



## Kindergarten Practice: The Situated Socialization of Minority Parents

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### Abstract

Almost all parents in Norway use kindergarten and part of becoming a kindergarten parent is learning the routines of the particular institution. Thus, kindergarten parents go through a socialization process, learning amongst other how to deliver and pick up their children. Building on ten days observations of bringing and delivery scenes in a kindergarten, it is here suggested that this socialization process may have a racialized character. The kindergarten in question had special delivery routines, which the kindergarten staff expected parents to carry out, but not everybody did, and the article investigates how the staff reacted towards the three deviant cases observed. The bottom-up analysis of the social interaction between the parents and the staff is here supplied by the perspective of racialization, questioning the gaze of majority persons and their naturalized power to define non-complying parents as something *other*. The kindergarten staff did not overtly orient to the non-compliance as a problem in the case where the parent had a majority background, which was in much contrast to their conduct in the two other cases with minority parents. In these cases, the staff interacted in a unilateral manner by giving advice and even instructions, very much embodying what Palludan in her study of children-staff interaction calls *the teaching tone*.

**Keywords:** kindergarten parents; minority parents; parent socialization; institutional discrimination; othering

### Introduction

In Norway, all children from about the age of one year, are entitled to a place in kindergarten providing children with good opportunities for development and activity. In 2016, 91% of children between one to five years old attended kindergarten, for children speaking a minority language the number was 76%<sup>2</sup> (SSB, 2017). The kindergarten service is mainly financed by public grants, being disposed of by the municipal. There is a user fee

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<sup>2</sup> The term *minority language* is here defined as children speaking another mother tongue than Norwegian, Sami, Swedish, Danish or English (SSB, 2017).

as well, but the size of the fee is regulated and there are arrangements ensuring reduced payment for low-income families. This means that attending kindergarten is a very ordinary thing to do in everyday family life, and in the kindergarten, they meet staff with different backgrounds in terms of education. About 40% have a pedagogical education (mostly as preschool teachers), about 30% are skilled workers (often children and youth workers) and the rest are registered with “different backgrounds” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2018).

According to The Kindergarten Act §1, the relationship between kindergarten staff and parents should be characterized by cooperation and mutual understanding. While these terms suggest an equal partnership between parents and staff, the kindergarten is also an institution with “predefined patterns of conduct” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 72) which parents are expected to adapt to. Thus, in everyday encounters, parents and kindergarten staff meet as *insiders and outsiders*, rather than on neutral ground as equal partners as policy documents seem to assume. Building on observations of delivery/picking-up episodes for a period of ten days, the analytic focus in this article is on how the staff in this kindergarten socialize parents to the local routines for delivering children. The so-called kitchen-routine will be described in more detail below, but in short, parents were expected to deliver their children in a common area called *the kitchen*, rather than in the wardrobe area. The special arrangement had been explained to the parents in a parent meeting, I was told, but not all parents attended the meeting, and as one of the preschool teachers said: “This routine is perhaps not so easy to understand for all [parents]”.

The present article investigates the local norms for delivering children, with a special focus on how the kindergarten staff managed deviances from the expected routine. Though it is more usual to adopt the term socialization in the child-adult relationship, it will here be argued that this is an inherent dimension of the parent-staff relationship as well. This is not to suggest a unilateral understanding of socialization as this article is grounded in the micro-perspective of ethnomethodology. Within this perspective, conversation or talk is “the central medium for human socialization” (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990, p. 289) and the capacity to socialize others relates to the performance of *all* participants or members of a group—not primarily those conventionally acknowledged as socialization agents or professionals. As expressed in the research of language socialization: “(...) it is not only the child who is being socialized—the child, through its actions and verbalizations, is also actively (if not necessarily consciously) socializing the mother as a mother” (Kulick & Schieffelin, 2008, p. 350). Accordingly, socialization is not a one-way street and in the analysis section, there will be an instance demonstrating that also parents at times may attempt to change the conduct of the staff.

The staff’s *socialization-in-action* described in this article takes place in a nursery department where over half of the parents had a minority background. In this article, I will often refer to persons with majority or minority background. The content of these terms are debated, but it is common to understand a minority group to be non-dominant and numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a state (Døving, 2011).

