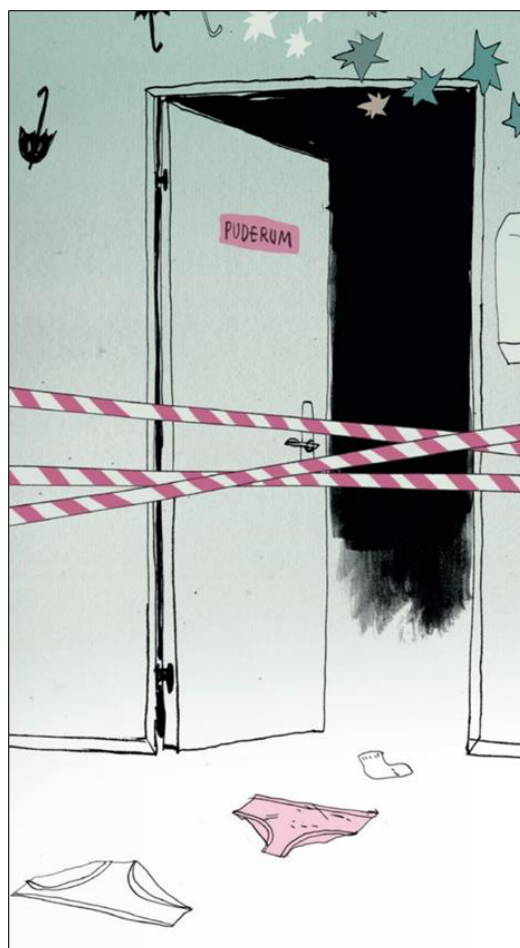


A cultural-historical shift in Denmark
in views on childhood sexuality
and practices in childcare institutions,
influenced by fears of child sexual abuse

Et kulturskifte i Danmark i daginstitutioners praksis omkring børn og i synet på børns seksualitet, influeret af frygt for seksuelle overgreb på børn

Doctoral Dissertation

Else-Marie Buch Leander



School of Culture and Society - Aarhus University - 2021



This dissertation is dedicated, with love and
gratitude,

To my family, Niels, Astrid and Sigrid

And to the memory of my parents,

Else Koch Hansen and Knud Leander Hansen

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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION SUMMARY

Since the 1980s, the fear of child sexual abuse (CSA) has become a major cultural feature of the West (Bech, 2005; Best, 1990; Furedi, 2006, 2013; Furedi & Bristow, 2010; Jenkins, 1998, 2003; Jenks, 1994; Johnson, 2000; Piper & Stronach, 2008; Tobin, 1997). Internationally, the unintended consequences of this fear are rarely investigated, and doing so is often controversial. The purpose of this dissertation was to investigate these consequences.

This dissertation has two key focuses: 1) the influence of the fear of CSA on staff practices, male childcare-staff working conditions, and teacher–child relationships at Danish childcare institutions; 2) the influence of the fear of CSA on the view of childhood sexuality and Danish childcare institutions’ practices surrounding children’s sexual behavior.

The dissertation is based on two major empirical studies. The first, called *The Guideline Study*¹, was a mixed methods survey concerning guidelines for protecting children against CSA, and staff against wrongful allegations of this, at Danish childcare institutions, in which 2051 directors and teachers from approximately one-quarter of Danish childcare facilities participated. Examples of such guidelines include staff being forbidden to have children sit on their lap, or male staff being forbidden to change diapers. This study also addressed the institutions’ rules concerning children’s nudity and sexual games. This first Danish research study on these subjects showed that the majority of institutions (58%) had staff guidelines that were aimed mostly at protecting staff from wrongful allegations. The study revealed that these guidelines were a sign that male workers were being stigmatized, and that some institutions had discriminatory guidelines that applied exclusively to men. Furthermore, the guidelines conflicted with staff’s trusting relationships with children, and the task of caring

¹ I conducted *The Guideline Study* in cooperation with Associate Professor, psychologist Karen P. Munk and psychologist Per Lindsø Larsen.

for them. The majority of institutions (64%) also had rules for children's nudity and doctor games. Although doctor games were quite accepted at Danish childcare institutions until the beginning of this century, the study showed that new, pervasive regulations had been established to control the child's body and its sexuality.

The second study presented in this dissertation investigated the changes in the view of childhood sexuality and nudity in the Danish education and care journal, *Børn&Unge* (*Children&Youth*), over 50 years: 1970–2019, in particular the emergence of the “child perpetrator of sexual abuse” in the late 1990s. The main method used in this study was discourse analysis. The study revealed a radical change in views of childhood sexuality in Denmark from 1970 to 2019: from an extreme liberalism in the early decades—illustrated by a rare collection of photos of children's nudity and sexuality, reprinted in this article—to a view that strongly associates children's sexuality with sexual abuse. The study showed that the significant attention to and fear of CSA influenced the new view of childhood sexuality, and that this progressively took root in Danish childcare institutions, creating a panic.

The data presented in this dissertation were gathered in Denmark, and the analytical focus of the dissertation is the unintended consequences of the fear of CSA in Denmark. However, throughout this dissertation there is a strong international focus, particularly on the United States, where the present significant focus on CSA in the West originated around 1980, and where this development has had its most extreme consequences.

The dissertation's theoretical framework consists of multiple theories and concepts. Its three key theories are 1) discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992; Foucault, 1976), 2) Foucault's theory of discipline and its central figure, the panopticon (Foucault, 1977), and 3) the theory of fear (Furedi, 2006; Svendsen, 2008). Furthermore, I use a number of concepts and elements of theories more locally to analyze various aspects of my subject; these concepts

derive from the theories of developmental psychology, moral panic, play, trust and recognition, among others. Finally, I draw on theory and studies of children's sexuality and children's problematic sexual behavior.

This dissertation presents one of the most substantial empirical research projects conducted to investigate the multiple effects and unintended consequences of the widespread fear of CSA. It documents an important cultural shift at Danish childcare institutions. It shows that the fear of CSA has had a significant impact on practices and relationships at Danish childcare institutions, enforcing self-defense strategies among staff and resulting in a general disciplining of bodies, which has reduced trust, care, intimacy, learning opportunities, and children's sexual play. In particular, this dissertation reveals how the significant focus on CSA since the 1980s has created social outcasts, even among the children it aimed to protect; it has stigmatized male childcare professionals and influenced the panic surrounding childhood sexuality that identifies some children as perpetrators of sexual abuse. It demonstrates that in more ways than one, fears about CSA and wrongful allegations have disrupted the prioritized place children normally occupy, in relation to adults.

This is an overview of the four articles that resulted from this doctoral project.

1. Leander, E.-M. B., Munk, K. P., & Larsen, P. L. (2019). Guidelines for preventing child sexual abuse and wrongful allegations against staff at Danish childcare facilities. *Societies*, 9(2), 42.
2. Leander, E.-M. B., Larsen, P. L., & Munk, K. P. (2018). Children's doctor games and nudity at Danish childcare institutions. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 47, 863–875.
3. Leander, E.-M. B. (2021). Children's sexuality and nudity in discourse and images in a Danish education and care journal over 50 years: 1970–2019: The emergence of

“the child perpetrator of sexual abuse” in an international perspective. (Currently being revised for length for *Archives of Sexual Behavior*).^{*}

4. Leander, E.-M. B. (2021). Doctor Games. In D. P. VanderLaan & W. I. Wong (Eds.). *Gender and sexuality development: Contemporary theory and research*. New York, NY: Springer.

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RESUMÉ AF PH.D.-AFHANDLINGEN:

Et kulturskifte i Danmark i daginstitutioners praksis omkring børn og i synet på børns seksualitet, influeret af frygt for seksuelle overgreb på børn

Frygt for seksuelle overgreb på børn har været i markant fokus i den vestlige kultur siden 1980'erne (Bech, 2005; Best, 1990; Furedi, 2006, 2013; Furedi & Bristow, 2010; Jenkins, 1998, 2003; Jenks, 1994; Johnson, 2000; Piper & Stronach, 2008; Tobin, 1997). Der forskes kun sjældent, både i Danmark og internationalt, i de utilsigtede virkninger af dette store fokus, og det kan være kontroversielt at gøre det. Det er denne ph.d.-afhandlings formål at undersøge de utilsigtede konsekvenser af det store fokus på frygt for seksuelle overgreb på børn i den vestlige kultur siden 1980'erne.

Ph.d.-afhandlingen har to primære fokuspunkter: 1) den indvirkning frykten for seksuelle overgreb på børn har på danske daginstitutioners praksis, ikke mindst på mandlige pædagogers arbejdsvilkår og på relationen mellem børn og pædagoger; 2) danske daginstitutioners regler for børns seksuelle lege og nøgenhed og den indvirkning frykten for seksuelle overgreb på børn har haft på synet på børns seksualitet og nøgenhed i Danmark, og internationalt.

Afhandlingen er baseret på to store empiriske undersøgelser. Den første, kaldet *Retningslinjeundersøgelsen*², er en spørgeskemaundersøgelse om danske daginstitutioners retningslinjer til forebyggelse af seksuelle overgreb på børn og uberettigede anklager over for personalet om seksuelle overgreb mod børn. Eksempler på sådanne retningslinjer er, at personalet ikke må tage børnene på skødet, eller at mandlige pædagoger ikke må skifte ble. I undersøgelsen deltog 2051 ledere og pædagoger fra knap en fjerdedel af landets daginstitutioner og FFO'er. Dens metode var mixed methods med både kvantitative og kvalitative spørgsmål.

² Retningslinjeundersøgelsen er foretaget i samarbejde med lektor, psykolog Karen P. Munk og psykolog Per Lindsø Larsen.

Undersøgelsen spurgte også ind til daginstitutionernes regler for børns seksuelle lege og nøgenhed. Denne første danske forskningsundersøgelse om disse emner viste, at flertallet af institutionerne (58%) havde retningslinjer for personalets omgang med børnene, som primært havde til formål at beskytte personalet mod uberettigede anklager. Den viste desuden, at mandligt pædagogisk personale var stigmatiseret med hensyn til frygten for seksuelle overgreb på børn, og at der i nogle institutioner var diskriminerende særregler for mænd. Flertallet af institutionerne (64%) havde regler for børns doktorlege og nøgenhed, og hvor doktorlege og børns nøgenhed var almindeligt accepteret i institutionerne før årtusindeskiftet, var seksuelle lege og nøgenhed nu underlagt stor kontrol.

Den anden undersøgelse i denne afhandling er en analyse af BUPL's blad *Børn&Unge* (B&U) dækning af emnet børns seksualitet gennem 50 år – fra 1970-2019. Denne undersøgelse, hvis metode er diskursanalyse, dokumenterer fremkomsten af et nyt syn på børns seksualitet omkring århundredskiftet: hvor der i de første årtier i B&U herskede et stort frisind i forhold til børns kroppe, også hos de daginstitutioner og pædagoger, der optrådte i bladet, ændrede synet sig omkring årtusindeskiftet mod en opfattelse af børn som potentielle seksuelle misbrugere – et syn, som min analyse viser, stammer fra USA. En række fotos fra B&U dokumenterer frisindet omkring barnets krop i Danmark, fra før frygten for seksuelle overgreb satte ind.

Denne afhandling henter sin empiri i Danmark og har sit primære fokus på de utilsigtede konsekvenser i Danmark af det store fokus på seksuelle overgreb på børn. Samtidig perspektiveres der i hele afhandlingen til udlandet, især USA, hvor de sidste årtiers store fokus på seksuelle overgreb på børn begyndte i 1970'erne, og hvor denne udvikling har haft sine mest alvorlige utilsigtede konsekvenser.

Det teoretiske grundlag for afhandlingen er pluralistisk og interdisciplinært. De tre hovedteorier er diskursanalyse (Fairclough, 1992; Foucault, 1976), Foucault's teori om disciplin og panoptikon (Foucault, 1977) og frygtteori (Furedi, 2006; Svendsen, 2008). Endvidere bruger jeg brudstykker af teorier om f.eks. udviklingspsykologi, moralsk panik, leg, tillid og anerkendelse. Endelig anvender jeg teori om og studier af børns seksualitet.

Min ph.d.-afhandling præsenterer internationalt set nogle af de mest omfattende empiriske forskningsfund om de utilsigtede virkninger af de sidste årtiers store fokus på seksuelle overgreb på børn. Den dokumenterer et historisk kulturskifte i danske daginstitutioner, hvor frygten for seksuelle overgreb på børn og ikke mindst for uberettigede anklager mod personalet har resulteret i defensive, distancerede omgangsformer mellem pædagoger og børn. Den viser, at dét, som jeg med udgangspunkt i Foucault's teori om disciplin begrebsliggør som en disciplinering af børn og voksne, kan true læring, nære relationer og tillid i institutionerne. Afhandlingen dokumenterer, at denne udvikling har været omkostningsfuld for de mandlige pædagoger, men også for børnene. Dels kan de defensive retningslinjer for personalet tilsidesætte børns behov, dels er synet på børn som krænkere problematisk og kan have store omkostninger for de børn, der udråbes som krænkere.

Her en oversigt over de artikler, som indgår i denne ph.d.-afhandling:

1. Leander, E.-M. B., Munk, K. P., & Larsen, P. L. (2019). Guidelines for preventing child sexual abuse and wrongful allegations against staff at Danish childcare facilities. *Societies*, 9(2), 42.
2. Leander, E.-M. B., Larsen, P. L., & Munk, K. P. (2018). Children's doctor games and nudity at Danish childcare institutions. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 47, 863–875.
3. Leander, E.-M. B. (2021). Children's sexuality and nudity in discourse and images in a Danish education and care journal over 50 years: 1970–2019: The emergence of

“the child perpetrator of sexual abuse” in an international perspective. (Ifølge aftale med *Archives of Sexual Behavior* forkorter jeg i øjeblikket artiklen til dette tidsskrift).*

4. Leander, E.-M. B. (2021). Doctor Games. In D. P. VanderLaan & W. I. Wong (Eds.). *Gender and sexuality development: Contemporary theory and research*. New York, NY: Springer.

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PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

PREFACE

Since the 1980s, the fear of child sexual abuse (CSA) has become a major cultural feature of the West (Bech, 2005; Best, 1990; Edelberg, 2018; Furedi, 2006, 2013; Furedi & Bristow, 2010; Jenkins, 1998, 2003; Jenks, 1994; Johnson, 2000; La Fontaine, 1998; Meyer, 2007; Piper & Stronach, 2008; Tobin, 1997; Webster, 2005). In Denmark and internationally, the unintended consequences of this fear are rarely investigated, and doing so is often controversial (Cricher, 2003; Furedi, 2013). The purpose of this dissertation was to examine the unintended cultural, institutional, social, and discursive consequences of this historical development. The aim was not to question the importance of focusing on CSA—doing the most a society can to prevent it—nor was it to argue that the fear of CSA is not natural or understandable. This should go without saying. Instead, this dissertation focuses on the other side of this development. This perspective is implicit in the concept of “unintended consequences,” defined as follows by *The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics*: “The law of unintended consequences, often cited but rarely defined, is that actions of people—and especially of government—always have effects that are unanticipated or unintended. Economists and other social scientists have heeded its power for centuries; for just as long, politicians and popular opinion have largely ignored it.” Furthermore, the encyclopedia emphasizes the contrast between “the seen,” that is, the obvious, visible consequences of something, and “the unseen”, that is, the unintended consequences (Norton, 2008). The popularization of the concept of “unintended consequences” is usually attributed to the American sociologist Robert K. Merton, who distinguished between beneficial and adverse unintended consequences (Merton, 1936). Although recent decades’ significant focus on CSA has yielded many beneficial, intended consequences, and probably also beneficial,

unintended consequences, the scope of this dissertation addresses its adverse, unintended consequences, those that are “unseen” or “largely ignored” (Norton, 2008). I will demonstrate that these may be very serious, and therefore necessitates attention and investigation.

The unintended consequences of the significant focus on CSA since the 1980s manifest as a vast, multifaceted phenomenon, which makes it a highly interdisciplinary subject that may be addressed from many perspectives and in many ways. This article-based dissertation consists of four articles and has two closely related key focuses: 1) the influence of the fear of CSA on childcare staff practices, male childcare-staff working conditions, and teacher–child relationships at Danish childcare institutions; 2) the influence of the fear of CSA on the view of childhood sexuality in Denmark, and internationally, and Danish childcare institutions’ practices surrounding children’s sexual behavior. In this doctoral project, I investigated these focuses empirically, and this dissertation is based on two major empirical studies. The first, called *The Guideline Study*, was a mixed methods survey conducted in 2012, concerning guidelines for protecting children against CSA, and staff against wrongful allegations of this, in which approximately one-quarter of Danish childcare institutions participated. Examples of such guidelines include staff being forbidden to have children sit on their lap, or male staff being forbidden to change diapers. *The Guideline Study* also addressed these institutions’ rules regarding children’s nudity and sexual games. Examples of such rules include children being forbidden to play doctor games. The second study presented in this dissertation investigated changes in the view of childhood sexuality and nudity in the Danish education and care journal, *Børn&Unge (Children&Youth)*, over 50 years—1970 to 2019—in particular, the emergence of the “child perpetrator of sexual abuse,” in the late 1990s.

My doctoral investigation focuses mainly on childcare institutions. Since the 1960s, children in Western societies have spent an increasing amount of their childhood in

childcare institutions, and this is particularly pronounced in Denmark (Korsgaard, Kristensen, & Jensen, 2017; OECD, 2016). A recurrent theory is that this historical development has fueled recent decades' significant fears of CSA in the West, which I discuss in the "Historical Background" section (Bech, 2005; de Coninck-Smith, 2004; Hemmingsen, 2000; Jenkins, 1998, 2003). Therefore, childcare facilities are obvious places to study the very general subject of "the unintended consequences of recent decades' significant fear of CSA," in a concrete and meaningful manner.

The data presented in this dissertation were gathered in Denmark, and the analytical focus of the dissertation is the unintended consequences of the fear of CSA in Denmark. However, throughout this dissertation there is a strong international focus, particularly on the English-speaking countries, and most particularly on the United States, where the present significant focus on CSA in the West originated, around 1980 (Best, 1990; Furedi, 2006; Jenkins, 1998), and where this development has had its most extreme consequences, as we will see.

This is an overview of this dissertation's four articles and two studies, which is followed by a description of the process of which they are the result:

The four articles:

1. Leander, E.-M. B., Munk, K. P., & Larsen, P. L. (2019). Guidelines for preventing child sexual abuse and wrongful allegations against staff at Danish childcare facilities. *Societies*, 9(2), 42.
2. Leander, E.-M. B., Larsen, P. L., & Munk, K. P. (2018). Children's doctor games and nudity at Danish childcare institutions. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 47, 863–875.

3. Leander, E.-M. B. (2021). Children's sexuality and nudity in discourse and images in a Danish education and care journal over 50 years: 1970–2019: The emergence of “the child perpetrator of sexual abuse” in an international perspective.
(Peer-reviewed for *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, spring 2021—currently being revised for length for this journal).*
4. Leander, E.-M. B. (2021). Doctor Games. In D. P. VanderLaan & W. I. Wong (Eds.). *Gender and sexuality development: Contemporary theory and research*. New York, NY: Springer.

The two studies:

1. *The Guideline Study:*

Part 1: Guidelines for preventing CSA and wrongful allegations of CSA at Danish childcare institutions (*first article*)

Part 2: Rules for children's sexual games and nudity at Danish childcare institutions (*second and fourth articles*)

2. *The Børn&Unge Study (third article)*

I was introduced to the broader subject of this dissertation—“the unintended consequences of the significant fear of CSA in recent decades”—in 2009, when I was a research assistant for the study, “When trust is lost—the formation of a public distrust identity,” carried out by associate professor, Dr. Karen P. Munk, of Aarhus University (Munk, Larsen, Leander & Sørensen, 2013). Prior to the studies presented in my dissertation, this was the only Danish empirical study of the unintended consequences of the significant fear of CSA in recent decades. This study was conducted in 2010 at Danish preschool institutions and before- and

*After my Ph.D. defense, article 3 was published in *Archives of Sexual Behavior* in a slightly shortened version: Leander, EM.B. Children's Sexuality and Nudity in Discourse and Images in a Danish Education and Care Journal over 50 Years (1970–2019): The Emergence of “The Child Perpetrator of Sexual Abuse” in an International Perspective. *Arch Sex Behav* 52, 49–78 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-022-02421-5>

after-school clubs with a control group of randomly selected participants. The findings revealed that 68.7% of teachers felt that the risk of wrongful allegations of CSA had increased in recent years; 8.5% of male teachers had considered leaving the profession because of the risk of wrongful allegations; 12.7% of teachers had become more suspicious of their colleagues, and 47% of the control group participants had become more suspicious of other people's behavior around children in recent years; 56.3% of male teachers and 21.1% of female teachers had changed their conduct around children, keeping a greater distance from them, as a result of the increased focus on CSA. These findings indicated that the increased focus on CSA in society had resulted in a climate of fear in childcare institutions that needed to be further investigated, and that this was particularly pronounced with regard to male staff (Munk et al., 2013).

In Munk et al.'s study (2013), some childcare professionals' responses mentioned guidelines at their institutions for preventing CSA and wrongful allegations of CSA. These guidelines were unknown to Karen P. Munk and me, and we decided to investigate them in greater detail. We obtained funding from "The Danish Union of Social Educators and the Danish Union of Early Childhood and Youth Educators Funds for Development and Research" for a new study (*The Guideline Study*), which we conducted with psychologist Per Lindsø Larsen in 2012. Karen P. Munk, Per Lindsø Larsen and I formed *The Paradox Research Group*. I was the project manager of *The Guideline Study*. While we were carrying this out, I was awarded a doctoral fellowship at Aarhus University, co-financed by Aarhus University and the *Danish Union of Early Childhood and Youth Educators* (BUPL), and I made the data collected for *The Guideline Study* central to my Ph.D. research.

The aims of *The Guideline Study* were to investigate the pervasiveness of guidelines for preventing CSA and wrongful allegations of CSA at Danish childcare

institutions, whether the institutions had guidelines that applied exclusively to male staff, and how they affected the children, the staff, daily practices, and teacher–child relationships. *The Guideline Study* was based on the hypothesis that such guidelines could have a significant and adverse influence on pedagogical practices and teacher–child relationships at childcare facilities, especially with regard to male childcare-staff working conditions, and that this may be problematic with respect to pedagogical aims and children’s well-being. We concluded that since such guidelines were largely unknown to the Danish public, our investigation of them could provide valuable new knowledge.

As mentioned above, *The Guideline Study* also included questions about the childcare institutions’ rules for children’s nudity and sexual games. The aim of this part of the study was to investigate whether the significant focus on CSA had influenced Danish childcare institutions’ view of children’s sexuality, how the childcare institutions addressed children’s nudity and sexual games, and how possible rules for addressing these concerns affected the children. The hypothesis for this part of the study was that, if staff feared wrongful allegations of CSA, children’s display of sexuality and nudity could be sensitive subjects at childcare institutions, and also, that the focus on children as potential victims of CSA could influence the view of their doctor games.

As the data collected for *The Guideline Study* were very rich and addressed two closely related but different questions, it led to two separate articles. The first addressed the staff guidelines, and was published in the journal, *Societies*, in 2019. The second addressed the rules for children, and was published in the journal, *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, in 2018. Karen P. Munk and Per Lindsø Larsen are co-authors of both articles.

While writing the second article, I searched for research on Danish childcare institutions’ attitudes to children’s nudity and sexual games before the turn of the millennium,

but found nothing. To fill this gap, I decided to conduct a new study, in which I analyzed the coverage of childhood sexuality and nudity in discourse and images in the Danish education and care journal, *Børn&Unge* (B&U), over a period of 50 years: 1970 to 2019. B&U is published by BUPL. This study aimed to investigate in detail the anatomy of the shift in practices surrounding children's sexuality at Danish childcare institutions that *The Guideline Study* revealed: Which ideas and narratives informed this shift, where did they come from, and how did they develop? The research questions went beyond the scope of childcare institutions, and asked more generally, how has the significant focus on CSA affected the view of natural childhood sexuality in Denmark—and internationally—and what are the consequences for children? The hypothesis was that attitudes to children's nudity and sexuality at Danish childcare institutions were very different in the decades prior to the turn of the millennium, and that the shift in views on childhood sexuality at these facilities and beyond was largely influenced by the fear of CSA and could have severe consequences for children. I conducted the B&U study independently, and it led to this dissertation's third article. This article was peer-reviewed for *Archives of Sexual Behavior* in the spring of 2021, and I am currently revising it for length for this journal.^{*} *Archives of Sexual Behavior* has agreed to publish the photographs of naked children from the earlier periods of B&U, which are reprinted in my article; this may be unprecedented in an American journal in recent decades.

After the second article on Danish childcare institutions' rules for children's nudity and sexual games was published in *Archives of Sexual Behavior* in 2018, the managing editor of this journal, Assistant Professor, Dr. Doug P. VanderLaan, of the University of Toronto Mississauga, Canada, invited me to contribute a short article on children's doctor games to the book, *Gender and sexuality development: Contemporary theory and research* (VanderLaan & Wong, 2021). This led me to write the fourth article included in this

^{*}After my Ph.D. defense, article 3 was published in *Archives of Sexual Behavior* in a slightly shortened version: Leander, EM.B. Children's Sexuality and Nudity in Discourse and Images in a Danish Education and Care Journal over 50 Years (1970–2019): The Emergence of “The Child Perpetrator of Sexual Abuse” in an International Perspective. *Arch Sex Behav* 52, 49–78 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-022-02421-5>

dissertation, which elaborates on the knowledge of children's doctor games provided by *The Guideline Study*.

I should add that I wrote all four articles with the aim of publishing them in international journals (and one book), which is why each article is to be considered as an independent unit. This means that some information will recur in the articles, especially because three of them analyze data from *The Guideline Study*. However, as explained above, the focuses of the four articles are different.

During my Ph.D. program, I gathered more data than I could include in this dissertation. I wish to briefly mention these data, as they significantly deepened my understanding of the unintended consequences of the fear of CSA, and thus contributed important background knowledge to the writing of this dissertation. First, I carried out a mixed methods study at a Danish kindergarten, where the sexual games among a group of children had significant consequences for the children involved, their parents, and the childcare institution. One boy was singled out as "a perpetrator of sexual abuse." I conducted 22 qualitative research interviews with the kindergarten directors, childcare professionals, parents, and municipal employees, and analyzed documents and newspaper articles related to the case.

Secondly, I conducted seven independent qualitative research interviews: 1) an interview with a young woman who feared her child would be sexually abused; 2) an interview with a woman, whose child played a game with a friend in the child's kindergarten that involved undressing, after which the kindergarten director reported the woman and her husband to the authorities; 3) an interview with a male teaching assistant at a kindergarten who lost his job after wrongful allegations of CSA; 4) an interview with a male childcare professional who was convicted of CSA at his kindergarten and appealed the case, and a

separate interview with his wife; 5) an interview with a gay high school teacher who was transferred from his teaching position to another work assignment, after parents complained about “immoral teaching”; 6) an interview with the head physician at the Center for Sexually Abused Children at Aarhus University Hospital; 7) an interview with the father of a multi-handicapped woman, who was accused of sexually abusing her and denied permission to visit her at the institution where she lived. These data represent a fertile body of material for continuing research on the subject of this dissertation once I receive my Ph.D.

