Chapter 8

[title]**The Controversy of Ravza's Pacifier: In Search of Embodied Care in Preschool Education**

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Over the last forty years, Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) has gained recognition by governments, parents, employers, local communities, and researchers for various reasons. The importance of ECEC provision has been stressed, supported by the argument that it enables the early learning of children as a foundation for reaching higher educational attainment and productive employment in later life. Longitudinal studies in the USA and the UK have demonstrated, for example, that high-quality preschool can improve outcomes in terms of children's cognitive development, socio-emotional functioning, and educational performance, especially for children from low socio-economic backgrounds and children with migrant backgrounds, (see reviews of Lazarri and Vandenbroeck 2013, Melhuish et al. 2015, Leseman and Slot 2014, Bennett 2012).

In the international realm, it is therefore argued that ECEC is increasingly conceptualized as a preparation for compulsory schooling since children are expected to acquire (pre-)literacy, (pre-)numeracy and (pre-)scientific skills from a young age, and this development has been called *schoolification* of preschool education (OECD 2006, Moss 2013, Woodhead 2006). Preschool education is increasingly constructed as a prep school with a significance in later stages of life (Ang 2014, Vandenbroeck, Coussee, and Bradt 2010). According to critical scholars, the emphasis on schoolification indeed shows that children are considered autonomous and rational human beings who need to be made ready for future economic, social, political, and cultural life (Lynch, Baker, and Lyons 2009, Noddings 1984).

In this chapter, however, we want to scrutinize the interpretations of learning in preschool arrangements that tend to limit the attention given to the *caring* dimension of education (Alvestad 2009, Forrester 2005, Kyriacou et al. 2009, Van Laere and Vandenbroeck 2017). The debate so far has focused on conceptualizations of care and education in ECEC, and it has been argued that a divide and hierarchy between care and education has been constructed in which caring is subordinate to learning (Garnier 2011, Cameron and Moss 2011, Kaga, Bennett, and Moss 2010, Löfdahl and Folke-Fichtelius 2015). By increasingly emphasizing the future employability of children, some scholars believe that schoolification of the early years contributes to intensifying Cartesian rationalism, signifying a further disembodiment of education (Fielding and Moss 2011, Tobin 1997, Warin 2014). We focus on the idea that this hierarchy between care and education stems, in theoretical terms, from an underlying notion of a mind–body dualism that might have implications for how children are approached by professionals following ECEC policies and practices (Van Laere et al. 2014).

In what follows, we first explain how contemporary feminist thinkers have framed this mind–body dualism in care arrangements as problematic. To go beyond this hierarchical binary between care and education, we elaborate on the work of Hamington (2004, 2015a, 2016, 2014), an ethics of care theorist whose work is rooted in phenomenological ontological notions. Second, we frame our research methodology, inspired by a video-cued, multi-vocal conversation that was organized during ten focus groups with parents and four focus groups with diverse preschool staff in the Belgian cities of Ghent, Brussels, and Antwerp. During the focus groups, a movie of a so-called typical day in a preschool class was discussed. Third, we engage in a qualitative analysis that is inspired by a specific storyline in the video (see Van Laere 2017). During this research project and analysis, the interactions with Ravza, a two-and-a-half-year-old Turkish girl in preschool, evoked a lot of discussion and controversy amongst the research respondents. By analyzing the meanings that respondents attribute to the

situation of Ravza, we consider conceptualizations of care and education and make a plea for professionals who might learn to embrace differentiated manifestations of interdependency, underpinned by notions of difference and solidarity in our societies, that allow for such practices in early childhood settings.

