further (Foucault, 2002; 2015d; 2015e; 2015j). Power is everywhere Foucault famously said (2015g), but this must not lead us to think that we always recognize its countenance or workings. We can only hope to become conscious of this, or at least learn how to problematize it, by ways of study. There is a great deal of literature within organizational studies and CMS that intends to do this in one way or another (e.g. Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007; Bergström and Knights, 2006; Costea et al., 2012; Holmqvist, 2005; Holmqvist et al., 2012; Jones & Spicer, 2009; Maravelias, 2011; Pongratz & Voß, 2003), and I would align my thesis with such an approach. That is, an approach pursuing a path which is less about challenging and more about trying to understand how power permeates certain practices.

**1.1 Purpose**

*The purpose of this study is to empirically examine and critically discuss preschool socialization of children.*
I would like to stress the point that the purpose is neither to celebrate nor polemicize – neither negate nor affirm – the institution and its practices. I emphasise this because the subject of my study has had a tendency to cause rather divided and emphatic opinions.Opposed declarations such as ‘we have to start early since children are so impressionable’ and ‘just let children be children’ has been voiced more than twice. The education and care of children, in line with the Discourse discussed earlier, is often a sensitive and shattered topic; which undeniably contribute to the interest in studying it. But the sort of statements above are outside the purpose of this study. The thesis considers a societal process, but does not undertake claiming whether said process is right or wrong. Foucault would probably have asserted, in line with his approach in *Histoire du la sexualité I* (2015g), that the question is not whether what we say about children is right or wrong, but rather why we are talking so much about them and what we are saying.

1.2 Research Question

There are two main research questions in this thesis: Which are the discursive goals of socialization? And what mechanisms are employed in the process?

1.3 Disposition

The thesis is divided into seven parts, excluding the reference list and appendix. *The first chapter* is the introduction, which problematize the chosen subject, show how the study aims to contribute, places it within a field of study, and formulates purpose and research questions. *The second chapter* is the literature review, which discuss the field within which the thesis is placed – both methodologically and theoretically – as well as the employed concepts. This chapter has two purposes: firstly to give an introduction to any reader unfamiliar with the field of research, and secondly to give the reader a sense of the writer’s frame of reference. *The third chapter* deals with the research design and method: how the study was performed, what assumptions were taken, as well as what limitations exist. *The forth chapter* entail the presentation and analysis of the empirical data gathered in this study. *The fifth chapter* is a discussion that reflects upon some more abstract consequences and meanings of the data and analysis. *The sixths chapter* is a conclusion that briefly sum up the thesis, and finally *the seventh chapter* gives some suggestions for further studies.
2. Literature Review

This study situates itself within *Critical Management Studies* (CMS) in at least two respects. On the one hand it draws its conceptual and analytical premises from CMS and authors connected to it; and on the other, alluding to the etymology of the term ‘critical’ as a separating or distinguishing force, it studies something rather peripheral or otherwise considered separate to managerial or organizational studies. Bellow I develop how these features relate to the field of study.

2.1 Critical Management Studies

The word ‘critical’ in Critical Management Studies may signify at least two things. Firstly it may refer to the study and evaluation of the field of management itself, which, paraphrasing a term from Fournier and Grey (2000), might be called the dimension of *self-reflexion* (see e.g. Alvesson & Deetz, 2000a; Alvesson & Deetz, 2000b; Alvesson, 2002; Alvesson, 2003; Alvesson et al., 2009; Duberley & Johnson, 2009; Grant et al., 2009). Secondly ‘critical’ may also refer to the inspiration and use of certain approaches to theory in order to reinterpret as well as revitalize otherwise stringent and taken for granted societal ‘truths’ (see e.g. Alvesson, 2013; Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007; Ashcraft, Karen Lee, 2009; Fleming & Mandarini, 2009; Fleming & Spicer, 2007; Jones & Spicer, 2009). The two different countenances of ‘critical’ in CMS are separate in the sense that the body of the research looks different; hence why no reference listed above are mentioned in both strains. However, they are also intertwined in the sense that the sources of inspiration mentioned in the second understanding also fuels the *self-reflexion* mentioned in the first, and vice versa. In light of this, some might argue that they are not different at all, and that they are principally undividable. Nevertheless, it is useful, as a structure of discussion, to isolate these two ‘meanings’ of CMS and discuss them somewhat independently, even if they converge and intermingle.

With regards to the first aspect, it is fair to say that it exists in the domain of methodology. That is, one purpose of CMS is to reflect upon the very way in which management studies is performed: i.e. how data is generated, analysed, and how the discipline is structured. The first sentence in Alvesson et al.’s introduction to the anthology *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Management Studies* states that the field of CMS has “emerged as a movement that questions the authority and relevance of mainstream thinking and practice” (2009:1). In this context, ‘mainstream thinking and practices’ may be thought of as those within the field of management studies itself, such as choices of study objects, research designs, and models for analysis.
Examples of this type of questioning is Alvesson’s various discussions about the methodology of management studies and social sciences (2000a-b; 2002; 2003). Drawing on postmodernist critique and critical theorists, e.g. Horkheimer, Habermas, Foucault, Derrida, etc., who tend to disregard and even discredit empirical research as a source of knowledge according to Alvesson, he tries to discuss the purpose of empirical research within the field of study.

There are of course other types of self-reflexive thinking that has little or nothing to do with CMS: textbooks on societal research is a good example (see e.g. Flick, 2014), or studies on method and research in general (see e.g. Mills, 2000; Burrell & Morgan, 1970). They are reflexive on their field’s methodology, but are not for that reason books in Critical Management Studies. Something more than just being self-reflexive has to exist to discerns a research field from literature on methodology, and it might be argued that that lies in the promotion of its own agenda. For even if CMS prides itself on questioning the reigning modes of thinking, it also includes the advocacy of its own research model. CMS doesn’t only stay a questioning discourse it also promotes its own system of thought. This is also illustrated by the works mentioned earlier by Alvesson, where he, in contrast to the postmodernist thinkers who disfavour empirical research altogether, tries to argue for certain forms of empirical data, in particular qualitative data, that he still finds relevant and meaningful (2000a-b; 2002; 2003).

Hence Alvesson does not only question, but also endorse his own way of doing research.

Critical Management Studies is hence not exclusively about questioning and reflecting upon the research process itself, but also about questioning and reflecting upon the results of the research as such, which ties into the second aspect of the term ‘critical’ in CMS. Here the ‘mainstream thinking and practices’ mentioned earlier, may instead be read as those of organizations and institutions. In order to do this, CMS must base itself on the idea that you can interpret similar social phenomenon in different ways, some more mainstream than others. Of course, the acknowledgment of ambivalence in research interpretation, which is an epistemological question, is nothing extraordinary and nothing that solely applies to CMS. In fact within certain types of social sciences, it seem to be a rather well established assumption today that one can look at the same results and derive different conclusion, and thus that there are different explanations for the same social phenomenon; hence why social sciences are often, and sometimes problematically, referred to as ‘subjective’. This dimension of social research does not negate the possibility of performing social science all together, but it questions whether it should go under the name science since it doesn’t ascribe to the ‘objective’ imperative we most often see. Instead of trying to get at the objective truth, thinkers adhere to
a rationale of interpretation: e.g. arguing that doing research, interpreting data, and creating theories can still shine light over, albeit in a limited fashion, otherwise hidden social phenomena. The idea is that any given management theory, or for that matter economical, sociological, or historical theory, even if it’s not ‘objectively’ true, can still be useful for our understanding. Concepts such as ‘potential’, ‘employability’, and ‘entreployee’, which are highly discussed today within organizational and entrepreneurial studies, can be useful to bring attention to unrealized practices in the labour market (Costea et al., 2012; Holmqvist & Spicer, 2013; Pongratz & Voß, 2003). Today these concepts prompts certain meaningful questions about the social order; although there is no guarantee that these concepts will stay interesting and meaningful forever. In the same manner that concepts such as ‘control’ and ‘transaction costs’ had to give way to ‘neo-normative structures’ and ‘self-governance’ in (post-) bureaucratic terminology, it is likely that the interest in for example employability will fade – not meaning that it will totally disappear.

Critical Management Studies as I understand it, does not question nor refute that certain types of theory or interpretations might be considered meaningful, instead it questions on what grounds and why these theories are meaningful and it refutes the idea that those grounds are set in stone. For instance, while CMS would not say it’s impossible to perform a statistical survey on productivity, it would instead ask: why are we so interested in studying productivity? Is productivity a necessity for companies? And moreover, regarding being self-reflexive, how come that a reference to statistical tools legitimize our understanding? The abundance of theories regarding productivity and efficiency, which in some sense the field of management studies was founded upon, indicate that there is or was a certain social order governing mainstream managerial thinking. It is undoubtedly true that we can find models that would help maximize or improve efficiency and productivity in organization, few people would contradict that. But be that as it may, it is not consequently true that those theories and models should by default be put into practice; nor for that matter that they should be our focus. Fournier and Grey refers to this type of questioning within CMS as its non-performative character, which can be understood as a specific form of what they call de-naturalization (2000).

Non-performative refers to the argument that management studies doesn’t only have to be about studying ways of maximizing output, and De-naturalization refers to the more general aim of CMS to unveil what seems to be self-evident views on the world: so called ‘ways to do things’. Oftentimes our understandings of the social world ‘as it is’ gets coded in a layer of ‘the natural order of things’. This refers to ideas about how the world is constituted, which can be
both biological and ideological. An example: ‘Men think logically and women think emotionally’. This notion, regardless of whether it is true or not, may interact with our ideological conceptions of vocational coding to create an understanding of ‘the natural order’, such as: ‘men should be engineers and women caretakers’. Yet if we disassemble our assumptions and take one or both notions out of play, the statement falls apart and no longer appears as self-evident: we have thus de-naturalized our understanding according to Fournier and Grey (2010). In a way, Alvesson (2002; 2003) and Alvesson and Deetz (2000a; 2000b) also talk about this, but instead in terms of norms. It is not exactly the same thing, because de-naturalization assume that we have to undo or deconstruct a structure that is already present in society, whereas what Alvesson (2002; 2003) and Alvesson and Deetz (2000a; 2000b) talks about also implies that we question the creation of such structures. That is, not only does CMS question the norms that exist but also the norms that are being created.

Examples of Critical Management Studies that take the aforementioned approach to decode understandings and reinterpret social orders are numerous: Fleming and Spicer’s book *Contesting the Corporation* question how we regard power and resistance in organizations (2007); Jones and Spicer’s *Unmasking the Entrepreneur* question the ideals and views on entrepreneurship (2009); Alvesson and Kärreman’s article *Unraveling HRM* (short title) reinterprets the meaning and functions of Human resource management (2007); and some recent studies on health ideals and norms can also be mentioned (e.g. Cederström & Spicer, 2015; Maravelias, 2015).