This dissertation takes on a highly understudied subject, particularly with regard to empirical studies. As mentioned above, prior to this dissertation, only Munk et al. (2013) had investigated the unintended consequences in Denmark of recent decades’ significant focus on CSA empirically, and no research studies addressed Danish childcare institutions’ guidelines for preventing CSA and wrongful allegations of CSA. There is a limited number of American and British empirical studies of guidelines for preventing CSA and wrongful allegations of CSA at childcare institutions, which I present in this dissertation’s first article. Furthermore, this dissertation presents the first Danish research into the influence of recent decades’ significant fear of CSA on childcare institutions’ practices surrounding children’s sexual games and nudity, and the related shift in the view of childhood sexuality to the idea of this as potentially abusive, and of children as potential perpetrators of sexual abuse. Also, internationally, this subject is sparsely studied. Only a few studies, which I discuss in the articles, have addressed this controversial subject in the English-speaking countries. Thus, my dissertation presents one of the most substantial empirical research projects conducted to investigate the multiple effects and unintended consequences of the current widespread fear of CSA in the West. It documents an important cultural shift at Danish childcare facilities. It shows that the fear of CSA has had a significant impact on practices and relationships at Danish childcare institutions, enforcing defensive strategies among staff, and resulting in a

general disciplining of bodies, and the behavior of both staff and children, which has reduced trust, care, intimacy, learning opportunities, and children's sexual play. In particular, this dissertation reveals how this development has created social outcasts, even among the children it aimed to protect; it has stigmatized male childcare professionals and influenced the panic surrounding childhood sexuality that identifies some children as perpetrators of sexual abuse.

Finally, a few words on the organization of this dissertation. It consists of three parts. Part one is the introduction. After the preface, I introduce the methods and the theoretical framework used in this dissertation. Then I present a brief historical background to the significant focus on CSA in recent decades in Denmark and internationally, and also discuss possible causes of this focus and provide an overview of some of the main arguments in the literature on this question. Part two presents this dissertation's four articles. Part three includes a concluding chapter, in which I address the four articles as a group, to discuss the general findings of this dissertation. Last is a postscript, in which I briefly present the impact that my doctoral research has had on Danish society.

In this dissertation, the articles are presented in the form in which they were published, or will be published, and therefore, each article has its own reference list. A separate reference list follows part one and part three. Finally, a complete list of references for the entire dissertation is found after the postscript.

METHODS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Methods

In this doctoral project, the subject is at the center of my investigation, and I have chosen the methods, theories and concepts that best shed light on the subject. As “the unintended consequences of the significant focus on child sexual abuse (CSA)” is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, and, as such, a highly interdisciplinary subject, my approach to both method and theory is correspondingly multifaceted and interdisciplinary. The methods and theories applied in this dissertation’s separate articles are richly described in each particular article; therefore, the purpose of this chapter is not to repeat this in detail, but to present the general methodological and theoretical strategies of my dissertation.

In terms of method, this is a mixed-methods doctoral project. I understand “mixed methods” broadly, as the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods, and of various quantitative or various qualitative methods, and finally, of various sorts of data within a particular qualitative method, e.g., text and images in document analysis (Frederiksen, Gundelach, & Nielsen, 2014). My doctoral project involves all three sorts of mixing. It involves a survey that mixed quantitative, closed-end questions with qualitative, open-ended questions (articles 1 and 2), and a qualitative document analysis that, to a minor degree, included quantitative method (article 3). Furthermore, in article one, I analyzed both qualitative survey responses and documents, and in article three, I analyzed both documents and photos. As a result, this doctoral project applied mixed methods to the separate articles and as a general strategy, as all the methods used in the doctoral project considered as a whole are also mixed. The purpose of this mixed-methods approach was to validate the doctoral project’s separate findings and, especially, to arrive at a fuller and more multifaceted picture of the unintended consequences of the fear of CSA, which shed light on their

prevalence, their nature, their origins, their consequences, and how the affected individuals experienced them. For instance, mixing current survey data from childcare institutions with a document analysis of 50 years of *Børn&Unge* (B&U) was a way to develop a historical dimension of my investigation, which not only shed light on earlier practices and views in childcare institutions, but provided a profounder understanding of current practices and views (Frederiksen et al., 2014). Frederiksen et al. (2014) stressed the importance of integrating the various elements of a mixed-methods study and to describe how this integration occurred. This doctoral project is a highly integrated project with a high level of consistency among the elements of each article, among the articles, and within the dissertation as a whole. More precisely, within the separate articles, the quantitative and qualitative dimensions, and where relevant, the various qualitative elements, are integrated through the design, data collection, analysis, the interpretation of the findings, and the conclusion. On the general level of the dissertation, the four articles are integrated through the design, data collection, analysis, their interpretation, and the conclusion.

In this dissertation, I also used triangulation. Whereas mixed methods integrate quantitative and qualitative methods, or various quantitative or qualitative methods, triangulation combines data sets, researchers, theories, and methods to validate findings and increase their credibility. Denzin (2006) described these four types of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and method triangulation. All four types are used in this dissertation: As mentioned above, I applied mixed methods as a general strategy, two more researchers were involved in *The Guideline Study* and are co-authors of articles one and two, and, as I describe later in this chapter, I applied multiple theories. Finally, I used various types of data triangulation: My data were gathered from various sources, settings, historical periods, and countries (Denzin, 2006; Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2018).

Per Lindsø Larsen, one of my two co-authors of articles one and two, carried out the entire statistical analysis of the quantitative findings of *The Guideline Study*, presented in articles one and two. This statistical work was carried out using Statistical Package Social Sciences (SPSS), version 23.

The qualitative data in this dissertation consists of the responses to the open-ended survey questions in *The Guideline Study* and documents. The documents are mainly the selected group of articles from *Børn&Unge* analyzed in article three, but also older newspaper articles, research articles, and so on, which are analyzed as historical sources in articles one and three. Finally, the selected group of photos from *Børn&Unge* reprinted in article three is also part of my qualitative data. In this dissertation, I analyzed all the qualitative textual data using thematic analysis and, where relevant, coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, in articles two and three, I applied discourse analysis to the qualitative data as the analysis is significantly concerned with the discourse used to discuss children's sexuality and children themselves when they engage in sexual behavior, and changes in this over time. In this dissertation, I understand "discourse" as an unequivocal constitution of meaning in language, in a given field or setting, often recognizable by specific thematic patterns and linguistic characteristics, such as recurring terms or images (Fairclough, 1992; Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999). Discourse analysis is a method of identifying norms, conflicts, and struggles and changes in norms over time, and to establish their connections to a broader cultural context (Fairclough, 1992; Foucault, 1976; Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999). In articles two and three, I investigate how children's sexuality is currently discussed and viewed at Danish childcare institutions (second article), and how it was discussed and viewed at Danish childcare institutions and by childhood-sexuality specialists in Denmark and internationally before the turn of the millennium (third article). I track the changes that occurred from 1970 until the present and connect them to a broader cultural context. Discourse analysis is more

than a method; it is also a theory, and I will return to discourse analysis as a theory in the following section, where I present the theoretical framework used to analyze this dissertation's data.

Theoretical framework

As I stated at the beginning of this section, given the multifaceted character of the subject of the unintended consequences of the significant focus on CSA, and the fact that this phenomenon is the nexus of many cultural currents, my theoretical framework consists of multiple theories and concepts. Its three key theories are 1) discourse analysis, 2) Foucault's theory of discipline and its central figure, the panopticon, and 3) the theory of fear. All three recur in the dissertation's articles, but not necessarily in all four. Besides these fundamental theories, which I explain and elaborate in the articles, I use a number of concepts and elements of theory more locally to analyze various aspects of my subject; these concepts derive from the theories of developmental psychology, moral panic, play, trust and recognition, among others. Finally, I draw on theory and studies of children's sexuality and children's problematic sexual behavior (PSB).

In this introduction, I will say a few more words about the three key theories of my theoretical framework and their common ground. My use of discourse analysis is fundamentally inspired by Foucault's general idea that the history of Western sexuality is discursive, and that therefore, we must pay attention to the way sexuality is discussed at different times in history. The main idea is that discourse reveals norms, but also constructs them, and therefore, that it is a power strategy in an ongoing fight for the "truth," rather than presenting eternal truths (Foucault, 1976). In the second and third articles, I investigate how the ideas of childhood sexuality as potentially abusive and of children as potential perpetrators of sexual abuse have been constructed since the 1980s, partly through discourse.

According to the theory of discourse analysis, discourse is constitutive of identities, social relations, and actions (Fairclough, 1992; Foucault, 1976), and a major aim of this dissertation is to investigate the consequences of children being identified as “perpetrators of sexual abuse.”

Various schools exist in the field of discourse analysis. I draw on Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as well as Foucault’s work. Fairclough’s CDA invites close discourse analysis of text and speech, and also connects discourse in text and speech to broader social contexts, everyday practices, and broader social structures, as discourse constitutes and is constituted by more far-reaching social processes. In contrast to other schools of discourse analysis, Fairclough’s emphasizes that discourse is but one constitutive social practice in society (Fairclough, 1992; Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999). In this dissertation, my discourse analysis of childcare professionals’ survey responses and documents goes hand in hand with the analysis of practices at childcare institutions, and it is connected to larger patterns and currents in Western culture in recent decades. This leads me to the next two key theories of my theoretical framework.

Foucault’s theory of discipline including its central figure, the panopticon, which was inspired by the prison building concept conceived by Jeremy Bentham in 1791, is the second key theory (Foucault, 1977). According to Foucault, the disciplinary technology functions by refined methods to meticulously discipline and control the body, and is informed by given knowledge, characterized by a pronounced distinction between the normal and the abnormal. In this dissertation, I conceptualize the fear of CSA as a disciplinary technology; I demonstrate how the fear of CSA in recent decades has resulted in the disciplining of adults and children’s behavior around children. In the first article, I elaborate on the panopticon as a main allegory of today’s childcare institution reacting to concerns of CSA and false allegations of CSA. In the first and third articles, I analyze both the guidelines for staff for

preventing CSA and wrongful allegations of CSA, and the rules for children's sexual games and nudity at Danish childcare institutions, as methods of discipline. In the third article, when I analyze the broader subject of changes in the view of childhood sexuality, both in Denmark and internationally, I analyze the highly normative knowledge related to the new view of childhood sexuality as potentially abusive, as also inherent in this disciplinary technology. I reveal the discourse and narrative that contributed to the construction of this knowledge on childhood sexuality, and the interaction between this and childcare institutions' disciplinary practices that surround children's sexual games and nudity. Foucault's theory of discipline describes how strict discipline identifies those who do not adhere to accepted norms as outcasts, and this is central to this dissertation's revelation of the severity of the unintended consequences of the significant focus on CSA for male childcare professionals and children.

The third key theory of my theoretical framework is the theory of fear. I briefly mention elements of Svendsen's (2008) and Bauman's (2006) theories; however, Frank Furedi's theory of fear is the main theory that I apply. Furedi associates recent decades' significant focus on CSA, which he designates "the culture of abuse," to a general Western "culture of fear" that has existed since the 1980s (Furedi, 2006). The culture of abuse has normalized abuse and has "the victim" as its central identity. The culture of fear is governed by a fearful, pessimistic, and misanthropic perspective on the world, and by a mistrust of others and of society's institutions. According to Furedi, this finds its most saturated form in a widespread obsession with children's safety, particularly with regard to CSA. He identifies one of the most serious consequences of the culture of fear as people's estrangement from one another (Furedi, 2006, 2013; Furedi & Bristow, 2010). In this dissertation, Furedi's analysis of the Western culture of fear and abuse in recent decades is central to my situating my findings in the context of a broader cultural and international development since the 1980s.

The key theories that define my theoretical framework furnish the principal tools for this dissertation's investigation of existing practices, discourses, norms, and knowledge related to recent decades' significant focus on CSA, and for revealing their hidden structures, contradictions, and adverse effects, which may exercise great power over people's lives. Foucault reminds us that every era is structured by norms that guide our lives without our being aware of this, and that norms are historical and may be questioned (Foucault, 1976, 1977). His theory of discipline is applied as a tool for discovering the micro-powers at work behind childcare institutions' staff guidelines for preventing CSA and wrongful allegations of CSA, and their rules for children's sexual games and nudity. As Furedi stated, "The culture of fear strives to displace individual freedoms and democratic rights with regulation and censorship" (Furedi, 2006, p. xvi). This dissertation applies these theories, and the rest of the theoretical framework presented, to ask how radical transformations in behavior around children came about. I wish to emphasize that I do not question that CSA exists nor that it is a serious social problem. Neither do I question that children may display PSB, or that it may be serious. Finally, I do not question the importance of preventing CSA, and PSB in children, or the significance of many dedicated professionals' efforts related to these concerns. My ambition to investigate the dysfunction caused by the intense, generalized fear of CSA does not conflict with the ambition to establish the best ways possible to address these societal problems.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Several scholars have argued that the current significant focus on child sexual abuse (CSA) in the West originated in the United States in the late 1970s, and established itself in the 1980s, when it was also exported to Europe, including Denmark (Bech, 2005; Best, 1990; Blådel, 1999; Furedi, 2006; Guillou, 2009; Jenkins, 1998; Kutchinsky, 1992; Nielsen, 2011; Vanggaard, 1990). Concerns about CSA were not new when they emerged in the United States in the 1970s. Jenkins traced the roots of the modern American discovery of CSA back to the Progressive Era, between 1890 to 1920, and described how concerns about CSA returned in cycles since that period, interrupted by periods of sexual freedom during which concern about CSA diminished or vanished. However, the cycle was broken when, beginning in the 1980s, CSA became part of the “enduring cultural landscape, a metanarrative potentially explaining all social and personal ills” (Jenkins, 1998, 2003, p. 15).

In Denmark, too, there were periods of concern about CSA in the last century. The first evidence of a Danish public debate on this subject appeared around 1906 (de Coninck-Smith, 2004). De Coninck-Smith’s (2008) and Bak’s (2018) findings indicate a significant increase in concerns about CSA throughout the 20th century. De Coninck-Smith (2008) found that from 1900 to 1943, cases of schoolteachers’ sexual misconduct involving their pupils were solved quietly and privately with warnings and dismissals, but resulted in prison sentences and blacklisting from 1943 to 1960. Bak (2018) argued that radical changes in the legal perception of CSA in Denmark in 1930 led to significant changes in the norms related to these concerns. In 1930, the age of sexual consent was raised to 15, and applied to boys as well as girls, and was extended to 18 for adopted and stepchildren, and when the abuser was a teacher. Bak showed that after these legal changes, in the period from 1934 to 1943 there was a 150 % increase in reported incidents of CSA, and in the period from 1932 to 1942, there was a 79 % increase in convictions for incest. During the German occupation, 87

% of all reported sex crimes in Copenhagen involved a child (Bak, 2018). After World War II, there was increased awareness that boys, too, could be victims of CSA, and significant public concern about, and action against, CSA by male homosexuals (de Coninck-Smith, 2004; Edelberg, 2018). However, from the 1960s onward, during the liberal era of the sexual revolution, CSA did not seem to be a significant public concern, and there were even manifestations of a radically different view of intergenerational sexual relationships: Child pornography was legal in Denmark from 1969 to 1980, and while well-known doctors downplayed the harm done by CSA, extreme circles of the sexual revolution endorsed sexual relationships between adults and children as part of the ultimate sexual liberation (Graugaard, 2013; Edelberg, 2018; Tolstrup, 1969).

In Denmark, the 1980s appear to have been a decade of varied attitudes. As I will show, this was a very liberal decade with regard to childhood sexuality and nudity. Also, in 1985 an association called The Pedophile Group was founded, and was briefly included in the respectable Danish Association of Gays and Lesbians, until it was excluded (Edelberg, 2018; Graugaard, 2013). However, in 1980, child pornography became illegal in Denmark, and this was the decade in which a renewed focus on CSA was imported from the United States to Denmark. Analyzing “the rise of the child-victim” in the United States in the 1980s, Best stated: “Threats to children came under intense scrutiny; there was widespread concern about child abuse, child pornography, incest, child molestation, harmful rock lyrics, missing children, and related dangers” (Best, 1990, pp. 1–2). When these renewed concerns about CSA were imported in Denmark in the 1980s, this was first in the form of a significant focus on incest, which continued in the 1990s (Andreasen, 1999; Blædel, 1999; Edelberg, 2018; Graugaard, 2013; Kutchinsky, 1989; Nielsen, 2011; Rasmussen, 2000; Vanggaard, 1990). The full-blown panic about CSA did not erupt in Denmark until the late 1990s, and in the literature, there is a broad consensus that the well-known Vadstrupgaard case was central to

fueling this panic (e.g., Bech, 2005; Edelberg, 2018; Graugaard, 2013; Helweg-Larsen, Andersen, & Plauborg, 2010; Rantorp, 2000). This dissertation documents these circumstances extensively.

In the Vadstrupgaard case, which spanned 1997 and 1998, a male teaching assistant was sentenced to three and a half years in prison for sexually abusing twenty children in a kindergarten. However, some argued that the case was a miscarriage of justice (Berntsen, 2002; Blædel, 1999; Hemmingsen, 2002; Rantorp, 2000). The Vadstrupgaard case was the first major case of its sort in Denmark. With respect to Danish childcare facilities, this represented a loss of innocence, and it led to public outcry. In the case, children testified to having been violently sexually abused primarily in the kindergarten's basement, where they were forced to drink urine and eat feces, among other things. In a later stage of the case, they testified to having been transported to a hotel where they were violently physically and sexually abused by a group of people—allegations the police were unable to confirm (Blædel, 1999; Hemmingsen, 2000). With the Vadstrupgaard case, a phenomenon that emerged in the late 1970s in the United States, and spread throughout the Western world, reached Denmark: highly publicized cases of CSA in childcare institutions, which often evolved into allegations of pedophile rings and/or satanic, ritualistic sexual abuse cults (Furedi, 2013; Hemmingsen, 2000; Jenkins, 1998). In Denmark, in the aftermath of the Vastrupgaard case, several cases of allegations of CSA by childcare professionals followed (Rantorp, 2000; Rasmussen, 2000). However, there are no indications that allegations of pedophile rings and/or satanic, ritualistic sexual abuse cults were widespread in Denmark in such cases, after the Vadstrupgaard case.

The Vadstrupgaard case led to an intense focus on CSA, from the media, the public, politicians, and children's organizations, and since this case, considerable juridical, political, and institutional efforts have been made to prevent CSA in Danish society. Three publications on the prevention of CSA (Danish Government, 2011; Helweg-Larsen et al.,

2010; Mehlbye & Hammershøi, 2006) described these efforts, and each described the years following the Vadstrupgaard case as a landmark period in the national effort to fight CSA in Denmark. Helweg-Larsen et al. (2010) stated that before the late 1990s, CSA was a relatively undiscussed problem in the public debate, and explicitly singled out the Vadstrupgaard case as the cause for the launch of what they regarded as the first national program for preventing CSA. This was launched in 1999 and 2000 by an inter-ministerial committee and The Danish National Council for Children, and was followed in 2003 by “The government’s action plan 2003,” which continued to be the framework for governmental initiatives to prevent CSA in the following decade. The long list of initiatives that were implemented as a result of these programs, launched from 1999 through 2003, testify to the immense impact of the Vadstrupgaard case, and to the vast focus on CSA that has prevailed in Danish society since; the following are but some examples. Vetting of childcare staff was established in 2001 and became a legal requirement in 2005. Significant increases in punishment for CSA were established in 2002 and 2008. A web filtering mechanism to combat the distribution of child pornography was developed and launched in 2005. A network of researchers and practitioners who were specialists on the subject of CSA, a Danish National Centre for Social Efforts Against Child Sexual Abuse (SISO), and specialized treatment centers for sexually abused children at three Danish hospitals were established. Surveys were carried out to investigate the problem of CSA. The Danish Janus Center, which assesses and treats children with problematic sexual behavior (PSB), was established. Furthermore, in 2013, in Denmark, five “children’s houses” were inaugurated, where children who are victims of abuse can access a complete range of support services from experts under one roof, a project that was anticipated by the programs launched in 1999 through 2003 (Danish Government, 2011; Helweg-Larsen et al., 2010; Mehlbye & Hammershøi, 2006).

“The government’s action plan 2003” recommended implementing guidelines for the interactions between childcare professionals and children in Danish schools and in early childhood education and care (ECEC) (Helweg-Larsen et al., 2010). Seven years later, Helweg-Larsen et al.’s (2010) survey of Danish municipalities’ CSA prevention programs asked whether the municipalities had established guidelines for physical interactions between children and staff in ECEC. Fifty-four of Denmark’s ninety-eight municipalities participated in the survey: Only about five had established such guidelines for their ECEC institutions. Other municipalities replied that guidelines existed, but were determined by the individual institutions. In *The Guideline Study*, we sent the questionnaire to the ECEC institutions themselves, and, as we will see, we were able to reveal that such guidelines are, in fact, widespread in Danish ECEC; however, the vast majority of the institutions that participated in our survey stated that their guidelines had been established without the intervention of the municipality. Although Helweg-Larsen et al. (2010) presented limited information on guidelines for preventing CSA and wrongful allegations at Danish childcare institutions, their report for The National Institute of Public Health was rich in recommendations to Danish municipalities that such guidelines should be established:

“Another thing you can do to prevent child sexual abuse is to focus on interactions in schools, childcare and residential institutions, leisure associations etc. and to establish rules for the employees’ physical interactions with the children (or rules for the children’s interactions with each other). This may for instance be rules dictating that two childcare professionals must always be present on the playground with the children, in the wood etc. or that diaper changing always must take place with the door open. The guidelines serve two purposes, on the one hand to reduce the risk of CSA, on the other hand to protect the employees from the risk of false allegations of CSA.”

(Helweg-Larsen et al., 2010, p. 47)

Elsewhere, the authors specify that preventing CSA implies “...limits for the physical interactions with children in schools, childcare and residential institutions, leisure associations etc.” (Helweg-Larsen et al., 2010, p. 11).

It stands clear that, after the Vadstrupgaard case, guidelines of the sort investigated in this dissertation were recommended by the Danish Government and Danish researchers working for a national research institute. “The government’s action plan 2003” also mentioned that children’s awareness of their personal boundaries may reduce their risk of sexual abuse (Helweg-Larsen et al., 2010). This was emphasized again in the government’s 2011 follow-up report: “Thus, in the coming years, further focus on strengthening children’s resilience is needed. Children must be helped to set personal boundaries” (Danish Government, 2011, p. 6). As we will see, *The Guideline Study* revealed a noteworthy, widespread focus on teaching children about personal boundaries, at Danish childcare institutions.

The Vadstrupgaard case was not the only case around the turn of the millennium that fueled the intense Danish focus on CSA. As mentioned above, in the aftermath of the Vadstrupgaard case, others followed (Rantorp, 2000; Weiss, 2000), and internationally, the horrific case of the Belgian, Marc Dutroux, shocked. Since the millennium, other Danish cases of CSA have continued to shock the Danes, including, the Beder case of 2007, another major case at a kindergarten, and approximately seven extreme cases of CSA in dysfunctional families, all of which were highly publicized. Also, internationally, high-profile cases of CSA continue to sustain the fear of CSA and have led to substantial changes in society. In the United Kingdom, the sexual abuse scandal surrounding media personality Jimmy Savile, who posthumously, in 2012, was revealed to have been a serial child abuser for decades, led to an unprecedented focus on, and investigation into historical cases of CSA, also called “non-recent abuse,” a focus that persists today. The

British have been invited to break their silence concerning sexual abuse they suffered as children, even decades ago—for instance, but not exclusively, in institutions and at the hands of professionals (Furedi, 2013; NSPCC, 2021). Also, in France, at this very moment, in 2021, vast CSA scandals are rocking the country. In particular, two books in which two women broke their silence on the CSA—in the one case, incest—they suffered at the hands of two famous men from the French intelligentsia (Kouchner, 2021; Springora, 2020) have brought a significant focus on CSA and its alleged quasi-acceptance among the French cultural elite. Under the hashtag *#Metooinceste*, numerous French men and women tell of the incest they suffered as children. The ensuing debate resulted in a landmark French law in April 2021, which prohibits sex with relatives who are under 18, and sets the age of consent at 15, giving France an age of sexual consent for the first time. The parliament voted unanimously to define sex with children automatically as rape, punishable by up to 20 years in prison (Independent, 2021; Reuters, 2021). Jenkins' judgement that, since the 1980s, CSA has become “part of our enduring cultural landscape” is still valid today (Jenkins, 2003, p. 15).

A multi-faceted background to the fear of CSA

There is no single reason for, or simple background to the fact that the focus on and fear of CSA became a major cultural feature in the West in the 1980s, and that this has persisted. This phenomenon is the cultural–historical nexus of many cultural currents. A central factor is that the beliefs concerning the extent of the harm caused by CSA changed in the 1970s and 1980s (Best, 1990; Jenkins, 2003). In the above-mentioned study of 1900 to 1970 cases of Danish schoolteachers' sexual misconduct involving their pupils, de Coninck-Smith found that throughout this period the attitude that “no harm had been done” was widespread among parents (de Coninck-Smith, 2008, p. 529). Today, CSA is associated with long-lasting, possibly life-long, detrimental impact on all aspects of life (e.g., Hailes, Yu, Danese, & Fazel,

2019). In the 2011 report from the Danish Government, also mentioned above, this view underpinned the government's strategies to prevent CSA in Denmark:

“The mental strain that results from the sexual abuse cannot avoid leaving lasting traces in the sexually abused child, and consequently, the passage to adulthood may be very difficult. In other words, there is a high risk that the sexual abuse will haunt the child for the rest of its life.” (Danish Government, 2011, p. 4)

Furedi (2013) described a shift in the 1970s and 1980s, from the idea of the child as capable of overcoming adversity to the idea of the sexually abused child as a traumatized victim who is scarred for life and in need of therapeutic intervention. According to this fatalistic view, CSA became a defining human experience, an identity.

The estimated prevalence of CSA rose drastically in the 1970s and 1980s (Bech, 2005; Best, 1990; Furedi, 2006; Jenkins, 1998). Jenkins (1998) noted that in 1955 it was estimated that one of every 1 million American girls was affected by incest, in contrast to 160,000 of every 1 million in 1986. In 2008, an international leader in research on CSA, Michael Seto, stated that “child sexual abuse is a widespread social problem” (Seto, 2008, p. vii). In Denmark, an influential 1988 study by Leth, Stenvig, and Pedersen concluded that a minimum of approximately 10% of children under the age of 18 were victims of CSA. Leth later described this vividly as, “Two in each school class!” However, she emphasized that this number embraced a spectrum of CSA experiences, including sexually condescending comments (Leth, 1999, p. 12). In fact, several scholars have emphasized that the definition of (child) sexual abuse has expanded since the 1970s, which may partly explain the increase in the estimated prevalence of CSA, and the CSA prevalence rates found in studies in recent

decades (Bech, 2005; Best, 1990; Furedi, 2013, Haslam, 2016; Haslam et al., 2020; Jenkins, 1998; Okami, 1992). Changes in the perception of both the gravity and the extent of the problem of CSA have been crucial to the advocacy for societal action against CSA, and for keeping this problem at the center of Western society's attention for decades. "Victimization surveys certainly contributed to the child abuse revolution," Jenkins stated (2003, p. 9). However, he reminded us that earlier studies (Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953; Goldberg & Goldberg, 1935) suggested a CSA problem on a vast scale too, without attracting the attention such claims did from the 1970s onward, and concluded that the audience was substantially different at that time.

