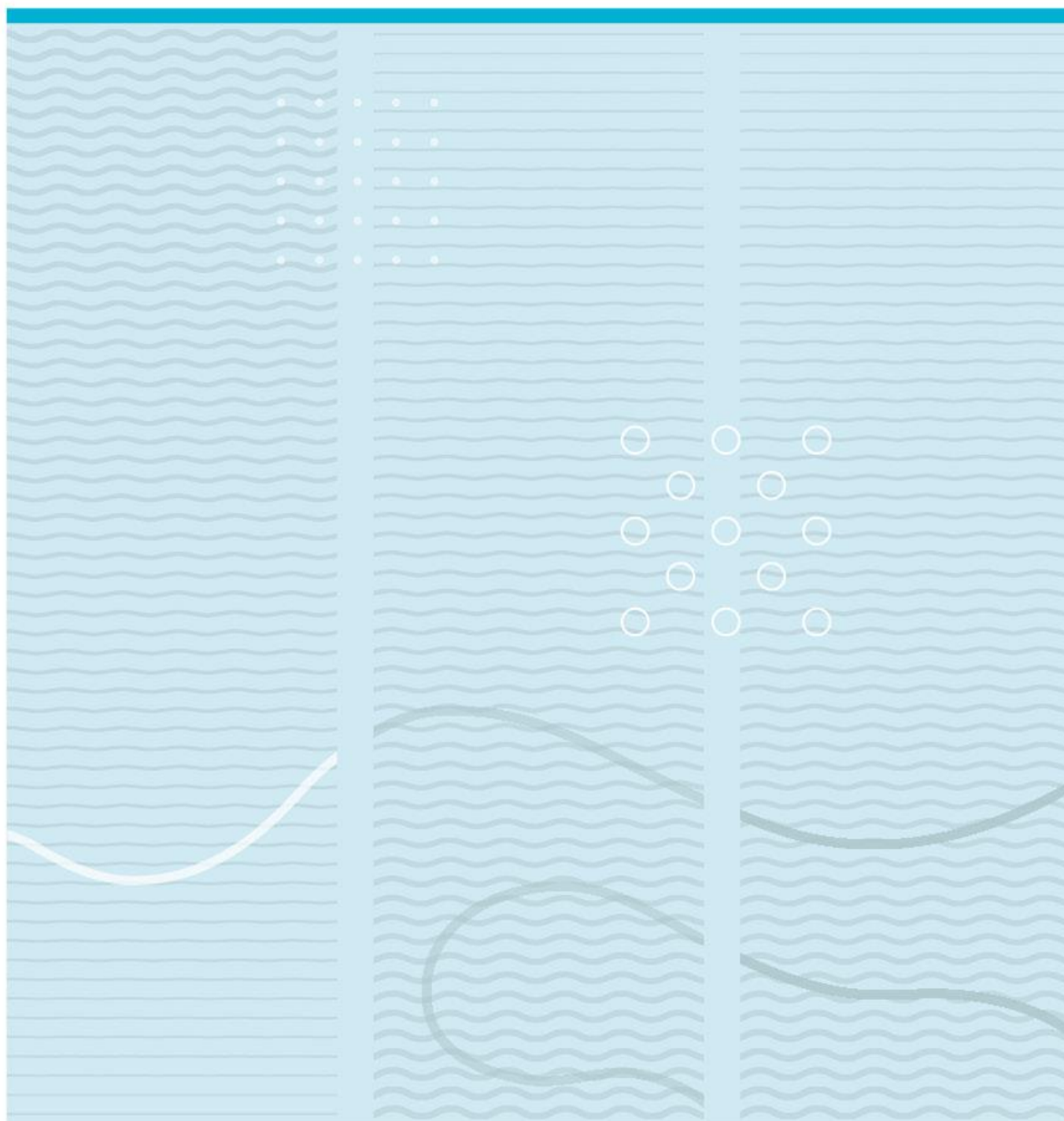


Nadia Olonkin

# Institutionalizing toddlers – A Human Rights violation?

An Ethnographic study of whether the practice of the comprehensive institutionalization of one-year-old's sufficiently safeguards children's rights according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child articles 3, 6 (no.2) and 12, assessed against neuro affective development psychology.



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This thesis is worth 60 study points

## Summary

The aim of this master thesis research project has been to evaluate whether the practice of the comprehensive institutionalization of one-year-olds sufficiently safeguards these children`s rights as stated in articles 3, 6 (no.2) and 12 in the Convention on the Rights of The Child (CRC). These articles concern their right to have every decision made in their best interest, their right to gain development to the maximum extent possible as well as their right to be heard.

Neuro affective development psychology show that the quality of the emotional communication between young children and their caregivers is highly significant for the child`s ability to develop to the maximum extent possible (Heradstveit, 2014). It also suggests that attachment behavior<sup>1</sup> displayed by these children may play a vital role regarding their development, as keeping proximity to their primary caregivers actually is of great importance when it comes to their development. By using the method of ethnography, I have attempted to evaluate the emotional communication between staff members and children, and whether these toddlers persistent and continuous need for their caregiver`s continuous emotional availability is safeguarded. I have also attempted to evaluate to what extent these children`s right to be heard is safeguarded as their display of attachment behavior is often overlooked when separated from their parent.

My findings suggest that the comprehensive institutionalization of these young children may be considered to be a threat to both these children`s right to gain development to the maximum extent possible as well as their right to be heard, and therefore also a threat to their right to have every decision made in their best interest.

In the last part of this thesis I ask why we choose to arrange our childcare in this way? What are we sacrificing and what are we gaining by outsourcing our children`s childhood? What values lie behind these choices? And what consequences does it inflict on our society as a whole?

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<sup>1</sup> Clinging, kissing, vocal calls and other forms of behavior that results in keeping mother and child close is what Bowlby have labeled with the general term “attachment behavior” (Bowlby, 1969, p. 182 and 233).

## List of abbreviations

| Abbreviations: | Meaning:   |
|----------------|--|
| ADHD           | Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder                             |
| CRC            | Convention on the Rights of the Child                                |
| ECCD           | Early Childhood Care and Education                                   |
| GOBAN          | Gode Barnehager for barn i Norge                                     |
| NICHD          | The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development         |
| NSD            | Norsk Senter for Forskningsdata (Norwegian Center for Research Data) |
| RIG            | Representations of Interactions that have been Generalized           |
| SSB            | Statistisk Sentralbyrå (Statistics Norway)                           |
| UN             | United Nations   |
| UNESCO         | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization     |

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*“Let those babies sleep in your arms and on your chest and be with you all the time.*

*They will start taking steps away from you when they`re ready.”*

*-The Continuum Concept*



# Foreword

A few years ago, my first-born started daycare for the first time, after a few hours over a couple of days we were told to say our goodbyes and leave our child, regardless of how she reacted. They claimed that if we responded to her crying, she would learn that she could manipulate us into getting her will, which were to make us stay with her.

Disregarding her emotions and leaving her in the care of strangers felt so wrong. It was a stressful and painful experience for both her and I, which made me question why we do this? Why do we put our babies in the care of strangers in daycare for the majority of each week? And further, is it harmful in any way?

I have been reflecting upon these issues ever since, and when the chance to write a master thesis appeared, I was convinced that this had to be my topic. I had to find out if the rights of children in daycare are sufficiently safeguarded.

When I now finally have finished my thesis, there are a few people I need to thank.

First and foremost, I want to thank the daycare who let me stay with them in order to do my research; without your goodwill and trust, writing this thesis would not have been possible. I truly have a lot of respect for your work, and I want to encourage you to share your experiences!

I also owe a thanks to my supervisor, Lena, thank you for your guidance throughout my thesis: having someone to discuss my topic with who asked the difficult questions, made me reflect more deeply upon the issues I've explored and enabled me to do better.

Thanks to my family, especially my little sister Elena for all your support. Having you to turn to when I managed to convince myself that I did not hold the intellectual capacities to author my thesis, was crucial! Also, to my friends, Tony, for offering guidance and advice, as well as Jamie for all your support, and also for all help with the grammars!

The biggest thank you I owe the most beautiful children; I love you so much!

Dear Alana, my daughter and first born, having you was the most difficult, challenging experience of my life. The struggles we've had has made me who I am and enabled me to write this very important piece of paper. You beautiful, wise, little soul, mamma loves you!



Mailo, my son and second born, having you was a joy right from the beginning. You spread so much love and happiness, you handsome, caring, little soul, mamma loves you!  
You guys make me strive to be the best mother I can possibly be, because you deserve nothing less.

Thanks to my fiancé who have stood by me -rock solid- through many tough experiences these last few years, I don't know what I would do without you. Your support and your flexibility have been absolutely crucial in order for me to write this thesis! You are my best friend, and the kids and I are so lucky to have you!

And last, but not least; thanks to my mother, not only for enabling me to work on my thesis by helping out with practicalities, but for providing me with the foundation which I've needed to overcome difficulties in my life. I now know what you sacrificed for me and my sisters by being a stay-at-home mom. It has meant more than I ever realized to be your first priority as a child. Knowing how much you love me has kept me alive.

Tønsberg, 30.04.2020

Nadia Olonkin

# 1. Introduction

How non-parental daycare affects children`s development has been a topic of discussion for both parents and policymakers as well as developmental scholars for some time. The major issue is whether daycare initiated in the earliest years of life undermines an adequate attachment relationship to a primary caregiver which, is a presupposition to achieving sufficient emotional communication which again is crucial in order to gain optimal development (Belski, 2009).

Child Psychologist Jay Belski believes that infant daycare on a full- or near full-time basis beginning in the first year of life, is a “risk factor”. Further one of the most recognized professors within the field of brain research, Allan N. Schore, states in his book *Affect Regulation and The Origin of The Self – The Neurobiology of Emotional Development* that “The matter of caregiving, in not just the first few months but the first 2-years-of-life, is an essential problem for the future of human societies” (Schore, 2016, p. 541). He argues that the process of enabling children to make use of their innate potential is non-verbal and unconscious, and therefore demands a dyadic relationship which is intimate enough to create the symbiotic state which is a prerequisite to achieve optimal socioemotional development (Schore, 2016, p. 542 and p. 571). He worries that the mother/child dyadic relationship is difficult to replicate within non-parental daycare (Schore, 2016, p. 542).

Dr. Sue Gerhardt`s explains in her book *Why love matters* why loving relationships “are essential to brain development in the early years, and how early interactions can have long lasting consequences for future emotional and physical health” (Gerhardt, 2015, p. Preface). She continues by saying that “the foundation are laid during pregnancy and in the first two years of life, because this is when the “social brain” is shaped and when an individual`s emotional style and emotional resources are established” (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 3).

With this new brain research available I believe it is relevant to ask whether employees within non-parental daycares can provide sufficient emotional care for these very young, non-verbal children in order for them to safeguard these children`s rights as stated in the CRC.

## 1.1 Context

In Norway 44.346 or 77.2% of all children under the age of two are institutionalized today (Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2019). Most of them, 42.259 children, spend 41 hours or more in these non-parental daycares (Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2019). Even when a parent is at home, with younger siblings or for other reasons, kids are put in daycares for the majority of the day to give the parent “a break” or so that they can “get something done”, or because the parents genuinely believe that this intense socialization is necessary (Small, 2002, p. 219). It is not strange, when one is made aware of how powerful actors in the global community, like UNESCO, praise institutionalization. They state in their report *Strong foundations – Early childhood care and education* (ECCE) that “the earlier – the better”, and that it is important that early childhood provision is made “an integral component of their education and poverty alleviation strategies” (Education For All Global Monitoring Report, 2007, p. Foreword). What does this mean? Is providing strong foundations for children in the first few years tantamount to institutionalizing one-year-olds for 41 hours or more per week? The formal definitions of the ECCE are; “children’s survival, growth, development and learning – including health, nutrition and hygiene, and cognitive, social, physical and emotional development – from birth to entry into primary school in formal, informal and non-formal settings”. This encompasses very diverse arrangements from “parenting programs to community-based child-care, center-based provision and formal pre-primary education, often in schools”. The programs aims at two age groups; those under three and those from three to school age (Education For All Global Monitoring Report, 2007, p. 3). The report problematizes that “almost half of the worlds countries have no formal programs for children under 3” (Education For All Global Monitoring Report, 2007, p. 4). Do newborn infants to three-year-old’s need educational programs? The report also states that those who would benefit the most of attending these programs are the least likely to be enrolled (Education For All Global Monitoring Report, 2007, p. 4). Are you *enrolled* in informal programs? According to UNESCO’s report kindergartens, preschools and nursery schools for those under three are tantamount to “good-quality early childhood care and education programs” because the stimulation and social interaction “supports children’s development and learning” (Education For All Global Monitoring Report, 2007, p. 12). When respected institutions like the UNESCO portrays daycare as important or even vital to a child’s development and well-being, then it is no wonder that parents take it for granted that this is the best option for their children.

The Norwegian government want to institutionalize as many children as possible, and states that daycare have positive long-term effects both on language development and social competence

amongst other things (Den Norske Regjeringen, 2019). There is a political agenda to develop and provide enough daycare facilities in order to have room for all one-year-olds since the 2009 legislation which guaranteed a legal right to attend daycare (Barnehageloven, 2009; NOU 2012:1, 2012). The government frequently assesses whether mandatory daycare should be implemented in order to increase the number of children in daycare and thus equalize any economic and social differences that may exist (St.meld. nr. 24 (2012-2013), 2013).

The idea that one-year-olds belong in daycare have become the dominant idea within Norwegian society. People in Norway seem to believe that one-year-olds benefit from being away from their families for the majority of the day. Comprehensive institutionalization of toddlers has become so normalized that questioning this system of universal, publicly supported childcare from the very beginning of life is rare. It has become the right way, and the only way.

As this contradicts what seems to be the common view of childcare globally, where parental rearing for such young children are seen to belong within the family, I ask whether the minority communities within Norway feels pressured into institutionalizing their toddlers, and how this affects their relationship to the society as a whole (Small, 2002, p. 151).

Specialist in child psychiatry John Bowlby states that parental behavior is a class of social behavior of an importance equivalent to that of mating behavior (Bowlby, 1969, p. 179). In other words, a very strong instinct. What happens when mothers are deprived of the opportunity to safeguard the needs of their own children as they see fit?

In the context of new brain research, my study seeks to explore whether this comprehensive institutionalization adequately ensures the children`s statutory rights to have every decision made in their best interest, to receive the opportunity for maximal development as well as to be heard as stated in articles 3, 6 (no.2) and 12 of the CRC.

The focus on the emotional communication between the children and daycare staff connects this thesis in a relevant way to contemporary pedagogical research, where there is an increasing focus on the importance of children`s wellbeing (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, p. 13).

## 1.2 Purpose of study

When Romania was under the dictatorship of Ceaușescu, more than 200.000 children were stowed away in orphanages. These children have taught modern medical science a lot about the importance of attachment to human development. Even though the children`s physical needs for food and shelter, were met, they had very little opportunity to foster strong emotional ties to the staff. When the dictatorship fell in 1989, many of these children were adopted by families in the West and their subsequent development has been followed by the medical world ever since. The consequences of this treatment in their early years has had has been astonishing. Their intellectual development was affected, and they were clumsy indicating loss of motor skill development. Lack of language skills created difficulties in communicating and interacting appropriately (Skårderud, 2016, 28.04). Behavior issues like ADHD and autism are widespread among them. The youngest children, those under eight months when they were adopted out of the orphanages, managed to catch up with other typical children, while those children that were placed in adoptive homes after eight months of age never managed to. Further, many of them live today with a constant high level of the stress hormone cortisol (Skårderud, 2016, 28.04). The experience of these Romanian children have taught us that our body remembers even though our mind does not; failing to establish good attachment early on affects our bodies and minds, maybe for the rest of your lives.

Even though daycare for toddlers have become more and more comprehensive these last few decades, there has been a lack of research done regarding how this practice affects children, both from short term as well as in long-term perspective. Recently the Norwegian government initiated such a study in an attempt to produce knowledge about toddlers in non-parental daycare. This study has been the largest ever completed in Norway and was published late 2018 and early 2019. The extensive longitudinal study was carried out in 90 different daycares and included 1.200 children ages birth to five years old (Gode Barnehager for barn i Norge, 2019). The motivation for this project was to improve the quality of non-parental daycares by gathering the most comprehensive data available and adding to the current relevant research. There were several different goals of the study, some were to examine how the quality of daycares fosters learning and development socially, emotionally and cognitively, how children thrive within these institutions and how group-sizes and adult-child relationships affects the children (Gode Barnehager for barn i Norge, 2019). The study`s main purpose was achieved because it provided essential information concluding that Norwegian daycares are not sufficiently preserving the youngest children`s needs. The researchers rated the quality of the daycares on a scale from one to seven, where one is “not good” and seven is

“excellent”. The collective score of Norwegian daycare toddler-units<sup>2</sup> is 3,9 (Jakobsen, 2019). According to the study these young children are not properly supervised, their safety is not sufficiently maintained, and the facilities hygiene standards are not good enough (Jakobsen, 2019). Even though revealing all of this information is important, the study lacks a perspective. That is the perspective of the one-year-old child.

New brain research has provided a scientific basis for understanding babyhood as a crucial time in emotional development. It shows that the experiences gained during the first few years of life actually contributes to the construction of the physical architecture of the developing brain (Alberta Family Wellness Initiative, 2013). The basic systems that manage emotions such as the stress response system, neurotransmitters responsiveness, the neural pathways which encode our implicit understanding of how intimate relationships work – are not in place at birth (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 104). Neither is the vital prefrontal cortex yet developed, and all of these rapidly develops during the first two years of life (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 104). This means that brains are not just born, but also constructed over time based on our social experiences. Just as a building needs a strong foundation in order to support the walls and roof, the brain needs a proper base to support future development. Positive experiences literally build the architecture of the developing brain, while negative experiences deter development. By enabling positive, intimate interaction between the child and its primary caregiver, solid brain foundation is built and maintained in the early years which provides a proper base for a lifetime of good mental as well as physical health. Supported by recent research, the Danish professor Susan Hart argues in her book *The Sensitive Brain* (2012) that even though institutionalized toddlers are surrounded by warm and responsive adults, it is not sufficient to develop a secure attachment. These very young children need to experience particularly close and intimate interactions with a primary caregiver that is adequately emotionally available in order for them to benefit from the relationship (Hart, 2012, p. 168). The lack of this exposes the child to a toxic kind of stress which over time will cause damage to the basic structures of a developing brain. It can cause a chronic stress activation or constant dimmed emotions, reduction of the “happy-hormones” oxytocin and serotonin, which again may lead to multiple physical as well as mental

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<sup>2</sup> Many daycares in Norway divide children into groups based on the age, one group has children aged 0-2 and the other group has children aged 3-5. As I will be focusing on one-year old’s in my thesis I will concentrate on the youngest group, which I will be referring to as the “toddler-unit”.

health issues later on (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 163; Hart, 2012, p. 175). Dr. Sue Gerhardt argues that experiences will elaborate our responses and add to our repertoire, and “the path that is trodden in very early life tends to set each of us off in a particular direction that gathers its own momentum” (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 104). In other words, the longer we stay on one path, the more difficult it becomes to stake out a new course. Without that strong foundation for future development the child will be at risk for a lifetime of mental and physical health issues (Alberta Family Wellness Initiative, 2013).

In his book *Affect regulation and the origin of self*, the prestigious brain researcher Allan Schore concludes with amplifying the recent worrisome concern about the increased risk of insecure attachments if daycare “begins in the first year and is extensive in duration” (Schore, 2016, p. 541). He further states that “The matter of caregiving, in not just the first few months but the first two-years-of-life, is an essential problem for the future societies” (Schore, 2016, p. 541).