The socialization practices observed will be discussed in terms of being discriminatory towards minority parents, and if so, at what analytic level does the discrimination seem to be (systemic vs. individual discrimination). In terms of analysis, this means looking at the practices from both *an emic* (from inside) and *an etic* (from outside) viewpoint (Pike, 1967). Following an ethnomethodological emic approach, it is perhaps hard to argue that it was a member's project to discriminate or racialize. Instead, racialization is nowadays more often thought of as taken for granted understandings and language practices unconsciously shared by the majority group. Within the post-colonial tradition, building on Edward W. Said's book *Orientalism* (1974), members of the West, or the majority, have the power to define what is not normal or different about *them* (See Rogstad & Midtbøen, 2009). But while it is acknowledged that everyday language is an efficient tool for *minorizing* or *othering* minority groups, there is little empirical research documenting the connection between discriminating structures and individual actions (Rogstad & Midtbøen, 2010). This article will contribute in this respect, and, as the analysis will show the everyday categorization between *us* and *them* may in practice be very subtly performed, invoking categorizations and descriptions indexing the heart of the institutional logic, rather than ethnicity per se.

## Previous research

The socialization of kindergarten parents is at least implicitly touched on in research on the Nordic kindergarten tradition. Findings from the Norwegian survey study "The multicultural kindergarten in rural areas" suggest that the staff do expect parents to adapt to institutional routines. As much as 70% of the staff agreed on the importance of parents adapting to the rules of the kindergarten as quickly as possible (Andersen et al., 2011). But adapting to the rules of the kindergarten can be a tall order to some parents, especially in the start-up period, and even more, if the parents have a minority background (Andenæs, 2011; Bundgaard & Gulløv, 2008). In the interview study of Andenæs (2011) an immigrant mother explains that she finds delivering and picking up at day care difficult:

Being an immigrant implies that one is constantly evaluated by others she says, to see whether one is good enough or not. She feels a need to protect herself from the kind of interpretations she encounters, so often in the style of 'it's because you are from X country that you behave like this' (Andenæs, 2011, p. 61)

The ethnography study of Bundgaard and Gulløv (2008) describes a difficult situation from the start-up period where a minority mother stayed in the wardrobe area and refused to enter the nursery department, with much difficulty for the start-up. The most interesting about this instance is how passive the kindergarten staff act.

Possibly, the staff's passivity described in Bundgaard and Gulløv (2008) should be understood as business-as-usual, rather than representing something very unusual in the kindergarten institution. In a recent Norwegian master thesis observing the interaction

between staff, parents and children, Haug (2016) argues, by adopting Latour's concept of *internalized borders*, that there is an invisible line between the department (as the staff's area) and the wardrobe area. Merely in two of forty-two observed situations in the morning, the parent would cross the border and follow the child into the department. Although the caretakers in Haug's study did *say* that they wanted the parents to enter the department more often, little was actually done to promote this. The thesis also gives examples of how parents who do cross the line are not spoken to (Haug, 2016, p. 33). Hence, if the staff does not relate to parents who are crossing the border as *doing the right thing* it is perhaps not only minority parents who will experience the wardrobe area as a more *neutral space* (Bundgaard & Gulløv, 2008, p. 60). Much likely, parents who are unfamiliar with the Nordic kindergarten tradition may be even more likely to feel *out of place* when crossing the border.

Moreover, research also gives reason to investigate whether parents with minority background are met in a different way compared to majority parents. Palludan's ethnographic study (Palludan, 2005), building on Bourdieu's theoretical framework (Bourdieu, 1977), describes how the staff meets children from different social and ethnic groups with what she calls different *language tones* (Palludan, 2005, 2007). She describes a communication pattern where children with majority background are met with a democratic *exchange tone* while children with minority background are met with a *teaching tone*, unilaterally instructing and showing the child how to perform. This means that not all children are in a position to establish an equal partnership with the kindergarten staff. According to Palludan (2005, p. 138), this segregated recognition practice is also at work when the staff interact with the parents, but evidence demonstrating how this comes about in practice is not presented. However, as we will learn from the data presented in this paper, this may not be an unreasonable claim.