In the West, significant changes in the last century are important in terms of providing a background for understanding the intense concern about CSA in the 1970s and 1980s, and its endurance. De Coninck-Smith (2004) investigated the appearance of "the child-lurer" (in Danish, "børnelokkeren") in the Danish dictionary in 1953, and more broadly, in Danish culture around the 1950s—a precursor to "the pedophile," which entered the Danish dictionary in 1964—and discussed the possible origins of the altered view of the child molester, and the increased focus on CSA in Danish society, of which this new concept was a sign. De Coninck-Smith's main argument was that changes in childhood and the perception of it were central to this development. She emphasized a double historical parting of "children's and adults' paths" (p. 167). First, childhood was increasingly recognized as a distinct part of life in the growing field of child psychology. Second, children increasingly spent time away from their parents in new places dedicated to them: schools, children's rooms in new residential areas, childcare institutions, playgrounds, and leisure activities, and they moved around on their own. De Coninck-Smith posited that the child-lurer personified children's sense of insecurity in the modern childhood, going by memoirs and fiction that described childhood experiences from the 1930s through the 1950s, in which the child-lurer

figured as a frightening creature in an urban atmosphere of loneliness and horror. At the same time, child psychology emphasized the importance of a good childhood, and parents' concerns about the child-lurer signaled responsible parenting. De Coninck-Smith found that by around the 1950s, the perception of the harm caused by CSA was already changing. In fact, the concept of "the child-lurer" was associated with significantly more harm—to children and to society—than earlier conceptions of the child molester (de Coninck-Smith, 2004).

The parting of children's and parents' paths that de Coninck-Smith (2004) described has become even more pronounced, as, since the 1960s, children in the Western world have spent increasing amounts of time in childcare institutions. The fact that they are now cared for by professionals for a considerable part of their childhood forms a basis for parents' concerns about CSA and provides a partial explanation of why cases of CSA in childcare institutions have the potential to create the panics they have throughout the Western world (Hemmingsen, 2000; Jenkins, 1998, 2003). This development is particularly evident in Denmark. Since the 1960s, childcare institutions have become pedagogical institutions for all Danish children, and Denmark has some of the highest numbers of children in daycare of the OECD countries (Korsgaard, Kristensen, & Jensen, 2017; OECD, 2016). This also establishes some of the background to the moral panic created by the Vadstrupgaard case. Danish parents had confided their children to childcare professionals, and the safety of this historically new arrangement was now brought into question. In fact, what was different about the Vadstrupgaard case, compared to the focus on incest that emerged in Denmark in the 1980s, was the public's realization that CSA could happen in a professional childcare institution, which made the threat of CSA more present to the general public. The Danish sociologist Henning Bech (2005), and Garland (2008) saw the pedophile as a cultural scapegoat for parents' guilt about neglecting parenting; Bech associated this theory with a

complex, late-modern drama of fear, guilt, and the power struggle between women and men, related to women entering the labor market, and the resulting placement of children in childcare institutions.

In “Moral Crusades in an Age of Mistrust. The Jimmy Savile Scandal,” Furedi also investigated the pre-existing conditions for the current “elevation of child abuse into the main focus of moral anxiety,” and argued that this is a symptom of a Western society plunged into a deep crisis of mistrust since the 1970s (Furedi, 2013, p. 95). Furedi described a society in which personal bonds are more unstable and can no longer be taken for granted, and in which mistrust characterizes people’s relations with one another, and with society’s institutions and authorities. In this disrupted society, the affectionate, constant bonds to children have acquired key significance. The child has been sacralized, and has a unique moral status, embodying innocence, which is why the risk of losing a child represents a major threat to the foundations of people’s lives. At the same time, the underlying mistrust in society makes people question the motives of those who surround children, amplifying their fear of this threat. Given society’s lack of a moral consensus on most questions and norms, the question of CSA has gained vast significance since the 1970s, by being one of few things about which everybody feels strongly: “the one evil that all of us can agree on” (Furedi, 2013, p. 95).

Jenks (1994) argued that in postmodernity, “the shrill cry of ‘abuse’ is a cry of our own collective pain at the loss of our social identity” (p. 120). Whereas children represented hope for the future in modernity, in the disenchantment of postmodernity, they represent “nostalgia.” When relationships with children are the only true and stable ones we have in an individualized world, where modernity’s optimistic dreams of growth and progress have failed, children are the only embodiments of the lost dream of continuity, close social bonds, and belonging, and that is the reason we watch over them so closely.

In his analysis of why various threats to children, including CSA, attracted tremendous public attention in America in the 1970s and 1980s, Best (1990) described how a variety of threats faced by American society, and the rest of the world, at that time, made Americans fear for the future, and he argued that this fear was channeled into fears about threats to children. Since children embody the future and are vulnerable, the parallel was easy to make, and fearing for children's futures was more manageable than fearing for the future of the world, with having to confront the major questions posed by pollution, the energy crisis, nuclear arms, a poor economy, and so on.

Besides discussing why the message of threatened children appealed to Americans in the 1970s and 1980s, Best (1990) also described who presented this message, and how. Those who claimed that CSA was a serious social threat were principally psychologists and social workers. In Denmark too, since the 1980s, psychologists were key actors in raising concerns about both CSA and PSB in children, as we will see later (Bech, 2005; Rantorp, 2000; Vanggaard, 1990). Other claims-makers who are mentioned by Best recur in the literature. Best (1990), Jenks (1994), Jenkins (1998), and Bech (2005) argued that the women's movement was instrumental in raising public awareness of CSA in the 1970s, as part of their liberation movement and a general feminist attack on male domination and violence, for example, in the family. Jenkins (2003) linked the persistence of the widespread focus on CSA since the 1980s to a feminization of American culture and politics that has resulted in a society that is more sensitive to sexual violence and exploitation. In Denmark, the woman's movement had already played a key role in raising awareness of CSA at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1930, the activism of The Danish Women's Society led to the establishment of an age of sexual consent of 15 for both boys and girls (de Coninck-Smith, 2004). It is worth noting that in 2021, in France, the feminist agenda also embraces the subject of CSA; as mentioned earlier, a French campaign featuring the hashtag

#MeTooInceste followed in the footsteps of the 2017 *#MeToo* movement, which focused on the sexual abuse of woman. The current French campaign was launched by “NousToutes” (“All we woman”), a French feminist organization that combats sexual violence. Finally, Best (1990) and Jenks (1994) also emphasized that in America, conservatives and the child protection lobby sought to promote traditional family values by focusing on CSA, whereas Jenkins (2003) argued that the American advocates for abused children in the 1980s were part of a general movement that was determined to “purge Sixties decadence from American life” (p. 11).

There is significant consensus in the literature that mass media played a key role in raising awareness of CSA in the 1970s and 1980s, and that it continues to be a key player in keeping the subject at the center of public concern. Best (1994) described how the form of, and drama surrounding a subject may evolve when it passes through mass media: In particular, new claims-makers who do not have direct access to officials and politicians, have to present their case through the mass media, and must do so through compelling rhetoric, to attract attention. When mass media take up a story, they have their own agenda and emphasize its dramatic elements. Jenkins (1998) argued that the intense coverage of CSA began when media values were shifting to the sensational. Also, Furedi (2013) mentioned how the media present a “dramatised version of events,” at times sacrificing judgment and sense of proportion, and emphasized how the public imagination has been influenced by the combined efforts of the media and claims-makers whose campaigns and “alarmist message” have resulted in “the normalisation of paedophilia” (pp. 48–49). Although Jenkins argued that CSA was “one of the leading social issues reported in the mass media” since the mid-1980s (Jenkins, 1998, p. 140), Cheit (2003) argued that his empirical findings disputed this widely held assumption. Investigating the cases of all those charged with CSA (n=192) in Rhode Island in 1993, Cheit found that the coverage of these cases was mostly limited, and often nonexistent: only the 2

or 3 most-covered cases received intensive coverage. Cheit concluded that popular impressions of CSA are formed by a few unusual, “dramatic” cases that are not representative of the whole (Cheit, 2003, p. 616).

There is significant evidence that unusual and dramatic, highly-publicized cases of CSA may have a persistent impact on the society in which they occur (Seto, 2008; Furedi, 2013; Jenkins, 1998; Letourneau & Caldwell, 2013). One need only think of the American laws that were passed in the wake of brutal cases of the abduction, rape, or murder of children, and at times named after them, for example, “The Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sexually Violent Offender Registration Act” of 1994, “Megan’s law” of 1996, and “The Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act” of 2006, three federal laws that resulted in the requirements of sexual offender registration³ and community notification,⁴ often also of children and adolescents adjudicated or convicted of a sexual crime, throughout the United States (ATSA, 2020; Letourneau & Caldwell, 2013).

In Denmark, as I have noted and document in this dissertation, the Vadstrupgaard case, in particular, had a long-lasting impact. In his article on the news coverage of this case, Held (2000) presented the intensive coverage of the subject of CSA in the Danish media from 1997—the year the Vadstrupgaard case broke—and onward, which addressed not only the Vadstrupgaard case, and subsequent cases in Denmark, but also a range of major international cases of CSA. Held found that some of the Danish media were sensationalist, and uncritically covered the allegations of a ring of pedophiles in the

³ “Sexual offender registration” requires convicted sex offenders to register their home address with the local law enforcement agency, sometimes for the rest of their lives (ATSA, 2020; Letourneau & Caldwell, 2013).

⁴ “Community notification” requires community members to be notified, usually over the internet, when a convicted sex offender moves into the community (ATSA, 2020; Letourneau & Caldwell, 2013).

Vadstrupgaard case, even though the police had refuted this. He argued that claims-makers who were interviewed by the media played a key role in the media's broadcasting three myths related to the case: 1) that the alleged ring of pedophiles in the Vadstrupgaard case was just the tip of the iceberg in Denmark, 2) that children were infallible witnesses who always told the truth, and 3) that Denmark was a paradise for pedophiles. Held directly related these myths to initiatives to prevent CSA at Danish childcare institutions, which began to emerge throughout Denmark in 1999. Held also related the media coverage to mistrust, and to social changes surrounding children: parents felt insecure sending their children to daycare, and childcare professionals, particularly men, felt they were scrutinized in a new way. He quoted influential voices that said that it was unfortunate that childcare professionals may be wrongfully accused, but that children's safety was paramount. Held concluded: "The panic over pedophilia was created by the mass media," and the claims-makers who collaborated with the media (p. 141). The claims-makers Held mentioned included psychologist Mimi Strange and British social worker Vernon Jones, who I will return to in my analysis of B&U, and also the well-known psychologist, Kuno Sørensen, who has been a prominent figure in the field of CSA prevention in Denmark in recent decades (Held, 2000).

Today, because of modern mass media and communication, we live in a global village, when it comes to major cases of CSA from around the world. Despite their national character, their intense media coverage makes them present and horrifying to the international public, who are exposed to an ongoing stream of such cases. Several scholars have described how CSA has also become a frequent theme in popular culture, where, in recent decades, literary fiction, films, television series, true-crime documentaries, and so on have increasingly presented this theme, often through formulas aimed at entertaining (Best, 1990; Furedi, 2006; Jenkins 1998). In Denmark, two widely viewed art movies directed by Thomas Vinterberg were central in raising awareness of incest—*The Celebration (Festen)*, in

1998—and later, of the consequences of false allegations of CSA against male childcare professionals—*The Hunt (Jagten)*, in 2013 (Edelberg, 2018). To sum up, there is reason to believe that the omnipresence of the subject of CSA, due to modern communication, mass media, and popular culture, and the highly dramatic framing of this subject in these media, have contributed to keeping CSA a principal concern and fear in Western societies, since the 1980s (Best, 1990).

One last facet of the multifaceted background to the persistent focus on CSA in Western culture that I mention here was discerned by Jenkins (2003), among other scholars, who described how the focus on CSA has been institutionalized. In the United States, social welfare agencies have expanded significantly, abuse and incest have become mainstream study and research themes, therapeutic care and counseling in the healthcare industry have expanded tremendously, and contribute considerably to the American economy, and survivor movements and networks have become powerful interest groups, with vast numbers of members who construct their identities in terms of their experience of sexual abuse. Jenkins argued that the extent of this institutionalization of the focus on CSA makes it difficult to imagine this focus receding from public awareness (Jenkins, 2003). In the third article in this dissertation, I investigate how the view of childhood sexuality as potentially problematic and abusive has been institutionalized, in both Denmark and in the United States.

The foregoing overview of the possible causes of the widespread focus on CSA in the Western world since the 1980s is not complete, nor does the group of scholars I include represent all the scholars who have considered this subject. The principal aim of this overview is to convey the multifaceted character of this development. Jenkins argued, “Any explanations advanced for the success or failure of claims about child exploitation must take account of an international dimension,” (1998, p. 230), and added, with regard to concerns about CSA in Western countries in recent decades, “Panics were partly a response to local

conditions, but emerging perceptions of local problems were shaped and interpreted by American experts and delegations, American academic journals and professional texts, and omnipresent American popular culture” (p. 231). In this dissertation, particularly in the third article, on B&U, I identify the American influence on this development in Denmark. I also document the key role of the Vadstrupgaard case. However, it takes all the theories of the foregoing overview of possible causes of the recent decades’ intense focus on CSA in the West to understand that, in Denmark, this was not simply an import from the United States, or the result of the Vadstrupgaard case; it was also the result of long historical processes—related to modern childhood and general late-modern sociological and existential conditions—that Western societies share to large extent. In the third article, I add some of my own speculations concerning the background of the current significant focus on CSA. However, the main goal of this dissertation is not to ask *why* this significant focus emerged and persisted, but to investigate its unintended consequences, and to do so empirically.

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PART 2:
THE DISSERTATION'S FOUR ARTICLES

Article

Guidelines for Preventing Child Sexual Abuse and Wrongful Allegations against Staff at Danish Childcare Facilities

Else-Marie Buch Leander ^{1,*} , Karen Pallesgaard Munk ¹ and Per Lindso Larsen ²

¹ School of Culture and Society, Aarhus University, 8000 Aarhus, Denmark; filkpm@cas.au.dk

² Centre for Oligophrenia and Psychiatry, 8541 Skødstrup, Denmark; lindsoe@gmail.com

* Correspondence: filembl@cas.au.dk

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Abstract: Since the 1980s, the fear of child sexual abuse (CSA) has become a major cultural feature of a large part of the Western world. Internationally, the unintended consequences of the fear surrounding CSA are rarely investigated and doing so is often controversial. The purpose of this study was to investigate how this widespread fear of CSA has influenced practices and teacher–child relationships at childcare institutions. This is the first study of Danish childcare facilities’ guidelines for protecting children against CSA, and staff against wrongful allegations of CSA. Examples of such guidelines include staff being forbidden to have children sit on their lap, or male staff being forbidden to change diapers. This mixed methods survey, which involved the participation of 2051 directors and teachers from approximately one-quarter of Danish childcare facilities, showed that the majority of institutions had guidelines that were aimed mostly at protecting staff from wrongful allegations. The study revealed that the guidelines were a sign that male workers were being stigmatized, and that some institutions had discriminatory guidelines that applied exclusively to men. Furthermore, the guidelines conflicted with staff’s trusting relationships with children, and the task of caring for them.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education and Care; child sexual abuse; prevention policies; no touch; teacher–child relationships; male childcare workers; stigma; discrimination; fear; panopticon; moral panic

1. Introduction

Since the early 1980s, the Western world has paid increasing attention to the sexual abuse of children (CSA), and over the past 35 years, in a large part of the Western world, including Denmark, the fear of CSA has become a major cultural feature [1–10], and, at times, the focus of a moral panic [11–16]. This widespread fear of CSA has created another fear, namely the fear of being wrongly accused, which is particularly significant in professions that involve working with children [4,6,9,17–26]. Being wrongly accused of CSA represents a significant threat to individuals, as it is an allegation that has vast personal costs, largely because it is virtually impossible to be cleared of this charge [17,19,24,27]. Despite the habitually volatile nature of a moral panic, some moral panics, such as one about CSA, become “routinized” or “institutionalized,” which means that they influence society’s institutions and interpersonal norms [14] (p. 41). The purpose of this study was to investigate how the fear surrounding CSA internationally has influenced practices and teacher–child relationships at Danish childcare institutions. The long-term impact of moral panics is often ignored, in part because strong feelings and a strong consensus are key characteristics [14]. This makes them controversial to investigate, and, in particular, to introduce perspectives other than that of the moral panic itself. Hence, our

study is one of few empirical studies, worldwide, of the unintended consequences of contemporary society's significant focus on CSA. It is important to emphasize that our study does not imply that the fear of CSA is wrong, or that strong CSA prevention is not essential in any society. This should go without saying. Instead, our study directs attention to the proportions of this fear, and its unintended consequences with regard to a specific setting, namely the childcare institution.

This study is the first study of Danish childcare facilities' guidelines for protecting children from sexual abuse and staff from wrongful allegations of CSA. Examples of such guidelines are that doors must be kept open when staff help children with toileting, or that staff are forbidden to have children sit on their lap. This study was conducted in 2012 at approximately one-quarter of Danish preschool institutions and before-and-after-school clubs (BASCs). The majority of institutions had such guidelines, and our study reveals that their principal goal was protecting staff from wrongful allegations, and that they significantly influence daily practices and teacher–child relationships, and have unintended, adverse consequences for children and staff, particularly male staff¹.

This study was informed by an earlier controlled study that we conducted in 2010 at Danish preschool institutions and BASCs, which strongly indicated that both institutional and social changes had occurred that were not justified by the actual risk of CSA at such facilities [21]. In 2003, the Danish National Institute of Social Research concluded, based on a cohort study of 5000 Danish children born in 1995, “that extremely few children had been exposed to sexual abuse or sexual acts by adults in Early Childhood Education and Care institutions” [28] (p. 8). Furthermore, the Danish Union of Early Childhood and Youth Educators (BUPL) informed us that between 2008 and 2015, three childcare teachers were convicted of CSA,² and The Danish Union of Public Employees (FOA), informed us that between 2012 and 2015, two childcare assistants were convicted of CSA.³ These numbers do not give a complete picture, but they indicate a low risk of children being sexually abused at Danish childcare facilities, where the vetting of staff has been mandatory since 2005. Yet, our 2010 study indicated that a climate of fear had resulted from an increased focus on CSA in society: 68.7% of teachers felt that the risk of wrongful allegations of CSA had increased in recent years; 8.5% of male teachers had considered leaving the profession because of the risk of wrongful allegations; 12.7% of teachers had become more suspicious of their colleagues; 47% of the control group participants had become more suspicious of other people's behavior towards children in recent years. As a result of the increased focus on CSA, 56.3% of male teachers and 21.1% of female teachers had changed their conduct towards children, keeping a greater distance from them. In their responses to open-ended questions, many childcare professionals mentioned formal and informal guidelines at their institutions to protect against wrongful allegations of CSA [21]. These responses provided us with the basis for the hypothesis that such guidelines, although previously more or less unknown to the Danish public, had a strong influence on pedagogical practices and teacher–child relationships at childcare facilities, especially with regard to male staff's working conditions and relationships to children. Hence, the purpose of the study presented in this article was to investigate these guidelines and this hypothesis in greater detail. Our aim was to investigate the pervasiveness of formal and informal staff guidelines for preventing CSA and wrongful allegations of CSA, what the guidelines addressed, why they were established, and whether the institutions had guidelines that applied exclusively to male staff. A further aim was to investigate how directors and teachers experienced the guidelines, and how they affected the children, the staff—in particular, male staff—and the daily practices and social relations at the institutions.

This study joins a small group of studies from the United Kingdom [4,16,29–31] and the United States [6,9,32,33] that indicated that guidelines for protecting children from CSA and staff from wrongful allegations are pervasive at British and American preschool institutions. These studies

¹ The study is called *The Guideline Study 2012*, in Danish, *Retningslinjeundersøgelsen 2012*. For a report on the study in Danish, see [20].

² BUPL informed us that until 2008, they did not regularly keep track of this type of conviction.

³ FOA informed us that until 2012, they did not keep track of this type of conviction.

showed that guidelines in the United Kingdom and the United States mainly addressed touch between staff and children, visibility at the institutions, and the presence of two staff members during certain tasks. Both in the United Kingdom and in the United States, guidelines were more about protecting staff than protecting children, and a gender inequality that stigmatized male teachers, who at times followed special guidelines, existed in both countries [4,6,9,16,29–33]. A study by Piper and Stronach investigated touch practices at British preschools and schools, and is the most comprehensive study of childcare facilities' guidelines for protecting children from CSA and staff from wrongful allegations in the English-language literature [16]. The study showed that in general, touch was either prohibited by so called no touch policies or limited by detailed “technical” and “depersonalised” guidelines [16] (p. 38), which complicated daily practices. The most pervasive guideline was to never be alone with a child. The survey indicated a “nightmare of surveillance” (p. 38) and a “microregulation of professional behaviours” at British preschools and schools (p. 45). The unanimous conclusion of the UK and the USA studies was that the concrete guidelines and the fear of wrongful allegations have impoverished practice and relationships for children and staff. As this article will show, our findings share striking similarities to the British and American findings. Both the nature of the guidelines for protecting children from CSA and staff from wrongful allegations at childcare institutions, and their unintended consequences—and thus, the important questions that they raise, which we discuss in this paper—are international.

We have structured our article as follows. In “Historical background,” we begin by offering new insights into the historical origins of Danish childcare facilities' guidelines for protecting children from CSA and staff from wrongful allegations of CSA. In the “Materials and Methods” section, we present our data, and the theoretical framework that we use to analyze our data in this article. This framework builds on a variety of interdisciplinary theories and concepts, and has Michel Foucault's theory of the panopticon as its main construct [34]. This is followed by the presentation of our results. After that, we analyze and discuss our findings, focusing first on the unintended consequences of the guidelines for staff, principally the discrimination against male staff, and then on the unintended consequences of the guidelines for the children, principally guidelines' adverse influence on staff's relationships with children. We also examine a new ruling by the Danish Board of Equal Treatment concerning special guidelines for male staff at childcare facilities.

Historical Background

In Denmark, the moral panic over CSA at childcare facilities began in 1997/1998, during the important “Vadstrupgaard case,” in which a male teaching assistant was sentenced to three and a half years in prison for the sexual abuse of 20 children at a kindergarten. This first major public case of this sort elicited a public outcry in Danish society, and undermined trust in Danish childcare facilities [35,36]. However, some claimed that the case was a miscarriage of justice, arguing that there was no concrete evidence, that the police made major mistakes in their investigation when interviewing the children, and finally, that the children's testimony was uncritically believed during the case [36–39]. In the aftermath of the Vadstrupgaard case, CSA received significant attention from the media, the public, politicians, and children's organizations, and considerable juridical, political, and institutional efforts have been made since to prevent CSA in Danish society. For instance, the vetting of childcare staff became possible in 2001 and was mandated by law in 2005.

In the years following the Vadstrupgaard case, the number of allegations of CSA against childcare staff increased dramatically. Before this case, allegations of CSA were rare at Danish childcare institutions; BUPL rarely received more than one such report per year. In the two years immediately following the Vadstrupgaard case, from 1998 to 2000, BUPL received twenty-five reports, only one of which ended with a conviction. BUPL considered it probable that more members were accused of CSA during that period, since at that time the union did not centrally register all allegations against members. During that period, the Danish Union of Early Childhood and Youth Educator assistants (PMF) received 35 reports of such cases, two of which ended in convictions. In the majority of the

reports registered with both unions, the allegations against members did not lead to charges being pressed [40]. In those years, several cases were publicized by the media, and newspaper articles from that period spoke of the “many cases” of CSA in Danish childcare institutions [39,41–45], and experts and stakeholders discussed whether a huge problem and taboo had been exposed, or whether this reflected a general hysteria [36,42,46].

The existence of a “before and after Vadstrupgaard” is illustrated by the contrasting ways in which male workers in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) were discussed before and after the case. A 1996 discussion paper for the European Commission Network on Childcare, “Men as workers in Childcare Services,” stated, “A particular argument against employing men is that men may sexually abuse children. This argument is particularly prominent in the United Kingdom. It does not appear at all in the Danish debates” [47] (p. 23). However, after the Vadstrupgaard case, the association between men and the risk of CSA at childcare facilities became central to the public debate in Denmark. In a newspaper article, a leading Danish psychologist claimed that “pedophiles are everywhere” and “quickly find their way to preschool institutions,” and warned against naïvely hiring men at childcare facilities [41] (p. 24). Other articles reported that worried parents were uneasy about male childcare workers, or raised the question of whether men should care for children professionally at all (e.g., [42,44,48]). Meanwhile, experts and leading figures from unions, teachers’ colleges, the police, politics, and child welfare organizations warned against the “stigmatization” and “hysteria” evolving around male childcare workers [43,44,49–53]. The male childcare workers spoke of their fears or were presented in the media as perplexed about their new stigmatization and the risk of wrongful allegations. Male students in ECEC programs reported feeling vulnerable before practicums, and teachers’ colleges around the country held seminars on how to ensure workplace security [42–45,50–54].

In the newspaper articles cited above, and in the literature of that time, we found indications that it was in the aftermath of the Vadstrupgaard case that guidelines to protect against CSA and wrongful allegations were introduced to Danish childcare facilities.⁴ They grew out of an interaction between a bottom-up movement by perplexed institutions that wished to protect themselves and the children in their care, and the influences of agents eager to help the institutions and their male workers. A 2000 anthology that addressed the Vadstrupgaard case, read, “In crèches, kindergartens and BASCs all over the country, staff discuss new workflows with the aim of ensuring that male teachers, in particular, are not alone with the children at any time” [36] (p. 11). Newspaper articles reported on institutions that established guidelines for staff, or special guidelines for men [42,46,50,51]. According to BUPL and PMF, many male childcare professionals asked the unions for guidelines that described which behaviors were appropriate around children and, in particular, those that would protect against wrongful allegations; for instance, the men asked whether it was appropriate to have a child sit on the lap [43,54]. PMF advised the men to keep in mind the risk of misconstruction, particularly in physical matters, and recommended that two colleagues be present [43]. The director of BUPL stated that male staff began to question their behavior, wondering whether to close the bathroom door while toileting [52]. In 1998, the municipality of Gladsaxe hosted a meeting for male childcare workers, during which a BUPL representative advised male staff on how to avoid misconstruction. For instance, the men were advised that hugging children was acceptable, but kissing was not [43]. However, in a 1999 pamphlet, BUPL and PMF jointly warned against control mechanisms, gendered practices, and the reduction of physical contact at childcare facilities, instead recommending strong leadership and an open culture [56]. These historical sources reveal how the guidelines that were well established at the majority of institutions in our survey in 2012 began cropping up in the years after Vadstrupgaard.