In summary, it is a very complex endeavour to crystalize exactly what CMS is. Individual authors might have divergent ideas on the subject. And in some sense, to even ask the question ‘what is CMS?’ falls outside of CMS; at least if we try to answer it with a definition. As Alvesson has said, CMS is less about trying to define things and more about performing meaningful interpretations (2002). Hence I have not tried to define CMS, rather I’ve tried to talk about some aspects that underpins the field and subsequently this thesis. My study subject goes up against what might normally be found in managerial literature. It is not very unusual for management or organizational studies to research preschool institutions as such: that is, to study the very organization and operation of preschools. But to instead look at preschools statements and practices, i.e. individual discourses, as a representative for a grander social process, i.e. societal Discourse, might very well be considered epistemologically and ontologically non-mainstream. Likewise the terminology needed to perform such a study might appear curious to certain brand of management research. However, within a view of
management that allows studies of the type I’ve mentioned above, studies which are interested in interpreting practices in terms of broader social processes, this becomes possible. Both my use of terminology, as well as my views on language and method, align with certain assumptions of CMS literature; even if there are nevertheless of course points of disaccord.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The four major terms of this thesis are: Subjectification, Identity Regulation & Formation, Discourse, and Agency. The mentioned concepts, all frequented in CMS literature, are employed here as exemplifiers of mechanisms of socialization, or as Foucault might have said ‘technologies of the self’ (2015i). That is: if socialization is the general expression for social conditioning of individuals, then the others are more concrete articulations of how this is achieved. All terms relate to the processes of crafting identities, producing citizens or manufacturing subjectivity – i.e. what makes an individual believe that s/he is such or such a person – but they differ in degrees of specificity. Here I expand upon how these terms are used in this study, and I add some relevant sub-concepts.

2.2.1 Subjectification

A genealogy of subjectification, then, would involve tracing the ways in which a particular conception of what it means to be a person – ‘the self’ – that functions as a regulatory ideal in so many aspects of contemporary life has been put together or ‘made up’… (du Gay, 2007: 43)

Subjectification, a term borrowed from Foucault (2015h), can sometimes be understood as tantamount to socialization. If we consider that subjectification means making someone into a subject, and socialization making someone social, then they may lie close to each other when the intended subject takes social form. Though this isn’t always the case, and neither is it the case that socialization always means ‘making someone social’. In this study, subjectification will be employed as a term that primarily highlights two dimensions of a socializing process. As Bergström and Knights puts it:

... subjectivity is neither wholly determined by organizational discourses nor simply a product of human agency. Rather, the research indicates that subjectification is a complex condition and consequence of the mutually interdependent relations of agency and discourse, not a determinant of either (2006:370)

On the one hand subjectification depends on the Discourse of the organization: in other words the framework of truth – i.e. the ‘do’s and the ‘don’t’s, the ‘yes’s and the ‘no’s, and the ‘good’s and the ‘bad’s (see e.g. Bergström and Knights, 2006). In the preschool this consists of the preschool’s expressed rules, i.e. what the individuals have to adhere in order not to seem
different or deviant. As Musson and Duberley put it “Discourses make certain ways of thinking and acting possible, and others impossible or costly.” (2007:145). On the other hand subjectification also depends on what is called agency: i.e. the individuals own participation in constructing their subjectivity. For instance, when you yourself perform the activity desired by the framework of truth, you are an agent of the discourse and subsequently strengthen its bind on you. One can think of the process whereby we slowly start to identify ourselves with the things we do, i.e. ‘I work with this’, ‘I do this on my spare time’, etc. Besides what people tell us, and for that matter what we tell ourselves, the actions we do are a part of crafting our identity and subjecting us to different societal processes.

Any attempt to analyse the impact of organizational discourse on individuals must be cognizant of the way that subjects often actively participate in the production of the self-same subjectivity that constrains them. (Bergström and Knights, 2006:352)

2.2.2 Identity Formation & Regulation

Identity formation and regulation is similar to subjectification with regards to the premises of agency and discourse (see e.g. Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Holmqvist et al., 2012). As Kosmala & Herrbach puts it:

Technologies of the self therefore incorporate dynamics between structure and human agency: moving between and around the existing organizational structure may promote the production of individual autonomy (human agency), whilst at the same time merging individual desires with the embodied and institutionalized aspirations of the organization (structure). (Kosmala & Herrbach, 2006: 1397)

Nonetheless, it differs when it comes to the specificity of description. One might say that subjectification looks at the power-play between organization and subject from a distance whereas identity formation and regulation takes a microscopic approach and looks at factors even closer to the individual. It looks at factors such as “group categorization and affiliation”, “establishing and clarifying a distinct set of rules of the game”, “defining the context” (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002:631), and how these participate in shaping the individual.

Specifically two sub-terms of identity formation and regulation, as discussed by Alvesson and Willmott, will be referred to in this thesis: central life interest and distinctiveness (2002). The first one refers to “questions about a person’s – or a group or a social institution’s – feelings and ideas about basic identity concerns and qualities” (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002: 625), and the second one has to do with definability: i.e. whether someone is defined, by themselves or others, as different to someone else. The following quote is very illustrative to sum up different techniques and processes that will be explored in this thesis:
Different modes of identity regulation help organizations to ‘shape’ their employees’ self-image. These modes include a combination of techniques: defining the person directly, defining a person by defining others, providing a specific vocabulary of motives, explicating morals and values, knowledge and skills, group categorization and affiliation, hierarchical location, establishing and clarifying a distinct set of rules, and defining the context. (Kosmala & Herrbach, 2006: 1396)

In conclusion it should be mentioned that in comparison to subjectification, which can be a rather subconscious or at least unpronounced process, identity regulation is more intentional. As Alvesson and Willmott for instance put it “Identity regulation encompasses the more or less intentional effects of social practices upon processes of identity construction and reconstruction.” (2002: 625).

2.2.1 Discourse

In order to avoid confusion, some words will be said more specifically regarding the use of the term discourse in this thesis. For as observed by several researchers, there exists a conceptual discrepancy regarding this term (see e.g. Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Grant et al., 2009). As an analytical and ontological tool, discourse may on the one hand refer to social structures or systems of truth on which a society as a whole bases its power and knowledge; or on the other hand it may refer to individual and/or textual ‘speeches’ such as spoken or written language. It can thus be either highly abstract, or highly concrete. A banal yet illustrative example of an individual discourse might be telling someone ‘you are good at drawing’, whereas if we instead ask ourselves ‘why was this statement made to begin with?’ or ‘how is society structured for this statement to be relevant?’ then we are inquiring into a societal Discourse. When I talk about the latter I use capital initial letter and also often write either societal or organizational infront, which I don’t do when referring to individual discourses.

Furthermore, the term ‘discourse’ is also linked to an epistemological dimension, regarding methods of analysing data (see e.g. Flick, 2014: 446).

On the one hand, discourse is frequently described as constructing the social, a move that in effect attributes discourse with ontological qualities. On the other, the notion “discourse” fulfils a heuristic or epistemological role to the extent that those such as Foucaul (1974) and Laclau (2002, 2005) take great care to qualify “what discourse does”. (Grant, et al., 2009:214-215)

Since I ascribe to a discursive method of analysis, which will be discussed in the following chapter, it’s important to hold this dimensions of the term in mind as well.

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7 In French, ‘un discours’ may for instance mean ‘a speech’.
3. Research Design & Method

In accordance with the theoretical framework, this thesis derives its analytical lens from discursive lines of thought. More methodologically expressed, it ascribes its ontological point of view to what is called, with reference to the predating philosophical movement, the ‘linguistic-turn’ (see e.g. Alvesson, 2002; Alvesson & Duberley & Johnson, 2009; Kärreman, 2000; Knights, 2009; and for discourse perspectives within CMS see e.g. Alvesson & Kärreman, 2002; Grant, et al. 2009; cf. e.g., Roberts, 2005). By basing an analysis on the statements people make – here primarily collected through interviews – such research aims at exploring underlying structures or constructions of human society and mechanisms of power, so called ‘societal Discourses’. This does not mean evaluating the truth or correctness of statements or structures in society. Rather it’s about asking why this statement is made to begin with, and how they relate to social structures. In the same way that many researchers in CMS go to post-modernist and critical theorists such as Horkheimer, Adorno, Derrida or Habermas for inspiration (Alvesson, 2002; Alvesson & Deetz, 2000a; Alvesson et al., 2009; Knights, 2009), the aforementioned is the meta-theoretical or epistemological backdrop, as well the analytical lens, from where this study begins. I will now move on to introducing the data gathering process.

The empirical data collected in this study consists of eleven interviews: nine of which are with pedagogues and two with preschool chiefs – important to note is that the word ‘pedagogue’ is universally used in this thesis, for coherency reasons, to refer to both educated and uneducated preschool teachers. The pedagogues, having responsibility of children from one to five years old, were divided between two preschools in the Stockholm area; five at one site, and four at another. Their educational background and work experience varied: some were educated preschool teachers, others elementary school teachers, others Montessori educated, and one not educated in pedagogy-related things at all. Both preschool chiefs had worked in the industry for more than 30 years. One was in charge of two preschools, the same where the interviews with pedagogues were gathered, and the other, recently retired, had been in charge of four preschools at most in his/ her career. All individuals interviewed worked within the same company, which is a private company with many different preschools all around Sweden. One preschool didn’t ascribe to any particular type of pedagogy, whereas the other was based on Montessori pedagogy – although the preschool chief didn’t seem to think it was so important,
for instance s/he said to me that s/he didn’t want me to ask him/her questions about such things since s/he wasn’t a Montessori pedagogue.

The interviews took between 30 minutes and one hour, and were unstructured in form. A set of questions were prepared for all interviews as backup, but rarely was every question asked; and when they were, not often in the same order or fashion. Many questions were asked that was not part of those initially prepared. The reasoning behind using unstructured interviews was that it allowed each interviewee to express themselves as independently as possible and to allow them to arrive at the subjects that they find most important and interesting – which arguably is more representative for both their own opinions and the organization’s Discourse. This way I was able to trace and understand that there were certain important themes not caught by the prepared questions. For example, there was no prepared question on social competences, the organization of the room, or the concept of respect; themes which all interviewees nevertheless brought up as important.

I started all interviews by asking about previous work experiences and educational background, and then either asked follow-up questions on interesting things the interviewee mentioned, or followed up with a question on the role and purpose of preschools. Oftentimes early in the interviews, the interviewees discussed things connecting to either the prepared questions or themes that other interviewees had talked about. Hence I more frequently asked follow-up questions than the prepared ones – although many prepared questions were touched in one way or another. Each interview was ended by me asking the same question to everybody, sometimes with one or two follow-up questions; namely ‘what is a child?’ The answers to this question can be found in the appendix. All except one interview with a preschool chief – that for technical reasons was lost – were recorded, transcribed, and then coded into different themes, where the most prevailing and reoccurring were chosen for analysis. Emphatic answers like ‘the most important for me…’ and the most frequently discussed subjects were written into the findings and analysis.