A Mind–body Hierarchy in Care

An Essentialist Mind–body Dualism

From a perspective of contemporary feminist theory, it is argued that discourses and practices in Western societies often implicitly embody an underlying mind–body dualism that is constructed on the basis of essentialist claims that the body is ontologically separate from the mind (Braidotti 2006, Haraway 1991, Gatens 1996, Braidotti 2013). This so-called Cartesian error in Western cultures, which refers to the assumption that there exists a dualism of mind and body, "a mind somehow cut off from matter" (Grosz 1994, 86), was challenged by feminist theorists in the 1980s and 1990s. These early third-wave feminists asserted that European modernist ideals, idealizing rationality and progression, are founded in the impossible separation of the body and the mind (Price and Shildrick 1999, Braidotti 2006, Braidotti 2013). Feminist scholars have rejected these essentialist ontological assumptions (Braidotti 1991, Gatens 1991, Haraway 1991, Grosz 1994, Butler 1990) and challenged dominant and historically rooted essentialist discourses and practices of care since those who *give* and *receive* care are perceived as marginal bodies (Wolkowitz 2006, Hughes et al. 2005). In the case of ECEC arrangements, the disembodiment of education not only affects children and parents, but the staff's bodies also tend to be denied or marginalized.

Implications for Those Who Receive Care

For those who receive care, the mind–body dualism means that they have often been considered as a burden to society since they do not meet the ideal of the rational and self-managing citizen/subject involved in self-determination, free choice, and self-reliance

(Williams 2001, Clarke 2005). Reindal (1999, 354) asserts the ideal of "independence and the ability to govern oneself" in rational ways is a widely accepted and frequently promoted basis for care policies and practices. This ideal of rational autonomy is nonetheless problematic. A dependence–independence dichotomy (see Reindal 1999, Williams 1999) is easily created and might have deep implications for people such as children, disabled people, elderly people and all people who are unable to choose and control their lives independently without significant others (Dean 2015, Dowse 2009, Lister 1997, Reindal 1999, Watson et al. 2004, Williams 2001). It has been argued that those policy and practice rationales paradoxically and easily mark people out as different in kind and devalued in their humanity (Williams, 2001). In that sense, those who receive care seem to belong to the private sphere of the "household of emotions" in Western societies and disappear as a concern from the public sphere, where issues of social justice and solidarity prevail (Hughes et al. 2005).

[subhead]**Implications for Those Who Give Care**

For those who give care, the mind–body dualism implies that certain types of care will continue to be relegated to the private domain of human activity (Hughes et al. 2005). In that sense, *body work* (bodies' work on other bodies), a concept of Wolkowitz (2006), can be considered as inferior and "dirty work," as workers have to negotiate the boundaries of the body (Douglas cited in Twigg et al. 2011).

Inspired by the notion of "leaky bodies," caring is predominantly about the containment, in its material form, of bodily fluids and, in its symbolic form, of bodily difference that is perceived as a burden to the social order (Hughes et al. 2005). Dealing with leaky bodies and boundaries cannot be avoided (Shildrick 1997) and breaks down the modernist myth of the rational (or becoming-rational) subject, signaling a world of relational transactions of caring and mutual recognition. A similar, slightly different concept introduced by Hochschild (2003) is *emotional labor*. Feminists have criticized dominant assumptions in which care, being

4

perceived as emotional labor, is expected to happen in the shadows of the symbolic order (Hughes et al. 2005). Emotional work, such as caring, therefore involves devalued work (Hochschild 2003; Twigg et al. 2011).

From this perspective, it is argued that caring work is consequently gendered, yet also classed and racialized. The gendered nature of care constructs women as natural subjects: caring work is seen as the duty and responsibility of women, being considered as unpaid work that women naturally do in the private sphere (Lister 1997). And when caring work is paid, the wages tend to be low and the recognition for employment poor, which reinforces already existing inequalities in the labor market (Rake 2001). Tronto (1993), for example, shows how the concrete giving and receiving of care is, in a male imaginary, left to the least powerful in society (Tronto 1993, Cockburn 2010). Moreover, the Cartesian division between mind and body appears not solely as a strongly gendered construction but also a classed and racialized construction that implies that body work and emotional labor carry a stigma and will be done by the lowest in the pecking order (Twigg et al. 2011, Wolkowitz 2006, Isaksen, Devi, and Hochschild 2008).

The Body Matters

An Anti-essentialist Corporeality

In search for alternative understandings that go beyond this mind–body dualism, feminists have argued for anti-essentialism as an alternative basis for feminist politics and collective concerns for women and men. From the perspective of third-wave feminist theory, rather than reducing the body to an unspoken being in Western societies, the body matters (Witz 2000), and not just to women, as "an open-ended, pliable set of significations, capable of being rewritten, reconstituted, in quite other terms than those which mark it" (Grosz 1994, 61). Their central argument is that the mind is always embodied or based on corporeal relations, and that the body is always social, political, and in-process rather than natural, thus referring

5

to a non-unitary vision of the subject whose mind and body are intrinsically interrelated (Braidotti 2006, Vandekinderen and Roets 2016).