⁴ In point of fact, a touch policy existed in Danish public primary and lower secondary education for a number of years. In 1929, The Danish Ministry of Education sent out a so-called “Touch Circular,” prohibiting all kinds of touch—friendly or unfriendly—between teachers and pupils, unless it was absolutely necessary. The policy was withdrawn in 1987 [55].

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Participants

The participants in the study presented here were 2051 directors and teachers from 1457 Danish childcare facilities. The institutions were public and private preschool institutions for children aged 0 to 6 years,⁵ and public BASCs for children aged approximately 6 to 10 years; 1131 preschool institutions and 326 BASCs participated. The preschool institutions included crèches, kindergartens,⁶ and so-called integrated institutions with both crèches and kindergartens. Participants included 1374 directors (67%) and 677 teachers (33%); 456 participants were men (22%) and 1595 were women (78%). The directors' ages were between 31 and 70, and the teachers' ages were between 20 and 68; 50.2% of directors and teachers were over 50.

2.2. Procedure

We e-mailed our online survey to 4716 (74%) of Denmark's approximately 6400 preschool institutions and BASCs. We selected the institutions randomly, adjusting only to represent both urban and rural areas in all parts of Denmark. BUPL provided the list of institutions. We supplemented this with institutions from municipalities in Denmark underrepresented on BUPL's list. We obtained the e-mail addresses of these institutions from the municipalities in which they operated. As we were unable to obtain teachers' e-mail addresses, we sent the invitations to participate to the directors, and invited them to respond to the questionnaire and to pass on the survey link to as many of their teachers as possible. Initially, substantially more directors than teachers answered our survey, and through the directors, we targeted the teachers with three reminders. This reduced the difference between the numbers of directors and teachers participating in our survey, although a considerable difference remained in the final result (1374 directors versus 677 teachers). The percentage of male survey participants was high (22%), relative to the percentage of male pedagogues at a national level (12%), which is important, as the concern under discussion is particularly sensitive for male childcare workers [21].

Our questionnaire had a 30.9% response rate, which represents 23% of all preschool institutions and BASCs in Denmark. The pilot study had a 20% response rate, and when we contacted the unresponsive institutions, they all explained that they were pressed for time and received many surveys. Guided by the pilot study, we made the questionnaire easier to answer, which, with the reminders, may account for the improved response rate of the final survey.

2.3. Measures

Our survey included questions about formal and informal guidelines for staff and rules for children for preventing CSA and wrongful allegations of CSA at the institutions. As the data collected was extensive, we address only the guidelines for staff in this article, and have presented our findings concerning the rules for children in a separate article [57].

We used a mixed-method survey [58,59] that included both mandatory, closed-ended questions, and optional, open-ended questions. The purpose of the quantitative questions was to establish the prevalence of guidelines for preventing CSA and wrongful allegations of CSA (henceforth, "the guidelines") at Danish childcare facilities, and to be able to generalize findings from a large sample concerning purposes, practices, consequences, and experiences related to the guidelines. For the analysis of the quantitative results, we used Statistical Package Social Sciences (SPSS), version 23.

⁵ In Denmark, children begin elementary school at the age of 6.

⁶ In Denmark, crèches are for children aged approximately 0–3 years old, and kindergartens are for children aged approximately 3–6 years old.

The purpose of the qualitative questions was to give participants the opportunity to elaborate on their views and experiences, and to tell their stories of the everyday practices surrounding the guidelines. Since no previous research described staff guidelines for preventing CSA and wrongful allegations of CSA in a Danish context, it was important that both directors and teachers provided information that we may not have thought to ask for, and it was important to address both formal and informal guidelines [59,60]. To analyze our survey's qualitative responses, we first used coding and thematic analysis [61] and next, the theoretical framework presented in Section 2.4.

To integrate our findings, we sometimes used data transformation [58]: some numeric findings were described verbally, and some qualitative findings were quantified, either verbally or numerically.

The quantitative and qualitative dimensions of this study were integrated through design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the findings, and this article's conclusions were based on the integrated analysis of quantitative and qualitative findings [58–60]. The low response rate is a weakness of our study; therefore, our analysis and conclusions attach considerable weight to the study's qualitative data, which, in contrast, is abundant. In all, 1682 of the 2051 participants made qualitative comments, ranging from one sentence to entire "pages." These many responses to the open-ended questions provided a detailed picture of the everyday practices surrounding the staff guidelines at the institutions, which counterbalanced the weaker response rate.

2.4. Theoretical Framework

The main theory underlying the theoretical framework that we use to analyze this article's findings is Foucault's governmental theory of *discipline* and its central figure, *the panopticon*, which Foucault developed from Jeremy Bentham's 1791 concept of the Panopticon prison building [34]. The panopticon has been mentioned previously in the literature as an image of the surveillance in childcare facilities as a result of the panic about CSA [6,9,16]. We employ Foucault's figure to develop an in-depth analysis of the guidelines in the broader context of his theory of discipline. Our analysis demonstrates how Foucault's 1977 theory of discipline, which he traced back to the 18th century, is vividly exemplified by the childcare institution of late modernity. We argue that the panopticon function is reinforced in today's childcare institution, and, developing Foucault's concept, we invent a new concept, *the multidimensional panopticon*. Our conceptual framework also draws on Axel Honneth's theory of *recognition* [62] to demonstrate the lack of recognition of male childcare workers. We also apply a theory of fear, primarily from Lars Svendsen's *Fear* [63] and Frank Furedi's *Culture of Fear* [3], to analyze the fear at childcare facilities, and its impact on teacher–child relationships. We also examine the unintended consequences of the guidelines on the children, through the lens of developmental psychology and Arlie R. Hochschild's concept of *feeling rules* [64]. We conclude this article by noting the importance of trust as *social capital* at childcare institutions [65].

3. Results

3.1. The Guidelines

Of the 1457 participating institutions, 58% (845) responded "yes" to whether they had guidelines for preventing CSA or wrongful allegations of CSA at the institution, 38.2% (557) responded "no," and 3.8% (55) responded "don't know." A number of respondents who stated in the closed-ended questions that there were no guidelines at their institutions nevertheless described guidelines in the open-ended responses, for instance, that doors were kept open. This indicated that the percentage of institutions with guidelines was higher than 58%.

At 74% of institutions that responded "yes" to whether they had guidelines, these were written (37%), or both written and oral (37%), whereas they were exclusively oral at 26% of institutions.

Optional, qualitative descriptions of the guidelines were provided by 898 respondents: 710 directors and 188 teachers. These responses indicated that three closely related sets of guidelines were particularly pervasive.

(1) Visibility. Guidelines that aimed for visibility were mentioned by 400 respondents. The main guideline, to keep doors open, was mentioned by 342 of the 400 respondents. Some institutions kept all doors open, others mainly kept doors to the bathroom and the diaper changing area open. Some institutions would permit the door to the toilet or the diaper changing area to be closed in some cases, but then, two staff members had to help the child. Several institutions had a guideline for always opening a closed door if a colleague was on the other side of it with children, and always checking on colleagues' secluded activities with children. Another frequently mentioned way to achieve visibility was to install windows in doors or walls; at some institutions, in all doors or walls, at other institutions, the doors or walls to the toilet or diaper changing area, in particular. The respondents generally described their institutions as being very monitoring-friendly. Several respondents remarked that it was impossible to hide or to be alone in their institution. Many responses indicated that the quest for visibility influenced the use of the rooms in the institutions, as teachers were not allowed to be alone with children in secluded rooms; the basement, in particular, was mentioned numerous times. Three institutions used video surveillance or intercoms.

(2) Not alone with children. Guidelines "forbidding staff to be alone with children" or "demanding that two staff members be present" were mentioned by 371 respondents. At some institutions, this guideline applied to all activities, at other institutions it applied mainly to diapering and toileting. It could also apply to the following situations: being in the playground or behind closed doors, opening or closing the institution, going to the basement or on trips, or helping a child physically.

(3) Touch. Guidelines that addressed touching children were mentioned by 217 respondents. This number does not include the many respondents who mentioned that staff were forbidden to be alone while diapering and toileting or examining a child physically; although these guidelines are indeed touch-related, we included them under "Not alone with children." At some institutions, the guideline was to limit touching children; at most institutions, guidelines addressed specific types of touch. The two most frequently mentioned types were kissing and sitting on laps. Guidelines for lap-sitting were mentioned in 76 responses and existed in several versions. Some institutions entirely forbade holding a child on the lap; this was the case mostly in BASCs and applied mostly to male workers. The other institutions had guidelines, often very detailed, for sitting on laps, or simply noted that teachers, especially male, were to be aware of the way children sat on the lap. Several institutions required children to sit with their legs together to one side, and not astride, whereas other institutions stated that children could sit on a lap only briefly, or only if they were upset. At several institutions, children had to sit facing away from the teacher, and at one institution, the guideline's wording specified that male workers were to remove children who sat on their penises. Guidelines for kissing were mentioned in 68 responses, only one of which was from a BASC. Some institutions entirely forbade kissing children; others forbade kissing children on the mouth. Some respondents specified that you could give a hug, but not a kiss. At several institutions, children were not allowed to touch specific parts of the teachers' body, and several institutions had guidelines for how and where to roughhouse. At some institutions, guidelines for touching children directly addressed their care. At a few BASCs, teachers did not do toileting or help if a child had wet itself; instead, they assisted the child verbally from outside the door. A few institutions refused to apply medications for infections or irritations in the anogenital area, a few institutions forbade onesies, to avoid touching the crotch area, and a few institutions had teachers wear plastic gloves when toileting. Two institutions had children stand while being diapered. At one kindergarten, teachers did not wipe girls after urination, and in another institution, teachers did not diaper when they were alone in the institution. At several institutions, guidelines for visibility, not being alone with a child, or touch, applied particularly or exclusively to substitutes, new employees, or students.

Besides the three most pervasive sets of guidelines, the following guidelines were mentioned to a greater or lesser extent in the responses. Guidelines that aimed to achieve an open culture and dialogue were mentioned by 114 respondents. At their institutions, staff members were urged to question colleagues' behaviors if these appeared unusual. At most institutions, such guidelines were combined

with more concrete guidelines of the sort already outlined; at some institutions, they stood alone. At many institutions, staff were forbidden to take photographs with their own cameras, and guidelines addressed which situations staff could photograph, and how much clothing photographed children had to wear. Several institutions had dress codes for staff. Some institutions forbade affectionate language between staff members and children; teachers were not allowed to say, "I love you," or to give children nicknames. Similarly, several institutions forbade staff to keep secrets with the children, or to let any child cling to any one teacher. Some institutions had a guideline requiring parents to always be informed of any situation involving a child that risked being misconstrued, or that such situations be documented. Finally, many respondents mentioned their institutions' general work for preventing and detecting CSA, confirming the overall picture conveyed by the survey, that the institutions were observant of signs of abuse of children, from any abuser, and took this issue very seriously.

3.2. *Special Guidelines for Male Staff*

In the vast majority of institutions, guidelines applied to both sexes. Some respondents remarked that guidelines had been established because of male workers but in order to not discriminate, both sexes followed them. Nevertheless, the directors of 6.5% of all institutions in the study, and 11.6% of institutions with guidelines (=95 institutions), responded "yes" to whether they had special guidelines for men. Furthermore, the directors of 15 institutions responded "no" to this question, although one or more teachers from these institutions responded "yes." The directors of four institutions did not participate in the survey, but one or more teachers from these institutions responded "yes" to whether they had special guidelines for men. The directors of 25 institutions responded "no" to whether they had special guidelines for men, although the qualitative responses from the institutions indicated that one or more such guidelines did in fact exist. For instance, the director of one institution stated that there were no special guidelines for men but noted elsewhere that male teachers never did toileting. These findings indicated that the percentage of institutions in the study with special guidelines for men was higher than the 6.5% of all institutions indicated by directors' responses. Possible explanations for the divergences could be different interpretations of what a guideline is, the sometimes informal character of the guidelines, and the fact that some teachers established personal guidelines.

At an integrated institution, special guidelines for men sounded like this: "Men don't do diapering or toileting. Our men are not allowed to be alone with our children in the basement. Our men are not allowed to have children sit on their laps." These guidelines are typical of the special guidelines for men found by the survey. The four most pervasive guidelines that applied to male workers were:

(1) Men may not do diapering or toileting. At some institutions, this guideline was absolute. At other institutions, male workers either had to be accompanied by a female colleague or had to keep the bathroom door open while diapering and toileting. One institution had men wear plastic gloves while diapering or toileting.

(2) Men may not be alone with children. Again, at some institutions, this guideline was absolute, whereas at others, it applied to specific situations, mainly diapering and toileting, opening and closing the institution, going to the basement or on a trip, especially to the beach or the swimming hall.

(3) Men must keep physically distant from children. At some institutions, men were required to be physically distant from children, at others, men had to avoid specific situations, such as having a child on the lap or applying sunscreen.

(4) Men may not put children down for their nap. At some institutions, the special guidelines for male staff applied only with regard to the girls at the institutions. At several BASCs, male workers were told to be alert to the risk of older girls getting crushes on them.

3.3. *Rationales for Establishing Guidelines*

When we asked directors and teachers whether the guidelines at their institutions were intended to protect both children from CSA and staff from wrongful allegations of CSA, or primarily protect children, or primarily protect staff, 85% responded "both children and staff," 9% responded "primarily

staff", and 6% responded "primarily children." Male directors and teachers responded "primarily staff" significantly more often than did female directors and teachers.

When, with an open-ended question, we asked directors only about the reasons for establishing guidelines in their institutions, we got very different results from the foregoing. Of the 822 directors who responded "yes" to whether they had guidelines in their institution, 802 provided qualitative responses. The two most mentioned rationales were protecting children from CSA, and protecting staff from wrongful allegations, although some responses just said "protection," without specifying of whom. In 273 responses, directors explicitly declared the protection of children to be the rationale, whereas in 441 responses, directors explicitly declared the protection of staff to be the rationale for establishing guidelines. Furthermore, in a number of the responses that claimed that both the protection of children and the protection of staff were rationales for establishing guidelines, the predominant reason was the protection of staff. For instance, one director wrote, "To protect both children and staff. But especially to avoid suspicion of staff." In 70 responses, directors emphasized that male staff or male students had been the rationale for establishing guidelines, in some cases without specifying why, but the vast majority of the 70 responses specified that it was about protecting the men. Even though many directors wished to protect the children from CSA, especially in the aftermath of upsetting cases of CSA, the directors' qualitative responses concerning the rationales for establishing guidelines aligned with the qualitative responses of the survey in general, and supported our overall finding that the predominant rationale for establishing guidelines was to protect staff, especially male staff. Furthermore, 127 of the 802 directors reported that cases of CSA or wrongful allegations of CSA—at their own institution or in the municipality, or cases in general, for instance those exposed by the media—had motivated them to establish guidelines. In their responses, 99 directors mentioned media coverage of CSA, or the general focus on CSA, as a rationale.

In 132 of the 802 qualitative responses from directors, they reported that the municipality had demanded or inspired the establishment of guidelines at their institutions. When asked directly, in a closed-end question, who had determined their guidelines, the directors' responses showed that at 77.3% of the institutions, directors had participated in determining guidelines, in 73.1% teachers had participated, and in the majority of institutions (61%), directors and teachers had determined the guidelines together. At 32% of the institutions, the municipality had contributed to determining the guidelines, and at 14% of institutions, parents had contributed. Again, these numbers underscored the general findings of the survey, that most often, guidelines were not forced on staff because of the management's mistrust, but predominantly represented staff's defensive behavior against parents' hypothetical suspicions, a finding also supported by the fact that, at times, staff established guidelines individually.

The foregoing findings were supported by the fact that the vast majority of respondents felt safer with guidelines. The question of whether their institution's guidelines made them feel safer with regard to wrongful accusations of CSA received a response from 818 directors and 223 teachers: 83% answered "yes"; fewer than 10% did not feel safer. There was no significant difference between directors and teachers, or between men and women. When we asked the 17 male directors and six male teachers who answered "yes" to whether they worked at an institution with guidelines that applied to men only, whether the special guidelines for men made them feel safer, 91% answered "yes," and 9% did not know.

3.4. *The Childcare Workers' Opinions of the Guidelines*

The invitation to give their opinion of the guidelines, and their everyday experiences of these was accepted by 505 female and 100 male directors, and 123 female and 53 male teachers. Their responses may be divided into three groups: (1) the majority of respondents who had a positive view of the guidelines; (2) a significant group of respondents who were generally positive, but were critical of specific points, sometimes just one or two, sometimes several; (3) a small group of respondents who had a very negative view of the guidelines. There was no significant difference between responses

from women and men, or between teachers' and directors' responses. Men tended to be more critical, but the large majority of men embraced the guidelines. It is noteworthy that amongst the critical or divided voices were many directors, indicating some directors who experienced pressure to establish guidelines, despite their professional convictions.

The *positive* views of the guidelines held by the first and second groups were that guidelines provided security for staff, children, and parents, functioned well, did not restrict the work, and had become a natural part of daily practice. Many respondents were clearly aware that a wrongful allegation would be devastating, and considered guidelines necessary for protecting staff, especially the men. Furthermore, some respondents found that guidelines gave them a professional tool for navigating a difficult field, and constituted a shared framework for the institution, which provided support in interactions with parents.

The *negative* views of the guidelines held by the second and third groups were that guidelines caused distrust to replace trust, especially with regard to male staff, for whom guidelines were seen as a constraint, and they were described as negatively affecting how pedagogy and care were practiced in the institutions. Concrete examples were that guidelines made it difficult to comfort a child, that activities with children in small groups or in closed rooms were hindered when teachers could not be alone with children, that guidelines made the daily routine less flexible, and finally, that it was invasive for children to be forced to sit on the toilet with the door open. Some respondents also felt that the guidelines were resource-demanding, and could not prevent abuse, anyway. Quite a few respondents found that guidelines were necessary, but that they represented a sad development—"a necessary evil," as some put it.

With regard to special guidelines for men, we asked both directors and the male childcare workers themselves about the men's attitudes to these guidelines. When we asked the directors who answered "yes" to whether they had special guidelines for male workers, the majority responded that male workers found such guidelines necessary, and knew that they were established for their own safety. At times, male workers themselves had demanded or participated in establishing the special guidelines. However, some directors had found that even though male workers considered special guidelines a necessary safety measure, they still found them discriminatory, accusatory, or limiting to their work. The directors' responses were confirmed when we asked the 17 male directors and six male teachers who answered "yes" to whether they worked at an institution with special guidelines for men: Most of the men found special guidelines for men a necessary safety measure, but several regretted the development, and a couple of men found special guidelines discriminatory and accusatory.

3.5. The Guidelines' Impact on Professional Identity

When asked whether the guidelines affected their professional identity, two-thirds of both directors and teachers answered "no." Amongst the third of respondents who found their professional identity affected, 134 female and 49 male directors, and 31 female and 14 male teachers, provided qualitative elaborations, and fell mainly into two disagreeing groups. The first saw guidelines as an asset to their professional identity, finding the protection of children a crucial part of their professional task. Directors in particular, including several male directors, found that their professional identity was strengthened when they could provide safety, in the shape of guidelines, for both children and staff. According to this group, guidelines created a sound awareness, and provided staff with a shared framework at the institutions, just as they indicated responsible professional behavior, which increased parental trust. In contrast, the second group saw guidelines as a detriment to their professional identity. They found that they and their profession had been placed under suspicion, and that following the guidelines was tantamount to admitting guilt. Many in this group found that the fear of misconstruction had become a constant awareness that inhibited a spontaneous workflow and their relationships to the children. To some respondents, it constituted a professional dilemma when guidelines overruled pedagogical or ethical considerations, for instance when staff safety was prioritized over children's right to privacy on the toilet. Several male respondents found guidelines stigmatizing and limiting to their ability

to exercise their profession, for instance, with respect to building relationships with children. Some directors found it a challenge to their professional identity to have to handle the stigmatization of men, including one director who felt forced to be “professionally suspicious of the staff.”

Finally, a smaller group did not evaluate the guidelines’ impact on their professional identity positively or negatively, but simply stated that a new awareness was part of the profession.

3.6. The Childcare Workers’ Opinions of the Guidelines’ Consequences for the Children

We asked our respondents whether guidelines influenced the care taken of the children and their development. The vast majority did not think so, although a minority of respondents described such influences, mostly finding that guidelines compromised childcare. In their experience, guidelines and the fear of misconstruction distanced them from the children. They described how childcare staff were more reluctant to comfort distressed children, to put children on their laps, or to hug them, and how relationships between staff and children had become less warm and authentic. Some regretted this development, arguing that children need a warm environment during a long day in childcare, and that having a child on one’s lap ought not to be considered suspect. A few respondents reported that children might sometimes perceive adults as dismissive. Some feared particularly for vulnerable children. Again, some respondents criticized the fact that doors were kept open when children sat on the toilet or got help after soiling their pants. Several respondents emphasized that guidelines and the fear of misconstruction particularly restrained male staff in their work, which could result in more distant relationships between children and male teachers, especially at institutions with special guidelines for men. Some respondents also claimed that the guideline concerning not being alone with children deprived the children of activities such as trips, going to the basement to collect things with an adult, and spontaneous activities. Several respondents considered it a significant pedagogical loss that one-on-one contact with children was lost. However, some respondents found that, on the contrary, guidelines positively influenced childcare, because they safeguarded children.

3.7. Institutions without Guidelines

At the institutions that stated that they had no guidelines, almost half the teachers and directors indicated that they were “neither pleased nor displeased” about having no guidelines, but more were “pleased” than “displeased.” Three percent of directors and nine percent of teachers felt unsafe without guidelines, whereas seventy percent of directors and fifty-three percent of teachers felt safe. Of the directors who answered “no” to whether they had guidelines, 80% stated that there was no specific reason for this; 15% stated that there was a specific reason. In the qualitative responses to why the institutions had no guidelines and their attitudes to this, many respondents wrote that they had not considered having guidelines, or had not had the time to establish these, or that their institution was new, or that our study made them consider establishing guidelines. Many other respondents wrote that at their institutions, staff members trusted one another, and used open dialogue, professionalism, and common sense to prevent CSA or wrongful allegations. This was often the case at smaller institutions, where staff members knew each other well. Some directors explained that guidelines would weaken trust, and that they did not want to cast suspicion on their staff and discriminate against male workers. In contrast, other respondents mentioned having no male workers as the reason for having no guidelines. Some respondents feared that guidelines would negatively affect professionalism, leading to a more artificial relationship with the children. Finally, some respondents answered that guidelines such as two teachers being required for all tasks would not be possible at their institution.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1. A Climate of Fear

Some institutions had many guidelines, others had only one or two; a guideline rigorously applied at one institution might be more relaxed at another. Still, we argue that the general pattern at the childcare facilities with guidelines was a *climate of fear* that influenced practices and social relations, with considerable unintended consequences for staff and children. In this section, we analyze and discuss these consequences.

The fear at the institutions with guidelines was not intense, but the “low-intensity fear” that Lars Svendsen called characteristic of our time, a fearful perspective on the world, which has been normalized, like a habit [63] (pp. 51–53). Svendsen associated this “low-intensity fear” with what Bauman refers to as a “derivative fear,” a fear that is not caused by an immediate threat, but instead presents itself as a “sentiment of being *susceptible* to danger; a feeling of insecurity (...) and vulnerability” at the thought of a *possible* threat [66] (p. 3); [63] (p. 53). The following statement from a male kindergarten director conveyed just such a feeling of insecurity, and articulated “the possible threat” generally feared at the childcare facilities in our survey: “I find that it’s easy to put forward an accusation, which, even though it is groundless, may destroy my professional life, and possibly my private life too. I feel at risk.”

The general feeling of insecurity at childcare facilities was reflected in the *two overarching functions* of the guidelines: (1) The first function was to avoid *misconstruction*, especially by parents who might enter the institution and be unaware of the reason for a teacher’s close contact with a child; (2) The second function was to enable staff members to act as *witnesses* to one another’s practices, in order to always be able to refute any wrongful allegations. That is why two staff members were present for many tasks, and why institutions had increased visibility. As a kindergarten director stated, “The guidelines are all about ensuring being seen in one’s interactions with the children.”

4.2. The Childcare Panopticon

All techniques at the childcare facilities with guidelines converged on the aims of *visibility* and *transparency*, which leads us to argue that the fear of CSA and wrongful allegations has made the childcare institution into a *panopticon*. In *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison* [34], Foucault developed Bentham’s 1791 concept of the Panopticon, a circular prison building with a central surveillance post overlooking clearly individualized cells in the circle. Each cell, with a window facing the control tower and one in the outer wall, is flooded with light, making all occupants visible at all times. The main idea of the panopticon is that the supervisor is invisible to the visible occupants, who, ignorant of when they, personally, are being watched, consequently must behave themselves at all times. Foucault stated that no physical force is necessary with this sort of power:

A real subjection is born mechanically from a fictitious relation. (...) He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; (...) By this very fact, the external power may throw off its physical weight [34] (pp. 202–203).

Our study showed that in *the childcare panopticon*, the extensive visibility and the hypothetical ever-present gaze of colleague witnesses and parents also engendered extensive self-regulation among the childcare workers. Many respondents mentioned maintaining a constant awareness to avoid *misconstruction*, for example, a BASC director noted, “Several years ago, a parent misunderstood a play situation, which scared us all, so now we are careful that no misunderstandings can/are allowed to occur.” They also revealed that this awareness made them change their conduct, distanced them from the children, and inhibited the natural workflow. A female BASC director explained, “I’m more aware of my presence with the children; they hardly ever sit on my lap anymore, and there is less kissing and hugging, it affects my view of the work and my professional approach to being with children.” Such statements showed that, paradoxically, the continuous attempt to *not* be mistaken for a pedophile kept

pedophilia present in the childcare workers' minds. One male BASC director stated, "It is regrettable to have to focus on something that I have no intention of doing." It is clear that the pedophile had become a *ghost subjectivity* that haunted the childcare panopticon, and in their constant attempt to alienate themselves from this pedophile ghost subjectivity, the childcare workers "behaved themselves."

In Bentham's panopticon, the prisoners, unable to see one another, relate to the supervisor only. In the childcare panopticon, the supervisory effect is multiplied, as everybody watches everybody else. The childcare workers watch one another, and themselves, through the internalized gaze of colleagues and parents. As one kindergarten director explained, "There will always be eyes on one another's practices." Foucault mentioned Bentham's dream of releasing the panopticon mechanism from the prison building, putting it to work in a "diffused, multiple and polyvalent way throughout the whole social body" [34] (pp. 208–209). Foucault himself spoke of "panoptisme" in a broader sense, as the daily surveillance in a modern society of "intersecting gazes" [34] (p. 217). Developing Foucault's idea, we argue that the fear of CSA and of misconceptions has transformed the childcare facilities with guidelines into a *multidimensional panopticon of intersecting gazes* that *disciplines* childcare staff behavior.