When a particular practice becomes so comprehensive as the institutionalization of one-year-olds has become in Norway it becomes naturalized. It becomes what we believe to be the right course of action. Our public institutions are made up of individuals who are part of this society which believes that this comprehensive institutionalization of our one-year-olds is the best way to care for our children. This will cause these ideas to infiltrate these institutions and form the norm from which they offer guidance and base their decisions upon. This means that institutions like the legal-system, family-counseling office (an official support service for divorcing parents), child protective services and mother and child health centers increasingly question whether parents who do not institutionalize their toddlers at this age might be unfit as the primary caregivers of their own children. Subsequently it becomes necessary for these parents to argue for their views and values which drives them to keep their young children close for a little longer. As their views and values do not coincide with the dominant idea of childcare, I question whether they will be considered to be rational and legitimate.

## 1.3 Overview

This first chapter contains an introduction where the research topic is placed in a relevant context and the purpose of the topic is explained. Next an overview is presented. Concluding the chapter are definitions of key terminology found in this thesis.

Chapter two then discusses the theoretical framework – neuro affective development psychology, as well as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 3, 6 (no.2) and 12.

In chapter three research methodology is described in detail including explanations of collection, transcription and analysis of collected data.

Ethical considerations and researcher reflections on reliability and validity of the research are also included.

In chapter four findings and analysis is presented.

Chapter five discuss the motivations for carrying out this very comprehensive institutionalization of our one-year-olds, and chapter six investigates what values that lies behind this cultural trend.

The conclusion can be found in chapter seven. Finally, suggestions for further research are presented in chapter eight.



## 1.4 Explanation of terms

- Baby, toddler, child, infant

Throughout the thesis I switch between these terms in order to avoid repetition and give the paper a certain flow. Even though my focus is on one-year-olds, I must stress the fact that my findings and my paper in general is not limited to this age-group as brain researcher Allan Schore, among others, argue that children are particularly vulnerable for the first thousand days of their lives (Schore, 2017). John Bowlby claims that children reach a threshold at age three which enables them to appropriately separate from their primary caregiver and explore the world to a bigger extent than younger children (Bowlby, 1969, p. 223 and 205).

- Non-parental daycare, Institution, Daycare, Kindergarten

All of the above terms are used throughout the thesis interchangeably to indicate young children who are cared for outside of their home, by non-family members. Michel Foucault argues that words are power, how we speak about certain phenomenon's shape the way we think about them, that is why we need to reflect upon these terms, and what they actually entail (Engelstad, 2010, 25.10.). Some may find it provocative that I call these facilities "Institutions", but I believe that calling them *kindergartens*, a garden for children, is an attempt to romanticize the fact that these are institutions in every meaning of the word. Children are sent off to adults they don't know, who are paid to look after them in premises with linoleum flooring and white walls, similar to any other institution like hospitals.

These institutions are not necessarily bad, but I question whether this comprehensive institutionalization of these very young children guarantees their rights to have every decision made in their best interest, to gain development to the maximum extent possible and to be heard, as stated in the CRC.

- Primary Caregiver

For most children the biological mother will be the primary caregiver in the beginning of life. While she spends nine months carrying the child within, preparing mentally and physically, consciously as well as unconsciously for the child to be born, they start to form a relationship. Children know their mothers voice from their time spent in their womb. She will be whom they are naturally drawn to, their preferred primary caregiver. The mother has

two important brain structures which contain a multitude of receptors for the attachment hormone oxytocin. One is within the brainstem and the other area is within the Gyrus Cinguli. In addition to function as a natural painkiller while giving birth, this hormone is involved in the mothers ability to feel empathy and her drive to meet her baby`s needs (Hart, 2012, p. 99).

The father`s role, at least according to development psychologist Donald Winnicott, is more indirect. He argues that the fathers most important contribution is to enable the mother to offer their child *holding*, by safeguarding her physical and emotional wellbeing. This will facilitate a functional mother/child dyad, where the mother is capable of cherishing the child and tending to its needs (Schwartz, 2008, p. 51). He also argues that fathers are represented to the child through the mother and is therefore dependent upon having a good relationship with her during these first few years.

An American legal definition of a primary caregiver is the person who has the “greatest responsibility for the daily care and rearing of a child. This person can be a non-parent also” (USLegal). When it comes to one-year-olds who spend 41 hours -and more in non-parental daycare, the staff must be expected to be capable of sufficiently replacing the mother`s role as the primary caregiver for these young children.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Neuro affective Development Psychology – Bridging Neurobiology and Development Psychology

In 1957 the attachment theory was first presented by child psychiatry specialist John Bowlby. His work which stressed the importance of the child's earliest social experiences in life, became the most influential theory regarding the behavior of young children. His research indicated that the mother-child dyad is essential for the child to reach optimal development (Bowlby, 1969, p. 179). Bowlby himself suggested that the function of attachment behavior is to protect the baby from predators and/or that it creates an opportunity for the child to learn from the mother various activities necessary for survival (Bowlby, 1969, p. 224).

When technological advances allowed for brain scanning in the 1990s, researchers were enabled to identify the subcortical neural cycles within the brain which controls the basic psychological processes (Schwartz, 2008, p. 15). Further they were able to identify the part of the nerve system that creates the foundation for attachment and development of personality, which enabled them to explain how the human emotional development could be understood in relation to nervous system development (Schwartz, 2008, p. 15). These discoveries bridged neurobiology and development psychology which became a whole new field of research which Dr. Susan Hart labeled *Neuro affective development psychology* (Hart, 2012, p. 12). Allan Schore, one of the most influential researcher within this field, states that Bowlby's attachment theory got revitalized by these discoveries as it has revealed the deep connections between psychological science and neuroscience, and given us a coherent theory of development (Schore, 2017).

For a long time, humans have been concerned with the relationship between our social environment and our genes (Hart, 2012, p. 13). It turns out though that the debate is meaningless as our personality only can be expressed through an intimate interaction of both environment and genes. The actions of our primary caregivers determines which and to what extent our biological presuppositions is realized (Hart, 2012, p. 15). Already from the time a child is conceived there arise a dynamic interaction between our genetic and innate presuppositions and our environment. And from a child is born it is already disposed to engage in interplay with its primary caregiver(s), which enables very diverse cultures to mold babies to fit exactly into their way of living (Small, 2002, p. 2). That is why genes and our social environment cannot be seen as opposites, but rather two aspects of human life that works together in an inseparable way (Hart, 2012, pp. 15-16).

This new knowledge that revealed that a child's innate potential can only be realized to the extent which its surroundings facilitates; the emotional communication with a primary caregiver forms and matures the foundation for the brain structures that enables the child to enter into emotional relations later in life (Schwartz, 2008, p. 15). The neural maturation, growth and differentiation completely relies on stimulation, and the child's physiology and its inner biochemical state are regulated by the primary caregiver (Schwartz, 2008, p. 15).

A child internalizes the experiences she has with her primary caregiver; if they are positive, she will gain a positive image of the world and also be enabled to accept and handle difficult emotions such as disappointment and frustration. If the experiences are negative and the child feels invalidated, and her needs not met, these abilities will not develop, or only develop to a reduced extent. She will begin to feel that the world is a hostile place from which she will prefer to withdraw (Diem-Wille, 2014, p. 13).

The human brain is the most complex and plastic natural system in the known universe. It is highly immature at birth, we are born with a brain only a quarter of its final adult size. Compared to the maturity of other mammals at birth, human babies should not have been born until the age of two, but because of us being bipedal, we would not be able to give birth to babies with such big brains. Some writers even refer to the human baby as an "external fetus" (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 33). Anyway, this means that even though experience in utero does matter in regard to a child's development, the "human care in early childhood plays a much bigger role in shaping the brain" (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 27). Human contact creates neural connections, positive experiences enable brain growth, especially in the first two years of life (Hart, 2012, p. 18). Which means that even though some abilities are genetically programmed, these will not be expressed without proper quality in the relationships which the child is part of. The American psychologist Allan Schore has pointed out that humans have an innate matrix for interaction with a primary caregiver, which children must be able to unfold their potential through.

The interaction between a primary caregiver and her child in the first few years have great influence upon our behavior throughout life, even the best genes in the world can't make up for an insufficient social environment at this point in life; interactions which are non-optimal will lead to a non-optimal development of the child's neural circuits. Interactions that are characterized by toxic stress, which could be the result of insufficient attachment alone, could lead to depression, anxiety, aggression or other anomalies later on in life.

Both Hart and Gerhardt refers to the American neurologist Paul D. Maclean who developed a theoretical construction of *the triune brain*. He argues that the brain is structured by evolution and is therefore divided into three layers; a reptilian brain, on top of which developed a mammalian emotional brain, and finally the human neocortex (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 51). Each layer is clearly separated with different structures, at the same time as they are still very much connected through massive amounts of nerve connections (Hart, 2012, p. 22). This enables adaptability and efficiency, but also makes it more vulnerable during development.

**The reptile brain** is the first layer, and consists of instinctual functions and primitive reflective emotional reactions like anxiety, aggression and sexuality (Hart, 2012, p. 24).

Some areas within this part of the brain needs stimuli from its primary caregivers to mature properly and is important when it comes to affect-regulation and management of stress which is crucial in order for the child to become able to handle intellectually demanding tasks throughout life. For example, the cerebellum will only grow and mature through physical stimulation; the child needs to be held, touched, caressed, rocked and carried for this part of the brain to develop sufficiently. Lack of this type of stimulation, may cause ADHD (Hart, 2012, p. 51).

In addition, this part of the brain consists of a *smart system* which facilitates interaction between the caregiver and the child early on and creates the foundation for the development of calm and social behavior. Children with a matured smart system will be better at self-regulation, as it provides the presuppositions for the child to practice this ability with a tuned primary caregiver.

**The older mammal brain**, also called the limbic system, creates the basic affections through developing social feelings. The development of this part of the brain enabled a new dimension of human interaction (Hart, 2012, p. 24).

In relation to the topic of my thesis, the limbic system is of particular interest. This supposedly were developed in order for mammals to gain stronger attachment to their offspring in addition to causing the offspring to react to separation by showing attachment behavior. This system rewards behavior that evolved to maximize the chance of survival and keeps the child away from threatening and uncomfortable situations. There are three main structures that interact within this system; the hypothalamus, the amygdala and the hippocampus. The amygdala functions as surveillance where it constantly scans the whole body for sensory information and reacts to anything that's perceived as a potential threat. It has its own memory which means that early experiences that has been perceived as a threat can provoke anxiety and fear throughout life; poor amygdala-prefrontal connectivity is significantly correlated with both depression and anxiety (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 54).

The hippocampus is crucial for both the ability to learn as well as our ability to memorize. It cannot trigger emotional reactions, but it has a regulating effect on other parts of the brain which makes it vital to our mental state. It has many receptors for stress hormones, which makes it very vulnerable to these; being exposed to stress for a long period of time will result in a loss of nerve cells, which one can see in brain scans executed on people who struggle with PTSD and also depression (Hart, 2012, p. 59).

The third layer is the frontal lobe, or **the new mammal brain**, and consists mainly of the neo cortex which process mental and cognitive perceptions. This part of the brain is often referred to as the *thinking brain* and enables us to make sense of our sensory experiences. It permits us to develop a complex emotional life, and also enables us to imagine what others feel, which is part of what makes the human organism so unique.

The prefrontal areas are located in this part of the brain, and even though our brain grows very fast the two first years of life, this particular part matures slowly. As a result of this the development of the brain is particularly sensitive to both positive and negative influence during the first thousand days of our lives (Schore, 2017). It is here one can find the structures that enable human beings to have complex emotions.

The *gyrus singuli* is reckoned to be the newest development within the human emotional system. It perceives emotions in the same way that our vision perceives sights and is a presupposition in order to engage in human relations. This structure initiates emotional behavior relating to attachment and care. It has many morphine receptors, so when it is activated it provides a sensation of safety and togetherness. It cooperates with the *Insula* which processes whether physical stimulation is experienced as comfortable or not.

*Parietal lobes* help us to coordinate and compare our sensory experience with the actual, physical world. Damage to these structures will cause disturbance in our sense of identity, as well as the perception of who, and where you are.

The *Prefrontal Cortex* is the most complex area of the brain. It enables us to control primitive behavior and emotions by inhibiting impulses in addition to taking control over both the reflective and instinctive systems. The prefrontal cortex is what makes humans capable of mentalizing, which enables us to perceive and interpret others' emotional lives, which is a presupposition to feel empathy. It is of vital importance when it comes to our ability to affect-regulate, and is also very vulnerable, as it is a control center with complex neural connections to and from other brain structures. This means that damage anywhere in the brain will affect the prefrontal cortex, as well as damage there will influence the entire brain. If a child does not receive sufficient empathic,

attuned attention during their first few vulnerable years, it will cause important parts of the brain, like the prefrontal cortex to fail to develop to the maximum extent possible (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 148). Even minimal damage will lead to apathy, carelessness and behavior completely lacking social inhibitions and accountability (Hart, 2012, p. 68). The link between depression and a poor development of the social brain have been found across a number of studies (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 149).

The brain is not just built up hierarchal, but also into asymmetrical halves – a right and a left. The *Orbifrontal cortex* which is particularly important regarding social-emotional development is found on the right side, this part of the brain develops almost entirely post-natal, and doesn't begin to mature until toddlerhood (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 55).

The right brain grows tremendously fast during the first two years of life and dominates throughout the first three years, until the child has become more mobile and language functions are developed. Up until then, the non-verbal communication, facial expressions, tone of voice and emotional tuning of the caregiver have such crucial impact on the development of the right brain. This explains why the early emotional contact between the child and its primary caregiver is of such great importance. The kind of brain each baby develops is dependent on his or her particular social experiences, through play, touch and interaction. For example when a mother sees her baby smile, her orbitofrontal cortex is activated, and when her baby sees her smiling, the baby's is as well (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 54). Allan Schore claims that the visual stimulation between the caregiver and her child is an essential component of a growth promoting environment (Schore, 2016, p. 91).

When a baby sees her smiling mother, its heartrate will accelerate and trigger biochemical processes; beta endorphins and dopamine are released, which regulate glucoses and insulin and speeds up the growth of nerve cells within the prefrontal cortex. During these visual dialogues the primary caregiver is psychobiologically attuned to her infant's internal state, "and in these merger experiences she creates and maintains a mutually regulated symbiotic state in the dyad" (Schore, 2016, p. 91). Interruptions of this tuned micro-interaction within the caregiver-child dyadic relationship will lead to difficulties regarding abilities like affect regulation and mentalization. Being denied sufficient attachment relationships during the period in which this part of the brain develops, up to the age of three, there is little hope of fully recovering these lost social abilities, or of developing this part of the brain adequately (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 56).

### **Resonance, synchronicity, mirroring and social biofeedback**

The human nervous system demands stimulation from the outside world in order to develop. That is why children are biologically programmed to seek attachment with their primary caregiver from the very start. Attachment is established through mutual affect-regulation, and in order to gain this emotional mutual toning with the child in our care we enter into a *pattern of resonance*, where we use mechanisms like mirroring and imitation to unconsciously synchronize each other's emotional state (Hart, 2012, p. 79 and p. 85).

Our ability to mirror each other enables the child to imitate from the very start of life. With an innate communication repertoire it will seek what is biologically satisfactory, in other words it will imitate movements that are close to its own spontaneous repertoire of expression which will be understandable and expected (Hart, 2012, p. 88).

The mirroring neurons has made it clear that we are connected to others from the very beginning. These neurons enable us to be part of each other's emotional lives, to share and understand another's intentions and feelings, which is important in order to develop empathy (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 49). Anxiety, tension and stress makes the mirroring neurons less effective, and decrease our ability to engage in a tuned mutual emotional state (Hart, 2012, p. 91).

The ability to mirror and imitate is not sufficient in order for the child to gain optimal development, it needs *social biofeedback* (Hart, 2012, p. 94). The social biofeedback explains how the child's emotional expressions and the caregivers consistent affect-mirroring (facial expressions, vocal sounds etc.) gets connected within the child's mind through a perfect synchronization which occurs when they have achieved co-affect-regulation.

In the beginning of life there is perfect compliance between the child's inner world and the outer state. As the child matures there becomes more and more of an discrepancy between the two, which is crucial in order for the child to become able to separate itself from the outside world, from there on it will be able to create a self.

### **The importance of togetherness – a neurobiological understanding of a mother's love**

The behavior of a primary caregiver is essential in order for the nerve system to facilitate a healthy and positive development of personality. The neural machinery activates specific hormones and specific areas in the brain in order to create the perfect environment to secure parental behavior and a healthy social interaction. Loving someone, whether it is in a romantic relationship or it is in the relationship with your child, releases the attachment hormone oxytocin. But even though these two types of love activate the same hormones, a particular part of the brain who happens to have numerous oxytocin-receptors *and* has close relations to the limbic system, seems to be specifically



involved in a mother's love for her child; the periaqueductal or PAG. Oxytocin works as a pain killer which enables woman to give birth in addition to strengthening her empathy and her urge to safeguard her child's need (Hart, 2012, p. 99).

A primary caregiver needs to be able to adapt the way, the amount and the timing of information to the particular child's capacity in order for them to gain optimal development of their personality (Hart, 2012, p. 107). This urges for the unconscious synchronized tuning in the mother/child-interaction which are so subtle and executed with such a precision, that they are both difficult to observe and also difficult to replicate for an outsider (Hart, 2012, p. 99 and p. 100). The primary caregiver's sensitivity regarding the child's signals is the essence in attachment, and it is through her sensitive interactions she enables the child's nerve system to develop strategies and patterns which becomes the prototype for all later interactions.

In order for her child to be able to benefit from the innate ability to initiate, maintain and exit social interactions with others, her love is a biological necessity (Hart, 2012, p. 113).

Babies are like the raw material for a fully developed self, they are born with a genetic blueprint and a unique range of possibilities, but they are incomplete and will only develop in response to human interaction (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 33). At birth there are relatively few nerve cell connections, but soon there is numerous connections which develops and transforms throughout life. They become more and more complex and gathers, as patterns of activity occurs. When these patterns of activity occur and also repeated often, a particular neural circuit profile arise. Bowlby labeled this as *inner working models*, which is notions, expectations and assumptions that arise in interactions with others (Klette, 2013, p. 20). When this is established the activation of different types of emotional states will slowly lead to the development of our personality, it will characterize the child's ability and capacity to handle stress as well as protect and comfort oneself in addition to others (Hart, 2012, p. 29; Klette, 2007, p. 19). If the child experiences the primary caregiver to be sensitive, empathic and predictable, the child will develop an inner model based on trust, confidence and security. On the other hand, if the child is met with rejection and unpredictability it will most likely develop an inner model characterized by lack of trust and a sense of insecurity (Klette, 2013, p. 20). When a primary caregiver is able to engage in and maintain a balanced emotional stimulation she will directly contribute to the regulation of the neurochemical as well as hormonal functions within the child. This enables the autonomous nerve system to modify the intensity of its emotional states. When this mechanism of regulation functions properly, the nerve system organizes itself in a coherent matter, but when it does not succeed at this both the

complexity of the brain as well as its ability to self-organize is limited (Hart, 2012, p. 128). The brain is highly adaptable, but it is not able to adapt to the lack of a sufficient primary caregiver. Stimuli from the outside world decides which neural connections that becomes strengthened, and which will be weakened. The connections that experience the most stimuli will be multiplied and strengthened; they create paths which we orient our lives in a particular direction from. Adult humans are unable to consciously recall any of it, but it is built into our organism and informs our expectations and behavior, they are according to neuroscientist Doug Watt “unrememberable and unforgettable” (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 30).