### **Context of the study: The routine**

Due to economic reasons, only one of the four departments would be staffed before 8.30 a.m., in the three other departments, the children should be delivered in the kitchen. This meant that children quite often would be greeted by care providers who they did not know very well. Delivering a child in the kitchen may be seen as fulfilling what could be called a trajectory of care, which might be more or less elaborated. Before entering the kitchen, the parents need to help their child with undressing and then look over the child's shelf in the wardrobe. When the parents approach the kitchen, they encounter an open area with many tables, the number of persons in the room (adults and children sitting at the tables) may vary from day to day. No doubt, this is a very different material structure compared to the more usual pattern described in Haug (2016, p. 24) where the care provider meets the child and the parent in the wardrobe area. The material structure of the kitchen sets premises for the conduct of both parties, thus the structure so to speak becomes a "co-

creator in and of everyday life” (Dannesboe, 2017, s 215). While the notion *kitchen* assumes familiar users, there was a divide between the children who would have breakfast in the kitchen and those who would not.

When the child was having breakfast, the parents had a clear mission in the room: To place the child at one of the tables, open the lunch-box, pour up milk and say goodbye to the child. In practice, this could be rather time extensive, especially in the case of toddlers. One mother used to take off both her jacket and her shoes before following her child into the kitchen. Both kindergarten staff and parents expected children of all ages to choose a table and then a chair on their own by asking them “Where do you want to sit?” Usually there was not very much talk between the parents and the staff as the latter tend to concentrate upon giving the child a good reception, however, greetings as “good morning” and “goodbye”, with or without eye contact, were common. There could be exceptions to this child-centered focus, for instance, if the child had been, or could possibly be, ill. This represents an *out-of-order* state where parents and staff talk together within an adult frame. Although in an ethnomethodological perspective all actions are *accomplishments*, parents who accompany a child eating breakfast did not seem to have much trouble with making themselves accountable in this setting. Their actions so to speak fulfill the purpose of the room, the furniture (table, chairs) and the equipment onto the table (glasses, water jug, a carton of milk and so forth).

In contrast, the parents whose children had eaten breakfast at home were obviously in a more ambiguous social situation. These children should also be brought into the kitchen, but then they should be channeled into the one department which had the early guard (this would ambulate according to an internal schedule, not communicated to the parents). Parents of children who had eaten breakfast at home would often stop at the doorstep or take just a few steps into the kitchen to make themselves visible to the staff. Usually, there was not much interaction with the staff, apart from greetings and/or eye contact. From my position, I could observe that eye contact was not always very easy to establish, for instance, when the staff was sitting with the back to the doorway. The staff were often busy talking with the children and did not seem to monitor the doorways. When eye contact (eventually) was established the staff would usually not rise from the chair and approach the parent in the doorway. Messages were seldom given to the staff, but at one occasion a father informed, standing in the doorway, that the child “had been to the toilet this morning” (I guess this had been an issue to the child in question). Providing such private information about a child with the whole room as overhearers appeared to be somewhat odd. But this parent so to speak ignored the poor terms of talking, given this particular material structure, and provided the information he thought was important.

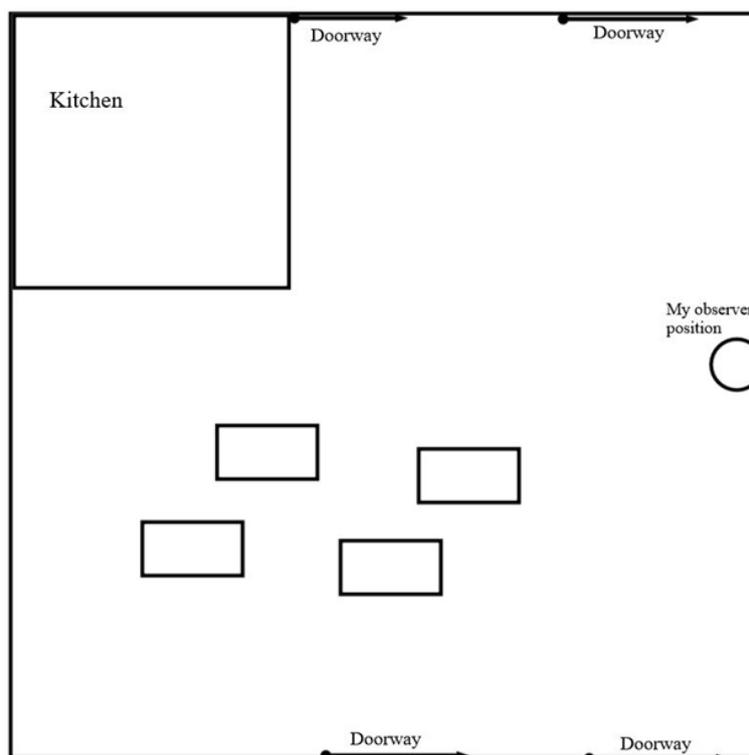
A very important stage of delivering in the kitchen was saying goodbye to the child. This is part of the *intimacy practice* (Haug, 2016, p. 29) between parent and child and implies physical contact (hugs, kisses, bowing and so forth) in addition to verbal interaction (Bye honey, have a nice day). As families nowadays are defined by the quality of the relationship, rather than a given membership (Finch, 2007, p 71), the goodbye exchange