The interviewees have been anonymized in this study. Not everybody asked to be anonymous, but in order to remain consistent with the ones who did I have chosen to anonymize everyone. Furthermore, besides the interviews, some observations were made regarding the rooms. Two interviews took place in a preschool classroom, and observations made there will be referenced in the study. These two forms of data gathering, and in particular interviews, which stands for the main material of this thesis, have been chosen because they are the more sensitive, and
arguably more representative, for the Discourse, thoughts, and sentiments of preschool employees.

Additionally to interviews and observations, some words should be said about the research project mentioned in the introduction and discussion. This research project is from 2013, and was done in the municipality of Uppsala. The project was called “Gnistan – entreprenörskap i utbildning”, and was researched and reported by Susanne Kjällander and Staffan Selander. They followed, evaluated and studied the impact on educational institutions – amongst which preschools was a part – by the infusion of certain entrepreneurial ideals. In the research project, the pedagogues were educated about entrepreneurial learning, in order to instil their education and their students with an entrepreneurial ‘spark’.

3.1 Limitations
The research design discussed above makes it possible to look at the discursive aspect of organizational practices, but shadows the perspective of the subject – in this case, the child. Based on the empirical data, little can be said about practices of resistance against discourses in the preschools for example, which is an otherwise burning topic not least within CMS (Fleming & Sewell, 2002; Fleming & Spicer, 2003; 2007). This should be kept in mind while reading, since it might risk downplaying the importance of the children in the organizational practices. My thesis could be exposed to the same critique as often reproached to Foucault: i.e. that through his framework the subjects of power practices often seem passive and compliant (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Grant et al., 2009). Within CMS literature the terms Identity work, which is connected to identity regulation, or counter-identification/ distancing, which is connected to identification, are attempts to impregnate the discussion with the perspective of the subject (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Holmer-Nadesan, 1996; Kosmala & Herrbach, 2006; Thomas & Davies, 2005; see also Deetz, 1994). Such approaches could equally help inform this subject, but demands a substantial amount of additional empirical data gathering, which unfortunately is outside the reach of this thesis.

By focusing on the preschool employees, this study doesn’t mean to diminish the role of the subject in the ontological and historical reality of the organization. If we want to understand ‘the realities’ of certain events, the perspective of resistors is indeed irrefutable. However, while it is true that we have to take into consideration the resistance of children if we want to understand the realities of power in preschool education, it is also true that such a perspective is not as imperative if we want to understand the Discourse that is set without the child’s
consent. In this study I hence make no claim to understand the ‘reality of preschool’, and instead limit myself to power processes working downwards in the organization. I would argue that the realities of preschools are too complex for me to research, and instead attempt to explain a more limited yet illuminating aspect of said organization.
4. Findings & Analysis

4.1 The Discursive Goals of Children’s Socialization

4.1.1 Social Competences & the Art of Being a Friend: Making Children Employable

One of the most important functions and purposes of preschools, according to the pedagogues, is working with social competences; almost all interviewees mentioned this at one point or another. This includes for instance: how to behave, be polite, and be a good friend. Moreover, teaching children not to hit each other, how to talk instead of screaming, and how to ask for certain things, were other obvious examples of this, whereas more sublime aspects dealt with gender questions or social rituals. One pedagogue mentioned that s/he recently had taken a discussion with his/her group about gender coding of clothes. This due to the event whereby one child said to another that he wasn’t allowed to have the shoes he had since they were red and that was a ‘girl colour’. Another pedagogue mentioned similar instances, and talked about teaching children to respect the ‘human’ and not to think in terms of boy or girl. But arguably the most prominent was that the interviewees talked about the importance of teaching children how to properly enter into different games and social groups with each other.

They said that it often happens that children forcefully step into other children’s games, with total disregard for what the participating child or children wants. The interviewees then saw it as their responsibility to both teach children to ask for permission and also, maybe more importantly, to make children feel like they know how to do so: i.e. to empower them. One pedagogue said for instance that s/he thinks this disregard is a lack of knowledge – in terms of a certain savoir-faire – rather than anything else. It is not that the children are rude or ill-mannered, they just don’t know the proper social rituals; they are, in some sense, socially ignorant s/he argued. As s/he put it at one point “There is after all a social game in which everyone participates in some way or another, and they are not as drilled in that yet.”

In addition, when asked what is the most important function and purpose of the preschool, s/he responded:

I think it is to be able to be in a group, to function in a group, to be able to take place in a group, and then, also, to let other people step forward in the group. And also, somewhere, to create the feeling that together we are stronger than just I. There is of course differences, some like to be alone a lot maybe. But there has to still exist the knowledge of how I should do if I want to [be in a group]. And if you don’t want to [be in a group], then we have to

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8 Quote, pedagogue. (Throughout this thesis, in order to differentiate between the various forms of sources, all references to gathered data will be done in footnotes).
work with ‘but why not?’ So that it’s not just ‘everyone should stay to themselves, and we leave it like that.’ Because society doesn’t really work like that.\(^9\)

This might seem like a self-evident dimension of preschools. As many pedagogues have noted, preschools want to offer the children an education they cannot easily get from their family, and hence must take advantage of all its organizational singularities; of which the arguably most prominent is the number of children in any given class. Therefore, teaching children how to behave in groups of around 15 individuals – which was the average class size – seems natural. However what is not as self-evident is whether it’s natural that this has to be the preschools primary function and purpose. There are other aspects that almost all interviewees talked about at some point in the interviews, which could have been listed as the preschools primary role and purpose. For instance: encouraging curiosity, creativity and exploration, or setting certain ‘preconditions’ for future learning. In fact, those specific answers might even be the most ‘formally correct’ ones, since they fall in line with both state and company prerogatives. The chief of all the pedagogues said that, with reference to the curriculum, “Well, the preschools most important role is that we today belong and adhere to Skolverket and Skolmyndigheten /…/ We have to create the preconditions for children’s curiosity regarding mathematics, science, language and all the subjects that are present in the schools”.\(^10\) Yet none of the above alternatives were the first one to come to mind to most pedagogues, instead questions of respect, compassion and humanity, followed by essential values, strengthening the ‘self’, independence, and self-reliance were the most prominent.

This likely indicates either that social education stands for the most apparent aspect in pedagogues’ everyday work, which many interviewees testify to, or that these competences are in fact prioritized in contemporary society. The one doesn’t exclude the other of course, and it could be that the reason why it’s apparent in the everyday work of pedagogues is exactly because they prioritize them and thus are more conscious to such phenomenon. It could be that they see more social faults being committed not solely because children act differently than before, which some interviewees claim, but also because social competences are more important and complex than before. This is corroborated by the notion persisting within preschools that the ‘future active social participant’ will not be judged as much on their physical abilities, as on their social capacities. One interviewee stated “Today’s society is like that, you

\(^9\) Quote, pedagogue.
\(^10\) Quote, preschool chief.
have to have a social competence in order to succeed in your work-life. There are hardly any jobs today that is not about being social.”¹¹ Moreover, one preschool chief said the following:

They start with us when they are one, and finish when they’re turning six and will start ‘förskoleklass’ (and ‘förskoleklass’ belongs to primary school). Then we have to think, already when they are one year old, ‘how will the world look like in 20 years? What type of knowledge do we think, or what type of people, what thoughts, and what reflections do they need to have with them?’ I can look back on my time as a preschool teacher and see that it is a very big difference today in comparison to the society at that time. You only have to think about when you went on an employment interview a couple of years ago. At that time you got the question ‘what can you do?’, ‘if you got to decide, what would you want to do?’ Today you receive totally different questions. There is no one asking you what you can do, rather you get questions like ‘how flexible are you?’, ‘how curious are you?’, ‘do you have a problem taking new assignments?’ Because we live in a changing world, where knowledge is a perishable good.¹²

Here we see how the individual discourses of preschool employees fall in line with broader societal currents as discussed in much managerial literature. Both with regards to the organizational activity shaping ‘what type of people’ children become – as Deetz put it “Most modern organizational decisions and practices reflect more the construction of “appropriate” individuals than the making of products, services or profits” (1994:24) – and with regards to the envisioned ‘ideals’.

The statements made by the preschool employees above submit that the ideals have changed. We find different answers to the questions: what does one need to be employable today and in the future? What type of individual does the child have to be in order to meet those demands? What knowledge and attributes should s/he occupy? As one pedagogue said: “Where is society headed? Because that impacts what we should give to the children. We can’t give them something that doesn’t coincide with what they should be over there.”¹³ The answers seem to be: s/he needs to be social, flexible, curious, and adaptive to the changing world. Referencing managerial literature, s/he needs to know how to ‘play the game’ (see e.g. Alvesson, 2013), be ambidextrous (Holmqvist & Spicer, 2013), entrepreneurial (Pongratz & Voß, 2003), and self-managing (Maravelias, 2011). This trend is something that has been discussed as “… an extension of management as an ideological and practical force into the ‘free’ spheres of individuals’ lives; a transformation of management into self-management; and an idealization of a particular type of self-managing individual, namely the individual that acts as an entrepreneur of him or herself.” (Maravelias, 2011: 107). Later I will show how mechanisms

¹¹ Quote, pedagogue.
¹² Quote, preschool chief.
¹³ Quote, pedagogue.
of subjectification and identity formation and regulation are employed to achieve this, but first I will discuss one more schematism of the ‘future active social participant’.

4.1.2 Setting the Preconditions: Laying the Foundation of Potentiality and Success

The fact that preschools today operate under the guidelines of a state governed curriculum is more than just a formality; it’s a part of the organizational identity. Both preschool chiefs I’ve interviewed have resourcefully referred to it. Either to explain the preschools actions and purpose, as discussed in the previous section, or to contrast themselves to the older ‘ways of doing things’.