In other words, children who gain repetitive and persistent positive experiences will develop a sense of security which will be stored within the child`s psyche and body as a basic sensation of the world as a pleasant and safe place to be. And on the other hand, children who experience lack of stimuli, neglect or even just an absence of sufficient attachment early on, will struggle with the consequences throughout life. The child`s body and mind will prepare to survive and reproduce in a world they perceive as a dangerous and risky place to be, where close relations with others can easily cease to exist. They unconsciously learn that engaging in close relationships means risking abandonment (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, p. 50).

There are massive amounts of documentation that claims that comprehensive lack of stimulation, or just the wrong kind of stimulation, and absence of a loving environment in this critical period of brain development results in irreversible emotional damage. Unless there is an intervention for the child when “the window is still open”, that is during the critical and sensitive periods when the neural structures are formed, these experiences will result in a permanent, abnormal behavior which cannot be corrected through normal experiences later on in life (Hart, 2012, p. 35 and 36).

### **The importance of Self-Regulation**

The attachment between a child and its primary caregiver can be seen as a framework from which the child is able to develop the ability to self-regulate (Schwartz, 2008, p. 15). Developing the ability of self-regulate does not happen in a vacuum, but in interaction with our social environment. Our brain develops in accordance with our relationship with our primary caregivers’; a child that experiences enough rewarding contact may end up with more dopamine synapses, and this affects how well the child are able to self-regulate and hence also approach life. In order for a child to be able to master this skill, it is of vital importance that he or she experiences a close enough relationship with a primary caregiver that enables the adult to regulate its emotional states for them.

After a period of time while they will co-regulate in a tuned state, the child will internalize the affect-regulative support and be able to self-regulate.

Regulating our emotions is a crucial ability when navigating our complex reality, it enables us to control strong emotional impulses for the sake of achieving alternative goals. Professor in psychology Pål Kraft writes in his book *Self-regulation* that a lot of the problems our society face today, such as issues like drug addiction, overweight and aggression, are in some way linked to the lack of an ability to self-regulate (Kraft, 2014, p. Preface).

## **2.2 The Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The ground-breaking Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) were adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 1989 and is the most ratified convention with 193 states parties (Parkes, 2015, p. 3). For the first time children were to be recognized as autonomous rights-holders (Parkes, 2015, p. Foreword). In January 1991 the CRC was ratified by Norway, meaning that the government is legally obligated to implement this provision within its domestic legal order. In 2003 articles 3, 6 and 12 of the CRC was integrated into Section §104 of the Norwegian constitution (Kongeriket Norges Grunnlov, 1814).

No research found has addressed or reviewed the issue of comprehensive institutionalization of infants in relation to the CRC. Since much of childrearing is unconsciously molded by our culture I believe it is crucial to examine this practice, because it is only by doing that we will be able to reject or reconsider parts of what our culture claim is “right” (Small, 2002, p. 212). It is of particular importance to evaluate this practice since the whole world is looking to the Nordic model of childcare (Bjørkeng, 2014).

This thesis attempts to examine these cultural norms and explore how this practice of institutionalization functions with the governmental legal commitments implemented with adoption of this convention. Three specific articles in the convention seem particularly relevant to my inquiry: article 6, no. 2 which states that State Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child; article 12 which states that every child has a right to be heard and article 3 which states that children have a right to have every decision made in their best interest. These three articles are all part of the four fundamental principles, which permeate the understanding and construction of all pertinent rights. This means that they are all closely

connected; both their right to maximum possible development and their right to be heard must be realized in order for their right to have every decision made in their best interest to be safeguarded (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013). General comment no. 14 regarding the child's best interest describes clearly the connection between articles 3 and 6; "States must create an environment that respects human dignity and ensures the holistic development of every child. In the assessment and determination of the child's best interests, the state must ensure full respect for his or her inherent right to (...) development" (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013, p. 11). The general comment no 12 highlights the inextricable link between article 3 and 12; one establishes the objective of achieving the best interests of the child and the other provides the methodology for reaching the goal of hearing the child (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009, p. 18).

In other words; in order for article 3 to be realized, both articles 6 and 12 needs to be as well.

Some argue that children's rights serve more as ethical guidance than judicial principles (Valen-Sendstad, 2013, p. 245). This opens debate about whether children's rights can only be realized when demanded by those who claim their rights to be violated. If this is the case, I believe it is essential to consider how non-verbal children, who are separated from their primary caregiver with whom they have established sufficient communication since birth, can rely on daycare staff to speak effectively on their behalf.

### 2.2.1 Article 6, no.2: Optimal Development

The CRC article 6 no.2 states that the government shall safeguard and facilitate every child's development. That they have included the word "shall" underlines the importance of this right, which is distinctive to the CRC. The formulation of "maximum extent possible" means that the state should do its utmost to protect this right (Høstmælingen & Kjørholt, 2016, p. 80). This article make up one out of four that are seen as the founding principles, and is quite comprehensive as it includes a great variety of elements that is seen to be essential to safeguard a child's optimal development (Høstmælingen & Kjørholt, 2016, p. 75). In general comment no.5 the UN committee express how they expect states to interpret *development* in the broadest sense possible, they expect them to interpret the term as an holistic concept, "embracing the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral, physiological and social development" (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2003, p. 4). The right to optimal development shall be interpreted in connection with the convention's first section, which is not legally binding, but important for understanding how to interpret correctly.

This part states that children have a particular need of care, understanding and protection. It further urges the parties to recognize that in order for children to gain a complete and harmonic development of his or her personality, they must grow up in an family environment with an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding (Høstmælingen & Kjørholt, 2016, p. 75).

When the Norwegian constitution was reviewed in 2014, the paragraph 104 regarding children's rights were strengthened. It now specifies that state party shall facilitate the development of all children, which includes securing the child regarding their health as well as economically and socially, preferably *within their own families* (Høstmælingen & Kjørholt, 2016, p. 85). The Norwegian Human Right Committee argues that the formulation "states shall facilitate" does not mean that the state party is a guarantor for all children to achieve optimal development, but it does amplify the states responsibility to ensure the framework from which one can secure this right (Høstmælingen & Kjørholt, 2016, p. 85).

Chapter 1 in Barnehageloven (the law that regulates daycares), states that these institutions should provide with the foundation from which children can gain well rounded development, it further states that the daycare should facilitate the development of diverse knowledge and skills (Barnehageloven, 2005). Considering the law, evaluating whether these institutions adequately facilitate the realization of these children's right to gain development to the maximum extent possible, is essential.

### 2.2.2 Article 12: The Right to be Heard

The article 12 states that children shall be given opportunity to communicate their wants and needs to those who make decisions on their behalf. The article represents one out of the four foundational principles in the CRC and is a central right when we are recognizing children as individuals with independent rights (Høstmælingen & Kjørholt, 2016, p. 92). The article states that every child should be enabled to express their opinion in any relation concerning him- or herself, in addition to a guaranteed right to be listened to and taken into consideration when decisions are made (Høstmælingen & Kjørholt, 2016, p. 93). No question regarding a child should be decided without the child's involvement. It is also one of the most controversial rights as adults often think they both have a right and a duty to make decisions on behalf of young children. And this is true, at least to some extent, but there is a great need to reflect upon to what extent we should disregard a toddler's point of view. According to theorists like Joel Feinberg, John Eekelaar and Michael

Freeman, children should only be restricted where their preferred course of action denies them a right to an “open future”, interferes with their development interests or restricts their choices in an irreparable way (Lundy, 2005, p. 938).

Even though it is widely acknowledged that children`s participation is crucial for their development and wellbeing, many barriers still exist when it comes to the implementation of this right, both legislatively as well as culturally (Parkes, 2015, p. 13). It seems that there exists a considerable reluctance to recognize the child as a subject of rights rather than a mere object of adult protection and authority (Parkes, 2015, p. 57). The Norwegian *Lov om barn og foreldre* (Act relating to children and parents) and *Barnehageloven* (Act relating to daycares) coincides with article 12 when it states that children are to be heard in accordance with their age and maturity, the former has even included two thresholds; seven and twelve years, to emphasize to what degree a child`s view should be taken into account (Barnehageloven, 2005; Barnelev, 1982). This seems to imply therefore that one-year-olds` opinions or preferences are disregarded. Do they not communicate their wants and needs when they protest as loud as they can by displaying attachment behavior, that is clinging and crying, when separated from their primary caregivers? Can such behavior be interpreted in any other way? If we listen to Schore, who states that the mother/child dyadic relationship are so intimate that they not only should be seen as a single unit, but must be seen as such, maybe the mothers should be the voice of their non-verbal one-year-olds (Schore, 2016, p. 7)? When a mother protest, cries of separation anxiety, maybe we should reunite mother and child with the aim to maintain the mother/child dyad?

### 2.2.3 Article 3: Childs best interest

Article 3 in the CRC states that every decision made on behalf of a child shall be in their best interest, regardless of who`s the decisionmaker; institutions, the court, administrative authorities or others (Sandberg, 2016, p. 5). One of the challenges with this article though is the lack of definition of what actually is considered to be the child`s best interest. It is seen as a dynamic term that varies a great deal within different cultures and contexts. A founding element though, is that the child`s dignity and integrity shall always be safeguarded (Høstmælingen & Kjørholt, 2016, p. 52). Even though most people would intuitively agree upon the fact that safeguarding every child`s best interest is important, what each of us believe this to entail differs tremendously (Valen-Sendstad, 2013, p. 246). I believe it is a valid question to ask if this very comprehensive institutionalization actually is in the best interest of our children?

The child`s best interest is embedded in the Norwegian constitution, but surprisingly enough the law regarding daycares does not include any provisions regarding the children`s best interest (Barnelova, 1982). Maybe this principle can and should be integrated into more laws than it is today, particularly into the legal framework from which daycares operates from, in order to both highlight its importance as well as clarify its significance and area of jurisdiction (Sandberg, 2016, p. 5)? The principle of considering a child`s best interest must be in the foundational presupposition for any legal framework that regulates the institutions that has the daily care for our society`s youngest members (Sandberg, 2016, p. 49).

So, I ask; does this comprehensive institutionalization adequately safeguard these children`s right to have every decision made in their best interest or is this practice a violation of their rights?

## 3. Methods

The following is a description of the research design chosen, which is ethnography.

Secondly, the methods used to collect my data are explained. The chapter then continues with presentations of methods used to both transcribe and analyze my data.

Next, a discussion of the central aspects concerning the quality of research, validity and reliability is included. Ethical reflections are presented at the end of this chapter:

### 3.1 Ethnography

In our everyday lives we learn to screen the people and events that surround us, which we are dependent upon to function relatively effectively in day to day life. Ethnographic research, though, urges us to notice what we normally don't, to work hard in order to really and truly see the details in our field of research (Angrosino, 2007, p. 38).

According to Alan Bryman ethnography is a research method where the researcher immerses herself in a particular context for a period of time, observing behavior, listening to what is said in conversations, and asking questions (Bryman, 2016, p. 690). The method of ethnography is seen to be of particular use in settings where the subjects own perspectives on the issue is of crucial value to the research, as it includes the act of perceiving the interrelationships of the people in the field through all five senses of the researcher (Angrosino, 2007, p. 26 and 37).

My research question is whether the practice of the comprehensive institutionalization of one-year old's sufficiently secures these children's rights as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) articles 3, 6 (no.2) and 12. These articles state that children have a right to have their best interest taken as a primary concern in any case that relates to them, and that they have a right to gain development to the maximum extent possible, in addition to a right to be heard. In order for me to evaluate these particular articles of the CRC in relation to such young, non-verbal children, I believe it is of vital importance that I concentrate on these children's emotional wellbeing. This research takes a cue from the Danish professor Thomas Gitz-Johansen and investigates the emotional lives of children in daycare (Gitz-Johansen, 2019). In order for their emotional wellbeing to be safeguarded, it is crucial that the emotional communication between the children and staff is of high quality, and also that they are heard and sufficiently interpreted, in order for their needs to be met.



A young child`s brain is unlikely to develop ideally without an appropriate one-to-one social experience with a loving adult (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 56). And in order to gain and maintain strong mental as well as physical health throughout life it is crucial that “the infant and young child experiences a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with his mother (or permanent mother-substitute) in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment” (Bowlby, 1969, p. Preface).

In other words, in order to gain optimal development as stated in article 6 (no.2) in the CRC, it is vital that the children in daycare not only receive affection, and positive facial expressions, but also that they have a sufficiently close, intimate relationship to their caregivers that enables them to benefit from these relationships.

The CRC art. 12 states that children that are able to communicate an opinion, should be heard. This presents a complicated question regarding these very young children`s abilities to effectively communicate their wants and needs, and whether the attending adults are able to interpret them correctly, so they can sufficiently safeguard these.

In order to investigate whether this occurs within non-parental daycare, it is expedient to apply the method of ethnography which allows the use of our emotional attention. The method facilitates and allows one to collect data through a subjective sensory perception of comfort or discomfort when exposed to particular experiences. Brain scans revealed that mirroring neurons are connected to both the Insula and the Gyrus Cinguli, which means that by only observing others` pain activates compassion and a genuine experience of physical pain is activated in the observer. In other words, it hurts watching others in both physical and emotional pain (Hart, 2012, p. 93). Therefore I propose this enables humans to use our emotions as a moral compass, which allows me to interpret these toddlers emotional lives through my own emotional reactions to the observed situations (Kraft, 2014, p. 89).

Previous research executed in daycare institutions is interpreted through the perspective of adults. This is problematic when observing children, as the literature explicitly argues that being open towards and tuning in on a toddlers emotional state is the only way to experience, understand and illuminate their perspective in order to meet their needs and protect their interests (Postholm, 2010, p. Introduction).

The application of focused ethnographic research aims to record as much detail as possible about the relationship between the children and the employees of the daycare center in order to develop a narrative account of these interactions. The goal was to observe these interactions and look for the

mutual intimate, loving relationships that according to Sue Gerhardt is essential for the toddler's optimal brain development. Recent discovery of mirror neurons in the brain have made it clear that babies are connected to other people from the beginning of life. Very young babies have the capacity to feel other people's emotions, and they need to feel loved and cherished in order to develop to the maximum extent possible (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 51). The emotional relationships between the toddlers and staff will be evaluated to see if they are close enough to meet the appropriate threshold for warmth and intimacy, as well as for the caregivers to accurately interpret the children's needs and meet them.

## **3.2 Data Collection**

There is a necessity to collect data systematically so as to best support the arguments made in this thesis (Angrosino, 2007, p. 36). And since quality ethnographic research is the result of triangulation – the use of multiple data collection techniques to reinforce conclusions, I have used both observation and interviewing in my research.

Traditionally, one has called what you do in fieldwork for “data collection”, which to some extent presupposes a passive field situation and an active field worker. This may give the impression that the world and its reality is something that can be reaped by a neutral researcher. But data in ethnographic method is a sensory experience for the researcher, which means that data and findings demands reflection, and must be interpreted by the researcher. Therefore, it is always affected by the researcher and her personal values and understanding of the world (Hagen & Skorpen, 2016, pp. 12-14).

The aim in every research is to try to be as objective as possible and not let your subjective opinions and experiences interfere with the results. But when it comes to the emotional lives of one-year-old's, I believe that this is not only unwise but foolish to not listen to one's own feelings and reactions. In order to safeguard a toddler's need, one is dependent upon the ability to empathize and feel what the child feels. It requires being particularly sensitive towards all the children in your care and tuning in to their emotional states, so that the children can develop the capacity to regulate their emotions.

Since using your senses while observing is a crucial skill when applying this method, being entirely objective is not possible. Transfers and contra-transfers are mechanisms defined in psychoanalysis as when the subjects transfer their feelings over to the one observing, and vice versa. This mechanism is a presupposition in order to interpret observations of non-verbal children (Hagen & Skorpen, 2016, p. 33).

This does not invalidate the researcher's analysis and findings; it only confirms the importance of the researcher being aware of their own position within these issues. These mechanisms are counterbalanced by validation of findings in the relevant literature which support my conclusions.

Studies carried out in the mid 80`s on children 0-3 in daycare linked early institutionalization to insecure attachment (Belski, 2009, p. 1). This did not go unchallenged, critics claimed that the proven insecurity in these children must have other explanations like poverty or poor-quality daycare, not the quantity and timing of daycare. But after taking into account these potential explanations, in the comprehensive study published by The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) amongst others, the results were strikingly consistent with the risk-factor conclusion (Belski, 2009, p. 2). These results helped to confine this research to only evaluating the relationship between the toddlers and their caregivers in daycare, and no other factors like socioeconomic conditions.

### *Sampling*

The ethnographic approach and analysis are time consuming, therefore the sample was limited to one daycare. This of course makes it difficult to generalize, but it gives me a deeper, richer inquiry to the toddler's experience in this particular unit at the daycare. As Postholm states; with the research focus on few settings and many variables, one are able to create a collage of the complex reality (Postholm, 2010, p. 35).

I used *purposive sampling*, which means I have suitable participants were recruited for the purpose of my study (Bryman, 2016, p. 408). The location, a toddler division in a non-parental daycare, was selected because of its relevance to my research questions.

Further *typical case sampling*- approach was used, which means this daycare was chosen as it exemplifies the dimension of interest; ordinary toddlers experience of day to day life in a daycare institution without any specific characteristic traits (Bryman, 2016, p. 409).

In order to recruit the participants, an email invitation was sent to a number of different public daycares in my district where I presented my research proposal, and I chose to do my research at the daycare who first responded.

The sample size was a total of nine children in one daycare division which included four one-year-olds and all children were under the age of three. This sample size allowed for a rich, deep study of the toddler's experience.

### 3.2.1 Observer as participant

Our human ability to observe the world around us forms the basis for our ability to make commonsense judgements about different aspects of our reality (Angrosino, 2007, p. 53).

Observation is the act of perceiving the activities and interrelationships of people in the field setting through the five senses of the researcher, and it requires both objective recordings as well as a search for patterns (Angrosino, 2007, p. 51).

It could be argued that interpreting these subjects (toddlers) thoughts and feelings would be difficult, but I would argue that it might be the opposite since a toddler's body language doesn't lie. They are unable to manipulate the observations. By combining observations and interpretations with the informal interviews of some of the employees, with available, relevant research regarding this issue, I believe I have become able to communicate the experiences of the toddlers in this daycare.

Observation might seem to be the most objective of the ethnographic methods, as it does not require much of interaction between the researcher and his or her subjects. It is important to remember though, that the objectivity of our five senses is not in any way absolute.

I started my observation with a wide focus, the interaction between children and staff. Reading through my observation notes after each session enabled me to reflect and establish a foundation for more specified observation. When I narrowed it down to observing the situations where the children seemed to be particularly vulnerable, it gave me information that allowed me to gain a profound understanding of the observed relationships (Postholm, 2010, p. 63).

Trying to get as much detail as possible and attempting to constantly tune in to the emotional life of the toddlers were quite exhausting, so I had to limit the number of hours I was there per day. The first week I was there in the morning, observing the employees and the children, and the second week I observed them after nap time and until they were picked up by their parents.

I spent a total of two weeks observing in the daycare unit, in two separate terms during autumn semester of 2019, which according to Angrosino may strengthen the credibility of my research (Angrosino, 2007, p. 59).

Psychotherapist Ester Bick developed the infant-observation-method, and she proposes that a researcher must be aware of how you get emotionally affected by observing young children. The ethnographic/social anthropological method recognizes that the observer is there as a complete human being and does not act like a distant, objective camera, and it is therefore unavoidable that the researcher gets personally emotionally affected. Ole Henrik Hansen wrote in his notes while doing an observational study in daycare; “I couldn’t do it anymore at the end. I could not stand observing how we teach toddlers to disconnect from their emotions. It was only because my wife called me a coward when I was about to give up, that I finished” (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, p. 19). Psychoanalysis is the study of the unconscious mind, and Esther Bick argues that it is of great importance to “enable observers to become increasingly receptive to the impact and meaning of emotional experience, transference, countertransference and projective identification, and to thoughtfully contain the impact of the information that these convey about unconscious mental content” (Thomson-Salo, 2014, p. 3). One is not objective, and I must be aware of that. I need to acknowledge my reactions and ask myself what they are telling me about those I observe as well as how they are connected with my own history and emotional life. This form of observing your own emotional reactions is a form of objectivity, where one is not freed from personal reactions, but that investigates and reflects upon them in order to understand what they say both about those who are studied and one’s own self.