In third-wave feminism, definitions of care are accordingly placed within broader social and political concerns rather than within an essentialist, individual-gendered psychology (Cockburn 2010). The caring relationship is valorized for its potential to symbolize the very embodiment of care in our societies; the interpretation of caring as marginal work is challenged and claims for dignity and respect for both the giver and receiver of care can be made (Hughes et al. 2005). In that vein, those who *give* and *receive* care are perceived as *bodies that matter*.

[subhead]**Implications for Those Who Receive Care**

The underlying interpretations of subjectivities of those who receive care, underpinned by biological essentialism, are challenged, and the notion of corporeality—or embodied subjectivity—is introduced (Braidotti 2006). These extended interpretations of the body assert new figurations of embodied rather than purely rational subjectivity (Lather 1991, Braidotti 2006, 2011). Making sense of corporeality suggests a relational rather than purely rational approach to the autonomy of the human subject (Dowse 2009, Goodley and Roets 2008, Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick-Cole 2014, Vandekinderen and Roets 2016), one that embraces interdependency rather than in - dependency as "an indispensable feature of the human condition"(Reindal 1999, 354). From a life course perspective the interdependent need for care is intrinsically a universal feature of the human condition that tends to be more or less intense but remains as a continuum (Lister 1997) and requires that we all embrace a notion of relational autonomy for *all* citizens (Williams 2001). As Lister (1997, 114) argues aptly, *relational autonomy* refers to an autonomous self that "does not have to be set in opposition to notions of interdependency and reciprocity, provided that it is understood that this autonomy, and the agency that derives from it, is only made possible by the human relationships that

6

nourish it and the social infrastructure that supports it." This feature of interdependency can, however, be considered as a universal feature of the human subject. In that sense, *all* human subjects require or give care during the course of their lives; "the giving and receiving of care is imperative to human existence but is experienced differently at various points in the life course" (Watson et al. 2004, 333).

[subhead]Implications for Those Who Give Care

From a third-wave feminist perspective, an ethics and politics of care implies an embodied ethics (Braidotti 2013). In that vein, here we mainly rely on Maurice Hamington's (2004, 2015a, 2012, 2014) theory of embodied care as a suitable theoretical backbone for the deconstruction of the Cartesian dualistic tradition that values the mind over the body. For Hamington, care permeates the human condition and is about who we fundamentally are as human beings. Hamington (2015b, 2012, 2016) argues that, on an ontological level, human beings are fundamentally relational and embodied beings. On an ethical level, this means that people are confronted with choices to be made in order to "do the right things." Rather than prescribed caring behaviors, the normative caring response is a product of openness and attentiveness to the questions that emerge in a particular relationship in a specific context (Hamington 2016).

[head]Research Methodology

[subhead]Research Context

The Flemish community of Belgium is historically characterized by a split childcare system consisting of care services for children from zero to three years old (*kinderopvang*) under the auspices of the Minister for Welfare and preschool institutions (*kleuterschool*) for children from two-and-a-half to six years old that are part of the educational system (Oberhuemer, Schreyer, and Neuman 2010). Every child is entitled to free preschool from two and a half

years onwards. Despite almost universal enrolment in preschool education, there is an unequal attendance—children from migrant and/or poor families are slightly more often absent from preschool than their more affluent peers—that causes policy concerns, as it is allegedly associated with school failure in later years (Department of Education 2015). According to the latest studies by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Belgium is one of the countries with the most pronounced educational gap between children with high socioeconomic status and low socioeconomic status (SES) and between children with and without migrant backgrounds (OECD 2013, 2016).