4.3. A Disciplinary Power

The panopticon is the emblematic architectural figure of the *disciplinary power* that, according to Foucault, gained traction in the eighteenth century, and became one of the central governmentalities of modernity. Foucault defined *discipline* as "methods, which made possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility–utility," a control exercised along three dimensions: time, space, and movement [34] (p. 137). For instance, such disciplinary methods were used to optimize education at schools, at times designed as panopticons in order to control sexual behavior, among other things. Foucault's definition is highly characteristic of the guidelines at the childcare facilities of today, that are the focus of our study, as they exercise detailed control over the childcare teacher's movements in time and space, and proscribe any behavior even remotely associable with sexuality, as in this kindergarten:

Teachers never change diapers with the door closed. We are not allowed to kiss children. We are decently dressed—children too. (...) Adults are never alone with a little group of children. Doors to bathrooms are always open. We do not apply zinc ointment when children have diaper rash. (...) We are allowed to hug the children, but not to touch any exposed skin—children like us to "draw" on their backs, but it has to be outside the clothes. When we put on sunblock, it takes place in the playground, where everybody can see it.

The many variations on guidelines for sitting on laps, mentioned earlier, are prime examples of how detailed guidelines control who may hold a child on the lap, where, how, and for how long. Discipline entails documentation as a way of extending surveillance in writing [34] (p. 189), which we also found at some institutions, such as the BASC that stated, "for instance, we write down on an everyday basis which adults are in the playground, the art center, etc., so that we are subsequently able to go back weeks and months, in case we need to know who was where, when." Such documentation brings to mind the detailed surveillance of each cell in Bentham's panopticon, and underscores the lengths to which childcare staff went, to prevent wrongful allegations.

Foucault argued that disciplinary power is always an attempt to control important threats to society, for instance, epidemics. Throughout much of history, sexuality, and even more so, deviant sexuality, have been considered a threat to institutions and society, and seen in this light, it is not surprising to find a disciplinary power at work at today's childcare facilities, in the shape of guidelines that guard against CSA and wrongful allegations. CSA is possibly considered the greatest evil in Western culture today, often specifically described as an "epidemic" or an "epidemic threat" to society [3].

4.4. The Disciplinary Counter-Law: Discrimination against Male Childcare Workers

Foucault argued that discipline confronts threats by striving to make subjects meet particular *norms* of use for a given situation, or for society as such. Punishing abnormal behavior and ranking people according to their level of success in following norms is central to discipline's functioning. Discipline is capable of depriving deviants of their rank altogether, creating outcasts, although disciplinary sanctions always have the homogenizing aim of making deviants follow norms. Historically, Foucault claimed, the liberties given to the people during the Enlightenment were counterbalanced by the development of discipline. Although, in theory, official laws and politics promise us equality and freedom as juridical subjects, in practice, discipline creates inequality and hierarchy, in order to force us to follow norms that are of value to society. Discipline reaches further than laws and politics can, regulating the minor behaviors of individuals in society. Foucault went so far as to define discipline as a *micro-power* and a *counter-law* operating on the obscure underside of the official laws, politics, and rights of a society [34] (pp. 222–223). He emphasized the example of the workplace as a place where the “real procedures” of discipline undermine “the legal fiction of the work contract,” adding, “Workshop discipline is not the least important” [34] (p. 223).

Foucault's theory of the disciplinary micro-power and counter-law operating beneath official rights and agendas is useful for fully grasping *the gender bias* of the guidelines at the institutions we studied. Male childcare teachers have the same education, and the same legal rights as female teachers. Clause 4 in Part 2 of the Danish *Consolidation Act on Equal Treatment of Men and Women as regards Access to Employment*, etc. [67] states, “Any employer who employs men and women shall treat them equally as regards working conditions.” Furthermore, in Danish society today, men are officially considered as fit to care for children as are women, and the increase in male involvement in the family has been on the political agenda for a number of years, primarily with regard to the number of men who take parental leave. Yet, a central finding of our study was that male and female staff were not equal when facing the subject of CSA at Danish childcare facilities. This was obvious in the group of institutions with special guidelines for men, but also in the fact that some institutions had established guidelines for both sexes because of the men, and that, in practice, guidelines for both sexes often applied only, or more rigorously, to men, as at one BASC that stipulated, “No children on the lap (especially male teachers).” Some institutions with no guidelines clearly stated that they had no guidelines because they had no male staff. Furthermore, the discourse of almost all respondents—including the large majority who did not themselves suspect their male colleagues of any wrongdoing—presupposed that men are those commonly associated with CSA. For instance, a female BASC director stated, “Always having children on the lap or clinging to you immediately sends the wrong signal when you are a male teacher. For a female teacher, others conceive of this as a sign of care and comfort.”

All things considered, we argue that our study reveals that male childcare professionals are stigmatized with respect to the subject of CSA and that, beneath official laws and politics proclaiming the equality of men and woman with regard to childcare, the childcare panopticon is mainly to be regarded as protection both *against men* and *of men*, who, in practice, receive less recognition and have reduced rights and poorer working conditions than female colleagues. Drawing on Foucault's theory of the disciplinary *micro-power* and *counter-law*, we claim that male childcare professionals are deprived of their rank as a collective punishment for the crimes of a small number of male childcare teachers and are kept at distance from children to prevent new crimes, disciplined into a *non-sensuous behavior* among children. All these are ends that official laws and politics would be unable to achieve and that conflict with these, but these ends serve Western society's subjacent, widespread fear of CSA, and the conviction that CSA is an epidemic that must be prevented, regardless of cost, which is probably the reason these guidelines—so discriminatory against men—have been allowed to exist for many years in a country such as Denmark, with high ambitions for gender equality. Regarding the guidelines as an expression of a disciplinary *micro-power* and *counter-law*, providing protection against both the feared epidemic threat of CSA in Western societies today, and the threat of false allegations, exposes not only the double standard of the Danish ambition for gender equality, it also illustrates why these

guidelines, conceived of as a safe defense by most childcare workers, in fact oppress male childcare workers, treating them as criminals under surveillance.

Discrimination against male teachers conflicts with the official ambition to increase the number of men in the ECEC sector workforce. In Denmark, 27% of the students training to become childcare teachers are men, but only 2.7% of teachers in crèches, and 6.7% of teachers in kindergartens, are men [68]. Still, Denmark is one of the countries with most men in the ECEC sector, as, in most countries, fewer than 3% of workers in this sector are men [18]. In Denmark, the question of attracting more men to the ECEC sector has repeatedly appeared on the political agenda over the last two decades [26,47]. As recently as 2016, the Danish government launched a campaign to attract more men to ECEC [68]. Moreover, attracting more men to the ECEC sector has been an international challenge for years and in several countries, governments and organizations have founded initiatives to increase the number of men in this field [18,25,26]. In 2011, the European Commission concluded, “There is a pressing need to make a career in the ECEC sector more attractive to men in all EU countries” [18] (p. ix). However, studies from several countries indicate that the stigmatization of male teachers with regard to CSA, with the subsequent risk of false allegations, is one of the main reasons men avoid ECEC [18,22,23,25,26]. Our findings confirm that there is an obvious contradiction between the gender equality officially desired by both the Danish ECEC sector and at an international scale, and the lack of equality and recognition that characterizes the actual work conditions for the men in this sector—what Foucault called the “real procedures” of the workplace [34] (p. 223).

4.5. The Lack of Recognition of Male Childcare Workers

Axel Honneth’s philosophy of recognition [62] offers a deeper understanding of why the stigmatization of, and discrimination against male childcare workers is harmful to them as individuals and as a professional group. Honneth argued that recognition is indispensable for humans to develop themselves as individuals, and that the struggle for recognition is an essential aspect of social conflicts and historical development. To become an autonomous individual, capable of relating to oneself positively, and of realizing one’s potential for a good life, one is dependent on the recognition of one’s fellow humans in three spheres of society: (1) in the form of *love* in one’s primary relations, (2) in the form of *rights* in the legal sphere, and (3) in the form of *solidarity* in social life. Solidarity is achieved when human beings reciprocally appreciate each other’s capacities and contributions to society, for instance, in workplaces. Honneth emphasized that if we are recognized in all three spheres, we gain *self-confidence* in our primary relationships, *self-respect* in the legal sphere, and *self-esteem* in the social sphere, whereas if we are not, we are treated with a disrespect that is devastating to these ways of positively relating to ourselves, which can hurt our very identity, and cause social isolation.

Our analysis demonstrated that male childcare workers were treated with disrespect with regard to both rights and solidarity. Despite their official rights, stigmatization in general, and special guidelines for men in particular, in praxis deprived the men of their right to gender equality in the workplace. Honneth points out that having legal rights signifies that we are accepted into the circle of citizens regarded as fit to pass moral judgment. In the case of male childcare professionals, depriving them of their rights questions their capacity for moral judgment around children, and threatens their self-respect as human beings and professionals. Furthermore, special guidelines and general stigmatization devalue male childcare workers’ professional capacities, and their contribution to the workplace and to society, which risks harming their self-esteem.

Although the majority of men who responded to our survey considered guidelines a necessary safety net, the qualitative responses revealed that some men suffered from the stigmatization that they experienced, and some men found both special guidelines for men and guidelines for both sexes offensive. A male kindergarten director remarked, “It is a bit offensive to always have to behave as though you were under suspicion. You feel that you are in a profession where your judgment is distrusted.” Other statements illustrated how some male childcare workers felt “hunted” by society, almost without human rights, and left to protect themselves. A male BASC director stated, “We are

several men, and every time there is something about male preschool teachers who have laid hands on a child, we are like hunted beasts. So, we have to protect ourselves.” A male kindergarten teacher agreed, “I especially experience the media coverage as a ‘witch hunt’ and as suspicion of men.” The strong metaphors in these statements, where the men compared themselves to beasts and witches, illustrate Honneth’s point that a fundamental lack of recognition risks hurting the very identity of male childcare workers, and causing social isolation. These metaphors also make it clear why this position must appear undesirable to men choosing a profession that usually includes the hope of being recognized for contributing to society.

4.6. *Special Guidelines for Male Childcare Workers Are Illegal*

In 2017, it was officially established in Denmark that special guidelines for male childcare workers are illegal. The Danish Institute for Human Rights won a case before the Danish Board of Equal Treatment after filing a complaint concerning special guidelines for men at Danish childcare facilities. The ruling stated that such guidelines are illegal and unacceptable, as they treat men differently and more poorly because of their sex [69]. The case targeted a Danish kindergarten that wrote on their homepage that their male workers did not diaper, but the judgment concerned the principle generally, following a debate in Danish society over the previous four years, largely prompted by the study presented in this article, which revealed the existence of special guidelines for male childcare teachers to the broader Danish public in 2013.

The abovementioned ruling represents a milestone in addressing the discrimination against male childcare workers that results from the fear of CSA; however, it is important to realize that it cannot stand alone. Along with *rights*, male childcare workers also need *solidarity*, in Honneth’s sense of the word. As our findings show, the now illegal special guidelines are the most apparent discrimination against male childcare workers, but this discrimination goes deeper, and underlies the entirety of the stigmatization of men with respect to CSA, and often implicitly the guidelines for both sexes. It is important to remember that, more than anything else, the guidelines are self-defensive. To ensure that male childcare teachers can perform their work without a sense of being at risk, as a society we need to address not only special guidelines for men, but also the underlying stigmatization, and move towards a genuine recognition of male childcare teachers as *professionals*, of value to childcare and society.

Our results also indicate that guidelines in general are problematic for the entire childcare profession. Guidelines for both men and women are the sign of a lack of trust in the profession. Even if the profession itself regards these guidelines as self-defensive, they imply to the world outside the institutions that childcare workers are not morally fit to take care of children, and risk becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

4.7. *The Guidelines from the Perspective of the Children*

Our survey revealed that the guidelines, which have the principal purpose of protecting staff, have a number of unintended, adverse consequences for the children. In the next sections, we address these consequences.

Our findings showed that the guidelines’ gender bias could create gender-biased work performance and gender-biased relationships between staff and children. There was a clear tendency for the women to perform the historically traditional women’s tasks of physically caring for children to a greater extent than the men, and close relationships between male staff and children were generally encouraged less than between female staff and children. A female kindergarten director from an institution where male staff were forbidden to be alone with children in the bathroom explained, “Children’s experience will be that the close relationships that the staff may create, for instance, while diapering, may be established only with women.” A male kindergarten director agreed, “Relationships with men, in particular, may become poorer, tense, and perhaps non-existent.” In our opinion, not only is there the risk that the stigmatization of men will be absorbed by the children, but also that they will not be offered equal role models and equal opportunities to relate to the two sexes.

For the children, another important, unintended consequence of the guidelines concerns resources. The guidelines are highly resource-demanding when they require the presence of two staff members for a task, or extended documentation, but also in terms of constant awareness, rendering both mental and organizational operations less flexible. This is significant, as the caretaker–child ratio in Denmark has diminished since 2009 [70], fueling an ongoing debate in Denmark about the quality of ECEC institutions today. Furthermore, both direct and indirect learning are threatened because of the decrease in contact between one teacher and one child or a small group of children. This creates poorer conditions for concentrated activities such as reading and stimulating language development, and also hinders learning that derives from children’s participation in daily chores.

4.8. New Feeling Rules

Our findings showed that owing to the widespread fear of misunderstandings, the whole spectrum of caring for children was problematized in the childcare panopticon. This was the case for touch as basic caretaking and comfort giving, as well as a sign of affection. For instance, a female kindergarten director stated, “You are not so natural when caring for and touching the children—you think more about how to touch them, comfort them, etc., which means that the children are touched less, and that things become cold and artificial at times.” And this was the case for *relationship-building*, because a friendship between a staff member and a child was potentially suspect. A male BASC director described how, “Under some circumstances staff will withdraw from relationships where the interaction may be misunderstood, which creates the risk of children distancing themselves from normal behavior.” All things considered, it was evident that seeing to the basic needs of, and being fond of a child had lost its innocence. A new sort of *professionalism*, no longer synonymous with working according to knowledge about what is best for children and their development, but synonymous with defensive behavior, was gaining traction. A female integrated institution director noted: “The staff’s care becomes deliberately professionally distant from the children.”

Arlie Russell Hochschild’s concept of *feeling rules* describes social rules that dictate what is socially expected and acceptable to feel in given circumstances; these rules about how we “ought to feel” change over time with different ideologies [64]. Our study indicates conflicting and changing feeling rules at Danish childcare facilities. Generally, Danish childcare workers are expected to love children, and many would feel ashamed if they did not [71,72]. At the same time, our results indicate that affection for children in a professional childcare setting has become associated with pedophilia, and therefore suspect. The childcare panopticon watches for those who “care too much,” and childcare staff question themselves, if they do. A BASC director explained that in 25 years, the care had gone from “considerate and loving” to “considerate and correct,” and a BASC teacher mourned the loss of a time when teachers would take children home and serve them buns and hot chocolate. There is a tendency for the new feeling rules to dictate *professionalism*, in contrast to *affection*. In our opinion, we, as a society, have to ask ourselves whether this change promotes *the social good* [64].

4.9. A Threat to Trusting Relationships

All things considered, the guidelines influenced the *relationships* between staff and children negatively in several ways and could have the overall consequence that children will be met with less human warmth, at worst, with distance. This situation conflicts with developmental psychology research, which has stressed for many years that close, trusting, and meaningful relationships are essential to children’s wellbeing, development, and learning [73–76]. Moreover, the importance of children’s relationships with their caretakers in ECEC is increased in modern, Western societies, as young children spend a great number of waking hours in daycare, resulting in the *dual socialization* of children between the home and daycare [76,77]. In fact, Denmark has some of the highest numbers of children in daycare amongst OECD countries [78], with 17.7% of children under one year old, 89.7% of 1- to 2-year-olds, and 97.5% of 3- to 5-year-olds attending ECEC [79], and 38% of 0- to 5-year-olds spending 8 hours or more a day at ECEC institutions [80]. Bronfenbrenner defined the optimal

conditions for a child's development and learning in relationships: "Learning and development are facilitated by the participation of the developing person in the progressively more complex patterns of reciprocal activity with someone with whom that person has developed a strong and enduring emotional attachment (...)," and he characterized this attachment as "a mutuality of positive feelings" [73] (p. 60). Similarly, Sommer et al. [76] argued that to achieve high-quality ECEC with *a child's perspective*, trusting relationships are necessary: "Being emotionally available" and "establishing contact and trust" in "secure relationships of reciprocal attachment (...) are essential for the child's future mental health and ability to cope with and explore the world" [76] (pp. 463–464).

Sommer et al. defined *a child's perspective-oriented practice* as a practice that sees "the child as a person," interpreting and respecting its "utterances and world of meaning" [76] (pp. 463–464). This definition resembles article 12 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* [81], which states that: "States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child." Our results said little about children's experiences of the guidelines, but concerning one matter, several respondents reported the dilemma created by following one guideline, despite the fact that it made children feel uncomfortable. That is when children at kindergartens and BASCs had to sit on the toilet with the door open, or after having soiled their pants, had to be helped with the door open, especially in the case of older children. In such situations, it was obvious that the children's right to privacy was ignored. The dysfunctionality stood out when the normal became the exception, as in this institution: "In wintertime, when the frost is hard, we may have to close the door to the outdoor toilet because otherwise it gets too cold for the children to use it."

Our findings suggested that the guidelines could have a particularly adverse effect on vulnerable children, because they made it more difficult to confide in a teacher, and because vulnerable children have a greater need for a close relationship to their caretakers. A BASC director stated, "When you have a child who has a hard time and doesn't open up unless the child is alone with an adult to confide in. This is not a frequent issue, but it is in these situations that we may lose some children in our care." And an integrated institution director stated:

At times, some vulnerable children may demonstrate very physically invasive behavior (they put their hands under the clothes of the adults, and occasionally try to crawl in there). This can have a huge and very unpleasant effect on the one who is involved, if you are at the same time afraid that it may be misconstrued as an attempt at abuse by the adult.

What is striking here is that, in the eyes of the director, the one who is affected is the professional adult, not the child in distress. The account emphasizes how, in the panopticon, children may be regarded as potentially *dangerous* to adults, which is the subject of the next section.

4.10. Children as Risks

We argue that the two rationales behind the guidelines, the protection of children and the protection of staff, conflict. The alleged protection of staff comes at the cost of the children, at times leading to ethical dilemmas for the staff, who must choose between themselves and the children, when following a defensive guideline means ignoring what is pedagogically or ethically right for the children. A significant group of participants acknowledged this dilemma, including a male kindergarten teacher who remarked, "Personally, I never close doors, etc., when I toilet or diaper. It's an emotional assault on those children who are modest," and a female integrated institution director who stated, "The judgment of pedagogical activities happens to vanish in the attempt to not be misunderstood."

Furedi and Bristow [4] discerned the foregoing dilemma in a British context, arguing that the widespread fear of CSA and the politics of prevention have left childcare professionals and volunteers, and everyone else, in "a state of moral confusion" (p. 49), feeling "forced to weigh up whether, and how, to interact with a child" (p. 39). They spoke of "a generation of adults who have acquired the

habit of distancing themselves from children” (p. 51) and expressed concern over the weakening of intergenerational bonds that leave children more vulnerable. In a 2007 survey by Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People, 48% of adults responded that the fear of being wrongly accused of CSA made them less likely to help a young person in danger or distress [4]. In our survey, a male respondent reported that after a colleague was accused of abuse, he felt disinclined to comfort children who were hurt.

A surprising finding of our survey was that the majority of respondents did not acknowledge the dilemma that we found in institutions with guidelines. Nevertheless, we argue that the childcare staff’s dilemma of having to choose between themselves or the children is a sign of a fear that has grown out of proportion. Svendsen [63] explained how fear, when it becomes disproportionate, also becomes *dysfunctional*. It leads to a politics of prevention, wherever more security is demanded in order to avoid all potential risks, without any reflection on costs. However, such politics of prevention are resource-demanding and undermine people’s freedom, quality of life, and the ability to go about their daily tasks without constant worry. Furthermore, dysfunctional fear transforms others into potential *risks*, distancing people from one another, and at worst leading to social disintegration [63]. Svendsen’s description is characteristic of the childcare panopticon that has resulted from society’s widespread fear of CSA, and consequently, from childcare staff’s fear of wrongful allegations and directors’ fear of accusations of inadequate CSA prevention. The paradox is that this snowball effect of fear that started with a concern for children has ended in dysfunctional childcare. At an international scale, the same development may be observed in other educational settings than ECEC facilities. Researchers from several countries have shown that various levels of no touch guidelines and other self-defensive practices have also gained ground in sports coaching and physical education (PE) of children in recent decades [82–85]. In a British context, Piper, Taylor and Garratt showed how the fear of misunderstandings and false accusations related to CSA have driven sports teachers and coaches to welcome surveillance, as they seek witnesses to their practices [86]. Öhman [82] reported a tendency among Swedish PE teachers to avoid touching or looking at students, or entering their changing room, out of anxiety surrounding intergenerational contact. Öhman and Quennerstedt [83] argued that touch is a precondition for optimal learning in PE, and therefore may be justified by children’s right to develop to their full potential, whereas Piper [84] stressed that these practices, which aim more for adult protection than child protection, damage trust and the moral and social values on which intergenerational encounters should be based.

In 1997, in his book, “Culture of Fear” (the 2006 edition, “Culture of Fear Revisited” is used here), Furedi already expressed the idea of others in society being perceived as potential risks. According to Furedi, one of the most devastating consequences of the culture of fear that defines current Western culture is that it estranges people from one another. It is profoundly *misanthropic*: “A society that pathologizes the act of touching a child transmits the very clear message that it has little faith in people” [3] (p. xix). Furedi argued that the pervasive focus on all sorts of abuse is a focus on the darkest sides of human beings, and distrust is the dominant feeling with which we encounter others, especially around children. There is a widespread fear that abusers prey on children everywhere, and children are the first to suffer, as childhood has become largely reconstructed around the principle of safety, especially in the United Kingdom and the United States [3]. Developing Furedi’s line of thought, we wish to emphasize that in the culture of fear, children not only pay a price, but also *themselves* represent a risk to adults. In our survey, the childcare staff were faced with the dilemma of whether to care for the children or to protect themselves, because the children represented a potential risk of wrongful allegations. There was a tendency for children too to be met with distrust. Children have become dangerous, and we argue that this development is dangerous to children. Piper discerned the same “mutually toxic relationship” between children and adults in sports coaching and PE: “Acting as if all adults acting in loco parentis are potentially toxic to those in their care has rendered children and young people potentially dangerous to coaches’ professional and personal well-being” [84] (p. 176). In our 2010 study, not only male professionals, but also 16% of the male control group participants had

changed their behavior towards children, keeping a greater physical distance from them. There were examples of grandfathers keeping their distance from their grandchildren, and parents keeping their distance from their children [21]. For children, the damaging effects of a development that positions them as a risk to adults, who therefore neglect their essential roles as children's carers, educators, and social guides, is reinforced when this self-defensive behavior occurs in several spheres of today's Western society.

4.11. Distrust and Trust

The low response rate to our study necessitates caution when generalizing the findings. However, studies have shown that there is not necessarily a linear relationship between response rates and nonresponse bias across surveys [87]. Also, a general decline in survey response may be observed in many wealthy countries. There is a general acceptance that nonresponse is partly related to the burden of answering a survey, and some researchers suggest that this general decrease in survey response reflects a corresponding increase in the total level of survey burden placed on sample populations today [87]. As all the nonresponsive institutions in our pilot study later informed us that they had not responded because they were pressed for time and received many surveys, we find it believable that the general trend of a larger survey burden in wealthy countries is also likely to be the main reason for the low response rate of our survey, especially in light of the diminished caretaker-child ratio in Denmark [70]. Furthermore, the quantitative part of our study, which indicates that these guidelines are pervasive at Danish childcare institutions, is supported by the rich qualitative part of the study, which gives a profound picture of how well established these guidelines are at Danish childcare institutions, and how they affect daily practices, and, partly as a consequence of the weak response rate, to a very large extent, we have based our analysis on the qualitative results. These are supported by our prior study [21], and similar studies from other countries [4,6,9,16,29–33]. Thus, this study remains a significant first study of Danish childcare institutions' guidelines for preventing CSA and false allegations of CSA. It shows that the panopticon does not define the whole truth about Danish preschool institutions and BASCs: 38.2% of the institutions we surveyed said that they had no guidelines, and at the institutions with guidelines, many teachers tried to balance things, and some protested against the fear, insisting on "giving children a hug." However, the study reveals that the panopticon captures an important aspect of Danish childcare facilities today, which has been little acknowledged, even though it affects children's wellbeing and development, and male staff's working conditions and recognition, and clearly is an international challenge.

Given that the Nordic countries are amongst the most trusting in the world, it was surprising to find the distrustful panopticon at work in Danish childcare facilities. Researchers have called the exceptionally high levels of trust in the Nordic countries the "Nordic trust exceptionalism" [88]. From 1981 to 2009, a period where trust was stable at a medium level in most Western countries, and declining in others, Denmark experienced a 50% increase in social trust [88,89]. Surprisingly, this was the same period in which the moral panic about CSA at childcare facilities developed, first in the United States, then in Europe. Our findings show that there is an exception to Denmark's trust exceptionalism, namely the distrustful childcare panopticon, which Denmark shares with, for example, the United States and the United Kingdom. This indicates the strength of the fear of CSA today, and the subsequent fear of wrongful allegations, which cross borders and function beneath official agendas and prevailing circumstances in society. Beneath the renowned Danish social trust, we found a hidden distrust of the childcare panopticon, exactly as, beneath the official Danish agenda of gender equality and the stated goal of attracting more men to the ECEC sector, we found male teachers stigmatized, and working in discriminating circumstances in Danish childcare facilities.

The considerable costs of the panopticon, for both staff and children, illustrate Francis Fukuyama's point that trust is not "nothing." Without trust, things fall apart, flexibility is lost, and relationships and operations are burdened by control mechanisms [63,65,90]. As part of *social capital*, trust is the very cement that makes workplaces and social life work and prosper [65]. It is no coincidence that

at a significant group of the institutions *without* guidelines, staff trusted one another, and relied on dialogue, professionalism, and common sense to keep children and staff safe. As we have seen, trust is essential to children's healthy development and learning. The international literature on guidelines for preventing CSA and wrongful allegations against staff unanimously calls for the rebuilding of trust around children at childcare facilities [4,6,9,16,32]. It is important to recognize that childcare facilities cannot solve this problem alone, as they react defensively to society's current, widespread fear of CSA. Therefore, our findings invite further reflection—in society and in research, in Denmark and internationally—on how society can assist childcare facilities to reestablish trust as fundamental social capital.

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Informed Consent: We state that no children took part in the survey. We state that no participants were asked to give information about their names. Therefore, all individual participants were anonymous to the researchers, as the survey was sent to the childcare institutions, and the participants answered the survey electronically at their institutions or at their homes. We have information about the participating institutions only, and this information remains strictly confidential and will never be disclosed to others than the researchers. In Denmark, a survey such as that described here does not require informed consent from the participants, nor does it require approval from an ethical committee. Therefore, we state that our study is compliant with all national and international guidelines for research without personally identifiable information.