When I started in the 70s we dealt with nursing and care [vård och omsorg]. That was a totally different thing. /…/ Today we have a curriculum, which we got in 98, and that is valid for children that are one year old.14

Later in the interview the same preschool chief said:

For as you know, the preschool was extended during the 70s, and hence many who were born in the 70s have themselves gone to preschool and have memories from their preschool days and how it looked back then. And they have a hard time accepting that we work with the youngest children’s learning so clearly, and based on a curriculum. /…/ Furthermore, the views of children and education was different, it has changed much in recent times. It used to be a bit like empty backs that had to be filled (and that was the schools view of students as well). That is to say that students were empty backs and we had to fill them with a lot of knowledge. And today we don’t look at it like that, rather we see the entire human, and we see that even a one year old carries experience with them.15

Pedagogues also mentioned the curriculum, but often for different reasons; two said that it’s nice to refer to the curriculum when parents don’t understand why they do certain things, and another said that it assures them of the correctness of what they were doing. Although, how one works with the curriculum, and hence with learning, is not always a clear path. As one pedagogue puts it:

…the learning in school is maybe more linear, I believe. Whilst in the preschool all subjects go into each other in a different way /…/ This learning is more like a snarl [trassel] I usually say. It’s like a snarly yarn where every learning process goes into one another and runs off in different directions.16

Additionally, one preschool chief said:

What we need to think of, what differentiates us from the school, is that the school has achievement goals, and we do not have achievement goals towards each and every child. However we do have achievement goals against what preconditions we create.17

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14 Quote, preschool chief.
15 Quote, preschool chief.
16 Quote, pedagogue.
17 Quote, preschool chief.
In a school, the fulfilment of the curriculum and the achievement of a student can more easily be defined and measured: for example by a certain number of correct answers on a test, or the child’s ability to express him- or herself in certain matters. These methods, even if not principally unproblematic, at least give the illusion of measurability – which in most cases is enough. Though in pre-schools they don’t have that, instead they measure ‘against what preconditions’ they create, which is a particularly important dimension of the curriculum. The same preschool chief as above said the following, something that the other preschool chief similarly discussed:

I mean, for a one year old to work with science might simply entail blowing soap bubbles whilst outside and getting to experience a colour spectrum. What is [important], is that our pedagogues must be conscious of that it’s science, even if the child is not conscious of it. In order to present new material to these children, so that they can go further, and so that it is possible to sit and reflect: what was it you saw? Did you see many colours? You might not always get answers, but you can see in the facial expressions of the child ‘yes, we saw many colours.’ So you have to humbly interpret the one year old’s experiences, and connect them to the curriculum. Whereas when a child is verbal, so that we can communicate, it’s different.18

The very act of setting the preconditions thus seems to imply supplying an experience and then subconsciously, which is important to note, coding that experience so that it sticks as something more than just a physical phenomenon; it should stick as something upon which one can reflect. The proof of transition, i.e. that the precondition was set, has to do with the individual signalling that the experience was perceived and meaningful. As might be understood, this is a hard task to ‘objectively’ measure – which is why both preschool chiefs underscore the importance of competent personal. But according to many pedagogues this is also the charm with the profession. When asked what made their teaching process interesting, one pedagogue said: “that I don’t need to govern, that I can add some mathematics when they least expect it /…/ I usually say that I lure in the knowledge even though they don’t know it.”19 Another pedagogue said, regarding some children running toy cars down a slide: “Is it then play or natural science? They’re experimenting without thinking about it.”20 The idea is that the preconditions are set without the children’s awareness, i.e. without them knowing it. The preconditions is not explicit knowledge, as verbal knowledge; it doesn’t manifests itself in production or communication. It’s something different. In fact, it can be said to pre-exist knowledge, and hence, since it is not actualized knowledge, I would argue that it’s potential knowledge.

18 Quote, preschool chief.
19 Quote, pedagogue.
20 Quote, pedagogue.
The idea that the preconditions can be understood as potentiality is further demonstrated through what looks like a contradiction in the expression ‘a life-long learning’. According to one preschool chief, this expression signifies that we learn from the first to the last breaths we take. And the other preschool chief said there is learning already in the womb. Furthermore, the expression is also mentioned by literature on preschool education. For instance:

Mathematical principles and expressions are part of how we experience the world around us, and often the pedagogical work with mathematics deals with capitalizing on the knowledge the child occupies and using that to explore the world around us. In this way mathematics becomes meaningful and useful and a foundation for a life-long learning.\(^\text{21}\) (Björklund, 2013).

But in relation to the aforementioned, this seem to suggest that preschools set the precondition for a process that is already in the making; i.e. they set the precondition for learning, but learning is already happening. It appears as a contradiction – which is furthered by the fact that the preschool chiefs and pedagogues often talk about how competent and knowledgeable children are, for instance one claimed that “the problem is not, I think at least, that children don’t know right and wrong … that exists as an inherent feeling to most people”\(^\text{22}\) another said that “they are complex already when they are born; they have everything”\(^\text{23}\) and that “they know everything, they are completely competent”\(^\text{24}\), while at the same time talking about teaching children the things they need to learn, e.g. the social filters, vocal and vocabulary sophistication, etc. One pedagogue approached this contradiction very insightfully when s/he said:

We are very good at thinking that the children are able and that they are competent. But I can still experience, when we talk about it in the preschool and so on, that there is a power hierarchy in that. In that we, the adults, can give them that. We can give them that they are competent. I don’t really know, there is something that sounds a bit bad.\(^\text{25}\)

One could understand this contradiction if one instead thinks in terms of potentiality and success. That is to say, the organizational Discourse is that children don’t have everything per se, but the potential to have everything. They always learn, but they have the potential to learn more. When asked the question ‘what is a child?’ one pedagogue even said that a child is “an incredible individual, with plenty of potential”.\(^\text{26}\) Subsequently, preschool education is about

\(^{21}\) My translation, original: Matematiska principer och uttryck är del av hur vi erfär omvärlden och ofta handlar det pedagogiska arbetet med matematik om att ta fasta på det matematiska kunnande barnen besitter och använda detta i utforskandet av omvärlden. På så sätt blir matematik meningsfull och användbar och en grund för ett livslångt lärande.

\(^{22}\) Quote, pedagogue.

\(^{23}\) Quote, pedagogue.

\(^{24}\) Quote, pedagogue.

\(^{25}\) Quote, pedagogue.

\(^{26}\) Quote, pedagogue.
bringing that potentiality to successful fruition – which is determined by the societal demands and norms. It’s about improving or ‘capitalizing’ upon the ‘life-long learning’; i.e. actualizing the potential that lies in it. Seen like this, the discourse of preschools doesn’t claim that children won’t understand reality without education. An individual without preschool education would undoubtedly still be able to differentiate and count entities. But rather that they might increase the degrees of success and sophistication. That is to say: for society it’s not enough to be able to count, one need to do so correctly, quickly, reflexively, and, maybe most importantly, with verbal sophistication.

It has been shown that 17 year old individuals who have been read to as children know 17000 words, and those who have not been read to as children know 15000 words as 17 year olds. That I think we must take in, and look at. So therefore I’ve said that we should have a ‘read warranty’, but that all literature will be about the grounds of the ‘equal treatment plan’: with harassment, violation, bullying of different kinds.27

In this context, the expression ‘life-long learning’ makes more sense. For in similarity to ‘life-long learning’, potential is equally never ending; the promise of potential is always more potential. The successful preschool child has the potential to become a successful primary school student, and the successful primary school student has the potential to become a successful high-school student, and so on. In a fashion, the potential implied in this is the primordial ground to what Costea et al. (2012) have studied with graduate students and what they call the ‘principal of potentiality’. It testifies to the fact that, in some sense, the greatest compliment today is not ‘you have achieved the goals’ but rather ‘you have potential to surpass the goals and reach the next level’.

Lastly, and connecting to the following chapter, I would like to argue for one more precondition being set in the preschool, one that is even more profound and primordial; namely, the very precondition of identity. As Bauman put it:

> After all, asking ‘who you are’ makes sense to you only once you believe that you can be someone other than you are; only if you have a choice, and only if it depends on what you choose; only if you have to do something, that is, for the choice to be ‘real’ and to hold. (Bauman, 2004: 19)

If identity formation and regulation depends on notions such as central life interests, as Alvesson and Willmott state (2002: 625), wherein the question ‘Who am I’ plays an important part, then it must be said that making an individual understand that they can do what they want, be who they want, and that the choice is ultimately theirs, is a part of laying the foundation of identity. Surely this process is also present in the homes, but the preschool has to some extent

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27 Quote, preschool chief.
formalized this practice: “The operation shall bear the stamp of care about the individual’s well-being and development /…/ The preschool shall give the children support in developing a positive understanding of themselves as learning and creating individuals.”  

(28) The preschool curriculum, p.4 & p.7. It’s not just a question of individual development, but conjointly of individuality itself. One pedagogue for instance said that in the beginning, children for the most part imitate adults, and that identity develops later in life. In preschool they roleplay s/he says; they practice taking decision, and are informed about the options in life – again, preconditions of a later development. “I’m thinking that it’s okay for the children to choose, but they also have to know what they are choosing between. I have to make sure that these alternatives are clear to the children and that they know each one.”  

(29) But in some sense this is more than just a game, it’s an essential preconditioning, and an essential part of forming the notion of ‘self’, or at least the seedbed from which it springs.

4.2 The Mechanisms of Socialization

4.2.1 ‘Self’, Independence, & Self-reliance: About Being Strong, Joyful, and Learning to Learn

This is a particularly interesting dimension of preschool practices – not least when considering that Foucault claimed that the question of how you control the self of children was pedagogy’s big question in the 16th century (2010: 96). According to several pedagogues in my thesis, preschools work a lot on strengthening the self-reliance and ‘self’ (swe. jaget) of the children; and the Montessori pedagogical slogan ‘help to self-help’, employed by one preschool, further testifies to this. Strengthening the children’s ability to govern themselves, to feel that they ‘can do it’, and that they are worth something, was for many pedagogues an essential part of (1) children’s personal development, and (2) their learning process. One pedagogue said:

I mean, in the preschool we are with them when they learn to walk, when they learn to talk, when they learn to function with other human-beings. Those are such essential things so that if we wouldn’t work with it [personality and identity], it would not work.  

(30) And further on in the interview:

It’s a precondition for learning I think. When the child comes to us in the morning, when they step in with us in our group and feel ‘I am important in this group, I’m expected, I contribute’ then that feeling will make so that they participate and they want to learn together.  

(31) 

28 My translation, original: Verksamheten ska präglas av omsorg om individens välbefinnande och utveckling. /…/ Förskolan ska ge barnen stöd i att utveckla en positiv uppfattning om sig själva som lärande och skapande individer.

29 Quote, pedagoge.

30 Quote, pedagoge.

31 Quote, pedagoge.
With regards to the first aspect (1), children’s personal development, it’s envisioned as a part of building up a resilience against the social climate today, regarding work, school, as well as society in general. The pedagogues argued that due to all the pressure on individuals today – having to take choices, performing, and ‘being perfect’ – it’s important to have a strong belief and reliance in yourself.

They have so many choices to take. If you’re going to buy cornflakes there are 20 brands. And these choices sometimes mean that we lose building up our independence and self-reliance. And that is something that I focus a lot on: that they should be balanced within themselves.\(^{32}\)

With regards to the second aspect (2), the children’s learning process, a strong sensation of ‘self’, independence, and self-reliance were for instance considered important for purposes of motivation and focus. Making reference to his/her own experience, one pedagogue said that if you do not believe in yourself, you will waste much energy focusing on different things in school, such as for example social questions like fitting in and not saying the wrong things to the wrong people, etc. Another said that when you believe that you can do things, you are less likely to give up. In essence, many pedagogues argue that building up the children’s ‘self’, independence and self-reliance makes life easier to handle and learning more fun. One pedagogue said “if you have self-reliance towards yourself and your own abilities, then you can do almost everything I believe”\(^{33}\) and then later “if I say like this: you should not learn for my sake, rather you should learn because you think it is fun.”\(^{34}\)

This clearly demonstrates the mechanisms of identity formation and regulation. For strengthening someone’s ‘self’ inadvertently also means taking part in forming and regulating that ‘self’. One has to categorize them as a group, one has to establish the rules of the game, and one has to define the context (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002:631). In preschools this happens when the pedagogues say to the children that they are individuals that ‘can do things’; when they tell them that they have to be nice to each other, play safe, and not scream or hit each other; and when they shape the environment and tell the children that it’s their environment and for their exploration and learning. In telling the child what s/he can or can’t do certain things – e.g. you can take off your own shoes and put on your own clothes but you may not play in with toys in the stairs nor eat while walking – we take part in the process of defining

\(^{32}\) Quote, pedagogue.
\(^{33}\) Quote, pedagogue.
\(^{34}\) Quote, pedagogue.
their existence, i.e. what is known as shaping central life interests (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002: 625).