[subhead]Video-cued Multi-vocal Conversation

The studies "pre-school in three cultures" (revisited) and "children crossing borders" from Joe Tobin and colleagues are an important source of inspiration for our qualitative study (Tobin 2009, 2016, Tobin, Arzubiaga, and Adair 2013, Tobin, Wu, and Davidson 1989). Tobin stimulates and evokes a multi-vocal conversation. This makes use of visual materials as a powerful tool to evoke genuine, spontaneous reactions. Research respondents are considered as subjects who can understand, even enjoy and find a movie provocative or meaningful, and are therefore invited to participate in focus groups (Tobin and Hsueh 2007).

To enable this multi-vocal conversation during the focus groups, a movie of a typical day in preschool was compiled. The movie shows how nineteen children, with and without migrant backgrounds, experienced a half- or full-day in a reception class (*instapklas*) of the Duizendvoet preschool in Lokeren, a small town in Belgium. The footage includes parents bringing and fetching their children, teacher-guided and free activities in class, free time at the outdoor playground, toileting, snack time, and lunchtime. We edited the movie in different stages and discussed these edited versions with the staff and parents of the children portrayed in the movie.[1]

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[1] The final movie can be viewed for research purposes at the following link: https://vimeo.com/199802331. (password: katrien)

[sub subhead]*Focus Groups*

The movie is not considered as data. Yet, 24 minutes movie was used to evoke reflection of staff members and parents on ECEC practices. We conducted ten focus groups with sixty-nine parents in the cities of Ghent, Antwerp, and Brussels. We decided to invite the participation of parents who are objects of policy making, which entails a focus on a diversity of parents with a migrant family history. We conducted four focus groups with forty-two preschool staff members (preschool teachers, teacher's assistants, after-school care workers, and supervisory staff) in the cities of Ghent and Brussels. These cities are characterized by a higher than average concentration of poverty and having a larger than average proportion of inhabitants with migrant backgrounds.

[sub subhead]*Data Analysis*

The overarching data analysis of the focus groups corresponds with principles of abductive analysis, which is "a creative inferential process aimed at producing new hypotheses and theories based on surprising research evidence" (Timmermans and Tavory 2012, 170). The starting point is identifying surprising facts that cannot be simply explained by induction or deduction.

In our study, the majority of the research participants feel emotionally touched and disturbed by the movie footage in which Ravza, a little girl with a pacifier, cries a lot. Quite surprisingly, even staff members that do not consider care as part of their professional repertoire, identify possible care needs of this child. As parents and professionals watch the movie, most of them problematize that Ravza is sitting alone most of the time, that she cries, and that she does not play by herself or with others. For some, it breaks their hearts, as they say in their own words, to see Ravza crying in the movie. Many participants were trying to figure out what is going on with Ravza, and what could be done by the professionals in the classroom to deal with the girl. A lot of the discussions concerning the situation of Ravza

focus on the observation that Ravza is holding a pacifier,[2] and this causes some controversy over whether or not children should be allowed to have a pacifier in preschool.

[head]Research Findings

In what follows, we address the different standpoints concerning the pacifier, not with the intent of defining whether a pacifier is desirable or not, but in order to understand explicit or underlying thoughts on education and care in the early years. The majority of participants attribute a negative connotation to the pacifier, feeling that it functions as an obstacle to the learning of Ravza and the other children in preschool, while other parents and professionals attribute a more positive connotation to the pacifier as it could compensate for the care dimensions that seem to be missing in the preschool system.

[subhead]Pacifier as an Obstacle for Education

[sub subhead]*Pacifier as a Hindrance for Speaking and Learning the Dominant Language*

In our study, many parents and preschool staff share experiences about children like Ravza, who do not master the dominant language and have not attended childcare before. According to them, these children have a higher risk of experiencing adaptation problems in preschool. Although participants underline the importance of a caring and attentive teacher, many parents and professionals seem to agree that eventually these children have to adapt to the preschool system. This was a particular concern in the view of preschool teachers, who view Ravza's crying as somewhat normal behavior since Ravza is transitioning from the home to the preschool environment, and, therefore, they argue that this behavior should be gone by the fifth week of starting preschool. In that sense, many parents and professionals express their

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[2] We note that the search for a translation of pacifier into English is already an interesting cultural inquiry as this object has different cultural connotations and names. In Dutch, we say *tut* or *fopspeen*, which addresses the suction need of a baby without giving them food or letting them drink. In English, other words exist such as *soother*, *comforter*, … We have chosen to use the word *pacifier*, knowing that this term is not a neutral term.

concern that the pacifier might hinder Ravza from speaking up in the class and communicating with the teacher and the other children.