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Else-Marie Buch Leander¹ · Per Lindsø Larsen² · Karen Pallesgaard Munk¹

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Abstract This article presents the first Danish study of the acceptance of children's nudity and sexuality at Danish childcare institutions. The study revealed an important cultural shift in the attitude toward children's nudity and sexual games, the so-called doctor games. Although these were quite accepted at Danish childcare institutions until the beginning of this century, the study showed that new, pervasive regulations had been established to control the child's body and its sexuality. A new discourse revealed that fear of child sexual abuse, in particular, had influenced views of children's sexual games and nudity and that, at times, the child itself was viewed as a potential threat to other children. This marks a new development in Denmark, internationally known for its broadmindedness, and this article discusses the background to this cultural shift in the institutions, and possible implications for the children.

Keywords Children's sexuality · Doctor games · Children's nudity · Prevention policies · Child sexual abuse

Introduction

Although Freud (1965) was the first to recognize “the lawfulness of the sexual impulse in childhood” in 1905 (pp. 247–248), children's sexuality is a relatively new research field. Its point of departure was the increased interest in the sexual abuse of children that arose in the 1980s and 1990s, as children's sexual behaviors were initially mistaken for a sure sign of sexual abuse

(Friedrich, 2007). For a long time, the view on children's sexuality has been burdened by the association with child sexual abuse (CSA) (Dicataldo, 2009; Sandfort & Cohen-Kettenis, 2000), and since the 1980s, researchers have struggled to establish what is normative and non-normative sexual behavior in children.

Although we still have much to learn about children's sexuality, and although parts of Western culture still frequently deny and ignore it (Dicataldo, 2009; Dixon, 2012), contemporary research has established that sexuality as such, and a variety of sexual behaviors are expected and developmentally appropriate in children (Elkovitch, Latzman, Hansen, & Flood, 2009; Friedrich, 2007). Several studies from various countries have shown that among children, sexual games, the so-called doctor games, are common and pervasive across both Western and non-Western cultures (Dixon, 2012; Fitzpatrick, Deehan, & Jennings, 1995; Ford & Beach, 1951; Lamb & Coakley, 1993; Larsson & Svedin, 2001; Lopez Sanchez, Del Campo, & Guijo, 2002; Sandfort & Cohen-Kettenis, 2000; Schoentjes, Deboutte, & Friedrich, 1999). Ford and Beach (1951) and Dixon (2012) stated that sociosexual patterns are found among all great apes during infant and juvenile life and argued that, given that children's sexual games are observed across human cultures, these are normal for our species, but emphasized culture's pervasive influence on the actual prevalence of such games, with substantial differences in tolerance among cultures.

There is a broad consensus that views on children's sexuality vary, depending on cultural setting and historical period, and that these are important, influential factors in the expression of children's sexuality (Dicataldo, 2009; Dixon, 2012; Elkovitch et al., 2009; Ford & Beach, 1951; Friedrich, 2007; Graugaard, 2013; Larsson, Svedin, & Friedrich, 2000; Tobin, 1997). Even so, there has been little empirical research into the role that culture plays, in both a national and a general sense, in determining what is normative and non-normative sexual behav-

✉ Else-Marie Buch Leander
 filembl@cas.au.dk

¹ Department of Culture and Society, Aarhus University, 8000 Aarhus, Denmark

² Centre for Oligophrenia and Psychiatry, Skødstrup, Denmark

ior in children, and into the consequences for children of such determinations. In the study presented in this article, we examined the influence of the attitude toward children's sexuality of a particular cultural development in Denmark, and a considerable part of the Western World in the past 25–35 years, namely, the increasing focus on, and fear of, CSA.¹

Our study presents the first Danish research into the attitudes toward children's sexual behaviors and nudity at Danish childcare institutions. Worldwide, it represents one of few empirical studies of the unintended consequences of contemporary society's significant focus on CSA. The study was conducted in 2012 at approximately one quarter of the Danish preschool institutions, and before- and after-school clubs (BASCs). An important finding was that the majority of the institutions had established rules for the children's conduct that essentially forbade or restricted children's nudity and doctor games. The results indicated an important shift in the attitude toward children's nudity and doctor games at Danish childcare institutions. Discourse analysis of the childcare professionals' answers revealed a conflict between a former, tolerant view of children's doctor games, and a more recent, now dominant, view of the games as problematic and potentially abusive. The rules and discourse concerning doctor games strongly indicated that the fear of CSA has influenced the conception of what is normal and admissible with regard to children's sexuality at Danish childcare institutions, and we discuss some of the implications that this new attitude toward children's sexuality may have for children.

Historical and Cultural Context

Over the past 35 years, in a large part of the Western world, including Denmark, the fear of CSA has become a significant cultural feature (Bech, 2005; Best, 1990; Dicataldo, 2009; Furedi, 2006; Furedi & Bristow, 2010; Jenks, 1994; Johnson, 2000; Meyer, 2007; Piper & Stronach, 2008; Tobin, 1997) and the center of a moral panic (Cohen, 2002; Critcher, 2003; Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009; Jenkins, 1998).

In Denmark, the moral panic regarding CSA broke out in 1997, during the big "Vadstrupgaard case," in which a male teaching assistant was sentenced to 3.5 years in prison for the sexual abuse of 20 children in his kindergarten. This first major, public case of the sort created a public outcry in the Danish society (Rantorp, 2000). Some, however, claimed that the case was a miscarriage of justice, arguing that there was no concrete evidence, that the police had made major mistakes in their investigation and interviewing of the children, and, finally, that the children's testimonies were uncritically believed in the case (Blædel, 1999; Rantorp, 2000). The number of allegations of CSA against childcare staff raised drastically in the years immediately after Vad-

strupgaard (Rasmussen, 2000). In the aftermath of the case, CSA received a great deal of attention from the media, the public, politicians, and children's organizations. Another significant case at a kindergarten, the Beder case of 2007, and approximately seven extreme cases of CSA in dysfunctional families during the past decade in Denmark have only intensified the extensive concern. Considerable juridical, political, and institutional steps have been taken since the Vadstrupgaard case, to prevent CSA in Danish society.

The concept of moral panic serves here as a tool, rather than an explanation (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009), to illustrate how a specific fear emerges in a culture and leaves behind significant institutional and social changes. By "moral panic," we do not imply that fear of pedophilia is not understandable or that the attention Danish society pays to CSA is not important. Instead, we direct attention to the proportions of the fear, and its unintended consequences. In 2010, we conducted a controlled study that focused on Danish childcare institutions, which strongly indicated that both institutional and social changes had occurred that were not justified by the actual risk of CSA at such facilities (Munk, Larsen, Leander, & Soerensen, 2013). In 2003, the Danish National Institute of Social Research concluded, based on a cohort study of 5000 children born in 1995, "that extremely few children had been exposed to sexual abuse or sexual acts by adults at preschool institutions" (Christensen, 2003). The Danish Union of Early Childhood and Youth Educators, BUPL, informed us that between 2008 and 2015 three childcare teachers were convicted of CSA,² and the Danish Union of Public Employees (FOA) informed us that between 2012 and 2015 two childcare assistants were convicted of CSA.³ These numbers do not give a complete picture, but they indicate a low risk of CSA at Danish childcare institutions. Even so, our 2010 study showed a tendency to a climate of fear at Danish childcare institutions: 68.7% of the teachers felt that the risk of being accused of CSA had increased in the previous years; 56.3% of male teachers and 21.1% of female teachers had changed their conduct toward children because of increased focus on CSA in society, keeping a greater distance from them; 12.7% of teachers had become more suspicious of their colleagues, and 47% of ordinary citizens in the control group had become more suspicious of other people's behavior toward children in the previous years. A number of childcare professionals spoke of formal and informal guidelines established to protect staff from wrongful allegations from without (Munk et al., 2013). Our study indicated that a climate of fear at the institutions may considerably alter daily interactions with children in ways that are incompatible with professional

¹ The study is called *The Guideline Study 2012*, in Danish, *Retningslinjeundersøgelsen 2012*. For a report on the study in Danish, see Leander, Munk, and Larsen (2013).

² BUPL informed us that until 2008 they did not regularly keep track of this type of conviction.

³ FOA informed us that until 2012 they did not keep track of this type of conviction.

standards and ideals, similar to research findings from the UK and the U.S. (Furedi & Bristow, 2010; Johnson, 2000; Piper & Stronach, 2008; Tobin, 1997).

The present study aimed to investigate in detail the formal and informal guidelines that our 2010 study indicated were established by some institutions to protect staff from wrongful allegations of CSA; we now also focused on rules at childcare institutions regarding children's doctor games and nudity. Tobin (1997, 2004, 2009) described how childcare teachers' fear of being unjustly accused of CSA and a fear of children's sexual games developed simultaneously in American early childhood education, in the aftermath of the outbreak of the CSA panic in the U.S. in the 1980s, and how these fears led to central changes in American preschools. Case reports and articles in the Danish media and professional magazines (e.g., Børn & Unge, 2008), showing increasing concerns about children's sexuality, indicated that a similar, dual development was occurring in Denmark, and needed to be investigated.

Method

Participants

The participants were 2051 directors and teachers from 1457 Danish childcare institutions, representing urban and rural areas throughout Denmark. The institutions were public and private preschools for children aged 0–6 years,⁴ and public BASCs for children aged approximately 6–10 years. The preschools included crèches, kindergartens,⁵ and so-called integrated institutions with both crèches and kindergartens. Participants included 1374 directors (67%) and 677 teachers (33%); 456 participants were men (22%) and 1595 were women (78%). The directors were between the ages of 31 and 70 years, and the teachers were between the ages of 20 and 68 years. 79.8% of directors and teachers were over 40 years, and 50.2% were over 50 years.

Procedure

We e-mailed our online survey to 4716 (74%) of Denmark's approximately 6400 preschools and BASCs. We selected the institutions randomly, adjusting only to represent both urban and rural areas in all parts of Denmark. The Danish Union of Early Childhood and Youth Educators, BUPL, provided the list of institutions. We supplemented this with institutions from municipalities in Denmark underrepresented on the list. We sent the invitations to participate to the institutions' directors, as we were unable to obtain teacher e-mail addresses. We invited the directors to answer the questionnaire themselves and

to pass on the survey link to as many teachers as possible. Compared to directors, teachers initially had a lower response rate, and as teachers have close contact with the children on an everyday basis, we targeted them in three reminders. This compensated somewhat for the difference in response rates between teachers and directors, although a considerable difference remained in the final result.

Our questionnaire had a 30.9% response rate, which represents 23% of all preschool institutions and BASCs in Denmark. The response rate from men was good, relative to the percentage of male childcare teachers on a national level (12%), which is relevant, as the issue is particularly sensitive for male childcare workers (Munk et al., 2013). The pilot study had a response rate of 20%, and when we contacted the unresponsive institutions, they all explained that the institutions were pressed for time and received many surveys. This seems to be a general problem for optional surveys at Danish childcare institutions. Guided by the pilot study, we made the questionnaire easier to answer, which, with the reminders, may account for the improved response rate of the final survey.

Measures

Our questionnaire contained questions about formal and informal guidelines for staff and rules for children to prevent CSA or wrongful allegations of CSA at the institutions. As the material is so extensive, this article addresses only the rules for the children.

The survey was a mixed method study (Bazeley & Kemp, 2012; Frederiksen, Gundelach, & Nielsen, 2014), including both mandatory, closed-ended questions and optional, open-ended questions. The purpose of the quantitative questions was to establish the prevalence of the guidelines and rules in question in Danish childcare institutions and to be able to generalize findings from a large sample about purposes, practices, consequences, and experiences related to the guidelines and rules. The purpose of the qualitative questions was to give participants the opportunity to elaborate their views and experiences and to tell their stories of the everyday practices surrounding these guidelines and rules. Since no previous research described guidelines for staff and rules for children to prevent CSA or wrongful allegations of CSA in a Danish context, it was important that both directors and teachers could give information that we might not have thought of asking for, and it was important to address both formal and informal guidelines (Creswell, 2015; Frederiksen et al., 2014). In all, 1682 of the 2051 participants made qualitative comments, ranging from a few sentences to entire pages.

The aim of the part of the study concerning rules for children was to investigate how widespread such rules were at Danish childcare institutions, what the rules addressed, how childcare professionals experienced them, how they affected the children, and how these rules might be connected to a broader societal context. The participants were asked whether their institution had rules for children's conduct. To frame the

⁴ In Denmark, children begin elementary school at the age of 6.

⁵ In Denmark, crèches are for children aged approximately 0–3 years, and kindergartens are for children aged approximately 3–6 years.

kind of rules in question, we gave examples of rules concerning sexual games and undressing. If they answered “yes” to this question, they were invited to describe the rules. They were also asked questions about whether, in their opinion, the rules influenced the care taken of the children, or their conduct and development, and if they answered “yes,” they were invited to describe how. Finally, the participants could add comments. Many respondents also gave information about the rules for children in the part of the questionnaire concerning guidelines for staff, and this information has been included in our analysis.

The quantitative and qualitative dimensions of this study were integrated through design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the results. Both dimensions were necessary to our aim of developing nuanced knowledge of rules for children to prevent CSA and wrongful allegations of CSA at Danish childcare institutions, and this article’s conclusions are based on the integrated analysis of quantitative and qualitative results (Bazeley & Kemp, 2012; Creswell, 2015; Frederiksen et al., 2014). To integrate the results, we sometimes used data transformation (Bazeley & Kemp, 2012): some numeric results were described verbally, and some qualitative results were quantified, either as numbers or verbally. The numerous answers to the open-ended questions offered a detailed picture of the everyday practices surrounding the rules for the children and this article’s presentation of the results is largely based on the qualitative answers.

Data Analysis and Theoretical Approach

We applied the theoretical approach of discourse analysis to the qualitative responses to our questionnaire (Fairclough, 1992; Foucault, 1976; Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999). We used thematic analysis as part of our discourse analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We believe that a given social structure, such as a childcare institution, is constituted both by its practices—in this case, the rules and daily routines surrounding children’s sexuality and nudity—and by its discourses, as discourses are constitutive of identities, social relations, and actions (Fairclough, 1992; Foucault, 1976). Discourse analysis is a way to identify norms, conflicts, and changes in norms and to establish their connections to a broader cultural context. We analyzed which discourses are found in the qualitative answers on children’s nudity and sexuality and on the rules concerning children’s nudity and doctor games at the institutions. In this context, we understand “discourse” as an unequivocal constitution of meaning in language, in a given field or setting, often recognizable by specific thematic patterns and linguistic characteristics, such as recurring terms or images (Fairclough, 1992; Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999). A fundamental ontological and epistemological assumption in discourse analysis is that our understanding of the world is always historically and culturally contingent and created through social processes wherein discourse is crucial to the construction of meaning and knowledge, and the ongoing fight for the “truth” (Fairclough, 1992; Foucault, 1976;

Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999). Our use of discourse analysis reflects our fundamental belief that human sexuality is biologically natural, but always historically, culturally, and socially embedded.

Definition of Doctor Games

Friedrich (2007) defined doctor games like this: “There are at least two children who expose genitalia and maybe even touch each other” (p. 41). In a typology of childhood sexual play and games, derived from reports of childhood sexual play and games by college undergraduates, Lamb and Coakley (1993) described doctor games like this: “For most subjects, pretending that one child was the doctor (or nurse) and the other child was the patient merely served as a framework in which the removal of clothes and the examination of bodies (especially the genitals) was permitted” (p. 519). Drawing on these two sources, on the knowledge gained from our study, and on our general knowledge of the subject, our definition of doctor games, on which this article is based, is: “Doctor games is a situation of play where at least two children undress and examine or otherwise play with their bodies, especially the genitals and/or the bottom. They look at and/or touch each other. The framework of the games can be a visit to the doctor, but other themes of play can inspire the games as well.”

It should be added that in Denmark, as in some responses in our study, a synonym for “doctor games” is “bottom games.”

Results

The Rules for Children

Sixty-four percent of the 1457 participating institutions had established rules for the children. Qualitative descriptions of the rules at their institutions were provided by 770 directors and 315 childcare teachers: 837 from preschool institutions and 248 from BASCs. At both types of institutions, two kinds of rules stood out: rules for undressing and doctor games.

We first address the preschool institutions. The vast majority of respondents from preschool institutions informed that their institution had one or more rules concerning undressing. The general rule was that the children were not allowed to undress at the institutions. Some respondents informed that the children were forbidden to take off their clothes, and other respondents specified that the children were forbidden to take off their underwear or to be naked. Many institutions forbade the changing of clothes in the main areas of the institutions, confining it to the bathroom. At a small group of institutions with rules for the children, the children bathed naked in summertime. However, at the vast majority of preschool institutions, children were forbidden to bathe naked or to play naked with water in summertime. Instead, the children bathed wearing swimsuits, a diaper, or underwear. Furthermore, the preschool institutions tended to have a policy of forbidding children to be photographed with few

or no clothes on. A few respondents also mentioned that in their institution, they made sure that parents, passersby, mailmen, or workers in the building did not see undressed children.

Given that undressing was forbidden in the vast majority of preschool institutions, the possibility of playing doctor was nonexistent or very restricted in most institutions. Most of the respondents from preschool institutions simply stated that the children were forbidden to undress at their institutions or that the children were to keep their clothes on in all kinds of play and games, while about 126 respondents directly informed that playing doctor was forbidden. About 195 respondents told that their preschool institution allowed doctor games with certain restrictions. The most frequently mentioned restriction by far was that children had to keep their clothes on while playing doctor, in some institutions their underwear, in some institutions all their clothes. Less mentioned restrictions were that children could play doctor only above the waist or that children were allowed to look at each other, but not to touch. In most cases, the institutions that allowed children to look at each other, only allowed this during visits to the bathroom. Only very few respondents, less than 30, made descriptions of the rules at their preschool institutions that indicated that their institutions allowed doctor games, where children actually undress and examine their bodies, particularly the genitals and the bottom. At the preschool institutions that allowed doctor games to some extent, the childcare teachers were typically very attentive to the games, ensuring that they took place between equals in both age and temperament, did not get out of hand, and that all children involved found them fun. Some of the preschool institutions that entirely forbade doctor games explained to the children that these belonged at home. Finally, quite a few respondents specified that children were forbidden to insert objects into the vagina/rectum. A small group of respondents mentioned kissing. Their institutions either forbade kissing or they forbade kissing on the mouth, on the body, on the genitals, or with the tongue. Eight respondents mentioned masturbation. At 3 of these respondents' institutions, masturbation was forbidden; at the other 5, masturbating children were told to go somewhere and be private about their activity.

Also, the vast majority of respondents from BASCs informed that undressing was forbidden in their institutions. Only two respondents from BASCs mentioned that children were allowed to bathe naked in summertime. Many respondents from BASCs told that the changing of clothes was confined to the bathroom. Several BASCs had a dress code, mostly for girls, who were forbidden to be topless or to bathe without tops in summertime. One also found the same pattern of prohibitions and restrictions for doctor games as in the preschool institutions, but with less tolerance, and no respondent told about doctor games allowed in their BASC where children could actually undress and examine their bodies, particularly the genitals and the bottom. Many respondents from BASCs mentioned that children were forbidden to accompany each other to the toilets or to touch genitals. Several BASCs forbade the children to take photographs of

each other, especially with few clothes on. Finally, a couple of BASCs had rules against sexualized language.

At all types of childcare institutions, staff often closely monitored the children, to ensure that they respected the rules for undressing and doctor games, and our study indicated that this resulted in increased supervision of the children. In Denmark, most childcare institutions traditionally have so-called cushion rooms, where children can either relax or play energetically. It seemed that these rooms were generally the places where children played doctor games or took off their clothes because they were warm. Therefore, there was a tendency to closely supervise “cushion rooms.” At some institutions, this had resulted in changes in the use of the rooms. For instance, one institution had removed the door to the “cushion room,” another had installed a mirror to watch the children, and a third had installed a window into the “cushion room.” Also, children's blanket forts or hiding places were either forbidden or kept under surveillance at several institutions.

Not all respondents offered information about the reasons for the rules in their institutions, but many did. The two most frequently mentioned reasons that children were forbidden to undress were to prevent naked children from playing doctor and to please parents who disliked the idea of their children being naked. However, the fear of accusations being made against the staff, and increased attention to the risk of pedophiles watching the children, also played significant roles.

With regard to doctor games, some respondents simply stated that they did not want these games at their institution. Others stated that the reason for forbidding or restricting doctor games was to avoid the risk of parents misunderstanding children's accounts of a doctor game as having involved a teacher. However, the most frequently mentioned reason by far was to prevent children from being harmed, or overstepping each other's boundaries in the games. In this matter too, the institutions tried hard to please parents, who, according to many respondents, were often uneasy or upset about doctor games. Still, in many institutions, the staff shared the concern that some children may overstep other children's boundaries.

Many respondents expressed their professional conviction that children's doctor games and their curiosity about the differences between boys and girls were a natural part of children's development, and in several institutions, this conviction formed the foundation of a written policy for the institution's handling of children's sexuality. Yet, as previously mentioned, in practice, very few of the institutions with rules for the children seemed to allow doctor games where children actually undress and examine their bodies, especially their genitals and/or bottom. Some institutions forbade or restricted doctor games despite their professional conviction that these were natural, to propitiate parents or to protect staff. Others forbade or restricted the games despite these professional convictions, because their main focus was on the risk of some children behaving intrusively, and the need to protect

weaker or smaller children. A number of institutions tried to balance things. They allowed doctor games to a certain extent and/or were careful of the way they interfered in the games, avoiding making the children feel ashamed.

Finally, a considerable group of institutions forbade doctor games because they regarded the games as inappropriate or directly harmful, including one integrated institution that stated, “The children are forbidden to play doctor games where they look at each other and touch each other. We find that transgressive.”

The Doctor Games

The aim of this study was to investigate the rules for children’s nudity and doctor games, not the games themselves. Hence, we did not ask the institutions about their experience of the prevalence of doctor games. However, the rich qualitative data of the survey provided significant insight into just how well known a phenomenon doctor games are at Danish childcare institutions, an insight we wished to preserve. To support this finding, we mixed qualitative and quantitative methods. We calculated that, of the 1682 respondents (working in 1135 institutions), who answered optional open-ended questions, the responses of 485 respondents (working in 338 institutions) clearly indicated that doctor games had been observed at their institutions. As not all 2054 participants were asked directly whether they had observed doctor games, this number was evidently not a precise measure of prevalence. However, it showed that children’s doctor games were known at many institutions, which became obvious when qualitatively analyzing the comments of the 485 respondents.

A few of the respondents reported only one or two episodes of doctor games in their institution, mostly episodes causing trouble with parents, as described by one integrated institution: “Four boys of the same age experimented with kissing each other’s penises. There was no indication of abuse, but one of the mothers reacted strongly.” However, the vast majority of the 485 respondents spoke of doctor games as a familiar and recurring thing. This was the case among respondents who noted that doctor games were allowed in one way or the other in their institutions, often detailing the rules, as did this integrated institution director: “The children are allowed to play doctor when the staff knows about it. The children are forbidden to touch each other’s genitals and to insert objects into body orifices.” Many respondents described doctor games as something that occurred periodically, including one kindergarten teacher: “During the periods when we experience a lot of ‘doctor games,’ we are very attentive to the ‘unmanned’ areas of the playground and the smaller rooms in the institution.” In a couple of institutions, doctor games recurred every spring or summer. In contrast, a couple of respondents observed the games continuously: “We talk a lot about this with the parents, since it happens all the time.” And some respondents wrote that their institutions might attempt to forbid doctor games, but that you cannot stop

children from playing them. A kindergarten director explained: “The children are forbidden to play ‘doctor’; they do so anyway, but we inform parents and children that they are forbidden to, and that attitude calms the parents.” Regardless of its exact prevalence, the overall pattern of the group of qualitative comments clearly indicating the observation of doctor games demonstrated that the institutions were very familiar with this activity.

This picture was further supported by the qualitative comments in general, indicating that children’s sexuality was a significant focus at childcare institutions. Many institutions encouraged discussions among staff, and sometimes with parents, concerning how to address children’s sexuality, wrote policies on the subject, acquired knowledge of what was considered normative and non-normative sexual behavior in children, or arranged lectures by experts at the institutions. Here is a short extract from the long sexual policy of one integrated institution:

We want our institution to be a place where children are to some extent allowed to explore themselves and each other in a safe environment and in equal relations. Therefore, we recognize the children’s sexual curiosity, exploration and games as long as there is respect and equality among the children. And therefore, we believe in the importance of being open to talking with the children about their sexuality.

Finally, the fact that 64% of the institutions had rules for children’s doctor games and/or nudity further supported our finding that the staff in many institutions encountered these games during the work with children, presuming that the rules were not purely hypothetical, which the often detailed descriptions of the rules suggested that they were not.

We did not ask questions about the prevalence of each activity related to doctor games, and their prevalence would be difficult to assess, given that the majority of institutions stopped or restricted doctor games and undressing. What children would do, and how often, when playing doctor, if they were left to themselves, is difficult to establish under such circumstances (Dixon, 2012). However, the qualitative answers offered a picture of the spectrum of activities in which children may engage while playing doctor. Children may expose themselves and look at each other’s bodies, with a particular interest in the genitals and the bottom. They may touch or examine each other’s bodies or otherwise play with their bodies. These activities were by far the most mentioned in our survey. Children may also kiss each other, or lick the skin—at times, the genitals. They may get on top of each other, simulating intercourse. Finally, they may insert objects into the vagina/rectum. These activities were almost always mentioned as prohibitions or as episodes of broken rules or trouble-making.

Attempts to kiss or lick each other, or simulate intercourse were mentioned only a few times. By contrast, we calculated that of the 1682 respondents (working in 1135 institutions), who answered open-ended questions, 91 respondents (working

in 58 institutions) voluntarily mentioned “the inserting of objects into the vagina/rectum.” Most of the comments simply stated that inserting objects into the vagina/rectum was forbidden, but some of the statements indicated that these acts were not unfamiliar to childcare professionals. One integrated institution director explained: “We can’t guarantee that the children don’t play doctor with sticks etc., because they are not constantly surveilled.” A kindergarten director wrote: “The children examine and explore, but we draw a line at inserting various objects.” One kindergarten that prohibited this behavior still stated in its sexual behavior policy that it considered it to be common that “kindergarten children may sniff each other or try to insert things into each other. Toads. Sticks. Fingers.” Other comments suggested that inserting objects into the body may be as much a playful as a sexual thing, indicating that body orifices in general appeal to children’s explorations: “The children are forbidden to insert objects into their holes. That is, nose, ears, mouth, eyes, navel, and vagina.” Other comments indicated that children use whatever is available. For instance, a forest-based kindergarten mentioned that in the forest, children sometimes experimented with putting leaves between their buttocks. Assuming that a prohibition is not purely hypothetical, but the result of childcare professionals actually encountering a particular behavior, the fact that a relatively large number of respondents mentioned this prohibition voluntarily, and the way some of them did so, indicated that children’s attempt to insert objects into the vagina/rectum was not a very rare phenomenon.

The Dominant Discourse of “Boundaries” and “Abuse”

Foucault (1976) taught us to pay attention to the way we talk about sexuality at different times in history. His major point was that the history of Western sexuality is indeed *discursive*; it is shaped by a power struggle among diverse discourses fighting for their historically embedded sexual norms and “truth.” This also applies to children’s sexuality, which Foucault identified as one of four main targets of biopower’s efforts to discipline bodies and regulate populations in the Western world since the eighteenth century. Until the twentieth century, children’s sexuality, especially older children’s masturbation, was considered an epidemic threat, not only to children’s future health, but also to the future of society and the entire human race. Parents, public authorities, and teachers implemented a range of activities, such as surveillance, changes in pedagogy, and disciplinary discourses, to control and discipline children’s sexuality (Foucault, 1976). These activities resemble the surveillance, rules, and discourse that our survey found were used to control children’s nudity and doctor games in Danish childcare institutions in the twenty-first century.