Moreover, in lines with mechanisms of subjectification, the act of strengthening the children’s belief in themselves is done in two ways, based on the pedagogues’ statements. On the one hand by encouraging their abilities and telling them that they are competent (discourse): for instance one pedagogue said “… it’s really about building up oneself. And with the young ones this means [saying], ‘you can, you can do it yourself’”35, and another said “they are completely competent and… They just don’t know it yet. We have to tell them what they are able of.”36 On the other hand it’s also done by allowing the children to decide themselves based on their own interests (agency).

I cannot decide ‘now you are ready for roleplay’ (you know approx. at what age it is, but still). Earlier it has been like this ‘okay, now we have to expand roleplay’ and then we start to take everything out. But this I think the children should be allowed to decide. It’s also about strengthening the ‘self’. I should not govern that.37

The assumption in the two different approaches might seem diametrically opposed, since one presupposes that children does not know that they are able and thus need to be encouraged, while the other instead assumes that children have their own interests and will arrive at doing things themselves. However, as discussed, these are very typical techniques for subjectification. It’s about forming the individual both as an object who can be told what they are, can do, and need to improve on; and as a subject who performs the actions themselves, and shows that they improve.

Technologies of the self, require the truths of the self to be discovered through self-examination and expressed through language in order to affirm and transform oneself. In these processes, the individual becomes both the object of improvement and the subject that does the improving. (Kosmala & Herrbach, 2006: 1397)

Hence, the pedagogues give identity features to the child while at the same time allowing them to be part of their own identity creation. In fact, the continuation of a quote mentioned above (footnote 29), is very illustrative of both dimensions: “and the joy you see when you say ‘you can’; ‘yes, I can!’”38 Here we have both the discourse trying to ‘encourage’, and the subject acknowledging that encouragement.

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35 Quote, pedagogue.
36 Quote, pedagogue.
37 Quote, pedagogue.
38 Quote, pedagogue.
Another technique used in strengthening the ‘self’ was what has been referred to by researchers as the ‘interpellative act’. “On Althusser’s account, the subject responds to the call [someone saying ‘hey you!’] by turning around, and in the act of turning around becomes a subject.” (Jones & Spicer, 2005:224). When someone calls our name, or otherwise make it clear to us that they perceive our existence, we acknowledge our status as subject by reacting to the call. Reversely it must also be true that calling someone’s name, or making them understand that they are perceived, is a form of building subjectivity.

Something I think is very important, regarding this you mention about strengthening the ‘self’; I don’t need to talk to the individual, but I usually have a checklist on that I at least have had contact with all children every day. And this I can have through the room, through a small wink of the eye or so. I don’t want to disturb if they are in some kind of activity. But if I don’t have a conversation with them I at least want to know that they feel like I’ve seen them. Then I will go past and just maybe poke softly like this [on the arm].

As with other techniques, it’s hard to escape this form of subjectification. In fact, certain ‘technologies of the self’ (Foucault, 2015i) are everywhere. The interesting question is dealing with how they can “be used as a mean of accomplishing a preferred orientation of the self” (Kosmala & Herrbach, 2006: 1394). In the case of preschools the ‘preferred orientation of the self’ is one that believes in their abilities, can do things themselves, and thinks it is fun to learn. To a certain extent we may understand this orientation as a liberalization, which statements by the pedagogues corroborate. They stop governing/ managing so much and instead let the ‘market do that job’, so to speak. In other words, they dismantle control and surveillance devices and instead give the individuals the tools to their own success. With this comes self-government, self-managing, self-control and neo-normative alternatives. That is, the individual is made to internalize some of the functions that society used to employ, which in many ways this is much more efficient. For who needs to control when we produce citizens that don’t need controlling? Why force learning when learning is wanted?

To sum up, individual discourses telling children that they ‘can do it’, encouraging them to be independent, and leaving free space for the children to play out this independence, could be understood as mechanism of the socialization towards a ‘future active social participant’ that is, as discussed in the previous chapter, full of potential, curios, and self-managing. This aspect even permeates the aesthetics in preschools, which will be discussed in the next subheading.

39 Quote, pedagogue.
4.2.2 The Organization of Space: an Organism for Boosting Independence

The milieu is something that I asked almost all the interviewees about, and in two interviews I had the possibility to make observations of a classroom for children between one and three years old. In preschools they call the room, or the milieu, ‘the third pedagogue’ – which is a term originating from Reggio Emilia pedagogy. This term refers to, as explained by several interviewees, how the room impacts the children’s emotions, sensations, independence and will to explore. It can be everything from the toys they have to furniture and how everything is placed. This falls in line with what is discussed by certain researchers in the field of Organizational Aesthetics. “… the vast majority of researchers in the field see aesthetics as an efficient mechanism for shaping the emotions, attitudes, and behaviour of the people who use a given space (e.g., Gagliardi 1990, Witkin 1990, Baldry 1999).”  

(Wasserman & Frenkel, 2011:503) One preschool chief explained the work being done with the room as following:

I usually do the following when I work with development regarding this: I walk around with an iPad, carrying it this way, around the waist, a child’s height, and I photograph the room and put it together to a slideshow. And then we ask ourselves ‘what is it the children see the first time they enter this room?’ and we often see legs of chairs and tables, but not the material that is supposed to be a support in the children’s learning. So then that goes down so the children can see it. And we move the tables and chairs so they don’t disturb.

This illustrates very well the type of conscious aesthetical ideas that go into creating a learning architecture. The main idea expressed by several pedagogues was that the rooms are adapted for the children, based on the children, and, at least to a certain extent, by the children themselves. The room is there to facilitate children’s learning and to supply their needs. But it’s also there to be modified by the children’s interests; it moves like ‘an organism’, as one pedagogue called it. In the room I visited almost everything was adapted to the children: most of the decoration was waist down (i.e. pictures, the clock, paintings, etc.), the furniture was miniature, and there was even what looked like a small desk accompanied by keyboard in the room. Additionally, the children could move around certain material in the room, or bring new material to the room, like sticks or things that might have interested them outside.

It’s about children’s influence. We should not build a milieu for the adults, it should rather be for the children. They should enter the room and feel ‘this is our milieu.’

Things were supposed to be very accessible to the children, once again in order to strengthen the children’s ‘self’, independence and self-reliance. It was considered that having things accessible to the children, so that they can take it whenever they feel like it, will improve these

40 Quote, preschool chief.
41 Quote, pedagogue.
features’. Only certain things, often considered unsafe, inappropriate, or unequal for the children to always have access to, were stored in unattainable places: for instance beads for young children, iPads, or specific toys that there was only a limited amount of. It was considered inappropriate for children to always play with iPads and unequal to give some children access to toys that they couldn’t supply to everyone, so subsequently they were most of the time hidden. Hence, it is also clear that the final power over the ‘rules of the game’ and the overall architecture lies with the pedagogues and management. They are the ones ‘making slideshows’ and who purposefully modify the environment to reach certain ends; thus they are the ones who ultimately decide what can be brought to the room or what is taken away. One could say that there are two different milieu in the same room, predicated on a certain hierarchy. There is the children’s milieu and the adults’ milieu, and the latter has access to the former’s room but oftentimes not vice versa. Certain things are off limit to the children, but not to the adults: for instance, besides the aforementioned toys or tools, their documents and computers. In other words, the adults are nevertheless the architects of this self-modifying or organic structure.

The children have big influence, it is their environment, but we make the frames of what is allowed /.../ the room is an organism, it moves. It changes. We can add something, and remove something. And we notice it on the children... We can change the environment so it becomes more challenging.42

Once again there is an aspect of undercover control; prompting change or learning without children’s knowledge or understanding of it. One pedagogue even equalled the classrooms to a laboratory where one could study behaviour theory – since s/he argued it entails all dimensions of society. It’s interesting to think of this development against the backdrop of Foucault’s discussions on architectonic principles of the disciplining society. For while education in the disciplining society places the individual in spaces where the body is always visible to surveillance and control mechanisms, like the Bentham’s Panopticon (Foucault, 2015f), the institutions of today try to reduce the amount of surveillance and control – at least in a physical sense.

I don’t like fences and such, putting stop and so on. I had an old boss who said to me once: if the child wants to flee or go out it means you have not made it nice enough for the child.43

Instead of ‘fences and such’ the preschool uses what has been referred to as neo-normative control (Fleming & Sturdy, 2009; see also Kinnie et al., 2000). This entails giving the

42 Quote, pedagogue.
43 Quote, pedagogue.
individual freedom and encouraging them to have ‘fun’ and ‘be themselves’, while at the same
time making sure to regulate their identity so that what they consider fun and ‘who they are’
go hand in hand with society’s norms. One pedagogue told me that when it was the children’s
first days at the preschool (so called ‘inskolning’), it was common that children stayed at the
door and wanted to go out. In those cases s/he said that it was important to not force the child
to come in, but instead stay with the child by the door and maybe read some stories, until the
child wanted to come in by him- or herself. This shows both how we value the freedom of the
individual to do what they want – i.e. stay at the door – while at the same time acknowledging
that it’s a problem that they want this. The decree of personal freedom, ‘fun’, and ‘do what you
want’ must ultimately fall in line with the prevailing societal ideals; for, insofar as it tries to
change their ways, a child that wants to run away or doesn’t think it is fun to learn is
nevertheless considered problematic by society. Ergo, the posterior of having no physical
fences is that we instead construct ‘barriers of sentiment.’

Here we see how the form of self-governing logic discussed in the previous heading also
permeates the room. Instead of external devices of control, one makes the child not want to flee
or stay at the door. For it’s more efficient to have individuals that want to follow the rules, or
see no purpose in breaking them, than individuals you have to physically control. If we can
make individuals want to learn and to stay put, we don’t have to force them to do so. In the end
it becomes a bit like saying: ‘You have freedom, you have independence, so you can pick any
colour you want… as long as it’s green or blue’. The fact of the matter is that the child is not
allowed to flee if s/he wants to and s/he is not allowed to go out if it’s not the right time. In as
much as there still exist ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’, there is no complete freedom or independence; there
is conditioned freedom and independence coated in a layer of ‘what we want’.
We were several in the test life, in our primitive life. It is only through the tale of others that we came to know our unity. Over the course of our story, narrated by the others, we end up, year by year, recognizing ourselves. We pile up all of our beings around the unity of our name.\(^{44}\)

– Gaston Bachelard (2016: 84)

**Question: What is a child?**

**Answer:** It’s a human. A human like everyone else, just a bit shorter. They know [are able to do] everything, they are completely competent; they just don’t know it yet. We have to tell them what they are able of.