> *After-school care worker: I think it is a pity that the girl is holding on to her bookbag and her pacifier the whole time. The teacher should encourage her to remove the pacifier. If you remove the pacifier, she will be able to talk with the other children. Now she seems lost. (FS 4)*

Moreover, the opinions of parents are that it is a task of the teacher to make this clear to the parents.

> *Parent 1: If she cries, she can't learn and if she has the pacifier, she can't learn. I will know before my baby comes to the school that I have to do exercises to stop this, and then she will become cleverer in the school to contact another person. If they have a pacifier at three or four years, they are a little disabled… If children of five years old have a pacifier, it is difficult to speak and then they look for contact and receive no answer.*
>
> *Parent 2: They indeed say that, but I don't think so. I know so many children. They always said about my children that a pacifier is not good for the teeth and not good for talking.*
>
> *Parent 1: The child will not become clever if she cannot speak.*
>
> *Parent 2: I don't think so because my son had a pacifier. Super, his teeth were good, and his talking was also good. From he was two-and-a-half years old, he spoke really well. The same applies to his cousins.*
>
> *Parent 3: Without pacifier, it is much better. They will talk Dutch a lot and play well. (FP4)*

The main concern of the first mother seems to be that Ravza won't be able to talk and, therefore, will not be able to learn because of having a pacifier. The mother perceives the

11

pacifier as a hindrance for learning in the sense that Ravza is not able to communicate, and consequently, she may not develop properly. The second mother in this fragment questions the view that a pacifier is not good for the teeth and the development of the child. Most parents in this focus group agree with the first mother that children should not have a pacifier in class. The first mother states that it is the task of the teacher to ask the parents to stop using the pacifier as it is the task of parents to prepare the child for preschool. This mother also emphasizes the importance of learning Dutch so that a child is prepared to become clever in school and also in life. For a majority of the parents, learning Dutch is the most important function of preschool; their children need Dutch in order to be able to follow primary school to succeed in school life and later in work life. Some parents, for example, express the hope that their children will become doctors or civil servants. Therefore, succeeding in school is important and in parents' view, this is only possible when children master the Dutch language as soon as possible. A common belief of many parents is that differences in dealing with children will disappear once the children know Dutch.

[sub subhead]*Banning Pacifiers so Children Will Become Self-reliant*

Although her child desperately wants to hold on to a pacifier in preschool, one mother explains that children should stop using the pacifier because they are not babies anymore. The idea that a pacifier does not belong in preschool, is also a predominant view of the teachers.

> *Preschool teacher 1: While seeing this child in the movie, I'm thinking that I'm a hard teacher for toddlers. In my case, the "pampering," such as washing hands are things that they need to do themselves. Like the pacifier. For me the pacifier has to be removed from the child. The pacifier belongs to home, in the schoolbag, or for sleeping and so on. I think that these children are kept very small. But, maybe it is because I'm hard.*

Preschool teacher 2: She will be able to come out of her state in which she is really nestled now. (FS1)

In this example, the pacifier symbolizes "staying small" This seems to imply that children need to "grow up" the moment they enter preschool. By banning a pacifier, children won't be kept small anymore by the teacher or the system. Some parents also allude to this meaning by reporting that they say to their child that they are not babies anymore so they have to stop holding a pacifier in preschool. In this fragment, the teacher connects "staying small" with children who don't do things themselves. It also became clear in the focus group that stimulating self-reliance in children is an important function of preschool, according to the teachers and some childcare workers. The teacher in this citation identifies herself as having a "hard" approach, which implies that the approach the teacher in the movie uses is too "soft." The teacher uses the verb "pampering" when referring to the children to problematize this approach.