was obviously not simply an empty ritual, but a moment of much importance to the parents. This became explicit in scenes where the child for some other reason did not cooperate and turned away from the parent. In one example a mother explained her child's dismissive behavior with that the child might not feel all well this morning, thus she obviously interpreted this as deviant conduct, calling for an account to the audience. In another instance, an older child would not return to the mother in the doorway to kiss her goodbye, and the mother sighed heavily on her way out, with a sorrow expression on her face (this happened several times during the observation period). Thus, dropping-off in the kitchen involved a composed trajectory of care where good family relations were displayed to a wide audience (the staff, other parents/children).

## **Methods**

The aim of the fieldwork was to gain empirical knowledge about the informal parent cooperation in everyday encounters, with a special focus on the staff's interaction with parents who had a minority background. The study was funded by Oslofjordfondet and The University College of Southeast Norway. The observations were made over a fortnight period and summed up to about sixteen observation sessions, lasting at least two hours each. The parents received information about the study in a parent meeting before start-up and written information about the study was provided as well. Parents could opt out of being observed, but no one did. In the morning, I did my observations sitting on a chair in the kitchen or from the bench in the wardrobe area in one of the departments. The children and the parents entered the kitchen from four doors, and sitting on a chair in the middle of the room, I was able to monitor the doorways, in both directions. The next page shows a simple sketch of the room.

Figure 1: The kitchen



The parents would enter the room from the wardrobe area through the four doorways, while the staff would sit around at the tables and talk with the children or they would go to and from the tables and the kitchen section. As I will come back to in the analysis section, sitting in the middle of the room gave me a wider perspective than the staff who could sit with their back to some of the doors. In terms of research roles, I was certainly more an outsider than an insider. Being interested in the interaction between the staff and the parents I was not interested in going native as a staff member, but at times it was difficult to be an observer only. Mainly because of the children who often talked to me or approached me, to sit on my lap or to give me a hug. Sitting in these areas, without nothing else to do, I also established a polite relation to the parents, mostly through smiles and greetings. Often I was the only adult person available, as the staff were elsewhere or occupied with the kids, thus to me, it felt like an appropriate thing to do.

Building on an ethnomethodological perspective, the expression *unmotivated looking* (Psathas, 1995, p. 45), suggests the researcher to start observing without theoretical assumptions and thus be interested in whatever is going on in self-organizing settings. Although I sympathize with the empiricist image of ethnomethodology, my lens would, of course, be affected by my prior knowledge about kindergarten practices, and, not least, earlier research. As mentioned, Palludan's distinction between teaching tone and exchange tone in interaction between kindergarten staff and children (Palludan, 2005), had made me wonder whether we could see this pattern in interaction with parents as well, and in this sense my observations may not have been all unmotivated. Though this was

not formulated as a hypothesis for the study, I was interested in learning whether the parent's ethnicity (as a majority/minority member) would somehow affect the staff-parent interaction.