– Preschool pedagogue (for untranslated original, see Appendix)

**Question: What is a child?**

**Answer:** What? What is a child? ... Well, a child is a human being in the process of experiencing and discovering our world; who learns incredibly many things; who hasn’t been shaped by society yet. They are complex already when they are born; they have everything: abilities, happiness... They are remarkable humans. I really think they are. Because they teach me incredibly much as well. And I know that it’s our future. We have to cherish them. I usually listen to the song ‘The Enigmatic People’ [swe. Det gåtfulla folket], who come from a foreign land. When you listen to that song... that’s how children are. It’s so incredible simply that they exist, and that I can be a part of forming them (and get payed to do so).

– Preschool pedagogue (for untranslated original, see Appendix)

\(^{44}\) My translation, original: Nous fûmes plusieurs dans la vie essayée, dans notre vie primitive. C’est seulement par le récit des autres que nous avons connu notre unité. Sur le fil de notre histoire racontée par les autres, nous finissons, année par année, à nous ressembler. Nous amassons tous nos êtres autour de l’unité de notre nom.
5. Discussion

5.1 Barriers of Sentiment: Mechanisms and Power in Preschools

Arguably, the strongest bind on an individual is not the type that structures bodies under devices of surveillance like cameras, supervisors, teachers, or peer-based surveillance (see e.g. Barker, 1993), but rather the type shapes subjectivity through ‘technologies of self’. It’s less a bind on the individual as it’s a bind rooted in individuality itself (see e.g. Bergström & Knights, 2006). Instead of telling someone to do something, you make that person want to do the thing you need; and moreover you make him/her believe that they chose it themselves. A camera has dead angles, a supervisor or teacher has no eyes in the back, and the work team does not necessarily follow you home after work. Thus those external modes of control have zones of freedom, spots where the body can hide away and escape (remember how the layout of Winston’s room in Orwell’s iconic novel 1984 played an important role). In comparison, you cannot hide from your own will and you cannot escape your own choices. “You should not learn for my sake, rather you should learn because you think it is fun”.45

From what I’ve been able to discern in my study, preschools work on creating certain identity traits and preconditions rather than actual abilities. A striking testimony to this is that some interviewees talked about their job as shaping or forming children, or claimed that children are not yet shaped or formed. From one year old they try to make them feel like “[they are] important in this group, [are] expected, [and] contribute”.46 They say that they see them as “competent individuals”,47 “their own individual”48 and “wonderful individuals with plenty of potential”49. And they tell them “you can, you can do it yourself” and are joyful when the children in turn say “Yes, I can.”50 In fact, I’ve tried to show how even the rooms’ topology is designed to this end; how it’s constructed in such a way as to make it clear to the children that it is their room, their environment, and their choice to do ‘whatever they want to’. Independence, strong ‘self’, and self-reliance are some of the desired traits of the social, curious, flexible, and self-managing future individual. And empowerment through words,
action, letting the children ‘do themselves’, and even the architecture, are some of the mechanisms employed.

But of course behind the individual discourses of freedom and individuality, behind the rhetoric of “seeing the entire individual”\textsuperscript{52}, “[seeing] the entire human”\textsuperscript{53}, and working “along the individual; adapted to the individual”,\textsuperscript{54} lies a societal Discourse of differentiation, meticulous planning, and subconscious conditioning, legitimized through a curriculum. While it sounds great to say that we should base our teaching on the interests of children and not force interest upon them, i.e. that we are “researching together [swe. med-forskande]”\textsuperscript{55} and that “the children should be allowed to decide”\textsuperscript{56}, it’s never the less the case that the interests of the children have to conform to a socially set agenda. And much of what we do – that is to say not only preschools but also society at large – is to form and regulate identities according to that itinerary. For what happens if a child doesn’t want to learn, if a child wants to flee? What happens if a child wants to fight instead of using their words? What happens if a child’s interests ends up aligning with illegal activities? Wouldn’t that child and his/ her education be considered a failure of socialization? The tendency towards self-management (Maravelias, 2011), an individualizing society (Bauman, 2001), strengthening of the ‘self’ and self-reliance, all aligns with new modes of governance and planning. The quote “you should not learn for my sake, rather you should learn because you think it is fun”\textsuperscript{57} could be continued with: ‘and you should think it is fun for society’s sake, because society wants you to learn.’ This is what has been discussed as neo-normative control (Fleming and Sturdy, 2009). Rather than that control and government has disappeared, which the individual discourses of pedagogues give appearance to, it might be argued that it has gone undercover. “I don’t need to govern, but I can put in some mathematics when they least expect it /…/ I usually say that I lure in the knowledge even though they don’t know it.”\textsuperscript{58}

We, i.e. society at large, tell ourselves that we consider children equally, that they are “humans just like everybody else, just a bit shorter”\textsuperscript{59}, yet we put them in different institutions and we adapt the environment to them. We tell them when they’re sick and when they should eat, and

\textsuperscript{52} Quote, pedagogue.
\textsuperscript{53} Quote, preschool chief.
\textsuperscript{54} Quote, pedagogue.
\textsuperscript{55} Quote, pedagogue.
\textsuperscript{56} Quote, pedagogue.
\textsuperscript{57} Quote, pedagogue.
\textsuperscript{58} Quote, pedagogue.
\textsuperscript{59} Quote, pedagogue.
we say things like ‘they are just children’. With this in mind one might rightfully ask: if it’s true that we don’t govern or control them, in fact that we shouldn’t govern or control them, how come that we nonetheless design their rooms so that “nothing is left to chance”\(^{60}\)? Security is the age old answer, which is still relevant and frequently used by the pedagogues. But saying ‘I’m doing this for your own safety’ is in no way negating control.

In any event, most people would say that there is nothing wrong in all this, and that we want children that think it’s fun to learn, and who are respectful and self-reliant. As a matter of fact, most of the things that the preschool wishes to instil in the children is something that society views as good; which is exactly the point. I have not questioned the social agenda per se, but I have tried to illustrate some of the mechanisms of power that is at play in this process. Mechanisms working on children to reach a “preferred orientation of the self” (Kosmala & Herrbach, 2006: 1394) that is: socially competent, have a joyful attitude towards learning, is independent, self-reliance, and have a strong ‘self’.

These mechanisms may not be as visible as traditional surveillance devices, but nonetheless strong binds on the individuals. Foucault might say that we should not fool ourselves to think that there are no tools of power, control, or governance in our institutions just because we can’t see them; this just means that they’ve learned how to effectively hide themselves (2015f; 2015j). The same holds true for our socialization of children. “Identity regulation may be pursued purposefully or it may be a by-product of other activities and arrangements typically not seen – by regulators or the targets of their efforts – as directed at self-definition.” (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002: 625). Even if we assume that there is no problem with these modes of control today, making ourselves believe that there subsequently never will be a problem might let what seems benign slip into the malignant. Or as Bauman has said, with reference to Ulrich Beck:

> It is then one of those cases when (to use Ulrich Beck’s expression) institutions ‘for overcoming problems’ are transformed into ‘institution causing problems’; you are, on the one hand, made responsible for yourself, but on the other hand are ‘dependent on conditions which completely elude your grasp’ (and in most cases also your knowledge) /.../. (Cursive in original, Bauman, 2001: 5)

In the age of bio-politics and liberalisation on several fronts, it might be true that we don’t control and govern children in the same way that we used to; drills has for example had a tendency to disappear in many institutions. But instead we instil self-governance and internalize control through the forming of self-managing individuals. We don’t like fences

\(^{60}\) Quote, pedagogue.
holding the children back and closing them in because it’s reminiscent of those old modes of control, yet we nevertheless need children to stay put and to be close to us. For how can we otherwise care for them and supervise their learning? Therefore we demolish the physical fences and construct psychological ones: “I had an old boss who said to me once: if the child wants to flee or go out it means you have not made it nice enough for the child”.

5.2 Preparation for What: Pre-condition, Pre-forming, Pre-school

The tragedy that comes to humans by having been a child, is hence that in the beginning his freedom was hidden to him and that all his life he will keep the nostalgia of the time where he was ignorant of its existence. (de Beauvoir, 1947:53)

Since at least one and a half century back, industrialized countries such as Sweden have been trying to shield children from certain aspects of industrialization, urbanization, and capitalism (see e.g. Riddersporre & Persson, 2010). For instance fighting child-labour, outlawing certain advertisement towards children, putting age limits on certain products, and making education obligatory. On the one hand this shielding has to do with protection from what we consider harmful environments and behaviours; on the other hand it also has to do with exemption and exclusion: that is to say, immunity, non-liability, and temporary exclusion from the family (mandatory education). The proof of this tendency is portrayed by for example our various reactions to violence against children, child soldiers, and the sexualisation and objectification of children’s bodies – for which the debate on Japanese fictional pornography is symbolic.

As discussed in the introduction, this is a societal Discourse and process of differentiation for which ‘minor’ is the legal term and ‘childhood’ is the ideological one (Ariès, 1960). More than just markers of age, these terms testifies to the fact that children are considered different than the otherwise ‘normal’ subjects of the law and the state. And as also mentioned in the introduction, the aforementioned has some of its roots in the earliest forms of institutions dedicated to care and education of children. For in institutions, and more specifically in schools and preschools, is where we put children when we don’t put them to work or war – Riddersporre and Persson have even said that “To be a child in modern Sweden has in many ways become tantamount with spending time in institutions” (2010:55). These early institutions were social rescue missions that also, like today, housed functions of socialization. For instance, Bjurman

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61 Quote, pedagogue.
62 My translation, original: Le malheur qui vient à l’homme du fait qu’il a été un enfant, c’est donc que sa liberté lui a été d’abord masquée et qu’il gardera toute sa vie la nostalgie du temps où il en ignorait les existences.
63 My translation, original: Att vara barn I det moderna Sverige har i många stycken blivit liktydigt med att vistas på institutioner.
(1990:72) states that the ‘salvation-houses’ were dedicated to children who were ‘lead on the wrong path’ (swe. vilseförda) or children whose parents were criminal (which at that time could mean that they were simply poor or beggars); and Simmons-Christenson says that the purpose of the ‘child-cribs’ was to “prepare future workers for society and to give them ethical nurture” (1997: 183). Hence these intuitions were attempts at reaching children early so that one could ‘correct any wrong’ and make respectable and productive citizens out of them. According to Hatje (1990:115) and Simmons-Christenson (1990:87; see also 1997:186) it was first in the late 19th and early 20th century, with infusion of Fröbel’s ideas, that preschools in Sweden really became grounded in some kind of pedagogical doctrine. The aforementioned social rescue missions thus went away and gave place to the kindergartens that would later develop into the modern preschool institution; which were institutions of escape and happiness. Written on the fliers for the sisters Moberg’s kindergarten in Norrköping were for instance “Help for mothers. Childhood happiness for the children!” (Riddersporre & Persson, 2010:23).