For the qualitative responses to our survey, we analyzed how the respondents “talked about” children’s sexuality and the rules for children’s nudity and doctor games at their institutions and found two very different discourses. The

dominant discourse supported the rules, and the other discourse, expressing the view of a minority of respondents, was critical. We first address the dominant discourse. At the core of the dominant discourse, we found a frequently mentioned fear of children “overstepping each other’s boundaries” in doctor games. One integrated institution director stated: “We don’t want doctor games because they may result in the trespassing of a child’s boundaries.” The dominant discourse was characterized by a significant focus on “boundaries,” a frequently recurring term, along with synonyms. One integrated institution director emphasized that “the most important thing is that the children learn not to overstep each other’s boundaries.” Both institutions with strict and more liberal rules for doctor games shared the focus on “boundaries.” In some institutions, the conviction was that children learn best about boundaries from their own experiences in doctor games, but in most of the institutions, teaching about boundaries was seen as the most efficient way for children to learn about them. The respondents explained how, in addition to enforcing rules for doctor games, they actively taught the children “to feel their boundaries,” “to set boundaries,” and “to respect other children’s boundaries.” For instance, one integrated institution noted: “We talk a lot to the children about setting boundaries and saying ‘no’ to things you want no part of. We also teach them to respect when a friend says ‘STOP.’” “Saying ‘no’ and ‘stop,’” and respecting other children’s “no” or “stop” were recurring synonyms for “boundaries” in this discourse. Similarly, the teachers at a small group of institutions taught the children ownership of their bodies. They taught them that their bodies were their own and that what they had in their underpants belonged to them. One BASC taught: “Your body is yours, you’re in charge of it, no one should touch it without your permission.”

Some respondents explained the focus on boundaries as a way to prevent sexual abuse later in the children’s lives; otherwise, the purpose was to prevent children from violating each other’s sexual boundaries at the institutions in the present. This prevention-oriented sexual education of children at Danish childcare institutions strongly resembles and appears to be an informal version of, the much more formalized and pervasive sexual abuse prevention programs in the U.S., where children also learn, in almost the same terms, that their body is their own, to say “no” to offending persons, and to distinguish between “good and bad touches” (Johnson, 2000).

In a smaller group of survey responses, the fear of children violating each other’s sexual boundaries was extremely explicit, and here, the dominant discourse was expressed in terms normally used for adult sex offenders. To these respondents, children might act in “offensive” ways and risked “violating” or “abusing” each other. For instance, a kindergarten director stated: “We do not remove all our clothes, even if it is hot, and the adults walk about both inside and outside, to ensure that any doctor games do not devolve into abuse.” In an integrated insti-

tution that forbade doctor games, the director made a distinction between “curious children” and children with “abuser behavior”: “When doctor games happen—because they do—we look carefully at the balance of power. Is there an abuser and victim behavior, or is it two curious children who have just discovered that we look alike or different?” A small group of institutions reported that they had had actual “cases” of children “sexually abusing” or “violating” other children.

The terminology of boundaries and the terminology of abuse were two levels of the same discourse, revealing the core of the dominant discourse to be the view of children’s doctor games as problematic and potentially abusive, and the child’s body as one to be protected against a hypothetical threat. Even though the dominant discourse also included the perception of doctor games as part of children’s natural development, the focus was on the risk of potential harm, and the games were viewed through the lens of adult sexuality. A few respondents actually used the adult term “sex” to describe the children’s games, including one integrated institution director: “The staff have decided that children are not to play sex games, to ensure that no children are harmed.” The dominant discourse could be more or less explicit; however, the general pattern in the dominant discourse revealed that doctor games were viewed in light of CSA. The fear of CSA seemed to be the sole rationale for speaking of children’s games as abusive and for using the theme of “boundaries” to teach children to defend their bodies and to respect other children’s bodies. The more or less explicit aim was to ensure that children were neither victims nor abusers in childhood or adulthood.

The Critical Discourse

In the second discourse, which we call the critical discourse, a minority of respondents criticized the prevailing rules at the institutions. At the core of their discourse was the perception of children’s doctor games as an expression of innocent childish curiosity about the body and the differences between boys and girls, and as a part of children’s natural development. In this discourse, the extensive regulation of children’s nudity and doctor games, and the negative view of these games as transgressive were seen as a sad development that did not serve the children well. A kindergarten director stated:

To me, it is unnatural when children do not run about naked at the beach, and can’t sit in a paddle pool without clothes. They acquire an incorrect relationship to their bodies as something that must be hidden.

Another kindergarten director argued:

I think that in everyday life children should have the opportunity to express themselves freely. It is natural to compare genders, and touch each other, examine each other. I think it is sad that we cannot manage this. Child-

care institutions function as an alternative to the home for many hours.

One integrated institution director held an even stronger opinion: “It seems like a sort of repression of sexuality.”

A kindergarten director argued that the view of the doctor games depended on the viewer, and mentioned parents, who were frequently described in the survey as disliking the children’s doctor games: “When children play doctor games, they don’t think of it as something sexual. The thoughts of the adults/parents make it something bad.” Other respondents criticized their colleagues or their profession for their attitude to children’s sexuality:

I think that we, as a profession, are racing in a wrong direction that is not about professional considerations, but about our squeamishness with regard to parental reactions and the influence of the media. No one wants to be the one who failed to react, therefore one overreacts.

Another BASC director made the same criticism:

My experience is that many teachers have tunnel vision when it comes to children’s doctor games. They think “sexual abuse” almost before they think “normal development.” I really miss more perspectives being brought into this debate, concerning the consequences of this on children’s normal development.

The expression of concern about the consequences of the rules for doctor games and nudity for the children was characteristic of the critical discourse. The main concern was that the rules would negatively affect the children’s natural development, and their relationship to their bodies and to sexuality. There were concerns about both short-term and long-term consequences for the children. Some criticized what a preschool teacher called the “constant surveillance” of children that resulted from the staff’s fear of these games. Some believed that the games would take place secretly, despite the rules, keeping children from seeking adult guidance if needed. Other respondents worried about the consequences for the children when they reached adolescence. They believed that children profit from having these first experiences with sexuality in secure settings and feared that children will be worse off without them when, as teenagers, they are confronted with sexuality in a challenging youth culture, which at times includes pornography and alcohol. Finally, a key concern voiced in the critical discourse was that children will come to perceive the body and nudity and sexuality as dangerous and forbidden and that they may experience guilt and shame because of their childish curiosity. One BASC director wrote:

When adults make rules for children’s natural curiosity about examining each other’s bodies, we send the message that something is wrong about that. That doesn’t make the curiosity disappear, but it connects it to shame.

It sometimes seems as though children are more affected by shame owing to our rules, than by any transgression of each other's boundaries.

Professional Dilemma or Professional Pride

The differing views of the dominant discourse and the critical discourse on children's doctor games represented opposing experiences of how the rules for children corresponded to professional competence. The minority of respondents who expressed their disapproval of the rules in the critical discourse found these incompatible with their professional competence. They found themselves in a professional, and sometimes ethical, dilemma, when they went against their professional knowledge and personal conviction at the cost of children's welfare. This could be the case for teachers working at institutions where the directors and their colleagues had established the rules, but it could also be the case for directors. Directors were well represented among the critical minority. They could feel forced to establish rules that conflicted with their professional convictions because of pressure from parents or society, or to protect their staff from wrongful allegations, as described by this BASC director: "We are sorry that we need to have rules that may teach children that their sexual curiosity is not quite natural."

The majority of respondents found that the rules had no negative consequences for the children's behavior and development. The consequences mentioned in the dominant discourse were positive: the rules, and the work with boundaries, taught children healthy and respectful sexual behavior and protected weaker children who were at risk of being harmed during doctor games. Therefore, the rules supported these respondents' professional competence, and quite a few respondents also found that the rules gave them a professional tool for navigating a difficult field. For instance, they found it helpful to rely on the rules when interacting with parents. For some directors, the general task of protecting children against sexual abuse, with both rules for the children and an awareness of possible signs that the children were being abused elsewhere, had become an important pillar of their professional identity, in that they found themselves responsible for an imperative, societal task in which they took professional pride.

The Cultural Shift at the Childcare Institutions

The divergent discourses on children's sexuality and the rules for doctor games and nudity indicate a conflict in current views on children's sexuality at Danish childcare institutions. These divergent discourses also tell of a historical-cultural shift at the institutions. No research exists concerning how Danish childcare institutions handled children's nudity and doctor games in the past. Glimpses of the past and reflections on the shift in attitude offered by respondents in our study con-

stitute the first piece of documentation. According to a number of respondents, the rules prohibiting children's doctor games and nudity marked a new development. In 2012, when we conducted the survey, a shift in attitude over the preceding 10–15 years was noted by several respondents, including one 57-year-old integrated institution director:

There definitely has been a change in attitude within the last ten years. The children bathe in swimming suits or underwear. We are more alert with regard to doctor games and undressing. Parents are also more sensitive about their children's nakedness.

A director, aged 48, who had worked for 19 years in an integrated institution, observed the same change in the history of her institution: "Children can't bathe naked or play doctor as they did in the beginning, when the institution first opened." A director, aged 55, who had worked for 14 years in an integrated institution where they began limiting children's doctor games to protect both children and staff, agreed: "We are more prudish than before." A director, aged 52, who had worked for 10 years in a kindergarten that used to allow children to play naked in paddling pools and under sprinklers, said that they now always had the children wear underwear and had become more aware of who might see the children from the street. She explained that doctor games and nudity had acquired new meanings:

To be naked, now, is associated more with something secret and a bit sexy—before it was just natural. Parents are also more attentive and worried if the children play sexual games—to a greater degree than before, they are afraid that their children will be "violated."

A director, aged 47, who had worked for 5 years in a BASC, told the same story: "There has been a drastic shift in the views of children's relations to one another. Exploratory behaviors among children are, sadly, often interpreted as abuse." Another BASC director, aged 49, who had worked for 10 years in a BASC, made this comparison: "Sexuality has become dangerous and taboo, a bit as I imagine it was in the 50s."

Especially with regard to children's bathing nude, many comments explicitly identified a historical-cultural shift, noting that children used to bathe naked on the playground or at the beach in the summer, but that the institutions now forbade this, to protect children against CSA, or staff against wrongful allegations, or to please worried parents. Some respondents portrayed a time not so long ago, when things were quite the opposite, and children bathing nude was a common practice at preschool institutions; one director, aged 59, who had worked for 20 years in an integrated institution, stated:

In the past, the children undressed completely when bathing or playing with water on the playground in the summer. In recent years, the practice has changed, so children wear

swimwear. Twenty years ago one would be almost puzzled if a child kept its underwear on during water games or brought swimwear to the childcare institution.

A director, aged 63, who had worked for 11 years in a kindergarten that forbade children to be naked despite their inclination to undress in the “cushion room” and on the playground in summertime, offered this interpretation of the shift: “Previously, children’s nudity on the beach and on the playground was not associated with the possible sexual abuse of children.” Some respondents looked back at the past nostalgically, including one director, aged 61, who had worked for 11 years in an integrated institution:

According to the rules at our institution, no children run around or bathe without underpants. We have gotten used to them, and it’s no problem on an everyday basis. It only becomes a problem when one begins to think about the lost freedom to run around without clothes that existed when my own children were kids, and the time was different...

The rules for the children evidently had direct effects on their behavior, such as not being able to be naked or play doctor. Although the vast majority of respondents did not find that the rules had influenced children’s general behavior in other ways, a minority noticed secondary changes. Some respondents spoke positively of the effect of the rules and the focus on boundaries on the children, such as this director, aged 56, who had worked for 7 years in a BASC: “The children know the limits of what they can and cannot do to each other. Every child knows the limits of what you are not supposed, and allowed, to do to others.” Other respondents had noticed that children had become more modest, for instance an experienced kindergarten director who found children more modest than ever before in her long career. A director, aged 50, who had worked for 23 years in an integrated institution, agreed:

I don’t know whether it is because of the rules—probably more because of the attitude of “adult Denmark”—but children are more modest than they were ten years ago, for instance, with regard to undressing in the swimming hall and bathing naked on the beach.

Several respondents noticed secondary changes in the children’s sexual conduct. A couple of respondents found that children were more conscious of sexual behavior, that they hid to play doctor games, or told on friends who broke the rules. This director, aged 59, who had worked for 15 years in her integrated institution, noted:

The eldest of the children are conscious that they are forbidden to play that kind of games, and that means that we observe fewer incidents of “doctor games.” However, we still see “doctor games” once in a while, and we also see that, as a consequence of the rules, children try to hide the games.

Several respondents agreed that doctor games had become rarer, including a director, aged 42, who had worked for 15 years in a kindergarten that enforced the rule that the children always had to keep their underwear on, also during water games, whereas the children used to be naked. When asked whether this rule had influenced the children’s general behavior, the director noted: “Doctor games are not as pervasive as they used to be.”

Discussion

The Loss of the Child’s Innocence

To summarize the testimonies of the last section, our survey indicated that there had been significant changes in both parents’ and childcare professionals’ attitudes toward children’s nudity and doctor games since the millennium, in the period following the outbreak of moral panic over CSA in Denmark at the end of the last century. The low response rate to our study necessitates caution when generalizing the results, but the limitation of the quantitative results is balanced by the strengths of the rich qualitative material of the survey on which this article is largely based. The combination of the quantitative results, showing that 64% of all institutions had rules for children’s nudity and/or doctor games, and the qualitative results reveals a cultural shift at the childcare institutions. This cultural shift varied in expression and extent at the individual institutions. The general pattern indicated by both rules and discourses was that the child’s body had been sexualized, not through recognition of the child’s own sexuality, but through the lens of adult sexuality. The child’s body now represented a range of risks that had to be controlled, and there was a tendency to directly taboo the child’s body, for instance, when everyday activities such as changing clothes were closely regulated to prevent the child’s body from being seen. The child’s body had clearly lost its innocence.

This cultural shift is complex and may be viewed in light of several cultural developments. An important one is the current polarization of Danish society—as of many Western societies—into the hypersexualization of society, including children, and a countertendency to a “new puritanism.” However, discourse analysis clearly indicated that a specific cultural development, namely the moral panic regarding CSA, played a principal role in this cultural shift, and in determining what is now admissible, and considered normal and morally good with regard to children’s nudity and doctor games at childcare institutions. The results showed that the pervasive cultural focus on CSA has closely associated the child’s body with CSA. Adults have learned to view the child’s body as a potential target of CSA, to the extent that it is no longer viewed in its own right. The rules and the discourse of boundaries and abuse revealed this fear of a transgression of the child’s body, and the cultural shift at the institutions appeared defensive, rather than based on

professional arguments: defensive with regard to both children and to childcare professionals, who risked accusations of CSA in the presence of a child's nude body.

Our survey showed that the cultural shift at Danish childcare institutions was characterized by a general loss of trust. Childcare professionals feared the accusations of parents and were themselves on the alert for the possible pedophile gaze all around them: of parents, workmen, or people on the beach. Teaching children to identify and respect boundaries is essential education, in sexual and all human matters. However, the qualitative responses indicated that the institutions' focus was mostly one-sided. Although many respondents viewed children's sexual curiosity as a natural part of children's development, and the staffs in many institutions were careful not to shame children when regulating doctor games, few participants actively used positive terms when speaking of the sexual games, or referred to any positive discourse with the children conveying the importance of trust and joy in intimacy, or the fun and knowledge of discovering how children have different bodies and sexes. In our opinion, a sexual education with a one-sided focus on boundaries, based primarily on a fearful rationale of preventing CSA, risks suggesting to children that sexuality is dangerous and that we must defend our bodies. This is logical with regard to potential CSA, but not in terms of the "normal" spectrum of sexuality, to which trust and joy are fundamental. Finally, the loss of trust also targeted the child. The games were viewed as potentially harmful, and it was against their small friends that the children learned to defend themselves. The discourse of boundaries and abuse revealed that the child had lost its innocence in more ways than one. Not only had the child been sexualized, the discourse of abuse typically used for adult sex offenders, which suggests an intentional act, rendered children playing doctor at their childcare institutions guilty of CSA. This result revealed the tendency at Danish childcare institutions to no longer view the child only as a potential victim of CSA, but also as a potential offender.

In our opinion, the discourse of boundaries, and especially, abuse, risks considerable consequences for the children. Such discourse is constitutive of the way others perceive the games, our actions concerning them, the identities of the children playing them, and the children's relations to both their friends and the adults in the childcare setting (Fairclough, 1992). The discourse of abuse may identify small children as abusers (and victims) and divide them into "good/bad guys." The discourse risks criminalizing and stigmatizing certain children at a very young age for playing doctor with their friends in childcare. The discourse and the view of doctor games as potentially abusive also risk altering the social relationships between childcare professionals and children, so that the child becomes not only someone to guard, but also someone to guard against.

Our findings, which focused on Danish children, are consistent with the research findings in other countries, namely

that children's doctor games are common and pervasive (see introduction). These concurrent, cross-cultural findings reveal a high prevalence of children's doctor games, which makes it possible to establish the games as expected and developmentally appropriate sexual behavior in children (Dixon, 2012; Ford & Beach, 1951; Friedrich, 2007). The concurrent, cross-cultural findings therefore strongly contradict the tendency, also revealed by our study, to problematize childhood sexuality.

Our results furthermore raise the question of whether children attempting to insert objects into the vagina/rectum are as rare as some studies have concluded (Elkovitch et al., 2009). This supposed low-frequency activity is often labeled "problematic," "aggressive," "non-normative," and "imitative of adult sexual behavior" (Elkovitch et al., 2009). This is due partly to the fact that it may harm children, but our study questions whether other interpretations of this activity may sometimes be relevant (Levine, 2002). These questions call for further research, particularly because children's sexual behavior deemed "problematic, aggressive, non-normative, and imitative of adult sexual behavior" often raises suspicions that the child exhibiting this behavior has been sexually abused, and risks the child being identified as a "perpetrator."

The problematization of childhood sexuality may be contemplated on a larger societal scale in the U.S., where, as mentioned earlier, a similar shift in culture took place in American preschools in the late 1980s, when children's sexuality became associated with sexual abuse and danger (Dicataldo, 2009; Levine, 2002; Tobin, 2004). Tobin (2009) depicted this shift in culture in American childcare:

And four and five-year-old children are also vulnerable to accusations of sexually abusing their classmates. Kissing games and playing doctor, common activities of young children just a generation ago, are now activities that routinely lead to calls home, official reports, and even suspensions and, in rare cases, legal proceedings. (p. 727)

In "Harmful to Minors," Levine (2002) described a drift in professionals' and lay-people's view of childhood sexuality, in the 1980s, from tolerance and trust, toward fear and prohibitions. Physical affection among children has come to be always judged as sex, and sex is now always judged as dangerous, Levine argued, bemoaning that sex education for children of all ages focuses on danger, whereas pleasure is tabooed. Children learn to defend themselves against peers and adults and are "brought up to be... suspicious of intrusions against their own body's 'boundaries'" (p. 179). In his book, "The Perversion of Youth," Dicataldo (2009) asked, "How did we get to the point where childhood sexuality is perceived as so potentially dangerous?" (p. 111). He regretted the lack of knowledge and acknowledgment of children's normal sexuality and pointed out the current pathologization of sexual behavior in children "that in the past or within another cultural

context would have barely registered a reaction.” He mentioned the expressions “children who molest children” and “children with sexual behavior problems” as examples of “new clinical terminology covering younger and younger children” and emphasized that such new categories are not without consequences. They are “buzzing, interactive and productive,” and have resulted in “new regimes of assessment and treatment” of children (pp. 135–136). Levine (2002), who also described the rise of a “new class of patient,” remarked that in 1984 there were no treatment programs for “children with sexual behavior problems” in the U.S., but a total of 50 residential and 394 nonresidential programs for such children under 12 just a dozen years later. Chaffin and Bonner (1998) described how the discourse normally applied to adult sex offenders has been applied to American preschoolers: “We see the labels of *offender* and *perp* applied to preschoolers. In many instances, this has extended to affixing the label of *sex offender*, even in advance of any actual inappropriate behavior” (p. 315).

The criminalizing discourse on children’s sexuality in the U.S. is reflected in the American legal response to children’s sexual behavior. Since the late 1980s, children’s and adolescents’ sexuality has been increasingly criminalized in the U.S., where criminal laws originally designed for adult perpetrators, including civil commitment, registration, and public notification, also are applied to children (in most cases older than preschool children) and youths, with no consideration for their developmental status (Dicataldo, 2009; Letourneau & Caldwell, 2013; Stillman, 2016; Zimring, 2004). The literature gives the examples of a 7-year-old child removed from home because he fondled his 5-year-old sibling’s genitals, and children as young as 10 or 12 years old being arrested by the police and subjected to sex-offender registration, neighborhood notification, and even civil commitment (Chaffin & Bonner, 1998; Letourneau & Caldwell, 2013). No other democratic country in the world subjects legal minors accused of sexual offenses to such severe penalties as the U.S. (Letourneau & Caldwell, 2013). An article in *The New Yorker* (Stillman, 2016) described how public juvenile sex-offender registration ruins the lives of children and youths, denying them rehabilitation, long into adulthood. These young Americans are unable to find jobs, and they and their families suffer stigmatization, even after sex-offender treatment, because their faces remain on the internet with the “sex-offender” label attached. Some of the offenses that in the U.S. get children and youth on the registry in the company of hardboiled, adult sex offenders are considered harmless or at least would not prompt legal proceedings in other democratic countries, for instance consensual sex between teenagers, which is generally accepted in Denmark, and only in rare cases becomes a legal matter (Graugaard, 1997; Graugaard et al., 2004).

Danish culture, regarded as being the opposite of the American culture of repressing youthful sexuality (Letourneau & Caldwell, 2013), may seem far from the American

developments of the last 30 years, with regard to children’s sexuality. Danish culture is very secular and known to be very broadminded. Since “the sexual liberation” of the 1960s, the Danes’ generally liberal attitude toward sexual matters has clearly left its mark. Sex education has been mandatory in the Danish elementary school system since 1970. Denmark was the first country in the world to legalize pornography in 1969, and the first country in the world to legally recognize same-sex unions in 1989, with the first homosexual couple getting married in Denmark that same year (Graugaard, 1997; Graugaard et al., 2004). The past that some childcare professionals evoked in our study, with children bathing naked in summertime, and a more tolerant attitude to doctor games some 15–20 years ago, is consistent with this broadmindedness, and the shift in attitude at Danish childcare institutions is the more surprising on this background. Nevertheless, our study indicates striking similarities between the cultural shift at American preschool facilities and in the general American attitude toward child sexuality in the 1980s, and the cultural shift at Danish childcare institutions around 2000. Without arguing that Denmark will necessarily follow the same path as the U.S., we do argue that a significant change is occurring at Danish childcare institutions, which calls for further consideration. Additional research is needed to further investigate both short- and long-term consequences for children of the present development, as our results indicate that the rules, discourse, and sexual education at Danish childcare facilities, intended to safeguard children, but based on fears of CSA, may instead result in mistrust, a problematization of the child’s body, and the criminalization of children’s sexuality, and of some children in particular. The Danish and the American shifts in culture illustrate that there is no innate view of children’s sexuality, but that culture is paramount in determining the norms of childhood sexuality. The cross-cultural parallel between two historically different countries, with regard to general sexual norms and liberty, further illustrates the deep and widespread influence of the fear of CSA in Western culture today.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest In Denmark, Ph.D. candidates hold a position with a salary. Else-Marie Buch Leander’s current Ph.D. position is partially funded by “The BUPL Funds for Research.” BUPL is the Danish Union of Early Childhood and Youth Educators. The other part of Else-Marie Buch Leander’s Ph.D. position is financed by Aarhus University.

Informed Consent We state that no children took part in the survey. We state that no participants were asked to give information about their name. All individual participants therefore were anonymous to the researchers as the survey was sent to the childcare institutions, and the participants

answered the survey electronically at their institutions or at their homes. We only have information about the participating institutions, and this information stays strictly confidential and will never be disclosed to other than the researchers. In Denmark, a survey as here described does not require informed consent from the participants, nor does it require approval from an ethical committee. We therefore state that our study is in accordance with all national and international guidelines for research without personally identifiable information.

Ethical Responsibilities of Authors We state that we honor the ethical responsibilities of authors in this article.

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Article 3:

**Children's sexuality and nudity in discourse and images in a Danish
education and care journal over 50 years: 1970–2019**

**The emergence of “the child perpetrator of sexual abuse” in an international
perspective**

**After my Ph.D. defense, article 3 was published in Archives of Sexual
Behavior in a slightly shortened version:**

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in a Danish Education and Care Journal over 50 Years (1970–2019): The
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ABSTRACT

In the late 20th century, a new view of children as potential sexual abusers emerged. Today, more research addresses children's "problematic sexual behavior" than their natural sexuality, and even young children are stigmatized and criminalized because of species-typical sexual behavior. Despite the importance of this new field of research and view of childhood sexuality, studies of this development, its origins, and consequences, are extremely rare. This study analyzed the discourse and images related to childhood sexuality in a Danish education and care journal for childcare professionals, from 1970 to 2019, to examine the emergence of "the child perpetrator of sexual abuse" in Denmark in the late 1990s, and traced the travelling of these ideas back to the United States, where this figure originated in the mid-1980s. The study revealed a radical change in views of childhood sexuality in Denmark from 1970 to 2019: from an extreme liberalism in the early decades—illustrated by a rare collection of photos of children's nudity and sexuality, reprinted in this article—to a view that strongly associates children's sexuality with sexual abuse. The study showed that the significant attention to and fear of child sexual abuse influenced the new view of childhood sexuality, and that this progressively took root in Danish childcare institutions, creating a panic. This article examines the knowledge, narratives, and the question of proportion regarding the cross-cultural view of children as potential sexual abusers, and discusses its consequences, combining a historical study and a dissection of an important, current phenomenon.

Keywords: children's sexuality; children's nudity; problematic sexual behavior; child sexual abuse; discourse analysis; historical study; Denmark.