The basic principles of ethnography are that one is searching for patterns that proceeds from careful observations of lived behavior (Angrosino, 2007, p. 38). As a result, when I started observing repeating behavior during the first week, I had to return to the site of observation to confirm my theory of actually observing a pattern of behavior. The finding is related to the toddlers’ reactions to the employees more physical, intimate care. I also wanted to compare this to the way they acted to the same kind of care provided by their own parents.

Knowing when to stop the observation is not always an easy matter in ethnography, but what brought my fieldwork to a close was a sense of having my research questions answered, and therefore not needing to generate further data. Ending my observation was motivated by “the recurrence of familiar situations and the feeling that little worthwhile was being revealed”, a kind of data saturation (Bryman, 2016, p. 445).

Going into this observational study my aim is to give detailed descriptions of the toddlers' sounds, facial expressions and body language. I want to try to portray the collective emotional life within institutions like this non-parental daycare. I want to include my own reactions in my notes, because I assume such notes does not only say something about me as a person but also something about the observed situation. For example, if I feel happy observing interactions between toddlers and employees, this reflects a quality in their interactions. At the same time, will me feeling sad observing toddlers crying not only reveal my personal "baggage", but also the emotions that are in play in that particular situation. I have to constantly evaluate whether my own feelings and reactions actually reflects the toddler's feelings. I endeavor, first and foremost, to be loyal towards the reality that I observed within this institution.

The daycare that's been investigated is a communal daycare in the eastern part of Norway. By size and organization, it is representative for other public daycare institutions. It is divided such a way that children from three years to school age are cared for in separate areas and children aged under three is in their own section.

Specific daycare employees are assigned to specific groups, if anyone is on sick leave (at least for a shorter period of time, up till six months), vacation, lunchbreaks or other things, they do not get replaced by other adults.

Most children in this section of the daycare are brought here around 7:30 and 8.00 and is picked up between 16:30 and 17:00.

Even though my focus is on the youngest children who are around age one and have just started daycare, my findings do not automatically exclude the older children, as all children under the age of three are seen to be particularly vulnerable and have very specific emotional needs (Schoore, 2017).

### *Observation guide*

Initially I wanted to lean on the *Caretaker Checklist* developed by the American NICHD-research, which is "the most comprehensive study to date of children and the many environments in which they develop" (U.S Departement of Health and Human Services, 2006, p. 3). In this study, childcare was measured in two ways; the *Structural/Regulable* features and *Process features*. The *structural/regulable* features entails aspects as adult-child ratio, group size, and training of the childcare provider. While the *Process* features concerns the children`s actual day-to-day experiences within these non-parental daycares (U.S Departement of Health and Human Services,

2006, p. 8). According to the NICHD study one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of children`s development is positive caregiving, that is “sensitive, encouraging, and frequent interactions between the caregiver and the child”. This positive caregiving includes showing a positive attitude, having positive physical contact, responding to vocalizations, amongst other things (U.S Department of Health and Human Services, 2006, p. 10).

But during my first few days observing, I realized that it is not just about how the adults behave towards the children that matter. What I saw was that even though the employees´ actions fulfilled all requirements of the checklist, something was still lacking, the children`s needs still did not seem to be sufficiently safeguarded. Research shows that the personality, traits or capabilities of the caregiver is of little importance when evaluating the quality of the relationship and interactions, what is important is how well the caregiver fits with the child, in other words, chemistry (Hart, 2012, p. 158). Professor in psychoanalysis Gertrud Diem-Wille claims that it is only the child`s reaction to contact with her primary caregivers`, the emotional “dialogue”, that can provide us with an indication of the quality of the relationship between the adult and the child (Diem-Wille, 2014, p. 9). Dr. Gabor Maté argues; that a child must be actively attaching to that particular adult, be wanting contact and closeness to him in order for the proper relationship to develop (Neufield & Maté, 2019, p. 6). This attachment will evolve into an emotional closeness and finally a sense of psychological intimacy (Neufield & Maté, 2019, p. 6). He continues by claiming that all the skills in the world cannot compensate for a lack of attachment relationship (Neufield & Maté, 2019, p. 6). Research regarding institutionalized children show that even though the children grow up in warm attentive caregivers, it is not enough to develop strong attachment because they lack that one particular caregiver which they have that warm, intimate relationship with (Hart, 2012, p. 168).

How the children feel towards the staff is the crucial aspect, as Bowlby argues they need to experience a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with their caregiver in which BOTH find satisfaction and enjoyment in order to sufficiently meet a young child`s need (Bowlby, 1998, p. 11). Therefore, I suggest that it must be considered whether it is possible for the daycare staff to be good enough caregivers to the youngest children, and whether these children actually want close contact and relationships with them.

My role was exclusively as a researcher observing and informally conversing with the participants. As a researcher I was not there to give advice or make comments or take on any domestic or personal functions (Diem-Wille, 2014, p. 9).

### *Pilot observation*

The daycare site in this research was available at my disposal which enabled me to do my research in two different terms. This gave me time to reflect upon the data collected and make necessary adjustments before I began my second research week.

I gradually began to discern matters that seemed to be important and concentrated on them, while paying proportionately less attention to things of less significance as I became more experienced (Angrosino, 2007, p. 38).

### *Access and Role for ethnographers*

As a researcher in this daycare I held an overt role in a closed setting, which means that I was clear about my presence within the institution (Bryman, 2016, p. 425). I strove to be a passive researcher, as I was conscious about not initiating interaction with the children. However, as Bryman states “sometimes ethnographers feel they have no choice but to get involved”, as I felt when children initiated contact (Bryman, 2016, p. 440). I did not want to reject them, as I could not explain why I would do so. Regarding being an insider or an outsider, I find myself somewhere in the middle. I do not have a pedagogical education, and I have never worked in a daycare, but I do have the schooling of a child- and youth worker that several of the assistants in Norwegian daycares holds. This might allow me to have a deeper understanding of both the daycare as an institution as well as children`s needs.

### *Field notes*

I kept my notes structured and organized while conducting the observation by marking every page with date and time. I used pseudonyms in order to protect the identity of my informants, and I kept all descriptions of people, actions and physical surroundings objective. This made the work of transcribing my fieldnotes manageable.

Either way, I was aware that my fieldnotes could not be perceived as objective descriptions, as they were a result of me constantly considering what is important enough to be noted, and what is not based on my theoretical background, as well as my previous experiences in life.

## 3.2.2 Interview

In order to as accurately as possible perceive the experiences of these toddlers, I attempted to stay true to my role as observer but also open to what the staff had to say regarding these (Diem-Wille, 2014). That is why I wanted to do interviewing which in ethnographic research is a process of



directing a conversation so as to collect information (Angrosino, 2007, p. 42). There are several types of interviews used by ethnographers, I have applied an open-ended variant, which have enabled me to go in-depth with the particular issues of interest, in order to capture the essence of toddler life in day-care. By using this method, I wanted to get the staff's perspective of whether they feel they are adequately able to safeguard the youngest children's needs. I asked open ended questions, and let the staff speak their minds. The ethnographic interview is conducted in depth, with the purpose of understanding the nuances and capturing the gray areas that I otherwise might have been missed (Angrosino, 2007, p. 43). In order to maximize the ethnographic results I prepared some general questions on the background of my observations which served as a guide for the conversation, and followed up with some probing questions which were designed to keep the interview moving in a productive direction, such as asking for clarifications, or opinions, more information (Angrosino, 2007). At the same time, I tried to spend some time in ice-breaking chit-chat in order to create an atmosphere where the staff felt comfortable talking to me, I kept eye contact as much as possible even though I simultaneously made notes.

### **3.3 Transcribing and analyzing**

Transcription is the analytical process where written notes are transferred from the observation notes to a coherent text in preparation for analysis. It is important that transcriptions are as accurate as possible in order to capture the essence of how toddlers experience everyday life in non-parental daycare. After the transcriptions were completed, a reliability check was performed where the observation notes were reviewed several times in order to make sure the essential parts were included and communicated as precisely as possible.

Because every researcher brings their own perspectives and experiences to the study ensuring the validity of the transcriptions can become a more intricate process than assuring the reliability. One must ensure that the transcriptions reflects the world one is studying to the maximum extent possible, rather than one's own theoretical assumptions. I wanted to observe with an open mind. I did not know what I was looking for when I initiated my observation, so I started out by noting as much detail as possible regarding both my observations and my reactions. At a later point when I started to recognize patterns, I narrowed my focus onto particular situations.

## *Analysis*

Analyzing the data I applied both descriptive analysis to search for patterns, and theoretical analysis to search for the meaning in the patterns (Angrosino, 2007, p. 75). Descriptive analysis required breaking down the data into its component parts and recognizing the patterns, regularities and themes that emerge from the data (Angrosino, 2007, p. 67). Applying a theoretical analysis afterwards enabled me to figure out how these component parts fit together, how the existence of patterns in the data could be explained and how I could account for the perceived regularities (Angrosino, 2007, p. 68).

According to Angrosino it is vital to the outcome of the research that the ethnographer come to recognize patterns, behaviors or actions that seem to be repeated, so that they can be said to be typical, and not just random occurrences (Angrosino, 2007, p. 38). He further states that a true pattern is the actual behavior that is shared by the members of the group, volunteer behavior one can see in everyday situations, which is not forced or manipulated (Angrosino, 2007, p. 68).

In order to clarify my themes for my work of analyzing my observations I began by *describing* what I had been observing in the field within my own notes. Next I continued by *classifying* my notes, which is the process of breaking down the narrative description and identifying the themes (Angrosino, 2007, p. 70).

The themes emerged from combining my data with the scholarly literature on the topic of my inquiry, which are “*Separation – Saying Goodbye*”, “*The Anticipation Machine - Changing Diapers*”, “*Second Skin – Nap Time*”, “*Emotions of Vitality – I’m Awake!*”, “*Mentalization – See beyond my behavior, see ME!*”, “*Still Face - Are you emotionally available when I need you the most?*”, “*Consolation – Am I not worthy?*” “*Love Matters – Hey Sis!*” and “*The Third Space – Moms here!*”

I reviewed these themes many times in relation to both my theoretical framework as well as my notes in order to avoid using different themes to describe the same phenomenon (Bryman, 2016, p. 581). Once the data were arranged into useful themes, it was possible for me to summarize them into a coherent text in order to present them (Angrosino, 2007, p. 71). I made statements of the relationship between the thematic elements in my data, how the perceived variables fit together (Angrosino, 2007, p. 72). These simple statements were a way of organizing my data and understanding the everyday lives of the toddlers I observed.

Further, I applied the *theoretical* analysis and considered the patterns I found in the light of existing literature and attempted to demonstrate how my findings related to the interpretations of others (Angrosino, 2007, p. 74).

### **3.4 The research quality of the study**

Ethnographers can rarely operate with objective certitude. While they must strive for accuracy, they must at the same time always keep in mind that the “facts” of human behavior and interactions are sometimes in the eyes of the beholder and can be manipulated by the subjects (Angrosino, 2007, p. 36).

A research project will always, to some extent, feature the researcher’s own personal experiences and perspectives, yet the intention must be to strive to examine the data material with an open mind and try to put aside one’s own experiences and perspective. I have aimed to achieve trustworthiness and authenticity in my work, and I hope those qualities are reflected clearly in my study.

Successful ethnographers strive to be conscious of their ethnocentric perspective and their assumption that our own ways of thinking and doing things are the right way, but these can never be banished completely (Angrosino, 2007, p. 38). The process of observation therefore needs to start with recording as much detail as possible, with as little interpretation as possible.

#### **3.4.1 Validity**

According to Bryman, validity is “concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research” (Bryman, 2016, p. 41). Validity can be said to be a measure of the degree to which an observation actually demonstrates what it appears to demonstrate (Angrosino, 2007, p. 58) Researchers normally distinguish between internal and external validity.

##### *Internal Validity*

The internal validity relates to the credibility of the study, the issue of causality, that is whether your data support your conclusions (Bryman, 2016, p. 384).

In order to ensure the internal validity of my research, I implemented important elements to the research process. I actively searched for consistencies and inconsistencies in what I observed. I have listened to the staff’s opinion about whether the comprehensive institutionalization of one-

year-olds is in their best interest. The staff are the people that spend every day with these children, their views matter. (I was surprised to hear that they actually thought this was a valid question. My presumption would be that they would uphold the practice as exclusively positive.)

It was also important to me to be open to “negative evidence”, defined as situations where the toddlers’ needs were met. These situations are not included in my thesis, as they are not relevant to my topic and also because the thesis is of a limited scope. I want to point out that having observed negative evidence, situations where toddlers’ needs were met, does not invalidate the findings since they must be considered implicit in the interpretation of observations made by a subjective researcher. I also followed Angrosino’s advice about playing “with alternative explanations for patterns that seem to be emerging” (Angrosino, 2007, p. 69). He continues by arguing that one should not wed oneself to a single analytical framework before all the data are in hand (Angrosino, 2007, p. 69).

### *External Validity*

The external validity on the other hand is concerned with the question of whether your results can be generalized across social settings. This represents a problem for qualitative research in general, as these studies often are executed in case studies and small samples (Bryman, 2016, p. 384).

Alternatively, one could say that even though my research were carried out in a single location, the location was really insignificant and not part of the subject of analysis, and therefore may simply have acted as a backdrop to the data collection (Bryman, 2016, p. 61). Therefore, the data on the relationship between daycare staff and very young children may to some extent offer a hint of what may be found in other, similar institutions because of the combination of the children’s needs and cognitive development at this age, which of course is common for them all.

### 3.4.2 Reliability

Reliability is concerned with the question of whether the results of a study are repeatable (Bryman, 2016, p. 41). While qualitative data in general, and therefore also ethnographic data are believed to be objectively real, the circumstances in which those data are collected cannot easily be replicated (Angrosino, 2007). The reality we perceive as ethnographers is always conditional, so we cannot take for granted that another researcher will come to the exact same conclusions (Angrosino, 2007, p. 36). Nevertheless, there are some ways in which observation-based researchers can achieve

something approaching the criteria of scientific reliability (Angrosino, 2007, p. 59). One is conducting the observation in a systematic fashion; another is using standardized techniques for the analysis of the data. A third way of achieving reliability to some extent in ethnographic research is to execute observation in several terms, if you then yield roughly comparable results, they can be considered credible (Angrosino, 2007, p. 59).

### **3.5 Ethical considerations**

Especially considering that my research involved very small children, it is particularly crucial that my research ethics maintain a high standard. Before the initiation of this project, it was approved by the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD). The NSD application included the ethical considerations made before the start of the research, which are based on Bryman's four basic principles of ethics (Bryman, 2016, p. 125):

1. Harm to the participants

One of the reasons for choosing participatory observation is that I feel it is borderline unethical to ignore toddlers, who does not understand why I am there, if they approach me. Rejection is painful for anyone, and maybe more so for those who cannot understand the reason why?

2. Informed consent

A letter outlining the study was provided to all participants and explained how potential participants' privacy and identities would be protected, how research notes would be destroyed after project completion and requested all parent's consent. Contact information both to for my research supervisor and my university was also provided in case the participants had questions or concerns related to the research.

3. Invasion of privacy

I was present when the children had their diapers changed, and I always asked permission to be present. I stayed in the background and followed all directions from the staff of whether to close the door etc. I always attempted to protect the privacy of my subjects.

4. Will the research involve deception of any kind?

I explained why I was there to parents and staff members. However, I did think this particular principle was a bit hard to follow. In order to avoid potential reactive effects, I

needed to keep some details to myself. I was afraid that staff would, unconsciously, sabotage my observations if they knew too much of what I was looking for. Regardless, I attempted to protect the interests of my subjects.

In addition, it has been tremendously important to me that my participants do not feel incorrectly presented in my thesis or in a way they do not recognize. On the other hand, this represents my interpretations and perceptions of reality, and I do acknowledge that there are always a multitude of views and understandings of our social world.

## 4. Analysis

This research is the result of triangulation which uses several data collection techniques in order to reinforce the conclusions (Angrosino, 2007, p. 35). Combining multiple perspectives proved very fertile, and enabled obtaining broad data material which could be related to the present academic research (Diem-Wille, 2014, p. Preface). Following is the analysis and discussion of the data material that was assembled through both observations and interviews.

The work of psychologists and brain researchers Bowlby, Winnicott, Hart and Schore, who provide this research's theoretical framework, demonstrate that the external world is of crucial importance when it comes to a child's ability to develop, and that it is the primary caregiver's interaction with the child that either supports and facilitates optimal development, or hinders it (Schwartz, 2008, p. 11). Schore argues that the most important information for successful development is conveyed by the social rather than the physical environment, and continues by saying that "the dyadic relations between a child and its caregivers the first few years of life can have direct and enduring effects on the child's brain development and behavior" (Schore, 2016, p. 199). He also states that infants and toddlers have "unique essential social emotional mental health needs" because the early maturation of the brain requires positive social experiences (Schore, 2017). The relationship a baby has with its primary caregiver functions as a template, as it "permanently molds the individual's capacities to enter into all later emotional relationships" (Schore, 2016, p. 3).

Some children just seem to be born more resilient than others, but there is a factor that seems to be crucial for developing this resilience, and that is having a responsive caretaker early in life. Social anthropologist Meredith Small claims in her book that even children who grew up in the worst possible conditions seemed to manage life and have a positive attitude as long as they had at least one caretaker who "paid attention to their needs and feelings and responded to their pain" (Small, 2002, p. 208). These early experiences shape the babies' adaptive capacities as well as their vulnerabilities to and resistance against particular forms of future pathologies (Schore, 2016, p. 3). The chemical construction of the brain rapidly develops during the first two years of life, but the process does not occur on its own, it needs nourishment. If the person who cares for these young children for the majority of each day do not provide enough empathetic, attuned attention, parts of the children's brains will not develop as well (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 148).

While strong attachment leads to a robust ability to mentalize, which is a presupposition to feel empathy, weak attachments, especially one where the child feels rejected, will lead to an inner conviction of being unloved and unwanted, which have major negative effect on the child's self-esteem (Hart, 2012, p. 165).

Therefore, the aim of this research is to examine whether daycare staff in are able to function as a mother-substitute, as Bowlby claims is of vital importance in order to sufficiently facilitate healthy development, or if their care is insufficient and therefore hinders of these children's abilities to develop to the maximum extent possible (Bowlby, 1969, p. Preface).

During the first week, I observed the children and staff in free, open situations that coincide with their everyday life within this institution in order to develop a general understanding of daycare life, and to identify situations to observe more in detail. I started by writing down as much as possible. After a few days, I noticed when relationships were revealed to be either close or distant seemed to be when the children were particularly vulnerable. Quite quickly these situations caught my attention by provoking an uncomfortable gut reaction, so I started to focus on these. To be able to claim these situations to be patterns of behavior, I asked if I could come back again at a later point to observe more. In order to confirm my findings, I searched through my literature to find answers to my question about what this behavior did indicate.

The second week was focused on the moments the children were particularly vulnerable and included also the parental pickup scenario as an attempt to see if any difference in their relationships could be observed and whether there was any noticeable difference in the attachment behavior. The transition time between caregivers could provide meaningful data.

The data analysis revealed nine different themes and the findings are presented in relation to the relevant literature. Seven of these interaction experiences display unsatisfactory attachment relationships, while during the last two interaction experiences the children are displaying satisfactory attachment behavior. These situations are where the children are reunited with either their parents or their siblings.