In ethnomethodological research, the participants' reaction to deviant conduct is one important resource for explicating the rules of a setting. As put by Wooffitt: "...if someone displays that they are 'noticing' the absence of a certain type of turn from a co-participant, then that demonstrates their own orientation to the normative expectation that it should have been produced"(Wooffitt, 2005, p. 61). This was the insight of Garfinkel's famous *breaching experiments* where Garfinkel told his students to produce out-of-place responses in their daily interaction (Garfinkel, 1967). The hostile reactions of the victims displayed the normative expectation that they should have been understood as having produced an accountable action. The deviant conduct made the normative pattern of business-as-usual visible. In this study, I observed that most parents followed their child into the kitchen. Though, because a few parents did not, it took a couple of days to firmly establish my understanding. The routine had not been explained to me in detail, thus in the onset, I was not sure how things worked, and because of this, I think I was able to relate the insecurity of some of the parents in terms of what to do. My reflexivity, and possibly the parents' reflexivity, would center around issues such as: How far should one go into the room? Should you talk to the staff? What do you do when the staff does not respond or is out of the room? After having noticed a couple of deviances to the usual pattern, I tested out my own assumptions by asking one of the staff whether parents were supposed to follow their children into the kitchen, and this was confirmed.

### **Getting the (minority) parents into the kitchen**

While most of the parents carried out the routine and accompanied their child into the kitchen or at least to the doorstep of the kitchen, there were, as mentioned, interesting deviances to this delivery pattern. In three cases, I observed the parents leaving their children in the wardrobe area without establishing contact with the staff before leaving. In the following, I will describe how the kindergarten staff followed up each of these cases.

#### **Case 1**

The first case was a child about four years old, in contrast to Case 2 and Case 3 this child was not a newcomer. Her father, who had a majority background, always left the kindergarten in a hurry. If no one from the staff was around in the wardrobe area while he was there, he would say goodbye to the child and leave. I did not see anybody of the staff noticing or acting on this conduct as problematic.

## Case 2

In contrast to Case 1, a mother with minority background was followed up for not bringing her child into the kitchen. I observed her as she helped her child with getting undressed. The care provider on duty came out in the wardrobe area and declared in a loud and clear voice (in Norwegian) “We are in the kitchen now”, then the topic shifted to talk about today’s events. This underlining of locality is a very indirect way of affecting the mother’s behavior, leaving it to the mother herself to figure out that she should accompany her child into the kitchen. But the mother was not given the chance to demonstrate her understanding of this hidden message. The next day, another member of the staff was on duty, and she came out in the wardrobe area and told the mother: “Very nice if you can follow him into the kitchen”. The mother nodded and confirmed verbally in a low voice. Compared to the day before this strategy is a more direct way of unilaterally advising the mother which is in line with what Palludan (2005) calls the teaching tone.

## Case 3

The teaching tone was even more clearly present in the third instance where the kindergarten teacher spoke English with a father (English is not their mother tongue, but both of them spoke English quite well I was told). When the father came to pick up his toddler, the teacher instantly sat down next to him on the bench in the wardrobe area and she told him in English: “In the morning, it’s important that you go- Sometimes there are not any grown-ups here, so you have to bring him into ‘kjøkkenet’ [the kitchen]”. The father said “OK”, and the kindergarten teacher said “very good”. She then laughed briefly, stood up and left. Note that the care provider first designed her turn as an unmitigated instruction: “In the morning, it’s important that you go-“, but then she cut herself off and provided an account at least indexing a thinking around children safety (“Sometimes there are not any grown-ups here”). This accounting element displays an understanding of performing a delicate action, and contribute to softening the instruction which follows “so you have to bring him into ‘kjøkkenet’ [the kitchen]”. On the other hand, the choice of the verb *you have to* indicates a very strong right on her own behalf to decide how the arrangement should be.

Albeit Case 2 and Case 3 represent clear instances of what Palludan calls the teaching tone, several weeks had gone since the start-up of the semester. Why did these direct ways of socializing the parents occur this late? Had the staff waited for the parents to adapt to the routines on their own before intervening? Another explanation for this delayed intervention might be that my presence made them become more reflective and thus conscious of the deviances. As mentioned, after noticing that not all children were followed into the kitchen, I asked one of the staff whether this was desired or not. Hence, my presence might have induced the staff to monitor the rules more than usual; this is also known as *the observer’s paradox*. But what is most surprising about these instances is perhaps not the advice-giving itself, but that the teaching tone in little degrees is balanced with

small-talk or other affiliating actions embodying an exchange tone. Although this study has not examined how the parents felt about being objected to these socializing actions, the encounters in Case 2 and 3 had in my opinion what Goffman would call a face-threatening quality (Goffman, 1967). The staff in question seemed to lack *the professional informality* needed to constitute an affiliating atmosphere when guiding the parents. It should be noted that other instances of giving instructions were observed in this kindergarten, which were given in a warmer and more recognizing style, thus, the point here is not to establish all socializing actions as bad on their own but to focus on how they are produced in social interaction.