The underlying assumption here is that, once children arrive in preschool, it is time for them to take responsibility for growing up and doing things themselves, especially when it comes to their own bodily and emotional caring needs. In this "hard" approach focused on stimulating self-reliance, teachers state that there is not much time for individual attention because they are responsible for collective education. Both parents and preschool staff acknowledge that young children are in the process of dealing with bodily needs such as eating, drinking, blowing their noses, using the toilet, sleeping, etc. Nevertheless, several teachers view supporting these processes as subordinate to preschool learning. Other teachers express the expectation that parents, in the home environment, or childcare workers, in the childcare center, should have already taught the children to be self-sufficient in their physical needs before entering preschool at the age of two-and-a-half. Being disciplined in controlling bodily and emotional functions, reflected in the ideal of not carrying a pacifier, is seen as a

prerequisite for early learning in preschool. Some parents concur with this idea as they are afraid that their children will not receive appropriate attention from the teacher in the early learning processes if they are not able to manage their bodily needs by themselves.

[sub subhead]*Pacifier as a Small Act of Disobedience*

Teachers attribute another meaning to the pacifier, connecting the pacifier to the phenomena of children who keep their jacket on in the beginning of school or want to keep their schoolbags with them.

> *Preschool teacher: Children who keep the schoolbag, their jackets on, and hold on to a pacifier, give me somehow the feeling that they want to push through their opinion. So, they feel like "ok, the teacher can listen a little bit to me." But this should only be in the first day or week. (FS 1)*

The teacher perceives this action as the child wanting to challenge the teachers, as if to get them to listen to him/her yet is convinced that the child has to learn fairly early that he/she cannot force his/her opinion on the class. This implies that children have to learn to obey to the teacher and the school system and let go of their personal needs, desires, and questions. Many professionals and parents understand discipline and obedience to the teacher as important aspects of education; it is assumed that a well-behaved child will do better in preschool and eventually in later schooling and will even be better prepared to work for a boss in later life. In line with this, it is remarkable how, for some professionals, having objects from the home environment like the pacifier and the schoolbag is a non-desirable practice as it would hinder the child's adaptation to the school system. Or, as one of the after-school workers in the focus group says:

> *I understand you have to comfort her, but if you allow the pacifier from home, they start bringing everything from home.*

14

Having objects such as a personal pacifier seem to represent small acts of disobedience from the child (and parents) toward the teacher, the school system, and the broader society. Or, as a preschool teacher who was responsible for thirty children between two-and-a-half and four years old, expresses:

> *In the beginning children are more like anarchists. They do not know how things are going in school and what the rules are. I let them be for a couple of days, and then they really have to start listening.*

[subhead]Pacifier as a Compensation for the Lack of Embodied Care

[sub subhead]*Pacifier as Emotional Comfort*

Several parents understand the pacifier as way to make Ravza more relaxed and to bring peace to her.

> *Parent 2: When children cry and you give them a pacifier, they become calm and relaxed.*
>
> *Parent 4: That is just a habit…*
>
> *Parent 2: The pacifier means a lot to the child, maybe not for us. But for the child, if you all of a sudden take this away like the teacher who would say, "noooo, no pacifier, pacifier out," the child becomes internally ….I don't know.*
>
> *Researcher: What do the others think?*
>
> *Parent 5: No pacifier in school!*
>
> *Parent 2: But I'm not telling you that a pacifier is something good. I know this is nothing special. But after a while, this becomes a habit of the child. She comes to the school and comes from home, somewhere else. And then, all of a sudden, the pacifier needs to be removed. I don't know, I think the child feels different. (FP4)*

For this mother, the pacifier represents a comfort that can make Ravza more relaxed. As she concludes further on, children won't be able to learn if they don't feel good and relaxed.

15

According to her, feeling emotionally safe in the class is a condition for education. This mother explicitly expresses that individual and emotional care should come prior to learning. Several parents, teacher's assistants, and teachers perceive the pacifier as a connection to home since children are in the process of being separated from the home environment. They question the abrupt transition between home and school, which can cause a lot of anxiety, sadness, pain, and insecurity within the child. Ravza may even experience a kind of "culture shock" in the meaning of feeling totally disoriented due to the rapidly changing social and cultural environment. Many parents and teachers state that it is hard for a child to say goodbye for the first time when it is are separated from its mother, especially in situations where children have never been in contact with the Dutch language or gone to childcare. A pacifier could mediate this transitional shock "so she can feel a bit more at home" in the preschool. Although most teachers are convinced that children should not have pacifiers in school, a few teachers are aware of the possible difficulties in the transition between home and school. For example, one teacher allows the children to bring a pacifier or their own stuffed animal. They have to put this in a visible hanging basket so they can see their pacifier and stuffed animal as a kind of emotional comfort, yet they cannot take it.