## 4.1 *Separation – Saying Goodbye*

Lilly enters the daycare clinging to her parent who hands her off to a staff member, Emily. Lilly responds by crying as an attempt to attract her primary caregiver in order to maintain their proximity. Clinging, kissing, vocal calls and other forms of behavior that results in keeping mother and child close is what Bowlby have labeled with the general term “attachment behavior” (Bowlby, 1969, p. 182 and 233).

Tears are running down Lilly’s cheeks, she protests as hard as she possibly can, to no use, her mother kisses her on the cheek and says her goodbye. Lilly continues to cry loudly and is obviously in distress. This matches Bowlby’s claim that there is no form of behavior that is accompanied by stronger feelings than attachment behavior and when proximity is threatened or lost it creates anxiety and sorrow (Bowlby, 1969, p. 209). Both Bowlby and Ainsworth claim that it is a sign of healthy attachment when a child stops crying when it get comforted by somebody they are attached to (Gitz-Johansen, 2019). The daycare staff tries to comfort Lilly, but to no use. Her behavior raises question about whether she has a sufficient attachment relationship with the daycare staff.

From about 6-8 months children develop separation anxiety, in other words they display attachment behavior when separated from their primary caregiver, and this behavior is very clearly expressed by children aged 12-30 months (Hart, 2012, p. 161). After this age children who according to Ainsworth knows their mothers thoroughly will become increasingly able to feel secure in unknown places with subordinated attachment figures (Hart, 2012, p. 162). The feeling is conditional though, first the subordinate figures must be familiar to the child, and preferably get to know the child while the mother is present. Secondly the child must be healthy and not under stress, like a sudden drop off at daycare, and thirdly the child must be aware of where their mother is, and be confident that he or she can resume contact with her at short notice. Bowlby further states that if these conditions are not present the child is likely to “become or remain very “mummyish”, or to show other disturbances of behavior” (Bowlby, 1969, p. 205). Although after their third birthday most children show less urgent and frequent attachment behavior then before, it nonetheless still constitutes a major part of behavior. Actually it continues to be a dominant strand throughout the latency of an ordinary child’s life (Bowlby, 1969, p. 207).

Hart claims that the most painful form of suffering, which developed when mammals started to create family lives, is the suffering of being separated from those whom you experience close relationships with (Hart, 2012, p. 59). Separation involves intense feelings of anxiety, anger and despair, in the child as well as in the adult (Hart, 2012, p. 121).

I feel for little Lilly.

## PLAYROOM

The staff tries to consolidate little Lilly, but no one really succeeds.

She gets to sit on the lap to staff member Kelly for a while, and it strikes me that the comfort she gets is not what I would consider to be sufficient as Kelly is concerned with the other children.

Kelly needs to monitor the other children in order to support Emily, because together they now are responsible for seven toddlers. Consequently, Lilly never really stops crying, and when she is put down on the floor she immediately starts crying loudly again. Eighteen-month-old Lilly stretches her arms towards Kelly, signaling that she wants to be held. Kelly grabs Lilly`s hand and leads her into another room, the playroom. The whole scenario upsets me, it feels rough and comes across as insensitive.

The playroom is unlocked as soon as staff member number two shows up. Here they have slides and seesaws´, and the room seems to be quite popular. Lilly does not seem to be capable to engage in play and wanders around sobbing. According to Gitz-Johansen play does not occur when a toddler`s needs are not met. They must feel safe and have their needs safeguarded in order to engage in play (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, p. 28). He further states that play is not the same as sitting down with a toy, there must be a certain mood, which he calls *playfulness* (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, p. 36). It refers to the relational and emotional aspect of play and can only be invoked when the children are with people whom they feel safe with and attached to. These are the adults who knows them well enough to interpret any signal and are able to function as an affect regulator (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, p. 38). Donald Winnicott calls this *good enough care*, which includes a sense of sensitivity that enables the adult to meet the child where it is and reassure them with body language and facial expressions. Only when the caregiver is able to pick up exactly what the child is feeling, is she able to affect-regulate, so the child will be able to reach the state where she is happy and comfortable again. This is the opposite of being mechanical when relating to toddlers and requires highly individualized treatment. The ability to engage in sufficiently sensitive interaction demands practical, psychological, emotional and physical work and takes a lot of energy from a daycare worker. Only on the basis of a secure emotional relationship with her primary caregiver will the child be curious about the world and wish to explore her surroundings (Diem-Wille, 2014, p. 13).

## WITHDRAWING

Lilly continued to be upset every morning the first week of my observation, and the staff struggled to provide her with sufficient consolation. They tried to distract her, put her in her stroller with her pacifier, but she continued to be sad. The staff was busy with the other toddlers, so once again, Lilly experienced being left all alone with her emotions in the middle of the hectic daycare. Professor in pedagogics, Else Foss argues that overhearing and neglecting a child crying is absence of care, and even though an adult is physically present, she is not sufficiently emotionally available for that child to safeguard its needs (Foss, 2013, p. 101). Crying can be a symptom of experienced stress, which is particularly dangerous for toddlers, since elevated levels of the stress hormone cortisol affect brain development. Elevated cortisol levels command the brain to focus every cell on the imaginary enemy instead of fighting of bacteria, concentrating on learning or anything else non-critical. And this is a very useful when real, sudden danger occurs, but the constant every day stress keeps the body in a constant state of crisis, which makes the brain unable to handle all the cortisol, which ends up destroying braincells. Even the hippocampus, which is crucial for memory and learning, can be unable to function (Tveitereid, 2008, p. 73).

When I got back the second week in order to observe more, Lilly had silenced. The daycare teacher explained to me that she had calmed down and had become more content. Lilly had indeed stopped crying, but she did not smile either, she did not seem happy at all. I thought to myself that she had given up and withdrawn. Research suggests that stress responses are activated and cortisol levels rise when children are separated from their primary caregiver and put into daycare (all-day-nurseries), even though the children do not look or seemed stressed (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 93). Lilly is too young to understand when and why things happen, and the unpredictability she is experiencing is assumed to be particularly stressful for the nervous system. Not being able to prepare eventually cause a feeling of helplessness which leads to an urge to withdraw (Hart, 2012, p. 179). Klette, in addition, urges us to consider that even though a child stops crying after some time spent in daycare, this must not be mistaken to signalize that the child is fine; it can just as easily be a display of emotional withdrawal and shutdown as Bowlby claims (Klette, 2013, p. 27).

## EXPERIENCES WITH A SAFE AND CARING ENVIRONMENT

There are several different terms that concerns a child`s sense of security. The object-relation theory, which is an extension of the attachment theory, speaks of the importance of having “a good inner object”. Which means that having many experiences with a safe and caring environment will create an inner feeling of basic security, and feelings of insecurity will be at a minimum level. When this foundation is in place, a baby will be able to be without their primary caregiver for some

time without feeling insecure. Winnicott says that these positive experiences are stored within the child as a basic feeling of security and stability which enables them to trust in people and their world later on in life. This particular phase early in life establishes confidence in the world and their surroundings. If the child experiences a pattern of insecure attachment early in life, the child will feel anxious and worried when their primary caregiver is absent (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, pp. 39-40).

In a doctoral thesis published as a NOVA report in 2007 Trine Klette wrote “in regard to attachment theory it is probably a very difficult time for children to experience such long separations from their primary caregivers. (...) Being separated from those closest to them and at the same time having to establish new relationships, appears to be very demanding for the child, in a period where it does not have the cognitive prerequisites to either understand or predict what is happening and why” (Klette, 2007, p. 155). This research suggests further discussion is needed about whether it is possible to establish the type of environment where such young children feel sufficiently safe and secure.

## **4.2      *The Anticipation Machine - Changing Diapers***

The employees at the daycare where the observation took place uses latex gloves when they change diapers with feces, and I had an immediate response to it. I understand the hygienic regulations for this practice, but I wonder what the child thinks of the adults need of putting gloves on before touching them? The same thing happens in different scenarios described in the following examples. A pacifier might fall to the floor, and while a mother would “wash it” in her own mouth before giving it back to the child, the employee would of course not do this. A mother would pick buggies, wipe away saliva with her bare hand, which an employee would not. These examples demonstrate the lack of an intimate relationship.

The American brain researcher Daniel Siegel calls the brain an “anticipation machine” (Siegel, 2012, p. 53) . He states that the brain uses many perceptual channels to create neural representations, or mental models, of the outside world in order to assess situations rapidly and to determine what to prepare for next (Siegel, 2012, p. 52). A child`s mental models derive from his experiences with the outside world, patterns of behavior and reactions creates anticipations. When a child is responded to with affection and compassion, the implicit self of the child develops well (Siegel, 2012, p. 54). If during every situation as the examples above, the child experiences a caregiver´s distaste, reservation or discomfort, the child will likely start to associate these experiences with making others feel uncomfortable. Also, a child who is kept at arm´s length from a

caregiver due to the adult's aversion to the child's bodily fluids, such as saliva or nasal mucus, will likely hinder the emergence of that intimate relationship the child should ideally have with his primary caregiver in order to safeguard his needs. Further, these adults' behaviors have the possibility to impact the child's relationship to their body and its normal functions, as well as the development of self-esteem and self-worth. Occasional occurrences likely have minimal impact, but the research suggests that regular occurrences, such as in full time daycare (where the average is 41 hours or more for Norwegian toddlers) actually may be causing harm to these children.

Children in daycare have a very hectic everyday life, which includes early mornings and late afternoons. Every day is largely characterized by routine and little individual adjustments. For lack of a better term, I would describe these children as strikingly obedient. Most of the time, they sit still at the table, when they are getting dressed for outside play and lie still when getting their diapers changed. The differences between the behavior of individual children are normally great, so this general docility and similarity is generally concerning (Diem-Wille, 2014, p. 11). When the children's diapers were changed before they were put down for naps, they laid completely still, like bags of potatoes. Watching this genuinely upset me. My experience is that children who are changed by their primary caregivers tend to fool around and twist like worms if they are awake and energetic. If they are exhausted and tired, they will twist and fuss, wiggle out of your arms and not lay still. Considering the generally accepted fact that children behave better in unfamiliar surroundings than with their parents, where they usually let the full range of emotions out, this may be seen as worrisome. Bowlby describes the emotional bond between a child and its parents as a relationship where the child feels safe enough to let all emotions come into play (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, p. 90). When children allow themselves to behave badly, they're also allowing themselves to be vulnerable. If we make room for that it might encourage that relational intimacy. The observed interactions at diaper changing time could indicate that the children did not let all their emotions come into play, which could indicate that they have not achieved the close, intimate relationship required to develop sufficient attachment.

### **4.3      *Second Skin – Nap Time***

I observed that the children were leaning a little bit outward when carried, and they kept one hand holding their stuffed animal tight and the other hand closed in a fist. Again, it was an observation that upset me. It struck me as odd. The children seemed tense. When I started to notice that this was not just that one child in daycare, but it was nearly all the children, I became confident that I could

label this as a pattern. Outside of daycare observations, I watched the parents and how their children behaved in similar situations. I observed that when children were this tired and carried by their primary caregiver their hands were open, relaxed, and the children hung over their parent`s shoulders.

Dr. Susan Hart claims that a tense body language signals the activation of the stress-system. She further states that this can result in unhealthy behavior, and that further reinforcement of this reaction can cause weakening of the higher cognitive functions, like abstract thinking and self-reflection (Hart, 2012, p. 130). Ester Bick who developed the Infant-observation-method at the Tavistock institute in London, called a child holding on to a physical object or tightening their muscles in order to “keep it together” in insecure situations for *second skin* (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, p. 44). She claims that the child`s behavior will become ingrained and form a pseudo-protective layer as a defense-mechanism when it experiences insufficient *holding* by the caregiver (Youell, 2002, p. 110). This tough outer layer hides an extremely fragile skin underneath, like a tortoise in a shell, and is often seen in children diagnosed with attention-deficit disorder (Youell, 2002, p. 110). With the second-skin activities, the baby can hold herself together and does not have to rely on anyone else, which she considers to be too risky (Youell, 2002, p. 113). Esther Bick`s theories are based on the idea of a body-mind continuum where she links the concept of identity to the feeling of being held together, the physical sensation of being held and having a boundary gives the baby a sense of holding it together and avoiding anxiety (Youell, 2002, p. 162). According to Bick the baby has an innate need to contain an object which can hold its attention in order to feel “collected”, and she claims that the optimal object is “the nipple in the mouth, together with the holding and talking and familiar smelling mother” (Youell, 2002, p. 272).

Donald Winnicott state that children have an innate need for a primary caregiver that is capable of an almost complete adaptation because this enable a connection between the child and the primary caregiver which is crucial for a child`s development. He uses the term *relating* to describe this connection between the dependent child and the mother whose intense concern for the child`s wellbeing creates a protective sphere and which supports the establishment of an coherent emotional life (Schwartz, 2008, p. 11). He argues that the mother functions as the child`s *self*, and that this deep connection makes the mother and child a single unit (Schwartz, 2008, p. 23). The child sees himself in his mother, and when the mother sees her child, she identifies with him (Schwartz, 2008, p. 23). He further claims that a child innate potential will mature in this facilitating environment, which is recognized by the caregivers intense attention towards the child`s

wellbeing which places the child's needs in the center by almost completely identifying with the child and adapting to its needs (Schwartz, 2008, p. 20). Through this adaptation, the process of differentiating between themselves and others is initiated. In this process, transitional objects, like the daycare children's stuffed animals, are of great importance as they build bridges between the child's inner and outer world (Schwartz, 2008, p. 20). The transitional object occurs in the *potential room*, the mental space between the inner and outer, where positive interactions unfold (Schwartz, 2008, p. 20). If that space fails to occur the child will not mature, but develop a false sense of self which will function as a shield against the outside world and that will protect the true self against impressions it is unable to process (Schwartz, 2008, p. 20). The *potential room* creates the framework from which the mother is enabled to give her child the necessary space and time to develop a self, from which the child evolves from being totally dependent to (relative) independent (Schwartz, 2008, p. 13 and 23).

#### **4.4 *Emotions of Vitality – I'm Awake!***

The daycare is a very hectic place, the adults always have something important to do. Most of the children naps outside in their strollers. They are put down more or less simultaneously, so many children wake up at the same time. They go from being asleep in their stroller to being put down on the cold, hard floor with only socks on their feet. It looks cold, unpleasant and uncomfortable. For a minute, they seemed groggy and disoriented, but soon they wander to their section of the daycare on their own. It did not feel right to me witnessing these very small, vulnerable children all alone in the middle of a crowded place. I had to repress my urge to grab them, hold them close and keep them warm till they were completely awake.

Daniel Stern calls the way a caregiver holds, looks or speaks to her child, *emotions of vitality* (Hart, 2012, p. 124). And while a soft touch, a loving look or harmonic, melodious speech creates positive sensations within the child, the opposite will provoke discomfort and unease. From what was observed, I believe these experiences of being lifted from the stroller and immediately put on the floor provokes discomfort and unease. Dr. Sue Gerhardt claims that good emotional "immunity" comes out of these positive emotions of vitality and that this helps children to recover from stress (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 102). Separation, uncertainty, lack of contact and lack of regulation will, on the other hand, evoke stress responses (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 102). Stress in a sensitive period of a child's development makes the brain unable to develop enough receptors to handle stress hormones in the future; while children who receive plenty of physical contact and attention have an abundance of such receptors in their brain in adulthood (Tveitereid, 2008, p. 74).

A few of the youngest ones seems to have learned certain coping mechanisms to protect themselves from the older, and bigger children. When the older children are headed towards the youngest children, they stand still or take a few steps back placing their hands in front of them, as if they are preparing for attack. It is difficult to witness one-year-olds in this situation where they obviously feel the urge to protect themselves. Psychoanalyst and child psychiatrist Donald Winnicott claim that it is crucial for these young children to be in an environment where they are not met with demands, but instead is met with a genuine concern of safeguarding their needs, so that they don't experience the world as a threat to their existence, but instead experience the world as a safe and good place to be (Gitz-Johansen, 2019). These observations call into question whether these toddlers consider their daycare as a good and safe place to be.

Children are able to handle unpleasant experiences if they have a caregiver present that is emotionally available to help them process their emotions when needed. However, when they have too many negative experiences, issues arise, as the child's experiences profoundly influence how their consciousness evolve. Negative experiences are stored within the child as a basic feeling of insecurity and instability which leads to distrust in people and the world throughout life (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, pp. 39-40). Because a child's confidence in the world and their surroundings are being built during this period, the observed behaviors raise concerns about whether their needs are being compromised at this institution.

#### **4.5      *Mentalization – See beyond my behavior, see ME!***

During my observations, I was struck by how much conflict occurs in the daycare setting; the children hit each other, push each other and pull each other's hair. The staff spend a lot of their time trying to avert and handle the conflicts that arise. This may occur as *true empathy*, defined as the child's ability to adopt others perspectives, is not present before the age of three (Østerlie, 2015, p. 16). I wonder how adults would have reacted to being treated like this in the space they spend most of their everyday lives in. These situations are problematic because babies unconsciously remember particular experiences that generate fear in early life, and use them as cues which tend to become an "indelible", unconscious, primary repertoire of fear reactions (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 50). This means that negative experiences in babyhood will forever affect your patterns of reactions throughout one's life, no matter how irrational they may be.



Because of all these conflicts, children were often crying and when children needed comfort and support, the staff seemed to struggle to meet the needs of the children because they were also focused on practical things such as wiping tables and dressing children for outside play at the same time. The adults' ability to tune in on each kid emotional needs seems to be limited in these settings. Any adult has emotional and practical limits to what can be handled under any circumstance and interacting with multiple children in a dynamic setting like daycare is no exception. During observations, it seems like the staff's view of the children changes from being empathetic to viewing the children as problematic and egocentric (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, p. 72); Staff member Kelly states that one of the boys is loud and vocal because he "likes to hear his own voice". Further, she seemed quite sure that Lilly's more or less constant cry is a result of her having "a strong will, protesting that she does not get things her way". Such reductionist labelling of the children as needy, hysterical or oversensitive, rather than seeing the children's authentic need for care and attention seem to be a coping mechanism for the employees. It could be easier for the staff to see the children as demanding to the extent where one cannot satisfy them, than actually acknowledge that you are incapable of meeting their needs (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, p. 76).

A Norwegian study revealed that staff in daycare talked disparagingly of children who often cried (Foss, 2013, p. 79). This is deeply worrisome knowing that the primary caregiver thoughts of the child contribute to shaping the child's personality, who they are and who they will become, through their emotional interaction. They tend to ascribe the child traits it still does not yet hold, and by doing so they contribute to the development of the same exact traits. A professor in psychoanalysis states that seeing your child as the cutest and sweetest of all is part of normal parenting (Diem-Wille, 2014, p. 4). The absence of this tendency is seen to be a severe sign of a non-optimal parenthood (Hart, 2012, p. 110 and p. 116). This research insinuates that being surrounded with caregivers who tend to ascribe them negative traits does happen in daycare, and a child who is told he is rude, and loud and ruthless may become just that. This is particularly worrisome when institutionalization becomes so comprehensive as it has in Norway.

Adults need to be empathetic in order to immerse oneself and understand what the child needs. Toddlers without the ability to communicate verbally with those around them are totally dependent on others' abilities to immerse themselves in the child's point of view and understand intuitively the child's needs from their non-verbal communication. A daycare employee must be able to help and act supportively from only a feeling or sensation of the toddler's needs. This ability to understand and immerse oneself in a child's feelings is closely linked to what is called *mentalization* in

contemporary attachment theory. This term is defined as the process where we understand our own and other's subjective conditions and mental processes. It is a basic social function that enables us to interpret people we are physically and psychologically with. We need to be able to look behind what the children say and do, and see the reasons for this particular behavior in order to be there for them (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, pp. 60-61).