### Passing problems

Few think of institutions as determining human conduct, in Gulløv's wording "Institutions are simultaneously committing and dynamic frames around formalized communities" (Gulløv, 2017, p. 41). However, in both of the cases mentioned above, the staff's socializing actions seemed to be successful; the next day both of the parents followed their child into the kitchen or at least to the doorstep. Even the parent's realization of the routine very much depends on the cooperation of the professional part, who is the one entitled to acknowledge that the child is being delivered in an appropriate manner. In this respect, the mother in Case 2 had certain passing problems, and a comment from the care provider on this particular event is very interesting as it conveys a reasoning around what might be the staff's collective project of socializing minority parents to follow the routine.

One morning, the mother from Case 2 came a few steps into the kitchen saying hello, I would say with a normal loud voice, and from my chair at the side of the room I returned her greeting. There was one care provider in the room who was sitting at the table with her back at the doorway. She was talking with a child and did not recognize that two children (both with minority background) were delivered behind her back. One of the mothers went into the office of the nursery manager, while the mother who said hello without being heard, waited a moment before leaving. Soon the care provider at the table discovered that one of the children had arrived. She took up her iPad and I told her that the other child also had been delivered. The care provider then asked me: "They did not come in?" (*they* may here be referring to both cases). I told her that the mother in question did, but that she was not noticed. The care provider then said: "Oh yes, I sat the other way". The *oh, yes* preface suggests this to be a here-and-now discovery to her (Heritage, 1984). After a pause an account followed: "We try to teach them to come in and communicate with us in the kitchen. This is also about attitudes to kindergarten. Some think of it more as storage".

The noun *we* in the utterance "we try to teach them to come in and communicate with us" suggests that teaching parents to come in and talk with the staff is not her personal opinion, but a collective project, she is talking on behalf of a professional *we* (See Drew & Sorjonen, 1997 p. 97 about use of personal pronoun). Strictly speaking, the utterance

says nothing about the ethnicity or the socio-cultural background of the *them*, so why do I hear the term *them* in this utterance to be parents with minority background? Is it because I use my common sense knowledge? Now while background knowledge certainly matters, this is not sufficient to explain my inference. Following an ethnomethodologically way of thinking, indexicality is the rule in human interaction, not the exception, and sequence is the most important sense-making vehicle. In this instance, the care provider produces her utterance (we try to teach them) without a lengthy pause to her prior utterance (oh yes, I sat the other way). Neither the turn is linguistically designed as launching a new topic, it is easily heard as an extension of the existing project of figuring out what just happened. Thus, it is my reflexive knowledge about how conversational actions tend to be packed, rather than factual background knowledge alone, which explains why I hear it this way. Still, the care provider's choice of noun after I have explained that the particular mother was not noticed is interesting indeed. By saying *them* rather than *she*, a first name, the mother of X and so forth, she refers to a group of people, not to a singular person. Moreover, the group in question is alluded to as people (some) who think day kindergarten is about storing, and this undermining description constructs *them* as a negative contrast group to people knowing better, which obviously includes the staff, the more competent *we*.

Regardless of ethnic origin, parents are often not talked to in delivery scenes, hence, this utterance may imply a thinking suggesting that talking to the staff is particularly important for minority parents. Moreover, the account "we try to teach them to come in and communicate with us in the kitchen" is ambiguous as it is not apparent whether this in Scott and Lyman's (1968) sense represents an excuse (denying her own responsibility for the incident), or a justification (denying the pejorative qualities of her actions). Taken as an excuse, minority parents have been taught to come in and talk to the staff in the kitchen, thus unstated; if the mother had followed this advice, she would not have gone unnoticed by the care provider and the incident becomes the mother's own fault. In this version, the account is easy to hear as a complaint over the mother's non-complying conduct. However, the same utterance can also be understood as a justification (Scott & Lyman, 1968). The incident of not noticing the mother is then not a bad thing, but something inducing parents to enter the kitchen and get in touch with the staff. Hence, to achieve this, a certain *management of inaccessibility* can even be used to integrate parents into the kindergarten culture. However, as the *oh, yes* preface suggests, the presence of the mother to be a here-and-now discovery to her (Heritage, 1984), it is perhaps more appropriate to interpret this as complaint after all (the turn was designed for me, but I chose to treat it as an explanation of what we do, rather than as a complaint, thus in my interpretation, it was sufficient for me to nod rather than sympathise).