In that sense, the pacifier might symbolize a lack of embodied care for children in the preschool system. Many parents connect this with a teacher who has to be a "mother-like" person, in the sense of being a person who is available for the children, a person who gives warmth and emotional comfort, and as a person that children can trust. In the focus group of the teacher's assistants, it becomes apparent that they see their job as providing individual attention and emotional care as compensation for the collective education from the teacher in which individual care and attention is lacking.

Remarkably, some parents also underline the importance of both children and adults who are able to care for each other, which indicates a sense of interdependency. In the stories

16

of these parents and teacher's assistants, it becomes clear that caring and learning cannot exist independently: caring activities like eating, drinking, toilet training, sleeping, and comforting are educational in nature; supporting cognitive, social, motor, and artistic learning processes requires that the educator have a caring attitude.

[sub subhead]*Pacifier as a Compensation for the Impossibility of Offering Embodied Care in Preschool Education*

Although many teachers find the individual attention for children time-consuming—they are responsible for the collective education, three teachers who recently became mothers state that becoming a mother has changed their viewpoint. They refer to how the mothers must feel when their toddler starts preschool. It is remarkable that one teacher questions the "hard" way in which Ravza's teacher reacts to Ravza's crying.

> *Preschool teacher 1: I thought it was a weird moment with Ravza. The way the teacher says, "stop crying," I don't know if she understands Dutch, but it must be hard for the mother that her daughter is sad. I would do it differently. On that moment, I found the teacher a bit hard, "Now you have to stop crying because you have a pacifier."*
> *Researcher: What do the others think?*
> *Preschool teacher 3: I think it depends on how long this is going on. Because I sometimes dare to say like, "Now it has been enough."*
> *(Other teachers agree verbally and non-verbally) (FS1)*

According to this participant, the teacher in the movie uses the pacifier as a way to prevent Ravza from crying because it would disturb the desirable class practice, and therefore tries to take distance from the child.

Despite the contentious relationship between learning and caring, the story of Ravza clearly demonstrates that the caring needs of children do not simply disappear. The majority of preschool staff members identify the physical and emotional caring needs of Ravza but have

different ways of coping with the alleged impossibility of dealing with these needs as an underlying and evident assumption in preschool. Preschool staff members develop strategies for restraining their caring responses and for not fully utilizing their embodied potential to care. However, some teachers state that they found it important to engage in care in preschool. They legitimize their caring responses either as part of their own caring personalities or attribute them to the fact that they are mothers themselves. Irrespective of whether or not teachers engage in care, there is a clear consensus that care in preschool education does not fundamentally belong in the professional repertoire of teachers.

[head]Conclusions

The story of Ravza and her pacifier illustrates the relationship between caring and learning as a productive topic in preschool, as it evokes many questions and caused uncertainty, discomfort, and controversy amongst the participants of our study. Many parents and preschool staff feel that children like Ravza, who do not master the dominant language and have not attended childcare before, have a higher risk of experiencing adaptation problems in preschool, which in turn could hinder their early learning opportunities. Despite the omnipresent fear of exclusion, they assume that children have to adapt to the preschool system, irrespective of the abrupt transition they experience from home/childcare to preschool at a very young age. The question they do not explicitly raise is how the preschool staff and system could adapt to the different experiences and starting positions of children.

In that vein, the pacifier symbolizes a problematic conditionality of the acceptance of an embodied human being with bodily and caring needs. On a more abstract level, preferably the body should be disciplined before the start in preschool or as soon as possible in preschool in order for children to be supported and able to learn. At the same time, the pacifier is used to question the divide between caring and learning in preschool, being sensitive to the embodied

care that children might require. Bloch and Kim (2015) problematized the introduction of a formal notion of "readiness" in the Head Start programs in the US in which, for example, children's needs for emotional stability and security are increasingly reframed as competences or skills within a developmental hierarchy that children need to possess and demonstrate. If the child cannot sufficiently self-regulate and demonstrate the required skills, it becomes the child's problem instead of the teacher's problem or that of the preschool or the curriculum (Bloch and Kim 2015). In this line of thinking, Lehrer, Bigras, and Laurin (2017) point out how implicit ideas and practices of readying children for Canadian preschools have paradoxically contributed to marginalizing and stigmatizing children.