#### **4.6      *Still face* – Are you emotionally available when I need you the most?**

Several times I observed a child getting physically hurt and not seeking consolation. At one point, Milo had a toy thrown at him. It obviously hurt a lot as he immediately got both a bruise and a bump on his forehead. His eyes teared up, and he grabbed on to his head with both of his hands. He sat in silence, alone, with tears running down his cheeks. I went over to him, but he clearly did not want me to comfort him as his body language was closed off to me. I was the only adult who saw it. I told the staff, who then rushed towards him asking what had happened. He, of course, did not have the vocabulary to explain. He wiped his tears and were again on his own. When a child cannot establish interaction with his caregivers, regardless of whether the caregiver is physically or emotionally unavailable, he will withdraw and attempt to consolidate and comfort himself (Hart, 2012, p. 99). Dr. Sue Gerhardt argues that a baby cannot experience optimal brain development on their own. They need a sensitive caregiver present to help them affect-regulate. Whether the lack of this is caused by emotional or physical isolation does not matter; his caregiver must be available when it counts the most (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 57 and 65). The American psychologist Ed Tronic conducted a study where mothers were asked not to respond to their toddler, to be emotionally unavailable. He called it the *Still-Face* project and found that when toddlers experienced this it will react by becoming unhappy before they give up seeking attention (Hart, 2012, p. 99). He claimed that this was not a temporary reaction, but had a long term effect on the child (Hart, 2012, p. 105)

Absence of the primary caregiver(s) is seen as one of the reasons for why children develop insecure attachments. The combination of the child's despair and the lack of response from the caregiver causes the child to not expect consolidation and, therefore, neither seek comfort himself (Klette, 2013, p. 22). I was surprised to observe that several of the children did not seek attention and affection from the staff, and when the staff tried to initiate intimate interaction, the children often turned away and did not seem interested in engaging in this interplay. Trine Klette claims that children whom tries to escape their primary caregiver, withdraw and do not seek closeness is displaying anxious, evasive attachment (Klette, 2013, p. 23). These children will at first glance

seem alright, as they often are “good” at playing by themselves, “good” at restraining their emotions and are in general easy to deal with, but in fact they seem to keep a lid on their own emotions, and are often very self-critical (Klette, 2013, p. 23).

#### **4.7      *Consolation – Am I not worthy?***

During my time observing in daycare I noticed that staff often seems to be trying to stop the children’s crying by distracting them, instead of offering comfort, which is one of the primary elements in emotional care and characterizes the work with toddlers in daycare. When these young children cry, no matter if it is because they are hungry or sleepy or feeling insecure, there is impossible to appeal to their cooperation or sense of reason. If they are hungry, they must be fed, and if they are insecure, they need to be comforted and if they are sleepy, they need to be put to bed. The employees of any daycare must empathize with the child, which will enable them to see behind the toddlers behavior in order to find the reasons for it, and then satisfy its needs (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, p. 59).

Offering consolation within these institutions can be quite challenging, there are few adults and many children which makes it difficult to offer individual, customized care. I genuinely believe that these employees are doing the best they can, and I question whether anyone would be able to do it much better. After all, we only have two hands and one lap each, with 9 children under the age of three and only three adults -at most, I question whether it is humanly possible to safeguard each and every child’s need. Klette claims that because the staff is unable to provide sufficient consolation, these children often are offered distractions as an attempt to stop them crying (Klette, 2013, p. 29). In addition, Norwegians have traditionally been skeptical of giving to much consolation, as this were said to raise demanding children. Research though show the complete opposite, children who are given sufficient consolation are less demanding and more independent (Klette, 2013, p. 30). Some claim that while psychologist see children as vulnerable and dependent, daycare teachers see them as competent and independent, and as a consequence, small children are seen to not need consolation and care, but rather guidance and support (Tveitereid, 2008, p. 84).

Often, I observed that interactions in general, and more importantly around consolation specifically, were offered quite randomly by the staff. Comforting children was initiated when it was convenient for the employees and ceased when they got busy with something or someone else. Some of the children rarely initiated contact. More worryingly; when contact was established it was often terminated by the grown-up, and not the child. Research show that children who were given

sufficient consolation by their primary caregiver, signaled that they had enough, that their need had been met, and were able to resume their own activities (Klette, 2013, p. 29). The opposite, when comforting is insufficient, leads to ambivalent attachment behavior missing ability and/or will to benefit from the consolation offered (Klette, 2013, p. 25 and 29). Adequate consolation is related to the child's ability to become sensitive and empathic. The particular purpose of this behavior is to relieve and reassure when the child is anxious, afraid or in pain, and enable the child to feel safe and trusting in their surroundings (Klette, 2013, p. 28).

From the observations, the staff seem to have better relations with some children than others. Some seem to get more effortless physical contact like hugs and kisses than others. It is generally accepted that people do not have chemistry with everyone they meet, so if we accept this to be part of human nature, we cannot blame them; chemistry is almost impossible to fake. It was also obvious that some children benefited more from the contact with the adult than other children did, which is a visual confirmation of the quality of the relationship and emotional proximity between the two (Diem-Wille, 2014, p. 7; Klette, 2007). These observations raise the question of whether the unequal distribution of physical affection impacts the children and their well-being, and specifically whether some of the children feel less worthy of love.

#### **4.8      *Love matters – Hey Sis!***

A member of the daycare staff had just changed diaper on little Ella. As she carried her towards the strollers, I noticed what I had noticed many times before in other situations with other staff and children; tense body language. Ella squeezed her stuffed animal tightly with one hand, and the other hand was in a fist. Then Ella's older sibling came running in and put her hand on Ella's back. Ella lit up and grabbed her shoulders, laid her head next to her siblings, pressing her cheek against her sister's cheek and closed her eyes. My eyes teared up, and I got a lump in my throat. For a few seconds, I believed Ella felt true love, and I recognized this display of strong attachment. It was so obvious that that kind of love and affection that was displayed between those two siblings was absent in the relation between the staff and the toddler.

Another notable incident occurred when Lilly's sister came into the unit. I have written about Lilly earlier in chapter 4.1, and her struggles to adapt to daycare which included crying a lot during the first week of observation. When I came back the second week, she had silenced. The staff explained to me that she finally had adapted and found her place; however, I believed she had withdrawn.

On the day of this incident, I was amazed by the transformation in Lilly. Having her sister with her gave her a confidence I had not seen before. Suddenly she was running around with a big smile on her face, making happy, loud noises which I had not heard before. I was so happy for her, but it was saddening that she did not feel like that without her sibling present.

I believe Jeanette Pedersen is right when she claims in her master thesis that the attachment between siblings is a research area which have gained little attention (Pedersen, 2016, p. 21). My observations indicate that siblings are of great importance when it comes to experiencing loving relationships during their first years of life, which to Dr. Sue Gerhardt says children need for optimal brain development (Gerhardt, 2015, p. Preface). Social anthropologist Meredith Small states that in a survey of 186 countries around the world, researchers found that older siblings, rather than mothers, fathers or other adults, were the primary caregivers of young children (Small, 2002, p. 28). Maybe siblings play a more meaningful role towards their younger siblings than current research demonstrates.

#### **4.9      *The Third Space – Moms Here!***

All children, except one, lit up instantly by the sight of their parent. They ran as fast as they could towards them and threw themselves into the arms of their parent. They clung onto them, and hugs and kisses were shared. It was almost as if I could feel the love and warmth between them. Gitz-Johansen writes that pleasure and devotion which manifests between a mother and her child is difficult to observe in a child-employee relationship. Primary maternal preoccupation denotes the fused state of consciousness that allows the mother a very delicate understanding and interaction with her baby (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, p. 110). Mother and child melts together, enjoys each other's sent and touch. Even though employees can get close, they are not this close; there are boundaries, the children's saliva and breath are kept in a distance, while a mother enjoys and breaths it in (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, pp. 88-89). This is exactly how I would describe my observation. The relationship between the parents and the toddlers were characterized by an intimacy that was absent between the children and the staff. The interaction is more fused between the child and parent. Winnicott calls this intimate space that appears between a mother and her child "the third space". It is a space where mother and child are completely engrossed with each other, much like being in love.

Researchers referred to through this thesis have more or less consistently been speaking about the mother-child dyadic relationship. The father is often left out in this discourse, not because the father is unimportant, but because the mother is usually a child's first primary caregiver. The fathers role

depends more on his effort – his desire and will to engage in the child, as well as his relationship with the baby’s mother (Schwartz, 2008, p. 51). This explains why I was particularly curious to see when a father picked up his child from daycare. Unsurprisingly, he had just the same warm, loving, intimate relationship with his child, as the mothers did, which was a valuable confirmation of the importance of the parental love.

Ainsworth claims that the quality of attachment reveals itself in how the grown up and child interacts; the grown-ups emotional warmth will be displayed through friendly and kind facial expressions and a visible enjoyment of the interaction, and they will treat the child with visible affection (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, p. 121). Observing the children with their parents left no question that most had strong attachment to their parents, and the physical manifestation of their love once again brought tears to my eyes. It was warming to see them experience the unconditional parental love, though hard to reflect upon how they spend most of their time during their everyday life without it. Sigmund Freud showed how human relationships always are marked by ambivalence; for example, parents feelings regarding their offspring vary from one extreme to another including love and hate, sacrificial devotion and distance, helplessness and aggression, joy and desperation, and the closer a relationship is, the more violent the contrast can be (Diem-Wille, 2014, p. 5). The relationship between the children and staff in this daycare seem flat. The nature of these daycare relationships seems to be professional and maintained at an arms length’s distance.

After the first moments of reunion, several of the children “fell apart”, crying and protesting. Considering how Bowlby describes the emotional bond between a child and its parents as a relationship where the child feels safe enough to let all emotions come into play, this display of emotions seems to be a manifestation of a sufficient attachment relationship (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, p. 90). Looking at these toddlers, exhausted in the arms of their parent, I’m thinking what a multitude of experiences and feelings they must gain during a day within these institutions that remain unspoken and unprocessed, which they need to have an outlet for in a safe environment (Neufield & Maté, 2019, p. 34).

## **4.10 Results and discussion**

A variety of powerful institutions have led parents to believe that daycares, preschools and nurseries for those under three are tantamount to “good-quality early childhood care” because the stimulation and social interaction “supports children’s development and learning” (Education For All Global Monitoring Report, 2007, p. 12). If that were the case the Norwegian government’s effort to have

every one-year-old institutionalized would have coincided with the CRC article 6 (2) which imposes a requirement to provide children maximum development to the greatest extent possible, and by doing so they would also be safeguarding the children's right to have every decision made in their best interest (Høstmælingen & Kjørholt, 2016, p. 80 and 53). But there is a discussion about whether this comprehensive institutionalization actually do support these very young children's development and learning, and therefore is actually in their best interest.

In the book *Children's Rights in Norway* it is claimed that research in the field of neuroscience show that the first years of life is crucial for shaping cognitive skills, as well as learning and language skills (Langford, Skivenes, & Søvig, 2019, p. 246). The author, who is a researcher of statistics, not a psychologist or neurologist, therefore suggests that providing childcare for those under three may determine their future academic success (Langford et al., 2019, p. 246). She refers to the book by Shonkoff and Phillip; *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early child development* (Langford et al., 2019, p. 246). However, she misses out on their point that the early years are crucial for a child's development, but the foundation that is built during this time is completely different than what she insinuates. Children will not succeed academically, or in other important aspects, by exposure to comprehensive early institutionalization. Some important mechanisms need to be in place for children to be able to take advantage of anything they learn later on. Development consists of learning, but one cannot learn before the brain is ready to (Hart, 2012, p. 30). Danish professor in development psychology Diane Sommer have gone through 400 different research projects and concludes that there is no debate; the earlier children are institutionalized, the worse they will perform in education later on (Fyen, 2015). Babies needs to have satisfying experiences of dependency in order for them to become self-regulating, and mastering the ability to self-regulate is crucial in order to develop academic skills (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 110; ten Braak, 2019). According to Kraft, the ability to self-regulate is more important than intelligence level when it comes to performance in school (Kraft, 2014, p. 67). In order for children to develop self-regulation skills, they need to be part of an intimate, finely tuned relationship with a primary caregiver who is able to create that deep connection which enables her to function as the child's *self* (Schwartz, 2008, p. 23).

Children, especially the youngest, don't always get the attention they so desperately need within these daycares, and in addition, the constant busyness adds stress to their lives. In a recent article in a national newspaper child psychiatrists are expressing their concern regarding the fact that young children are getting sick of all the stress they are experiencing (Ridar, Ertesvåg, & Christiansen,

2018, 30.09). They claim that more and more children are being hospitalized with unexplainable pain and paralysis`. Several cases have been reported, and the only commonality between them is that doctors can't seem to find any physical explanations for the symptoms. The doctors warned that these issues can end up as chronic conditions if they are not dealt with (Ridar et al., 2018, 30.09). When children experience long term stress, the symptoms can "get stuck" within their bodies and become chronic. This type of reaction is caused when the nervous system has become over sensitized. Professor Trond Diseth claims that the increase of such patients has been formidable over the last few years (Ridar et al., 2018, 30.09).

Babies and toddlers in non-parental daycare can avoid stress and anxiety if they develop a lasting secondary attachment bond with one carer who is constantly accessible (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, p. 94). Leading educators` responses to the issue of experienced stress in daycare is therefore to strengthen the staff, both by numbers and by having more educated staff (Jakobsen, 2019). According to their findings, the quality of adult/child interactions, verbal stimulation, supervision, quality of play and learning all improves the score of quality when there are several adults present (Jakobsen, 2019). This is problematic for two reasons; The first issue is that according to staffing procedures, children experience a variety of caregivers inconsistently. When asked about the possibilities of implementing one carer dedicated to a single child at a time, a staff member replied that that would be impossible. In this particular unit, they have four adult staff members, two working full-time and two part-time. The part-time-workers work two and three days every other week, this means that the children are cared for by someone they haven't seen for four days when they arrive daycare on Tuesday morning. None of the employees spends the same amount of time there as the children (41+ hours) do. In addition, laws regulating vacation, sick leave and lunch breaks do not apply children. Therefore, trying to create a strong connection and attachment between one specific adult and one particular child would make that child even more vulnerable. Their solution is to attempt to create relations with all nine children, in order for them to feel as safe and comfortable as possible throughout the day.

The second reason is that introducing more adults into daycare is problematic because even though children do attach to more than one person, there are limits to how many adults they can properly attach to. For example, at this daycare, there would be a total of five adults if they hired another staff member. Once parents are included as caregivers, these one-year-olds theoretically end up with seven primary caregivers, which does not include substitute daycare staff, grandparents and others they may have (or should have) relationships with.



Children at this young age do not benefit of having too many caregivers. They are incapable of predicting and therefore also adapting to the variety of different communication patterns. These patterns are unconsciously acquired through non-verbal communication and are described by various writers, amongst them Daniel Stern whom called them “Representations of Interactions that have been Generalized” or RIG, and John Bowlby whom called them “Internal Working Models” (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 40). These describe how the earliest social experiences are inscribed in our brain apart from conscious awareness and underpin our relationship behaviors throughout life. The most crucial assumption of all is that the people who surround a child must be emotionally available and present enough to see the child and help them through difficulties (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 40). Children are born with an innate need to connect, but their ability to predict their caregiver patterns of emotional, non-verbal communication is a presupposition for them to both initiate contact as well as participate in interaction. And if they experience failure to initiate and participate in that finely tuned micro-interaction, it happens at the expense of their development of self-regulating and identity-building skills (Hart, 2012, p. 160). If a child is exposed to a multitude of primary attachment figures who differs in emotional expressions during these vulnerable years, the confused child will desperately try to understand and find meaning in whatever is communicated, and if they fail, they will suffer from disorganized behavior (Hart, 2012, p. 106).

The longitudinal American NICHD study concluded that the amount of time children spend in daycare is not related to their cognitive outcomes, but children who spend many hours in childcare show somewhat more behavior problems than those in fewer daycare hours recorded (U.S Department of Health and Human Services, 2006, p. 17). During this research process, I wanted to take a closer look at the occurrence of psychoneuroses and character disorders one can relate to either deprivation of maternal care or discontinuities in a child`s relationship with his or hers mother (or permanent mother-substitute), and whether this has increased during these last few years. Unfortunately, statistics could not be found regarding children`s mental health before this very comprehensive institutionalization of one-year-olds began. However, The Norwegian Health Institute published a 2018 report regarding Norwegians ` mental health which states that mental disorders are widespread within this country which represented a considerable cost of 140 million NOK to the welfare state in 2017 alone (Reneflot, 2018; Vold, 2018). Especially worrisome is the 40% increase of mental disorders like anxiety, eating disorders and depression amongst teenage girls during the last five years (Reneflot, 2018). Bowlby argues that “many forms of psychoneurosis and character disorder are to be attributed either to deprivation of maternal care or to discontinuities

in a child's relationship with his mother figure", and amongst the younger population is anxiety, depression and also affective disorders the most common (Bowlby, 1998, p. 11; Reneflot, 2018).

Young children require satisfying experiences of dependency in order to become self-regulating, which is crucial in order to develop social competence (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 110; ten Braak, 2019). Children who do not have a consistent, stable, emotionally available primary caregiver whom they can depend upon during these vulnerable years are highly dependent upon others, they need reassurance and satisfaction from other people (Diem-Wille, 2014, p. 15). In their egocentric view, they relate everything that happens to themselves (Diem-Wille, 2014, p. 15). According to anthropologist Small, children who attend daycare seem at first glance to be more independent and self-assured than children who don't attend daycare, and also "don't get along with other kids as well, are pushy, and don't resolve disputes as well" (Small, 2002). So, this "essential socialization that occurs only in daycare" might seem to backfire.

The practice of separating young children from their primary caregivers can have long term consequences for both their mental as well as their physical being. How comprehensive the consequences will be for these children depends on a number of different factors, the child's age and maturity, the length and frequency of the separation(s) as well as the particular child's vulnerability, which is a combination of their genes and innate temper (Klette, 2013, p. 19). Different children have different thresholds, and there are no markers to indicate how much a certain baby can handle before it is too much. How resilient a child is may be due to their experiences in the womb, to their genetic makeup – or a combination of the two. Recent research has identified variations of the serotonin gene which has been linked with greater sensitivity to the social world. Babies who have these genes are referred to as "orchids", while the majority of babies are "dandelions" (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 35). Regardless; having primary caregivers who are emotionally inaccessible represents a risk of restricting a child's development (Diem-Wille, 2014, p. 16). Early institutionalization may actually be negative for children's development. The absence of an emotionally present and available primary caregiver creates great stress in a baby. When a child experiences to be ignored, unsupported, with decreased physical contact and affect-regulation, it causes them to overproduce stress hormones which is devastating for their developing brain. This research indicates a need for precautionary principles when creating policies that involve these very young children.

Another argument in favor institutionalize toddlers is that their language development benefits from it. The government states that attending daycare is crucial for the development of language, and express concerns about children who does not attend daycare (NOU 2012:1, 2012). This seems to be a poor argument for institutionalizing children at age one though, as the period of language acceleration starts first at age two and lasts to age three (Small, 2002, p. 97). A researcher who participated in the GoBaN study concluded there was no connection between when a child started daycare and their development of language (Løkås, 2018, 30.07.). The American NICHD study came to the same conclusion; the amount of time spent in child care was not related to children`s cognitive or language skills or to their school readiness (U.S Departement of Health and Human Services, 2006, p. 16). Language development is anchored in dialogue and personal experiences, and words gain meaning only through concrete experiences of interaction (Hart, 2012, p. 144). A Danish documentary revealed concerning examples of how much interaction daycare teachers and children have in a day. The documentary revealed that during 5.5 hours of care, three-year old, Merle, experienced 17 minutes with an adult in her daycare, and 12 of these 17 minutes she`s being read to. Another child, Artem, received 6 minutes of interaction with an adult during his 7 hours and 8 minutes in daycare (Carlson, 2019). Child psychiatry specialist Grethe Kragh-Müller calls it startling and problematic, because lack of one-on-one time with adults prevents the development of both social as well as language skills (Carlson, 2019). In addition, if the stories shared by staff in daycare across Norway in *Barnehageopprøret* (The Daycare Riot) are to be believed, it could be safe to conclude that this might be the case in Norwegian daycares as well (Barnehageopprøret, 2020).