That being said, even if our root comes from there, certain branches of the tree has developed and changed since then. When some of the pioneers of the kindergarten institutions wanted to articulate an ideal for their operations in late 19th and early 20th century, they used two metaphors: on the one hand the mother, and on the other the home. The mother represented the teacher or caretaker, and the home represented the environment (see e.g. Hatje, 1990; Robertson, 1988). It was thought that by combining the safe and caring environment implied in these notions with the pedagogical theories of the time, it would be possible to create the ideal institution for the development and integration of children into society. All the way up until the 1970s, despite people such as Alva Myrdal with their scientifically and psychologically based methods (Halldén, 1990; Myrdal & Myrdal, 1934), this view on preschools as a ‘substitute home’ was still highly prevalent in society – at least according to both two preschool chiefs I interviewed. At present however, even if we still hold on a bit to the notions of ‘childhood happiness’ found in the kindergartens, the organization has extensively changed this specific institutional identity – maybe partly by revitalizing some of the ‘child-cribs’ goals to ‘prepare future workers for society’.

Based on the interviews that I’ve done, today preschool officials and employees view themselves as professionals working within an institution more similar to school than home. One of the preschool chiefs even said that the preschools of today more resembles ‘learning

64 My translation, original: ... att förbereda framtida arbetare åt samhället och ge dem sedlig fostran.
65 My translation, original: Hjälp för mördrar. Barnaglädje åt barna!
institutions’, and that the pedagogues are ‘supervisors’. Furthermore, many pedagogues pointed out that the preschool’s strength lies in offering something different then the family, and thus must separate itself from the idea of home. Consequently they distance themselves emotionally as well as physically. They argue that relationships with the parents are ill-advised and that you should not show too much affection for one particular individual, or love the children you care for.

A bit back in time they said, if I may express myself a bit crudely, that it was nice to be an extended mum, and not so professional. Today we look down on that a bit, and argue that that is not our mission. Parents have their parenthood, and the care and love that a parent has.. we can never give that. We can never get that close to a child. And that is why we can more easily work with development.66

Through the 20th century there has of course been different forms of preschools, grounded in contrasting pedagogical ideas; which is equally true for today. What has stayed fairly universal though is on the one hand the premise of integration – that is, preschools are working for children’s successful entrance into societal life – and on the other hand, the assumption that children need safekeeping and security from certain aspects of human society, such as work-life. Yet now, probably due to a longer period of disassembling, this later dimension seems to be shifting. In the pamphlet mentioned in the introduction, where it was written that “The small-child-school is needed because children in today’s society no longer live near and in daily contact with adults in work and spare-time, the natural role models are gone”67 it was moreover stated that “In today’s society there is a big supply of vocations, work assignments and hobbies. The small-child-school is needed to help children develop a versatile personality – to foster them creatively, bodily, intellectually, socially, volitionally, and emotionally.”68 Due to the demands of society, to supply role models and help form diverse personalities is considered imperative today. As the small-child-school puts it: “We live in a complex world, where we have to be able to master problems within areas such as economy, engineering, environment, energy consumption, work-life, medication, human cultural patterns in industry countries and developing countries, general humanitarian knowledge and much, much more.”69

66 Quote, preschool chief.
67 My translation, original: Småbarnsskolan behövs därför att barn I dagens samhälle inte längre lever I nära daglig kontakt med vuxna I arbete och fritid, de naturliga förebilderna är borta.
69 My translation, original: Vi lever i en komplicerad värld, där vi måste kunna bemästra problem inom områden som ekonomi, teknik, miljö, energiförsörjning, näringsliv, läkekonst, människors kulturmönster i industriländer och utvecklingsländer, allmän humanistisk bildning och mycket, mycket mer.
With economic and entrepreneurial education creeping down through the ages (e.g. ‘The Spark’, swe. *Gnistan*) and companies such as KidZania, an organization offering consumption and production roleplay to children (see the chapter *7. Suggestion for Future Research* for a more detailed overview), it seems like we’re living a transformation. Though hardly as extreme as putting children in factories, on some level organizations and the societal Discourse starts to infringe on something previously sensitive. In the same way KidZania is right now taking careful steps into Europe and USA in order to, as they say, educate children about the realities of the world, one could argue that something similar is happening with preschools in Sweden. Preparation, supplying role models, and teaching children about the ‘real world’ is something that came up in most of my interviews, and I believe that the notion that underpins both KidZania, the research project *The Spark* (*Gnistan*), and certain preschools today, is somewhat similar. Namely: that it’s never too early for institutions to equip children with the proper ‘preconditions’ for reality; a reality that is after all both environmental and cultural, as well as productive, consumeristic, and capitalistic.

These institutions work for a new more social and self-managing ‘preferred orientation of the self’, aided by mechanisms directed at individuality and sentimentality (see e.g. Fleming & Sturdy, 2009; Kinnie et al., 2000). At KidZania the six most important steps of working in a grocery store is: be polite, always smile, body language, do not run, help one and other, and “Have fun!!”; in preschools you should not learn because you are told to, but because you think it is fun; and as it’s written in ‘The Spark’, “The more pronounced purposes with the operation often surrounded that the children shall get to explore and learn things in a – for them and the pedagogues – fun way.”70 (Kjällander & Selander, 2013:31). As I’ve discussed, the aforementioned is not necessarily about learning actual practices, but more to plant the seed of success. It’s about: strengthening the ‘self’, independence, and self-reliance; fostering entrepreneurial spirits and encouraging learning. This goal of preparation is connected to a logic of ‘potential’ not at all unique to preschools (see e.g. Costea et al., 2012). As Holmqvist et al. has said for instance, talking about the principals of expert advisors:

> The aim of such pastoral authorities and the self-forming technologies that they bring is then not so much to help individuals discipline a particular normalized identity, but to help them constantly transcend themselves; working on themselves to reach their full potential (Rose, 2007). (Holmqvist, et al., 2012: 196)

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70 My translation, original: *De mer uttalade syftena med verksamheten rör sig ofta om att barnen ska få utforska och lära sig saker på ett för dem, och för pedagogerna, roligt sätt.*
As a final reflection, I would like to put forward some extemporaneous ideas for speculation. It was stated by some of the pedagogues in my interviews that children are more narcissistic or egoistic today, and more and more frequently I seem to encounter people who claim that children are acting much older today than before (a theme that has even figured in the quite popular Swedish series *Solsidan* – see episode 5 season 4). This is something many people seem surprised by, which in a way is curious. For this seems to be exactly what our education appears to be structured according to: i.e. self-managing, self-reliant, and independent individuals with strong sense of ‘self’ that are well prepared for the future. Isn’t that who we search for when we seek the ‘future active social participant’? Conspicuously, we want to strengthen their individuality and then are surprised that they act egoistic; we prepare them for the future and then are surprised that they dress and feel a certain way earlier. To me, spontaneously, what seems most surprising is that we are surprised at all.
6. Conclusion

In this thesis I set out to study a research gap in the field of management studies. I looked at the discursive goals and mechanisms of socialization in preschools, which I analysed in terms of *Subjectification* and *Identity Regulation & Formation*. Through data gathered from two preschools in the Stockholm area, I discuss certain mechanisms, or ‘technologies of the self’ (Foucault, 2015i; Kosmala & Herrbach, 2006:1394), employed in the preschools; such as individual discourses, the children’s agency, and the milieu or context, to shape the identities of the children. For instance in many interviews pedagogues talked about the preschools role in strengthening the children’s ‘self’, independence and ‘self-reliance’. This could be done either through discourses telling them that they are capable individuals and showing them how to do things; or it could be achieved by strengthening the children’s agency, i.e. their ability to do things themselves. By enabling children to ‘do themselves’, e.g. by adapting the milieu so that children easily can grab things, preschools make children apart of their own identity creation. The mechanisms constructing subjectivity in the preschool is thus achieved by an interplay between the discourses of the institution as such, and the children themselves enacting and putting that discourse into play.

The primary goal behind the education of children, as expressed by the interviewees and the curriculum, is teaching the children social competences and setting the proper preconditions, e.g. for learning and societal existence. However, also underpinning this lies a notion of cultivating potentiality. Preschool education entails taking the potential to learn implied in the expression ‘a life-long learning’, and going beyond the unconditioned preconditions to reach higher societal norms. Hence, when preschools refer to ‘setting the precondition’, it can be understood as capitalizing on the potential for children to reach future requirements of sophistication. The ‘read warranty’, mentioned by one preschool chief, which aimed at increasing the children’s richness of vocabulary, 12-16 years ahead, is symbolic of this.

Moreover, these ‘requirements’ adhere to certain ideals regarding the traits of the ‘future active social participant’, and I’ve shown how the ‘preferred orientation of self’ (Kosmala & Herrbach, 2006: 1394) that the preschool is trying to create, has to do with forming the individuals so that they: have a joyful attitude towards learning, a strong ‘self’, independence, self-reliance, and a self-managing/ self-governing spirit. Other features were also mentioned such as curiosity and will for exploration, which arguably conforms to the so called ‘entrepreneurial spirit’ searched for in the research project ‘The Spark’ (swe. *Gnistan*).
Additionally, and in consonance with the aforementioned, I’ve demonstrated how much of the socialization process and the power at play in these preschools, has a liaison to studies found in managerial and CMS literature (see e.g. Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Costea et al., 2012; Holmqvist et al., 2012; Kosmala & Herrbach, 2006; Maravelias, 2011; Pongratz & Voß, 2003).

In conclusion, I’ve also pointed to the fact that all these traits might themselves be seen as what has been called ‘neo-normative control’, and hence play the role of both ‘preferred orientation of self’ and a governmental device (Fleming & Sturdy, 2009). I’ve claimed that “The decree of personal freedom, ‘fun’, and ‘do what you want’ must ultimately fall in line with the prevailing societal ideals; for, insofar as it tries to change their ways, a child that wants to run away or doesn’t think it is fun to learn is nevertheless considered problematic by society. Ergo, the posterior of having no physical fences is that we instead construct ‘barriers of sentiment.’”

Governance through ‘fun’, ‘interests’, and ‘free’ exploration, is prevalent in preschool discourse, where the children are compelled to “not learn for my sake, rather you should learn because you think it is fun.”