### Getting the staff into the wardrobe area

In this section, I will try to balance the impression of parents being socialized in a unilateral fashion. Albeit mostly adapting to the staff's actions, parents are also actors who sometimes try to negotiate the institutional terms. In an interview with a majority mother, a personal strategy for getting the staff's attention in the morning was revealed. She told that she often puts her head into the department and says hello to the staff, and very often someone from the staff will come out in the wardrobe area and meet them. I asked whether she thinks all parents would be met in this way, but she thought it would be different for parents who are not as much *on* as she is, for instance very cautious parents or ethnic minority parents. During the observation period, I observed a scene which could remind of this strategy of claiming attention.

A minority father with a quite small child used to come into the kitchen, carrying the child on his arm while an older sibling would wait in or nearby the doorway. The father would proceed to a table with grown-ups and other children and he would put the child into one of the baby chairs. Then one of the staff would stand up and say that the child does not need to sit there if she had eaten at home. One day something interesting happened at an unusually quiet early watch. The older sibling showed himself in the doorway and waves to one of the staff, standing at the kitchen bench, to make her come out in the wardrobe area. The care provider was doing some paper work and she said in a quite low voice and without looking up at him that "X [the name of the child] can come into the kitchen". She thus rejected the sibling's request to come out in the wardrobe area. The boy disappeared for a moment, and when he came back he had a desperate expression on his face. Though hard to say for sure, it is much likely that the older sibling was mediating his father's preferences, rather than his own. Soon after, the child and the father entered the room, this time the child walked on her own feet. The father stopped in the doorway and gently pushed the child toward another staff member who approached them.

At this moment, there were just a few children in the kitchen and one of the staff could easily have disappeared out for a moment, thus the rules of the institution are possibly not very easy to get around. This is not to suggest that parents cannot be "institutional entrepreneurs" (see Gulløv, 2017, p. 51) and change institutional routines and arrangements, but probably this is perhaps more likely to happen at the system level when parents act like a group.

The scene also indicates that the practice of delivery in the kitchen is extra problematic when it comes to toddlers. In her master thesis, Haug (2016, p. 29) describes the exchanges between parent and child as an "intimacy practice" where the staff in comparison is more of a bystander. But Haug's fieldwork was conducted in a department with older children. When it comes to toddlers, it is perhaps more appropriate to say that the care provider is an active participant and co-operator in the intimacy practice. When toddlers are handed over in the wardrobe area, the care provider needs to physically position her body close to the child and the parent, and the child goes from the arms of the parent into the arms of the care provider. Very often the care provider will hold the child when she

is kissed goodbye by the parent. the kitchen arrangement makes this bodily cooperation difficult. The staff usually sit at the table and entertain the children, and they did not stand up when a parent showed up. As long as the care provider sits at the table it is natural to see her as busy or inaccessible, thus, this places the parent in an interactional ambiguous situation in terms of what to do. In the example, this ambivalence is managed by placing the child in a chair at the table. Thus, his actions can be understood in light of the interactional context embedded in this particular material structure, rather than the father's lack of background knowledge (not knowing the arrangement or the Norwegian kindergarten culture).

## Discussion

The kitchen-routine appeared to be a somewhat demanding arrangement for the parents to take part in, especially when it comes to delivering toddlers. Most likely, the structure is particularly demanding for minority parents, to whom delivering in the kitchen is also a public display of ethnicity and language skills as well as good family relations. Possibly, the arrangement may be seen as a case of institutional discrimination (Kamali, 2005), where, albeit not intended by anyone, routines and arrangements do not function equally well for all groups. In this case, it is hard to see that the arrangement functions very well for any group as financial concerns lie behind, but it probably works even worse for parents and children with a minority background. Information about the arrangement had been given at a parent meeting, which not all attended, and, since the meeting was given in Norwegian, understanding might have been an issue to some parents. Moreover, information about the staffing schedule had not been distributed to the parents, thus the burden to figure out the arrangement of the day was very much up to the parents.