There are several hints of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in this daycare. There are posters stating that it is important to enable children`s participation, and the staff often says things like “I see you”. Obviously, this is an attempt to safeguard some of the child`s emotional needs to be seen by their primary caregiver(s). Regardless I believe that there is a dramatic lack of focus upon toddler`s emotional needs in daycares. After the staff says “I see you” nothing really happens, it is just an empty phrase. Daycare teachers and assistants commonly instruct parents to disregard children`s emotions and to turn one`s back on crying children. A staff member confirmed that the daycare staff here consistently tells parents to walk away and let them handle their crying child. Further questioning about whether there are ever situations when the staff urge parents to take their children`s emotions seriously, such as encouraging parents to display affection when reunited revealed that the staff never did this, nor did they ever think to do so. Telling parents to disregard their children`s emotions, and actively discounting their value seriously contributes to creating an

imbalance in the parent-child relationship because parents are told that their child's crying is not the expression of an innate need but rather an attempt to manipulate, and therefore is unimportant and should be ignored.

Associate professor Trine Klette argues that there is no question whether these young children in daycare for many hours every day and establishing new relationships experience this as demanding, especially since they do not yet possess vocabulary or a sense of time (Klette, 2013, p. 27). One of the periods that comes across as particularly demanding for these children is the familiarization phase, which seems to be quite lengthy for some children. Some children cry for days and weeks during their familiarization phase. One employee at the observation site reported that parents never will be called about a child's crying, even if the child cries all day. Another daycare, Muldvarpen, writes on its homepage; "There are huge individual differences as to when a child find its place within the daycare, (...) some children cries when their parents leave them at daycare every time, even when they have been here for years" (Muldvarpen barnehage).

Developmental psychology professor Lieselotte Ahnert conducted research on fifteen-month old baby's familiarization experiences in non-parental daycare. Her research questions explored whether these children found it stressful to start daycare, if it made any difference how much time parents spent on the familiarization phase, whether any differences could be found in how secure and insecure children handled starting daycare and if institutionalization affected the relationships between the children and their parents. All children observed in her study had elevated cortisol levels. A full five months after they started the daycare, the cortisol levels were significantly higher than it was at home before they were institutionalized. The mothers spent in average two months familiarizing the children to their new surroundings, but even with their mother's present, the children's cortisol levels remained elevated. In particular, the children who had insecure attachments to their mothers experienced elevated levels of the stress hormone.

The results from the American NICHD study showed that Children who spent ten hours or more per week had an increased risk for insecure attachment between the children and mothers with low levels of sensitivity (U.S Department of Health and Human Services, 2006, p. 17). In other words, this separation can come to undermine the mother's own capacity to provide sensitive care.

Ahnert's study revealed that securely attached children did not regulate their stress better than the insecurely attached children, but that their behavior and their inner state correlated to a greater extent. She concluded that for these young children the stress of being abandoned is so strong that an inner feeling of safety does not help (Tveitereid, 2008, p. 71).

This comprehensive institutionalization of our one-year-olds comes with a cost that is a legitimate concern. The statistics on the number of children who experience anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, and various forms of attention deficit disorder are rising. The national results from the survey *Ung data – 2017* (statistics regarding young people aged 3-25) states that “(...) the scope of mental health issues keeps rising. The increase is pronounced/considerable” (Bakken, 2017). It is difficult to argue that these health issues are caused by early institutionalization alone, as there are a number of different factors that affect children`s development. However, recent brain research of the substantial contribution of early experiences must be taken seriously (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 109). Early relationships affect our physiological responses, such as stress responses, neural networks and biochemical functioning, as well as our psychological expectations of others (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 109). It may seem paradoxical that rates of mental illness keeps rising at the same time as life has become objectively better according to every conceivable standard, but the youth who participated in this survey also reveal the highest number ever of youth experiencing loneliness (Bakken, 2017). Even though Norwegians experience a high external standard of living, this seems to reveal a form of poverty that does not include economics, but rather the lack of meaningful relationships.

This narrative of life in daycare is my subjective experience, and perceptions of what reality entails differs between every individual, but there are certain aspects of reality that can be caught, described and agreed upon (Postholm, 2010, p. 35). When asked for their opinion, a staff member expressed uncertainty about whether this comprehensive institutionalization is in the best interest our one-year-olds responding “maybe not”. It seems to me like this is a reality which we agree upon, and this raises the question of whether daycare staff maintain a system they don`t believe is right. If that is the case, I want to urge them to be aware of their moral responsibility to protect the interests of the children and speak up. When a state ratifies a convention, it takes on obligations under international law to implement it. When the Norwegian government ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, they were obliged to undertake all appropriate measures to both implement and ensure the realization of all rights in the Convention for all children within their jurisdiction (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2003, p. 1). Even though it is the state that takes on the obligation, the task of its implementation must engage all sectors of society, in addition to the children themselves (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2003, p. 2). Therefore, it is important for daycare staff to reflect upon these laws and obligations if we, as a society, want to achieve complete implementation of these children`s rights.

Trine Klette claims that the practice of this comprehensive institutionalization of one year old`s more than implies that their best interest is not the primary concern but rather the needs of the national economy (Klette, 2013, p. 27).

The emotions filling me up watching these children took their toll on me. I thought to myself that I need to distance myself from the toddlers´ emotional expressions in order to cope. Which caused me to wonder if the daycare employees internalized such a mechanism to make it possible to spend all day, every day with these children. Further, emotional distancing within the staff could cause them to become insensitive towards the children´s emotional signals, and thereby inhibit their ability to safeguard the children´s needs sufficiently. These employees could be experiencing *habituation* which means that they have been exposed to the same emotional stimuli on multiple occasions which causes them to respond to these children`s protests automatically, without any conscious reflection or much emotional investment (Kraft, 2014, p. 89). If this is the case, it is deeply problematic. In order to be able to ensure these children`s right to be heard which is essential in order for art. 3 to be realized adults around them must be open and attentive to their methods of communication and expression (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009; Valen-Sendstad, 2013, p. 249).

It is not claimed that these children should be happy and smiling all the time. As psychoanalysis Heinz Kohut argues, it is crucial that children from time to time feel frustrated and challenged in order for them to learn and grow (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, p. 56). Yet, the challenge must be in a form and intensity that the child can cope with because a sense of achievement will only occur by managing the challenge(s) presented to them. Winnicott argues that “Good enough mothering” does not mean that the child does not cry at all or never experience discomfort. Each child`s limit for what they can handle of frustration and separation will constantly expand. Danish professor Gitz-Johansen argues that good non-parental daycare is aware of each individual´s limit and stays within them (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, p. 57). It can be argued that when it comes to these young children, it is almost impossible for an employee to have a satisfactory intimate relationship which is a presupposition for them to achieve this level of awareness of each individual child.

Even though these children are in an environment where the caregivers do genuinely want what is best for them, there is definitely an absence of the necessary close intimate relationships that the children depend upon in order to develop fully. In daycare, they spend their majority of their waking time with people who take care of them in order to receive economic benefit in the form of a salary. I want to add that I do not think this regards this daycare in particular, but all daycares, as

the issues raised in this thesis lies with the youngest children immaturity, which are pretty universal. I honestly believe the staff in this daycare to be empathetic, caring women. My aim is not to criticize their work, they do the best they can within the framework they have been given. I would not have been able to do a better job myself. My criticism is solely on the system from which this practice derives from.

Now, returning to the research questions an whether this very comprehensive institutionalization safeguard the children`s rights as stated in the CRC articles 3, 6 no.2 and 12, takes their best interest into consideration, enable their development to the maximum extent possible and ensures that they are sufficiently heard by their caregivers. The research indicates that this institutionalization of such young children does not sufficiently safeguard any of the rights above. The following statements found on various daycare websites indicate a significant departure from current child development research. Suggestions such as “Avoid comforting and hugging to much”, “If the child cries, it is often best if the staff takes over and the parent leaves”, “Do not return to your crying child, even though it might be hard for you as a parent” might alarm any attachment researcher (Muldvarpen barnehage). Further advice from educators like “Count on there being tears, some children never adjust to being left by their parents every morning”, “Be consistent, when you say *goodbye* -you leave”, “If you leave a child that cries and clings to you, it is not unnatural to feel like a bad parent (...), but comfort yourself with the fact that the crying stops right after the parents are out of sight” indicate that the main concern is the parent, not the child (Frognerkilen barnehage). These statements do not appear to demonstrate respect and compassion, which are values that are rooted in these children`s human rights (Thoresen, 2013, p. 156). These statements reveal a grotesque display of the asymmetrical power-relationship between the children and the adults who make up their social environment (Thoresen, 2013, p. 151).

A child`s right to be heard is complementary to the right to have every decision made in their best interest, as it is presupposes listens to the child`s opinions, wants, and feelings, in order for their best interest to be safeguarded (Valen-Sendstad, 2013, p. 248).

Observations of these children in daycare demonstrate that they communicate in multiple ways that they would prefer being with their parents rather than in daycare. They prefer the primary caregivers they are familiar with for good reasons. So simple, yet so complicated.

Aisling Parkes claims that by facilitating children`s participation you enable them to protect themselves, it enables their needs to be met, and it allows them to develop to their full potential intellectually, socially and emotionally (Parkes, 2015, p. 13). This claim raises cause for concern about the children`s lack of participation limiting them reaching their potential.

From the observations conducted, I claim that being institutionalized for 41 hours or more per week might be harmful to these children. Additionally, it may have long lasting consequences on their mental and physical health throughout life. These babies are right to protest, and, as the research indicates they should be heard not ignored. This comprehensive institutionalization seem to insufficiently safeguard these children`s right to develop to the maximum extent possible, nor does it enable them to be sufficiently heard. As these rights are not realized, neither is their right to have their best interest regarded as a primary consideration.

Bowlby claims in his book *Attachment* that babies become more likely to respond to strange figures with fear responses after the age of six months, and that these responses increasingly grow in frequency and strength towards the end of the first year and continue until they reach a maturational threshold at age three (Bowlby, 1969, p. 223 and 205). The stimuli that most effectively terminate the behavioral systems which trigger fear-responses are the sound, sight and touch of their primary caregiver, most often their mother or mother-figure. When the child reaches its third birthday it has undergone changes that combined make proximity to the mother / mother figure less urgent (Bowlby, 1969, p. 179). Young primates in the wild spend a decreasing time with their mother, and this change is mainly a result of their own initiative. There are different reasons for this change. One is a “change in form taken by the behavioral systems mediating attachment behavior itself”, another is an increase of curiosity and of exploratory behavior (Bowlby, 1969, p. 197).

This data suggests reconsidering existing expectations of young children and the societal expectations for daycare.

Foss argues that no child in need for care should have to be worthy of sufficient care, all human beings should be treated with compassion and respect, and we should never settle with the idea that the care is good enough, but always strive to be better (Foss, 2013, p. 89).

This data again suggests reconsidering existing expectations for daycare since they are not ready for the bigger world outside of their own homes.

The comprehensive institutionalization of these toddlers, these “fetuses outside of the womb”, does not seem to be in their best interest as it does not ensure their development to the maximum extent possible or sufficiently safeguard their right to be heard, and therefore neither protects their right to have every decision made in their best interest. Therefore there is a need to explore the reasons for choosing to send non-verbal one-year-olds to these institutions for more than an adult work week (41+hours).



## **5. Why do we carry out this comprehensive institutionalization of our one-year-olds?**

There are different reasons to why society's youngest children are sent to daycare and following is a presentation of the different arguments used in the public discourse regarding this issue.

### **5.1 The early comprehensive institutionalization of one-year-olds is crucial in order to achieve equality between the sexes.**

When Bowlby's Attachment theory first got its breakthrough in the '60s, he was faced with strong resistance within feminist circuits as they interpreted this theory as an attempt to keep woman at home (Schwartz, 2008). Emphasizing the mother's importance regarding her child's wellbeing did not, and still don't, fit in with the goal of achieving equality between the sexes within the workforce. Norway is rated as the second-best country in the world for gender equality according to the *Global Gender Gap Report* (Forum, 2018). One significant marker indicating this equality percentage of women in the workforce. The comprehensive institutionalization of young children are a prerequisite enabling both parents to combine a demanding jobs with a family life (NOU 2012:1, 2012).

It is contradictory for society and government to enact laws regarding the welfare of children that are in opposition to the same government's social agenda of all ensuring highest possible levels of adult employment; this creates weak premises for this particular argument for institutionalization of young children.

Any debate should not be founded solely on adult wants but rather on children's needs. Norwegian mothers are expected to be back at work approximately seven months after giving birth, for 7.5 hours each day, away from their infants, away from those who are referred to as "external fetuses" in the literature (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 33). These very young children are still a physiologically and psychologically extension of their mothers, who need a mother (or mother substitute) who identifies so strongly with them that the baby's needs feels like her own, in order to develop to the maximum extent possible as stated in the CRC art 6 no. 2 (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 38; United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 1989).

Separation anxiety seems to be considered as a manifestation of a hysterical, irrational mother who can't let go of her child. New brain research proves that what actually happens when a child is left behind by their primary caregiver is that their brain enters panic-mode; the separation anxiety activates fear in the primitive reptile brain. The attachment behavior is an unconscious mechanism that is crucial for the mother to maintain proximity to her child, which the child's physical and a mental health depends on throughout life. The infant continues to cling to its mother, but due to a lack of strength to support itself for long, it is the mother's action alone that safeguards the proximity between the two (Bowlby, 1969, p. 199). These genetic presupposition enables a mother's physical bodies to respond to their crying, clinging toddlers in a way that a man's body cannot. It gives woman a unique ability to interpret the youngest children and be taken seriously when they express reservations regarding this comprehensive institutionalization.

Secondly, fathers also have a responsibility regarding the care for their children. They should contribute, and there are many ways to do just that; sharing their paycheck and welfare benefits with their child's mother, take a less demanding position in their workplace so that the mother also can work outside the home, or becoming stay-at-home fathers, so that the mothers can work full-time. A mother's role as the primary caregiver is only crucial during the first few months. Thereafter, when the mother feels she and her child are ready to separate, and the father has developed a positive, close relationship with the child through his caring support of the mother and child through both pregnancy and the first few months, then the father will be capable of safeguarding his child's needs. It is crucial that the parents have a positive, caring relationship and that the child considers the father as a primary caregiver as well when this shift occurs. It takes two to conceive a child, and it is in the best interest for the child to have to engaged parents.

Because of government policies and social expectations, many woman experiences to be unfairly prevented from making independent choices about safeguarding the needs of their own children as they see fit. They are mocked and labeled as hysterical if they protest against this comprehensive institutionalization which many don't feel comfortable with (Permisjonen Burde Foreldre Fordele Gruppen, 2019).

New mothers are overpowered by hormones which make them constantly want to touch and hold their babies and not be separated from them (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 31). But because the relationship between a mother and her child has largely been the private experience of women and not men, it has been hidden and unrepresented. The importance of woman's emotional lives in relation to their babies has been hugely downplayed (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 31 and 32). When it comes to safeguarding

a toddler`s needs, such as food or sleep, which men can easily relate to, there is no debate whether these are valid needs. In contrast, when a toddler cries due to separation anxiety and the mother tunes into this because it is in the nature of the mother-child dyadic relationship, it is rarely taken seriously. Exploring the reason for this is essential. A one-year-old need to be in proximity of their primary caregiver is equally as important as their need to be fed. Developmental psychologist Daniel Stern argues that the brain depends on positive stimulation from its surroundings in order to develop to the maximum extent possible, in the same manner as the body depends on nutrition to develop (Hart, 2012, p. 29).

I think that it is crucial to ask the question what is equality between the sexes? Is it to enable women to live their lives like men on men`s premises? Or is it to acknowledge that men and woman are different? Can it be that in order for a society to achieve equality between the sexes, it is crucial that the differences between men and women are acknowledged, and that women needs to be given the freedom to lead the life they want and safeguard the values they uphold as important. Not just for the sake of it, but for the better for our children`s wellbeing.

Ethics, or moral philosophy, is the part of philosophy which tries to answer questions like what is *right* and what is *wrong*? What is the *right* thing to do? According to the Danish philosopher Knud E. Løgstrup is ethics a concept founded upon our sensory experiences (Foss, 2013, p. 78). I interpret this as when we feel with our senses that something is not right, it should be taken into deeper consideration. When mothers feel anxious regarding this practice, we should therefore listen. They might be right; institutionalization of one-year-olds might be wrong.

## **5.2 Comprehensive institutionalization is important to safeguard economic development.**

When the issue of childcare is debated, the economic aspect is often included. The more adults active in the workforce, being productive citizens, the better for the nation`s economy. The same goes for each family`s private finances; having two wage earners is better than one. The common practice in Norway of providing families financial support through the child`s second year of life is seen by many as a relatively costly and an unnecessary arrangement.

It can again be argued that this argument does not hold true since it continues with the same contradictory premise as the previous argument for comprehensive early childcare; economics should not be a primary concern when it comes to children's wellbeing.

Calculating the economic cost/benefit of institutionalizing toddlers is a complex issue beyond the scope of this thesis, but I will address a few issues associated with the economic development argument.

In 2016, the Norwegian municipalities spent 42,7 billion NOK on providing daycare to its citizens. The cost for one child was between 122.100 and 289.700 NOK per year, and children under three years of age cost 1.8 times more than older children as the ratio child/pedagogue is higher (Utdanningspeilet, 2016). If you chose to care for your one-year-old at home, you are entitled to a public grant which in 2020 make up a maximum of 82 500 NOK (Ny Arbeids- og Velferdsforvaltning (NAV), 2019). This suggests that it is a greater cost for society to institutionalize these children, than keeping them at home for another year, even when parents receive the public grant.

Children in daycare are sick more often; the Norwegian Institute of Public Health states that colds and infections of the ears and throat occur almost twice as often in children that attend daycare than in children who are not institutionalized (Folkehelseinstituttet, 2013). Stomach and bowel infections are three times as common (Folkehelseinstituttet, 2013). The same results can be found in the American NICHD study; children in child care had a higher risk of getting sick with ear infections, stomachaches or influenza (U.S Departement of Health and Human Services, 2006, p. 17). Small children's immune systems are not properly developed, so they easily get infected. Contagious diseases spread faster to the other children in the daycare, as well as to their parents and siblings. A survey done in Oslo daycares showed that each child had seven infections during a single year, and as a cold previously lasted one week, can now last for three weeks, because the children are not given the proper rest (Johansen, 2016). That adds up to 21 days per child. Parents sick-leave is quite costly financially, but maybe personally also, as the parents may feel like they are never able to fully commit. Unable to focus a hundred percent at work or sufficiently meet job demands, and they may also feel guilty for sending their sick one-year-old to daycare. The personal cost of this way of living might be greater than the financial cost. Considering the long-term effects on the mental and physical health of these children as a result of high levels of stress hormones, in addition to not having a adequately emotionally available primary caregiver during this vulnerable period, it could be said that the cost may just outweigh any economic benefit that may exist.

This attempt to analyze the economic argument of early institutionalization do not cover all aspects of this issue, but it is a modest departure point for debating whether this practice of institutionalizing toddlers is financially smart. This debate is not related to the wise decision to invest in early childhood programs and support.