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71 Quote, see chapter 4.2.2.
72 Quote, pedagogue.
7. Suggestion for Future Research

There is a company called KidZania, which is dedicated to “making the world a better place” (if you believe their website). Their mission and vision is to “feature the very best educational entertainment experience in role-playing for our visitors” and “to ignite the hearts and minds of kids everywhere by empowering them to make the world a better place”. This place is a sort of amusement park where parents can drop off their children for four hours (mainly children between the ages 4 and 14, though children under and above are also welcome). Although this is no ordinary amusement park. Instead of rollercoasters, games and cotton candy, at KidZania you will find Renault, H&M, and Unilever, amongst others.

The concept is this: to enter KidZania you pay 32 pounds at the entrance and in exchange you get 50 KidZos – the official currency of KidZania. When the children enter they have a number of different things they can buy with their KidZos: e.g. ice-cream, sweats, and chocolate; they can also go climbing and get a face painting. Or instead, if they don’t feel like doing any of that, or if they’ve run out of money, they can go to work. They can go to Renault and change tires on wheels, to British airways and act as an air steward or stewardess, or to K-market, a grocery store, where they stand in a cashier and help customers. They even get instruction and education about the work at hand. They learn for example that the six most important steps of working in a grocery store as K-market is: be polite, always smile, body language, do not run, help one and other, and “Have fun!!” Then, once they’ve worked for 20 minutes, they get eight new KidZos that they are free to spend anywhere. Moreover, if they feel like eight KidZos is not enough and want to earn more, they can also go to the university, which instantly raises their salary with two KidZos. And finally, if they have money left before they leave, they can go to the bank and place it on an account from which they can withdraw the money at their next visit.

The products and prices are real, supplied by the companies. Each company creates and pays for their own corner in KidZania and in turn the idea is (I suppose) that they get the unique marketing and relationship building opportunities that KidZania supplies. The company exists in about 20 countries around the world, amongst some: Mexico (from where it originated), Japan, Singapore, Chile, Brazil, Egypt, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, and

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73 The following information is partly gathered from the website, http://london.kidzania.com/en-uk, and partly from a feature called ‘Quand les marques éduquent les enfants’ in a French television program from M6, 29 of November, 2015: ‘Les grandes marques ne meurent jamais’.
others. This is not a study of KidZania, but I ask myself, what does KidZania represent on a societal level? How do we interpret this? The answer to these questions works well into the social process that I’ve attempted to study in this thesis.

Some might say that KidZania doesn’t represent anything, and that it’s simply roleplaying. As the company itself put it, it’s roleplaying which enables education about the realities and practicalities of contemporary society, whilst at the same time having fun (!!). Yet it’s hard to believe that one could not read more into this, something dealing with the history of childhood, consumerism and capitalism. I will refrain from going into any deeper discussions of civilizations cultural patterns here – partly because I’m not very fond of the assumption of difference that a lot of cultural studies are predicated on, for many of the reason that post-colonial writers such as Said, Bhaba, and Brah have pointed out – but I will nonetheless remark that it’s curious that out of all the locations for KidZania only two are established in Europe (Portugal and UK) and none in USA or Canada. One could argue that this might have to do with KidZania’s or their partner’s strategic marketing interests. That children in Europe, USA and Canada, already are so familiar with brands such as H&M, Renault and Unilever, and hence that for strategical long-term reasons Kuwait, Qatar, or The UAE are preferable targets. But it could also be that KidZania’s management believes that the idea of having children go into a capitalistic micro-cosmos where they learn how to work and consume is for some reason, and maybe ironically, harder to digest for the European based capitalistic and consumeristic societies; and this since it breaks what I have called the child-adult divide.

KidZania as a representation of something, even though the thematics of that representation is still unclear, has influenced and interested me greatly and would without a doubt constitute an interesting further study subject in line with this thesis.
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9. Appendix

9.1 Answers to the Question ‘What is a Child?’

Translation: What? What is a child? What is a child… A child is a… well, a child is a human being in the process of experiencing and discovering our world; who learns incredibly many things; who hasn’t been shaped by society yet. They are complex already when they are born; they have everything: abilities, happiness… They are remarkable humans. I really think they are. Because they teach me incredibly much as well. And I know that it’s our future. We have to cherish them. I usually listen to the song ‘The Enigmatic People’, who come from a foreign land. When you listen to that song… that’s how children are. It’s so incredible simply that they exist, and that I can be a part of forming them (and get payed to do so).


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Translation: A child is a human. We at the preschool forms the child so that he/ she will go out into society and become beautiful. You could say that we polish a bit. And then [they] go to school and become more and more polished. Formed to a good human. Children are curious, so we help them explore things, and to learn the interaction with other children. And you see quickly when the children are interested in something, then we try to help the child to learn and explore.

att barnen är intresserade av någonting, då försöker man hjälpa till barnen att lära sig saker och undersöka.

*  

Translation: A child, for me, it’s… I’m almost becoming a bit touched because it’s so remarkable... It is a person full of happiness, open doors, and I have, as an adult, such an incredible power over this, to not shut those doors. You pushed a button there… A child is so remarkable. It’s so much happiness and running, so much fun; and joyfully. I only rejoice in the possibility of being able to work with, as I often say, Sweden’s future. I want to meet the children as I myself want to be met. But yes, they are incredibly interesting. Very competent, but as I also usually say, just a bit too short; a meter too short, for us adults to respect them for the person they are.


*  

Translation: What is a child? Wow, yes that was really… God. No but, just a… god, what should I say. An incredible individual, with plenty of potential. So much I can say actually. But I see it like a bunch of nebula, what we will give them, and they will just add on and fill up and so. The environment we give, and what we are, towards that little child, it will become so, shinning. I don’t know.

Translation: Well, a child, if one would look at it purely like that, then it is someone under 18 years old, approx. But a child is probably something that has not lived that long. It’s someone who have not had the time to build up that many experiences of things. And it is someone who… I don’t know, one finds a sincerity in children, they have not learned this thing yet… There is after all a social game in which everyone participates in some way or another, and they are not as drilled in that yet. Which I find incredibly… It’s somehow very nice, that there is a sincerity and curiosity in children I think. But children are also someone who are exposed to others, and that can’t survive (handle) themselves. That need support in learning how to survive (handle) one self. I’m thinking.


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Translation: It’s a human. A human like everyone else, just a bit shorter. They know [are able to do] everything, they are completely competent; they just don’t know it yet. We have to tell them what they are able of.


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Translation: That’s very exciting. What is a child… hum… It’s not something I have a crystal clear “yes this is what I think a child is”. I more think like, what fascinates me, is when I see these children that I work with outside with their parents. Then I see ‘but god, how small they are, they are just small children’. Here you lose that. I mean, it’s not like I treat them like adults, but I see them as competent individuals. And I have reacted on that I see them differently when I see them with their older siblings, they sit in the pushchair, they get pacifiers. In some way it
feels like we in our worlds, the families, we decide that ‘you will be this way’. Then you become a child. It’s really like that; what is a child? There is something… When we have “inskolning” it becomes very apparent. Because then it’s ‘if my child falls, who is one year and five months old, then he will not get up again, then you have to help him’. Those are the big questions parents come with. And of course the child falls, it happens pretty quickly. And they get up again directly. So, what is a child? Is that something we make. Is it in our reception that we… For the first question is always the same when you meet someone ‘and how old are you little girl or boy; ooh that big, soon four’. With this tiny voice. And hence we get some kind of grading of what they can do. Or we say ‘well, you’re so big now, you should know this’. Yes I think it’s a very good question, very interesting.


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Translation: Wow, what an exciting question. Yes… I think that a child is a human, and that one should not fall in the trap of thinking that a child is… like this… there is some expression, about being or becoming. That is, the child is not something that should become something else, rather the child should be allowed to be what it is in itself. You can for example talk about that we should have a ‘view of children’ in preschools, but in reality it’s a view of humans we
should have. Where regardless of whether you are one meter or two meter you should have the same respect. That has to be a precondition when I look at the child. Moreover I think that it’s a human that does not have as long workli… not… life experience as me. And I need to keep that in mind as well. When I challenge them regarding language, or natural experiences, they have maybe four years experience while I have 33. And that is important to remember.


*Translation: What is a child?... A life, a new life. A new life, as I’ve said before, an unwritten life. A new life that’s... That’s a good question. Really. A human. A child is a human, a new human. Very beautiful, indeed. I’m so sensitive when it comes to children. When I look at the children, I mean, like your question, ‘what is a child’, the children are... The emotions... Emotion. That is, children maybe bring to light such emotions with adults, so that you start to think ‘what is a human as well?’ They bring to light emotions. How a human should be. That’s what I am thinking about at least.


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Translation: A child is a human. A slightly smaller human. What more did you say? If society has any responsibilities? Of course we have. It’s our future. And regarding what responsibilities the child has… That’s not so much responsibilities, but more… We others, adults, that have more experience. We need to reflect our experience so that the child also gets experience and regarding that we need to create good foundations so that experiences and learning will become as positive as possible. That is, I think that you cannot have different essential values. Today we talk a lot about essential values, all of the time, and I usually say that ‘watch out so you don’t end up in the essential-value-swamp and only talk about essential values and never get any further’. In my world there is no difference, I act the same way against adults as I do against children. It’s just that I direct myself differently, because I know that a child’s life experience is not as big as your life experience. I cannot talk to a child like I can with you. Instead I have to turn against the child and create an image of ‘what experiences do you have, how can I reason with you, what questions can I ask you.’ That’s the sure instinct when you’re a good pedagogue.

9.2 Lyrics to ‘Det Gåtfulla Folket’ (The Enigmatic People)

Barn är ett folk och de bor i ett främmande land, detta land är ett regn och en pöl
Över den pölen går pojkarnas båtar ibland och de glider så fint utan köl
Där går en flicka som samlar på stenar, hon har en miljon
Kungen av trädstam sitter stilla bland grenar i trädkungens tron
Där går en pojke som skratrar åt snö
Där går en flicka som gjorde en ö av femton kuddar
Där går en pojke och allting blir glass som han snuddar
Alla är barn och de tillhör det gåtfulla folket

Barn är ett folk och de bor i ett främmande land, detta land är en äng och en vind
Där finner kanske en pojke ett nytt Samarkand och far bort på en svängande grind
Där går en flicka som sjunger om kottar, själv eger hon två
Där vid ett plank står en pojke och klottrar att jorden är blå
Där går en pojke som blev indian
Där, där går kungen av skugga runt stan och skuggar bovar
Och där fann en flicka en festlig grimas som hon provar
Alla är barn och de tillhör det gåtfulla folket

Barn är ett folk och de bor i ett främmande land, detta land är en gård och ett skjul
Där sker det farliga tågöverfallet ibland, vackra kvällar när månen är gul
Där går en pojke och gissar på bilar, själv vinner han jämt
Fåglarnas sånger i olika stilar är magiska skämt
Där blir en värdeförlorad sak till en skatt
Där, där blir sångar till fartyg en natt och går till månen
Där finns det riken som ingen av oss tar ifrån dem
Alla är barn och de tillhör det gåtfulla folket

– Det gåtfulla folket, from 1964, by Beppe Wolgers & Olle Adolphson