The analysis focused on what happened in the three deviant cases where the parents did not follow the children into the kitchen as expected. Would the staff socialize these parents to follow the routine, and how was this performed? In Case 1 where the parent had a majority background, the staff did not do anything during the observation period to change conduct, in contrast to the two other cases, where the parents had a minority background. The micro analysis of the staff's socialization-in-action confirms Palludan's impression that also parents with a minority background are met by a teaching tone, rather than an including exchange tone (Palludan, 2005, p. 138). In Case 2 the mother was indirectly ("We are in the kitchen now"), and directly ("Very nice if you can...") advised accompanying her child into the kitchen. In Case 3 it is perhaps more appropriate to say that the father was being instructed on what to do ("you have to bring him"). However, it should be added that several weeks had passed without the staff's intervention, thus passivity (Bundgaard & Gulløv, 2008) is perhaps the most appropriate characterization of their overall orientation. If so, the teaching tone may be better understood as a last resort. All in all, the staff seemed to be in short of the professional informality needed to balance the sociological and everyday meanings of the term socialization (where the latter means

to be sociable). However, it should be noted that regardless of the parents' sociocultural background, the exchange tone seemed to be quite rare in the parent-staff interaction as the staff tended to focus on giving the child a good reception. The socialization was successful as the parents in Case 2 and 3 changed conduct and started to come into the kitchen or in the doorway. On the other hand, the staff was not prone to make an exception from the routine and come out in the wardrobe area to meet the parents.

Actions designed at socializing (minority) parents may be performed in a more or less tactful manner, but can we, in this case, assume bad intentions on behalf of the staff? Following Bourdieu, Palludan (2005, 2007) understands the teaching tone as a structural phenomenon. Partly, the issue is understood as the minority children's' communicative competence (their habituated cultural capital), which makes the teaching tone natural to adopt for the staff to be able to communicate at all. But she also notices that the teaching tone is at work even when minority children speak Danish fluently. This is explained as an effect of the staff's unconscious categorization of minority children as less capable. This way of reasoning is in line with newer perspectives on discrimination as systemic, in terms of unconscious actions or unfortunate consequences of rules (Rogstad & Midtbøen, 2010, p. 45). In contrast to individual discrimination, the systemic discrimination is not intended or acknowledged by the performing actors (ibid). This new focus on systemic discrimination has been seen as a gain since the issue of discrimination then can be discussed without blaming concrete persons for being racists. On the other hand, this has also been considered to be a weakness (Rogstad & Midtbøen, 2009, p. 10).

From an ethnomethodological perspective, it is problematic to reduce this issue to the play of actor less structures. Following the perspective of racialization the utterance "We try to teach them to come in and communicate with us in the kitchen" should primarily be seen as an echo of the oriental way of thinking, which constructs minority groups as *the other* in contrast to a complacent *we*. Thus, the professional is unconsciously carrying out a dominant thinking and an institutional routine, without seeing the excluding side effects caused by her praxis. But from an ethnomethodological perspective, the relationship between social structure and social interaction is not given or external to the actor in the Durkheimian sense, Wilson (1992) argues: "Rather, externality and constraint are members' accomplishments, and social structure and social interaction are reflexively related rather than standing in causal or formal definitional relations to one another" (Wilson, 1992, p. 27). Institutional rules and routines are thus not realized by judgemental dopes, but by competent members who are not naïve about social structures and who know how to utilize various interactional resources to realize projects in talk. The site of discrimination is thus neither primarily at the individual level (othering as an individual cognitive process) or at an abstract cultural level (the oriental way of thinking) but at the middle level of social interaction where people enact their daily business, such as socializing each other. Any action should therefore be appreciated as an accomplishment in its own right and in this case, the distinction *we/they* is part of an account excusing (Scott & Lyman, 1968) her action of not noticing a parent. The care provider could have chosen

to produce a different account, for instance, an account blaming the routine or her own actions rather than the parents, but she did not (and I for myself could have responded in a different way too). Hence, in our everyday lives we all are co-producers of cultures in the settings we inhabit, but luckily, for organizations willing to scrutinize their practices, change is possible.

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