### **5.3 Comprehensive Institutionalization of one-year-olds is important in order to integrate immigrants.**

Integration regarding both mothers and their children is another important argument generated by the government. When it comes to children, it is accepted that it is important for them to be confident with the Norwegian language before they start school (St.meld. nr. 24 (2012-2013), 2013). However, as I argued in the chapter of analysis, language acceleration starts first at age two, and as the development of language is anchored in dialog and interpersonal experiences, lack of one-on-one time with adults in daycare may prevent rather than stimulate language development (Carlson, 2019; Hart, 2012, p. 144; Small, 2002, p. 97).

Institutionalizing your child is a demand when following the introduction course, which is a prerequisite to apply for asylum in Norway. In terms of integrating mothers, it can be argued that it is less expedient to separate mothers and vulnerable young children than to provide immigrant mothers opportunities to get to know Norwegian society on their own terms together with their toddlers. A survey done among Somalian mothers revealed that these mothers “made a relatively huge emotional sacrifice by institutionalizing their children” (Sønsthagen, 2018). They express in the survey that they miss their child during the day, and that they cry when they leave them (Sønsthagen, 2018). There are many different reasons to why parents decides to care for their toddlers at home; One reason that seems to be of particular importance is connected to the values of each family and the community they are a part of (NOU 2012:1, 2012).

According to the survey *Stay-at-home minority women*, 25 of the 30 women who participated in the survey report that the parenting responsibility for their children (and taking care of the household) was the reason why they were not working at that time of the study (Kaldheim, 2009, p. 46). They stated that they wanted to be at home with their children while they are small because it was important that parents have time for their number one priority, their children (Kaldheim, 2009, p. 46). In addition they made comments like “there are too few adults in daycares, these young children need a lot of attention” (Kaldheim, 2009, p. 50).

As this is not align with Norwegian conception of parenthood, these minority women may be perceived as oppressed by their husbands and communities, and thus deprived of the opportunity to be a productive member of society. This is problematic for two reasons. The first is that scientific research support these immigrant women`s feelings that the children should be at home with their parents the first few years. Adult disorders with their roots in babyhood, such as a sensitive stress response, or difficulty in regulating emotions, along with insecure attachments to others, can make individuals vulnerable to various psychopathologies. These disorders, such as overeating or undereating, lack of empathy towards others, depression, anger issues, physical illness, all are largely due to the inability to manage their own feelings, which has been impaired by their poorly developed emotion systems (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 108). Parents, who are biologically compelled to invest enormous amounts of time and energy to raise their children to adulthood in order to pass on their genetic legacy, have the best presuppositions to safeguard their children`s needs. Staff in daycare, on the other hand, shares no genetic or biological connection with them, and therefore, at least from an evolutionary point of view, have no reason to commit to these children in the same, crucial way (Small, 2002, p. 201).

Because many immigrants´ parenting values are distinct from Norwegian parenting values, it could cause a lack of respect and trust between the Norwegian communities and the immigrant communities. This may create conflicts and a barrier between these migrant women and the Norwegian society that in the long run leads to cultural contempt amongst these migrant communities.

Learning the language and becoming part of the bigger society is a good thing, but not on dispense of the wellbeing of one-year-olds.

## 6. What values does this cultural trend reveal?

The way we arrange childcare is arranged and shaped by the norms and values of a society, as this influence the way we perceive reality and the way we behave (Triandis, 2018, p. 2). Protestantism's legacy have resulted in a very strong pietism in Norway that considers daily work a "divine calling in its own right", and that seems to effect Norwegian parenthood a great deal (Borchgrevink & Brochmann, 2003, p. 79). During autumn of 2018 the new edition of the handbook for mother and child health centers in Norway was published. The book claims that babies have a natural need for constant body contact with their mother and are, therefore, meant to sleep with her the first few years of life. Further, it states that this mismatched with our modern lifestyle, so the book recommends that parents teach babies to sleep in their own bed by rejecting or ignoring them if they cry and need loving care in the middle of the night (Misvær, 2013, p. 168). This might be a display of how the relentless expansion of capitalism causes basic human feelings to be swept aside as Gerhardt argues (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 7).

Parents from other cultures are appalled by this practice and believe that western parents do not love their children and are not connected to them (Small, 2002, pp. 202-203).

Since woman in the West has achieved equality when it comes to education and participation in payed employment, the family has been losing significance.

The new 21<sup>st</sup> century economic reality have contributed to the current assumption that it is a good thing for parents to work, even during their children's earliest months and years when they are still dependent on its parents for "continuous emotional regulation and bodily care" (Gerhardt, 2015).

With both parents at work, and no relatives available, there is not many options left. Whether comprehensive institutionalization is the best way of arranging childcare is still highly debateble (Small, 2002, p. 220). It might seem like we are re-creating the network of people similar to what we had available for helping with childcare in "the old days", only at this day and age this web of kin is now replaced with complete strangers who are hired for a job rather than "compelled by the dictates of our genes to care for our kids" (Small, 2002, p. 220).

This current trend regarding infant's care tells us that providing learning opportunities at every stage of life beginning in infancy is important to facilitate (Education For All Global Monitoring Report, 2007, p. Foreword). Western parents are often in such a hurry to make their children independent that they expose their babies to too long absences from their primary caregiver in order to achieve this goal (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 111). It seems as if a child older than twelve months is not in some sort of outside care or regular program, the parents are not doing their job sufficiently

(Small, 2002, p. 219). Consequently, every August thousands of one-year-olds start daycare. Heartbreaking scenes of babies clinging on to the parents anxiously walk away, is a common sight. Unfortunately, leaving the child like this has the reverse effect; it undermines the baby's confidence in the parent and in the world, leaving him or her more dependent (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 111). Repressing many of our strongest emotions for the largest parts of our days from very early on seems like a heavy price to pay for the ruthless expansion of capitalism (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 7). Professor of Anthropology Meredith Small writes in her book *How biology and culture shapes the way we raise our young children* that she finds "the shift to accepting day care as "normal" as one of the more fascinating cultural changes of this generation" (Small, 2002, p. 219). All parents strive to be the best parents they can be; they discuss how to best raise children to be productive and successful citizens, and for some reason recently this idea that daycare staff are better at taking care of our children than the parents themselves has become the dominating idea. Children attending daycare have been getting younger and younger, and they spend more and more time in these institutions. Today, parents leave their one-year-olds to strangers for more than eight hours five days a week. Wider society is expected to safeguard children's needs in order for them to become independent, socially smart and "good", while individuals realize their own needs and wants. A longitudinal study regarding language in Norway media revealed that the use of the word "self-realization" has increased by over 240% during the two decades between 1987 till 2007. The expression "I want more" has increased by more than 140% (Vetlesen, Anderssen, Dundas, Ekeland, & Rand-Henriksen, 2009, p. 155).

Simultaneously, the use of the word "satisfaction" was reduced by 75%, and the term that signifies that one is "burned out" (utbrent) was used five times as much. "Gratitude" was reduced by 23%, the use of two different terms that both signify "moderation" was reduced by over 65% (Vetlesen et al., 2009, p. 155). This reflects the development of individualism within the Norwegian context. It seems that the broad freedom of choice does not necessarily create better lives or more satisfaction with the life we live. Terms like "solidarity", "unity", "togetherness" and "common interests" have all been decreasing, while "networking" has increased. Even though this word is a relational word, it provides a more instrumental association where others are used as tools to gain benefits, and not in order to safeguard others' well-being (Vetlesen et al., 2009, p. 158). People are used as means towards another's goal.

Norway seem to have enabled a kind of poverty that is not connected to money, but rather the lack of close relationships to emerge; in Neo-Liberal ideology, individuals are seen first and foremost as consumers. It could be argued that post-modern 21<sup>st</sup> century Western individuals live in a world that



is increasingly pervaded by a homogenic Neo-Liberal ideology where people are defined and understood by their communities as consumers. On an individual level, this means that many citizens tie their identity to materialistic goals and values; self-definition develops through what we own and consume (Vetlesen et al., 2009, p. 140). The Neo-Liberal ideology assumes that human motivations, intentions and aims are in the end nothing but the individual's right to be a consumer and a seller, and the individual acts in a way that maximizes materialistic benefits for themselves. Respect and concern for others are decreasing. Some researchers have started to worry about what consequences such societies will face. Human beings are social beings, and humans cannot survive without each other (Vetlesen et al., 2009, p. 142). Millions of years of evolution have designed us to be entwined with a family system with stable caregivers, and when these expectations are not met, children suffer and their lives are forever affected (Small, 2002, p. 194). A culture that uphold this type of comprehensive institutionalization of these infants and toddlers, who cannot talk, and barely walk is acceptable, or even important needs to take a harder look at this practice (Small, 2002, p. 221).

Norway has created an anti-child culture, where there is no room for children, and where nurturing care has become something for the weak, something we should manage without. Those who depend on others are seen as burdens to society, while the independent and self-reliance is our ideal, and the sooner we reach it, the better (Small, 2002, p. 227 and 228; Tveitereid, 2008, p. 85).

Dr. Gabor Maté describes current Western culture as “insane” because of its failure to meet basic human needs. He believes that this culture inflicts childhood trauma on our toddlers, and that this trauma is an internal psychic wound that limits people's capacity to live as fully as they might. He further asks whether we have created a society that puts higher value on consumerism than the healthy development of our children (Neufield & Maté, 2019, p. 38).

The quality of life in Norway has never been better, at least in an economic perspective. Regardless, more people feel hopeless, depressed and alone, and suicide rates are high. Mental illnesses cost the Norwegian society around 70 billion NOK per year, and depression make up half of those costs (Norsk Helseinformatikk AS (NHI), 2019). The purpose of life seems to be the pursuit of happiness, so there is a continuous search for those things that supposedly will bring happiness like the ideal job and the perfect house and the best life companion. Unfortunately, instead of feeling fulfilled, people seem to become more anxious and adrift, and what is missing must be considered. Emily Esfahani Smith argues that chasing happiness can make people unhappy: What truly makes people happy is to have meaning in life. She argues that people are experiencing a feeling of emptiness, which seems to be a lack of meaning, not happiness. Happiness is a feeling of comfort

and ease in the moment, while meaning is and comes from “belonging to and serving something beyond yourself and from developing the best within you” (Smith, 2017). Maybe a sense of belong to and serving someone else is what’s missing within the Norwegian society.

Laws can protect a child from neglect and abuse, but it cannot enforce love (Valen-Sendstad, 2013, p. 245). That might be true, but governments can facilitate opportunities for parents to be their children`s primary caregivers through these vulnerable years, instead of pressuring them to institutionalizing them at this early age. There is one external factor that seems to be critical for a child to develop resilience, and that is having a responsive caretaker early in life. Parents, who are biologically compelled to invest enormous amounts of time and energy in raising their children to adulthood in order to pass on their genetic legacy, have the best presuppositions to safeguard their children`s needs (Small, 2002, p. 201 and 208).

For all parents who may read this, research supports the fact that you are your child`s best caregiver. Never doubt that. Nobody could ever come close to the biological anchored love you and your child have for each other. Your child would choose you every time over anyone else, and if you miss your child during the day, you can be certain your child misses you a thousand times more. Therefore, when you pick up your child from daycare, make sure you embrace him or her, hold them tight and kiss them over and over. Convince them every day that they are the center of your universe, that they are loved and cherished more than anything, and that you too would choose them over anyone and anything else, if you could.

In order for children to “develop to the maximum extent possible” children need to be loved, they need to be listened to, and above all they need to belong to something, a family.

## 7. Suggestion for further research

These findings may be said to confirm the recent concerns regarding comprehensive early institutionalization, but I have added a new set of illustrative examples from a new perspective which I hope will stimulate to further research.

- The children`s obedience and lack of expressions of their emotional lives
- The lack of intimacy and being part of a bigger group, which deprives them of the one-on-one experience

It would be interesting to conduct a study where one uses video recordings to see how much quality one-on-one interactions children in daycare experiences with adult`s and how many people they need to interact with on a daily basis. A number of different researchers claim that children this age has a limited ability to deal with a number of different people during their early days, so the only way these children in non-parental daycare can avoid stress and anxiety is to develop a lasting secondary attachment bond with one caregiver who is constantly accessible to them (Gitz-Johansen, 2019, p. 94).

To make an *analytic generalization* in order to claim replicability in a qualitative study, one needs two or more cases that are shown to support the same theory (Angrosino, 2007, p. 161). It would be useful to execute a study similar study but only more comprehensive when it comes to both the number of daycares and observation time included, in order to reveal whether the majority of children in Norwegian daycares act the same way as the subjects in this research.

There is currently a focus on high cortisol levels in institutionalized toddlers, but it would be interesting to do an extensive longitudinal study to see whether low cortisol levels are as widespread since this is just as problematic as elevated cortisol levels. According to Susan Hart, this leads to the cell death in the Hippocampus, while according to Sue Gerhardt low levels of cortisol allows inflammatory response to flourish unchecked (Gerhardt, 2015, p. 163; Hart, 2012, p. 174). Researcher Steven Suomi discovered that when rhesus monkeys are separated from their mothers, their stress systems are activated, and does not decline before they are reunited. It is worth investigating whether human one-year-olds experience the same response and have elevated cortisol levels for 8-9 hours, five days a week.

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## **Appendix A. Letter for information and consent**

### **Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet**

*“Barnehagestart for ettåringer -til barnets beste?”*

**Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å vurdere barnehagestart for ettåringer opp mot barnekonvensjonen. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.**

#### **Formål**

Formålet med prosjektet er å kunne si noe mer om hvorvidt myndighetenes mål om å institusjonalisere alle ettåringer er i tråd med de forpliktelsene vi har påtatt oss i forbindelse med inkorporeringen av barnekonvensjonen inn i norsk lov.

Forskningsspørsmålene jeg ønsker å analysere er hvorvidt barnehagen som institusjon er til de yngste barna sitt beste, slik det er formulert i barnekonvensjonens artikkel tre. Hvorvidt institusjonaliseringen bidrar til optimal utvikling, slik det fremkommer i artikkel 6, og også hvorvidt barnets rett til å gi uttrykk for egen mening, i tråd med artikkel 12 i konvensjonen, er ivaretatt.

Forskningsprosjektet er en del av en masteroppgave på studiet Menneskerettigheter og Multikulturalisme ved Universitetet i Sørøst-Norge.

#### **Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?**

Universitetet i Sørøst-Norge er ansvarlig for prosjektet.



### Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Jeg har valgt nettopp ditt barns barnehage ettersom barnehagen er en kommunal barnehage som reguleres av de samme lover, forskrifter og vedtekter som andre kommunale barnehager i Færder kommune. Dette innebærer at denne barnehagens eierforhold, formål, opptakskriterier, åpningstider og oppsigelsestider samstemmer med de andre kommunale barnehagene i kommunen og dermed forhåpentligvis, til en viss grad, representerer en gjennomsnittlig barnehage her. Alle foreldre med barn på småbarnsavdelingen i den aktuelle barnehagen vil bli spurt om å delta i prosjektet.

### Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Jeg vil benytte meg av deltagende observasjon som metode, noe som innebærer at jeg vil ta del i barnehagehverdagen til barna på småbarnsavdelingen Fuglehuk. Observasjonen vil finne sted i løpet av høsten 2019, omfanget vil avklares nærmere senere i samråd med barnehagen. Opplysningene som samles inn registreres med håndskrevne notater, og eventuelle personsensitive opplysninger vil bli anonymisert.

Ettersom det er barn som er subjektene i dette prosjektet, vil foresatte ha anledning til å se observasjonsguiden på forhånd ved å ta kontakt.

### Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis dere gir tillatelse til at deres barn kan delta, kan dere når som helst trekke samtykke tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle opplysninger om deres barn vil da bli destruert. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for dere eller deres barn hvis dere ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke dere.

- Dersom dere ønsker å trekke tilbake samtykke til at deres barn kan delta i prosjektet, kan dere melde fra til meg **elektronisk** på [nadiaolonkin@gmail.com](mailto:nadiaolonkin@gmail.com) eller veileder ved Universitetet i Sørøst-Norge, Førsteamanuensis Lena Lybæk på [lenalybaek@usn.no](mailto:lenalybaek@usn.no). **Muntlig** enten til meg når jeg er tilstede i barnehagen eller til andre ansatte ved institusjonen. Eventuelt kan dere også skrive et notat som dere kan levere på **papir**.

### Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deres barn til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrevet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

- Prosjektets veileder Førsteamanuensis Lena Lybæk ved Universitetet i Sørøst-Norge vil ha tilgang på opplysninger innhentet ved observasjonen.
- Ettersom ingen uvedkommende skal ha tilgang på personsensitive opplysninger vil alle personnavn og andre opplysninger som kan identifisere institusjon, enkeltindivider etc. bli anonymisert. Innhentet datamaterialet vil lagres som anonymisert data i håndskrevne notater, og aldri bli oppbevart elektronisk.

### Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes i mai 2020. Innhentet datamaterialet vil bli makulert ved prosjektslutt.

### Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg/ditt barn,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg/ditt barn,
- få slettet personopplysninger om deg/ditt barn,
- få utlevert en kopi av dine/barna dine sine personopplysninger (dataportabilitet), og
- å sende klage til personvernombudet eller Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine/ditt barn sine personopplysninger.

### Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg/ditt barn basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Universitetet i Sørøst-Norge har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS fått i oppgave å vurdere at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket. Denne vurderingen pågår fortsatt, og prosjektet vil først starte når godkjenning foreligger.

### Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med: Universitetet i Sørøst-Norge ved

- Lena Lybæk, mail [lenalybaek@usn.no](mailto:lenalybaek@usn.no). Telefonnummer 31 00 88 78
- Vårt personvernombud: Paal Are Solberg, [personvernombud@usn.no](mailto:personvernombud@usn.no)
- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS, på epost ([personverntjenester@nsd.no](mailto:personverntjenester@nsd.no)) eller telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Prosjektansvarlig

*Eventuelt student*

(Forsker/veileder)

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## Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «*Barnehagestart for ettåringer – til barnets beste?*» og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- å delta i deltakende observasjon

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet, ca. mai 2020

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(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

## **Appendix B. NSD confirmation**

NSD sin vurdering

### **Prosjekttittel**

Institusjonalisering av ettåringer -brudd på barnekonvensjonen?

### **Referansenummer**

278688

### **Registrert**

27.05.2019 av Nadia Olonkin - 104649@student.usn.no

### **Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon**

Universitetet i Sørøst-Norge / Fakultet for humaniora, idrett- og utdanningsvitenskap / Institutt for kultur, religion og samfunnsfag

### **Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)**

Lena Lybæk, lenalybaek@usn.no, tlf: 91599311

### **Type prosjekt**

Studentprosjekt, masterstudium

### **Kontaktinformasjon, student**

Nadia Olonkin, nadiaolonkin@gmail.com, tlf: 92307793

### **Prosjektperiode**

01.08.2019 - 01.05.2020

### **Status**

25.07.2019 - Vurdert

### **Vurdering (1)**

#### **25.07.2019 - Vurdert**

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet med vedlegg den 25.07.2019, samt i meldingsdialogen mellom innmelder og NSD. Behandlingen kan starte. MELD ENDRINGER Dersom behandlingen av

personopplysninger endrer seg, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. På våre nettsider informerer vi om hvilke endringer som må meldes. Vent på svar før endringer gjennomføres. TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til 01.05.2020. LOVLIG GRUNNLAG Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake. Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a. PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om: - lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen - formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke behandles til nye, uforenlige formål - dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet - lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: åpenhet (art. 12), informasjon (art. 13), innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18), underretning (art. 19), dataportabilitet (art. 20). NSD vurderer at informasjonen om behandlingen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13. Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned. FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32). For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og/eller rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon. OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet. Lykke til med prosjektet! Kontaktperson hos NSD: Elizabeth Blomstervik Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)