The discussions, therefore, illustrate the vital tension between adhering to a dominant mind–body dualism, resulting in a hierarchy of education over embodied care, and the idea that the body does exist and matter in preschool education. In our study, the participants underline the importance of early learning in terms of learning the dominant language, learning to be self-reliant and independent, and learning to obey. To this end, Lynch (2016) stated that Cartesian rationalism has actually slightly changed the hegemony of the *homo sapiens* to the hegemony of the *homo economicus* (the self-sufficient, rational, and economically productive citizen) in education. Both concepts deny the existence of the *homo sentiens* (the interdependent, affective, relational human being) contributing strongly to the invisibility of affective and caring relations among human beings in education (Lynch 2016, Lynch, Lyons, and Cantillon 2007) Scholars like Hamington (2015a, 2012, 2016) indeed argue that, on an ontological level, human beings are fundamentally relational and embodied beings, and therefore human bodies are made to give and receive care.

Our study suggests that the human subject as a *homo sentiens* should be valued in preschool education. Kurban and Tobin (2009) report the statement of a five-year-old girl of Turkish descent in a German preschool who says, "They do not like our bodies." The authors

hypothesize that it is an expression of a young child's awareness of otherness, alterity, and feelings of alienation in terms of race and identity. The girl feels that she is viewed as "less then fully human" (Kurban and Tobin, 2009).

Our study suggests that the ways in which care and education are conceptualized significantly impacts on inclusion and exclusion mechanisms in preschool. Professionals tend to suppress their caring responses. Many preschool teachers view caring not as part of their professional identity and expertise. This needs to be understood in the context of an ECEC split system in which the caring and learning of young children are attributed to different types of services (childcare or preschool) and professionals. This can also be related to the fact that care signifies a devaluation of the preschool teacher profession, as care is historically associated with lower-qualified women assumed to "naturally care" for children (Van Laere et al. 2014).

In relation to the theoretical debates on ECEC professionalism, arguments have been made for a holistic view in which education and care are intrinsically the same, and the concept *educare* has been introduced (Cameron and Moss 2011, European Commission 2011, Kaga, Bennett, and Moss 2010). In countries with an integrated ECEC system or with a social pedagogical tradition like the Nordic countries and Germany, this *educare* view is more prevalent than in countries with a split system of separate childcare services and preschools (Kaga, Bennett, and Moss 2010). In that vein, we argue that the development of a professional, reflective language of educare might be very fruitful and enable staff to utilize their embodied potential to care.

Our study also reveals that we need to take distance from decontextualised pleas for 'holistic development' if we want to do justice to a humane educational praxis (Roets et al. 2017). The label "holistic" does not prevent professionals from accommodating individualistic meanings or a relativism of critical value positions, or to "become detached

from fundamental political and ethical questions of justice and equality" (Lorenz 2016, 6). Building further on the theoretical work of Hamington makes us aware that much more is needed to combat social inequalities in preschool.

Professionals should learn to embrace differentiated manifestations of interdependency and difference, underpinned by the value of solidarity in our societies as a matter of public concern (Lorenz 2016, Roets et al. 2017). According to Lorenz (2016, 14), this requires "building and respecting reciprocity beyond the personal sphere, … as the subject of reflexive negotiations." This is not a simple challenge and endeavour since *care* has been used for a long time as a means of disciplining and keeping women docile in patriarchal structures (Canella 1997). This might explain why professionals in our study who emphasize that care is vital, mainly adopt "mother-like" assumptions borrowed from their experiences in the private sphere in their caring attitude. Instead of simply "introducing" care into what previously seemed to be low-care situations (for example, preschools in ECEC split systems), we underline that embodied care is crucial and can be enriched by stimulating staff's caring imagination, thereby promoting their critical reflection about the solidarity they can shape as belonging to their public mandate (Hamington 2014).

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