INTRODUCTION

International findings show that sexual behavior in children is species-typical and pervasive; this has been observed by parents, childcare staff, and researchers, and retrospectively reported by adults in various Western and non-Western cultures (Balter, van Rhijn, & Davies, 2016; Bancroft, 2003; Bullough, 2004; Cacciatore, Ingman-Friberg, Lainiala, & Apter, 2020; Dixon, 2012; Elkovitch, Latzman, Hansen, & Flood, 2009; Fitzpatrick, Deehan, & Jennings, 1995; Ford & Beach, 1951; Lamb & Coakley, 1993; Larsson & Svedin, 2001; Leander, Larsen, & Munk, 2018; Lopez Sanchez, Del Campo, & Guijo, 2002; Miragoli, Camisasca, & Di Blasio, 2017; Okami, Olmstead, & Abramson, 1997; Sandfort & Cohen-Kettenis, 2000; Schoentjes, Deboutte, & Friedrich, 1999). Nonetheless, children's sexuality is an understudied and controversial subject—understudied, because controversial (Bancroft, 2003; Friedrich, 2003; O'Sullivan, 2003; Sandfort & Rademakers, 2000; Skundberg, 2020; Thigpen, Pinkston, & Mayefsky, 2003). However, in the United States in the mid-1980s, a new category of childhood sexuality was introduced, namely, “problematic sexual behavior” (PSB). The new idea of “children who sexually abuse other children” defined this category, and therefore, this was also the birth of a new identity, that of the “child perpetrator of sexual abuse” (Brownlie, 2001; Dicataldo, 2009; Friedrich, 2007; Jenkins, 2003; Okami, 1992). Since the mid-1980s, PSB in children has become a significant international focus (Silovsky, Letourneau, & Bonner, 2020), and today, more research addresses children's PSB than their natural sexuality (Dicataldo, 2009; Thigpen et al., 2003; Wurtele & Kenny, 2011). Despite the importance of this new research field and view of childhood sexuality, research that examines this development, and its origins and consequences, is scarce internationally, and virtually non-existent in Denmark. This is a problem, as the problematized view of childhood sexuality as potentially abusive may have severe consequences for children, for example, criminalizing their sexual behavior (Chaffin et al., 2006; Dicataldo, 2009; Jenkins, 2003;

Letourneau & Caldwell, 2013; Martin, 2014; Smith et al., 2014; Stillman, 2016; Tobin, 2009; Zimring, 2004). In this article, I study the emergence of the view of childhood sexuality as potentially problematic and abusive in a Danish context, while demonstrating its international character, and the travel of the related ideas that brought them from their place of origin, the United States, to Denmark. I show how these ideas came from the United States and influenced a change in Danish norms and practices, with regard to children's sexuality. My study simultaneously examines a historical development and dissects a persistent, current, international phenomenon and its consequences.

The present study follows up on a study that two colleagues and I conducted (Leander et al., 2018), which showed that around the turn of the millennium, Danish childcare institutions⁵ established pervasive rules that forbade or restricted children's nudity and sexual games, the so-called doctor games (Leander, 2021). The study indicated that previous to this, children's nudity and doctor games were quite accepted in these settings, and that, influenced by the fear of child sexual abuse (CSA), the new rules marked a shift to a view of doctor games as potentially harmful to children. While working on this study, I searched for research to further illustrate the prevailing views of, and practices, surrounding children's doctor games and nudity in Danish Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) before the turn of the millennium, but found nothing. Therefore, the first aim of the present study was to fill this gap. The second was to investigate in greater detail the anatomy of the cultural–historical shift in attitudes to children's sexuality: How did Danish ECEC come to consider childhood sexuality potentially harmful to children? Which ideas and narratives informed this shift? Where did they come from, and how did they develop? Which discourses supported the shift?

⁵ In Denmark, crèches are for children aged approximately 0–3 years old, and kindergartens are for children aged approximately 3–6 years old. At the age of 6, Danish children begin elementary school.

Who were the main actors? What was the international cultural–historical context of this development? What were the consequences?

To answer the foregoing questions, I conducted a qualitative analysis of discourses and images related to the subject of childhood sexuality in the Danish education and care journal, *Børn&Unge* (“Children&Youth”) over 50 years: 1970–2019. *Børn&Unge* (B&U) is published by The Danish Union of Early Childhood and Youth Educators (BUPL), and has been an influential voice in the field of education and care in Denmark over half a century. B&U published 40 to 50 issues annually during most of this period.⁶ The interviewees in B&U were key Danish experts on childhood sexuality, and childcare professionals. Analyzing B&U simultaneously offered an opportunity to identify the central ideas concerning childhood sexuality during the period of the above-mentioned shift in attitude to childhood sexuality in Danish ECEC, and provided a window into childcare institutions before the turn of the millennium, and their practices and norms with regard to childhood sexuality, as childcare professionals in B&U presented cases of children’s sexual behavior from their daily work.

During the 50 years B&U has existed, Danish woman entered the labor market and Danish children entered childcare institutions. This development, seen throughout the West, is particularly pronounced in Denmark, where we have some of the highest numbers of children in daycare of OECD countries (OECD, 2016), with 89.7% of 1–2-year-olds and 97.5% of 3–5-year-olds attending ECEC (Statistics Denmark, 2014), and 38% of 0–5-year-olds spending 8 or more hours a day at ECEC institutions (Jessen, 2015). When children

⁶ After publishing 11 issues in 1970, B&U published 40 to 50 issues per year until 2008; 50 issues per year from 1986 to 2003. From 2009 to 2019, the number of annual issues decreased gradually to 15 in 2019.

made the historical move into institutions with many other children for many hours a day, childcare institutions became an important new *locus* for children's first experiences of sexuality, particularly doctor games. In contrast to earlier times, when these games were played in the secrecy of children's rooms, for instance, they now became visible to professionals in childcare institutions, which makes these obvious places—especially in Denmark—to study childhood sexuality and changing norms concerning. Also, childcare institutions' norms for and practices surrounding children's sexuality are important to children's sexual development, as young children spending a great number of waking hours in daycare results in the dual socialization between the home and daycare (Balter et al., 2016, 2018; Cacciatore et al., 2020; Dencik, 1989; Leander et al., 2018; Sommer, Samuelsson, & Hundeide, 2013).

My analysis of B&U revealed that the view of childhood sexuality changed radically in Denmark between 1970 and 2019, both with regard to the idea of what childhood sexuality is and may be, and to the level of tolerance. I found an extreme liberalism in the earlier periods of B&U that later vanished in favor of views that potentially criminalized children's sexuality. I show that the tremendous attention to CSA, beginning in the late 1970s in the United States before being exported to Europe, crucially influenced this shift. The highly liberal discourse about childhood sexuality in B&U in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s would be almost impossible to present today because of the substantial international focus on CSA. Thus, this is also a study of what it is permissible to say—and what is not—in various historical periods, and which circumstances set the limits of discourse (Foucault, 1976). The radical change in views of childhood sexuality is even more evident in the illustrations for the B&U articles, which is why they are reproduced in this article.⁷ Looking at the change in

⁷ All the illustrations are to be found at the end of this article.

these illustrations, the reader will understand that there is a before and an after, when it comes to associating childhood sexuality and nudity to CSA.

METHOD

Procedure

The first issue of B&U was published on February 25, 1970. I searched for text and images concerning children's sexuality in all issues of B&U from that date through December 31, 2019. My search was limited to text and images concerning children up to approximately 11 years old, as this study only addresses views on childhood sexuality. In my analysis, I included all articles with children's sexuality as their main subject or that mentioned children's sexuality in passing. I omitted some brief items and advertisements.

I did part of my search at B&U's editorial office. As there is no card index or electronic database for the issues of B&U published from 1970 to 1985, I went through the print editions of all these issues. There is an electronic database for the issues published from 1986 to 2011, which may be inspected only at B&U's editorial office, which I did. I did the rest of my search through Infomedia, the Danish media database, where all issues of B&U from 2009 to the present are available electronically.

Permission to reproduce the images, and Personal Data Protection

Most of the photographs and drawings illustrating the B&U articles on children's sexuality from 1970 to 2019 are reproduced in this article, along with a few photographs from other B&U articles relevant to this study. I obtained written permission to reproduce all

photographs and drawings from both their copyright holders and B&U. In the case of four old photographs whose photographers remain unknown, I obtained permission from VISDA Visual Rights Denmark under Danish Copyright Law Article 24 a.

I attempted to find the children—now adults—in all the photographs, to obtain their permission to reproduce the photographs. This turned out to be impossible, as neither B&U nor the copyright holders had information on the children. In one case only, the photographer informed me that the two children in his photographs are his relatives, and I obtained written permission from the two adults in question (illustrations 8, 9, and 10).

Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), processing and transferring personal data outside the EU/EEA must have a legal basis. As it was impossible to obtain the children's permission to process and provide a legal basis for this transfer, I reported my study to The Danish Data Protection Agency (DDPA). Their assessment was that the photographs are non-sensitive personal data. The DDPA assessed that the legal basis for processing was article 6(1)(f) of the GDPR. This article provides a legal basis for processing when such processing is necessary for the purpose of a legitimate interest pursued by the controller or a third party, except where such interests are overridden by the interests or fundamental rights and freedoms of the data subject, which require the protection of personal data, in particular where the data subject is a child. The balancing test in question was to balance the interests of research and the related public interest, with the rights and freedoms of children protected by the GDPR. The DDPA cited the considerations this balancing test should include: On the one hand, the party who originally gave permission for the children to be photographed did so before the internet was invented/widely used. On the other hand, the photographs are old and have already been published. The DDPA added that if the photographs were reproduced, the children's identity should be protected the best way possible.

When considering whether the legitimate interest of my article and the research connected to the article overrides the children's interests, rights and/or freedoms, I have taken into account the reasonable expectations of the children, and their relationship to the party who consented to the photographs being taken, the photographer, and B&U as publicly accessible media. These reasonable expectations must also include considerations and view of the time and context in which these photographs were taken. Taking this into account, and because replicating the photographs is key to my research, I have determined that the legitimate interest pursued by my research in an area of significant public interest, the knowledge of which is scarce and difficult to obtain, overrides the rights and freedom of the data subject, even if the GDPR calls for special protection when it comes to processing personal data on children. I take into account the fact that (i) the photographs have already been published in B&U and (ii) and are available in public libraries in Denmark today. Also, (iii) the photographs are old and (iv) the children very young, so the chance of their being recognized must be considered very low, even when the photographs are digitally reproduced. The risk to the rights and freedom of the children are further (v) mitigated by the black bars that cover their eyes in the reproductions, why the photographs have been pseudonymized. Exceptions are photographs 8 and 10; as mentioned above, I got permission to reproduce these photographs from the child, now adult, and he and the photographer asked that no boxes cover the eyes, to respect the integrity of the photographs.

Regarding the legal basis for transferring personal data, any transfer of personal data to countries outside the EU/EEA may take place only subject to the conditions of Chapter V of the GDPR, which provides for an adequate level of protection or appropriate safeguards. Should these measures be absent, the GDPR provides for transfer to be legal if it fits within one of the derogations for specific situations covered by GDPR, one being consent to transfer. Regarding photographs 8, 9, and 10, the data subjects have provided their consent to

transfer. For photographs where consent was impossible to obtain, the GDPR provides for transfer to be legal where necessary for reasons important to the public interest, or, if the transfer is not repeated, if it concerns only a limited number of data subjects, and is necessary because of compelling, legitimate interests pursued by the transferor, which are not overridden by the interests or rights and freedoms of the data subject. When taking into account that this transfer will not be repeated, and that only a small number of data subjects are included, and when assessing the same criteria as applicable to the legal basis for processing, that is the compelling legitimate interest and the pseudonymization, it is assessed that the transfer of personal data to the US may be carried out under GDPR article 49, last section, or alternatively, GDPR article 49(d).

It should be noted that GDPR article 49, last sections, provides for informing the DDPA of the specific transfer that has been concluded, and for informing the data subjects. The GDPR and the Danish Data Protection Act, supplementing the GDPR, accepts that data subjects are not informed when it proves impossible to provide said information. As it has been impossible to identify the data subjects, this derogation applies.

Throughout the process surrounding the photographs, I received legal advice from the Danish expert on data protection, attorney Catrine Søndergaard Byrne.⁸

Measures

For this qualitative study, my method was discourse analysis (please see the next section).

However, I made limited use of quantitative methodology, as I counted the 1970–2019 B&U articles that mentioned or addressed CSA (illustration 23), to investigate a possible

⁸ <https://laboralegal.com/catrine-soendergaard-byrne/?lang=en>

correlation between the emergence of the view of childhood sexuality as potentially abusive, and the amount of focus on CSA. To achieve this, I searched B&U using the same procedure as I used to find the articles on childhood sexuality in B&U (please see Procedure).

Data Analysis and Theoretical Framework

I applied discourse analysis to the material I collected from B&U (Fairclough, 1992; Foucault, 1976; Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999). As part of this discourse analysis, I used coding and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Discourse analysis is a way to identify norms and changes in norms, and to establish their connections to a broader cultural background. In this context, I understand “discourse” as an unequivocal constitution of meaning in language, in a given field or setting, often recognizable by specific thematic patterns and linguistic characteristics, such as recurring terms or images (Fairclough, 1992; Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999).

A fundamental ontological and epistemological assumption in discourse analysis is that our understanding of the world is historically and culturally contingent, and created through social processes wherein discourse is crucial to the construction of meaning and knowledge (Fairclough, 1992; Foucault, 1976; Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999). According to Michel Foucault (1976), sexuality cannot be contemplated purely objectively or scientifically. Even though the last three centuries of the Western history of sexuality are characterized by the rich production of discourses on knowledge that have sought the truth about sexuality and defined it as having a fixed nature, which allows a distinction between the normal and the pathological, such discourses and their determinations are historically and culturally contingent. They appear to convey knowledge and truth, but are in fact power strategies in the ongoing fight for the “truth.” Therefore, in Foucault’s eyes, the history of sexuality must

be regarded as discursive, and an analysis of it must first analyze the discourses on sexuality throughout history, their transformations, and the struggle among them (Foucault, 1976).

I analyzed the various discourses on childhood sexuality in the B&U material, and the norms and views they represented. The discourses were those of B&U journalists and interviewees in B&U—mostly ECEC professionals, psychologists, and researchers. My analysis did not primarily aim to identify B&U’s views, but to use B&U as a framework for studying professional and cultural discourses on childhood sexuality from 1970 to the present. A key aim of my study was to identify the changes in the discourses and their norms and views, and possible conflicts between them, and to analyze these changes and conflicts in their cultural–historical context. Consequently, in the “Analysis and Findings” section, I divided the material into three periods, and my analysis proceeds chronologically, step by step, to capture the development over the years in detail. Because of the large time span the material covers, and to ensure the comprehensibility of the continuing analysis, I present some arguments and partial conclusions in “Analysis and Findings.”

Another key aim of my study was to gain insight into past practices in Danish childcare institutions, with regard to children’s sexuality and nudity. As ECEC professionals are B&U’s interviewees *and* its target audience, the material included a number of stories of how children’s sexuality and nudity were handled in Danish childcare institutions over these 50 years. According to discourse analysis, a given social structure, such as a childcare institution, is constituted by its practices—in this case, the daily routines surrounding children’s sexuality and nudity—and by its discourses, as discourses are constitutive of identities, social relations, and actions. On a broader level, there is a dialectic relationship between a society’s established and broad discourses, and local discourses and practices, for instance in a childcare institution (Fairclough, 1992; Foucault, 1976). Hence, my analysis also aimed to analyze the dialectic relationship between the discourses in B&U, both broad

and local, and the practices in Danish childcare institutions, and to reflect on this in a cultural–historical context.

Besides the discourse-analysis-based theoretical framework that underlies this article, I include other theories and concepts. Throughout this article, I draw on and discuss a number of childhood sexuality scholars. In the “Discussion” section, to put the historical change in views on childhood sexuality into a broader, international, cultural–historical context, I include literature by Furedi (2006) and other scholars, concerning the development of a Western culture of fear and abuse since the 1980s. I also apply Foucault’s theory of discipline (Foucault, 1977), to argue that the current norms for childhood sexuality, revealed by my discourse analysis, are part of a disciplinary technology. I also use the theory of discipline to speculate on possible triggers for the developments studied in this article.

A final note: One challenge to my discourse analysis was that B&U has interviewed me on the subject of childhood sexuality since 2013. In my analysis, I included my statements on the same footing as others’ statements. However, as it is impossible to be both subject and object of an analysis, an attempt to analyze my own statements to the same degree as others’ statements would be illusory. Instead, to make my position transparent to the reader, I must explain that that I was invited into the B&U debate on childhood sexuality because of the study mentioned in the introduction, concerning Danish childcare institutions’ rules for children’s doctor games and nudity (Leander et al., 2018). In this debate I endeavor to draw attention to the problematization of childhood sexuality, and its consequences.

Terminology

In this article, I use the terms “species-typical” and “natural” when describing children’s sexuality, unless I refer to others’ understandings of childhood sexuality. I do so to avoid dichotomies such as “normal–abnormal,” “normative–non-normative,” and “age-appropriate–not-age-appropriate.” As I demonstrate in this article, these dichotomies may be problematic for two reasons: first, because they often suggest objectivity but are in fact historically and culturally contingent; second, because in practice, they do not always satisfactorily describe the diversity of children’s sexuality, and may pathologize some children, for instance, those who are ahead of, or behind their age for natural reasons. I should emphasize my fundamental belief that human sexuality is biologically natural, but always historically, culturally, and socially embedded. Consequently, when I use the term “natural,” this is not meant in any absolute or static way. Furthermore, I do not mean to say that one should not, or that it may not be necessary, to discuss what expected sexual development in a child is, or that one may not legitimately determine that some children display PSB. However, I do believe that when applying these norms, one should always be aware that they are not absolute truths, and may marginalize some children.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

First period, 1970–1985: Children’s sexuality—a marginalized subject

The first period that I identified in B&U’s coverage of childhood sexuality extended from 1970 to 1985. The main reason for this periodization is that in this period, no article in B&U had children’s sexuality as its main topic. Instead, fewer than ten articles mentioned children’s sexuality in passing. These were primarily reviews of sex education books for

children (Haslund, 1971, 1975; Sander, 1981; T., 1970). Sex education became mandatory in the Danish elementary school system in 1970. What these reviews had in common was that their journalists found that most of the sex education books were prudish, sexist, prioritized information about reproduction, or were straight-up useless to children. They instead endorsed the books that provided children with full and realistic knowledge of sexuality; these included the books that addressed children's sexuality. One reviewer argued that sex education ought to begin in preschool, and endorsed a book (Widerberg, 1967) that explained to children the pleasure of intercourse by comparing it with children's doctor games. The reviewer was pleased that this book thoroughly explained to children that "whether married or in love, everyone has a need to fuck,"⁹ and contained good illustrations of "both erection and intercourse" (T., 1970). Another reviewer found a German book (Jacobi, Kriedemann, Maier, & Peters, 1974) that provided information on all aspects of sexuality, including children's sexual games, better than all other sex education books. The review included a photograph from the German book, showing a smiling boy of around 10 with a large erection, sitting on a bed beside a giggling girl of the same age, also naked. The reviewer stated that he had never seen anything like it in a book for children (Haslund, 1975). Also, in all the B&U articles I analyzed, this photograph stood out as the image that portrayed children's sexuality most explicitly, portraying overt sexual arousal and sexual play among older children.

Views similar to those of the B&U reviewers on sex education books for children were presented in an article discussing children's fiction, in which a well-known Danish literary critic, Pil Dahlerup, criticized the taboo on adult sex and childhood sex in children's books, when, as she stated, "everybody knows that children are already crazy about sex by the age of 3," detailing later how children run after each other, the girls to kiss the boys, the

⁹ All translations of quoted material have been made by the author.

boys to pull down the girls' pants (Øhlenschläger, 1972). Both this article and the reviews of sex education books contained highly broadminded discourse and views on children and sexuality, clearly contrasting with the more traditional, cautious approach to children and sexuality that allegedly predominated in most of the books reviewed. The reviewers portrayed children as having a vital sexuality, and a need and a capacity for receiving realistic and outspoken information about sexuality. As such, these reviews were very much in the spirit of both the "sexual revolution" of the 1970s and the general demand for realism that characterized children's books and literary criticism of children's books in the 1970s in Denmark (Christensen, 2003).

As I looked through all the print editions of issues of B&U from 1970 to 1985, I determined that there were not many photographs of naked children during that period (fewer than 20), but those I found openly and naturally showed the child's naked body, including buttocks and genitals. Most of these photos illustrated the daily routine in childcare institutions. For instance, a few photographs portrayed both very young and older children bathing naked at the institution or at camp (illustrations 1, 2, and 3). These photographs support the finding that before the turn of the millennium it was commonplace for children to bathe naked in Danish childcare institutions, as reported by Danish childcare professionals (Leander et al., 2018).

From 1970 to 1985, there were only two articles about CSA in B&U. This sign of an absence of focus on CSA among childcare professionals and in Danish society during this period is confirmed by these articles' content. The first was a two-page report by a Danish pediatrician, Svend Heinild, from the Second International Congress on Child Abuse & Neglect in London, in 1978 (Heinild, 1978). Heinild stated that only recently, one had become increasingly aware of CSA in both Europe and the United States, and that most speakers on CSA at the congress were Americans. Thus, an American speaker argued that at

least one in four children would experience at least one sexual assault before the age of eighteen, and an American film suggested that people who had been sexually abused as children abused their own children as adults, or had difficulty establishing a normal sex life. The pediatrician's report supports the argument that the great focus on CSA began in the United States in the late 1970s, and was exported and spread throughout Europe during the 1980s (Bech, 2005; Guillou, 2009; Jenkins, 1998; Kutchinsky, 1992; Vanggaard, 1990). This is also supported by the second article on CSA from this period, a 1985 review of an American children's book, "No More Secrets for Me" (Wachter, 1982), which encouraged children to confide in an adult if they experienced sexual abuse or other violations of personal boundaries from adults or older children (Weicher, 1985). In the mid-1980s, children sexually abusing children was a concern that was not at all on the Danish agenda. My count of the B&U articles that mentioned or addressed CSA between 1970 and 2019 confirmed that only in 1988 did B&U begin writing more regularly about CSA (illustration 23). A 1975 photograph from B&U pictured a male childcare institution's director in a group of children, with a naked child in his arms (illustration 4). It illustrates how today's significant focus on CSA, and by extension, the significant fear of wrongful allegations of CSA that has resulted in the distancing of childcare professionals (particularly male workers) from children, and the ban on children's nudity in most Danish childcare institutions, were not present in Denmark during this first period (Leander et al., 2018; Leander, Munk, & Larsen, 2019; Munk, Larsen, Leander, & Soerensen, 2013).

To sum up the period from 1970 to 1985, the topic of children's sexuality and photographs of naked children did not take up much column space in B&U, but when it did, the approach was very broadminded, which I later argue was closely related to the second finding from this period, namely that CSA was not yet a focal point in Denmark during this period. The only two glimpses of a focus on CSA in these 15 years came from English-

speaking countries, mainly the United States, indicating a cultural import under way. A pamphlet by BUPL and The Danish Union of Early Childhood and Youth Educator Assistants (PMF) supports these findings. It stated that in the 1970s, Danish childcare staff would walk around topless in summertime, and some childcare institutions had rooms for children's sexual games called "sex rooms" (Rantorp & Sanders, 1999, p. 8).

Second period, 1986–1998: Happy, naked children, liberal attitudes and the question of where to set limits

In 1986, for the first time, children's sexuality was the main topic of a B&U article. It addressed an incident at a BASC in which a group of children aged 8–9, had, according to their parents' formal complaint to the municipality, played striptease and masturbated to music under dimmed lights, before finally peeing in the institution's potted plants. The municipality dismissed the director after parents' complaints that staff had not interfered. The case was mentioned in three issues of B&U (Bisgaard, 1986; Børn&Unge, 1986; Riis, 1986), the last time as a three-article feature that was also the cover story (Riis, 1986). The question of where to set the limits for children's sexual behavior in childcare institutions was the crux of this feature. The cover presented a large photograph of two naked children, one displaying its genitals, laughing and touching each other. The photograph was captioned, "Do you want to play? Where is the limit" (illustration 5). Inside the journal, a photograph of two children kissing each other on the mouth appeared under the feature headline, "How naughty can a BASC be?" (illustration 6). BASC staff from another municipality was interviewed for the feature. Three teachers from one BASC reported similar events at their institution, where children aged 9–12 had repeatedly played strip poker behind closed doors. The staff had made sure that all children involved were comfortable with the game, but otherwise left the

children alone, and the parents were amused. A teacher from another BASC stated to B&U, “Children’s exploration of sexuality emerges everywhere” (Riis, 1986, p. 18).

In general, a great tolerance of children’s sexual games in childcare institutions characterized the 1986 feature’s nine interviews. A child psychologist and a teacher called for the acceptance of children’s sexual curiosity, the teacher concluding that his profession’s task was to defend this. An elementary school principal found that touching each other, something so fundamentally human, ought to be allowed to children in childcare institutions, and if children aged 10–12 masturbated together, teachers were to teach basic rules of conduct, but communicate a relaxed attitude to sex. Only the school doctor, Tage Voss, believed that children should learn to control themselves, to respect those around them. Their sexuality was not to be tolerated in childcare institutions, or become a pedagogical concern, “We should not be looking over the shoulder of a boy as he is masturbating, and telling him how to hold it” (Riis, 1986, p. 19). The other interviewees, too, discussed the risk of children’s sexuality provoking parents, and the challenge of defining acceptable limits, and called children’s sexuality “a taboo” and an “explosive” and “neglected” subject” (Riis, 1986, p. 18).

Between 1986 and 1998, B&U published three more features on children’s sexuality (Bo, 1990; Mølviq, 1988; Nielsen, 1998), which shared many similarities with the 1986 feature (Riis, 1986). The question of where to set the limits for children’s sexual games in a childcare institution was central to all four features, and the overarching question during this period. The 1988 feature (Mølviq, 1988) was an interview with a kindergarten teacher and a BASC teacher who had organized a municipal seminar on children’s sexuality to debate where childcare professionals were to set the limit for children’s sexual behavior, and the lead of the 1998 feature read: “Should the kids be allowed to take off their pants when

playing alone in the cushion room?”¹⁰ (Nielsen, 1998, p. 8). The main reason for childcare professionals to be concerned with the limits on children’s sexual games was the response of parents, who the four features generally portrayed as uneasy or ignorant about their children’s sexuality, and disapproving of their sexual games. The features described conflicts between childcare professionals who did not interfere with children’s sexual behavior, and angry parents. However, the picture was not black and white. The features also reported on exceedingly relaxed parents, and a kindergarten director stated that both parents’ and teachers’ attitudes towards children’s sexuality had become much more liberal during her 26 years in the profession. At times, the director even found this new broadmindedness an assault on children, for instance, when they were exposed to pornographic images (Bo, 1990, p. 13).

Among childcare professionals, the picture was not black and white, either. Clearly, all the childcare professionals who were interviewed for the four features between 1986 and 1998 expressed extremely liberal views of children’s sexuality, and an understanding that sexual games are a natural part of children’s development. The stories from childcare institutions also indicated that these were very accepting of children’s masturbation and sexual games. For example, a kindergarten director explained that in her institution, they were always “100% in solidarity with the children”:

“Like other kindergartens, we have a room with soft cushions, where the children are allowed to be on their own. If little Lise is lying in the cushion room, having a good time, we pop in at some point to remind her that in half an hour her mom will arrive, so she’d better put on her

¹⁰ The cushion room is a tradition in Danish childcare institutions, where children may either relax or play energetically among cushions. The cushion room is a recurrent feature in this article, as this room tends to be where children play doctor or undress (Leander et al., 2018).

pants again. Not all parents like the idea that their children are sexual beings” (Bo, 1990, p. 13).

However, there were also examples of children’s frequent masturbation bewildering childcare staff, who asked themselves how much was acceptable in the setting in question (e.g., Nielsen, 1998). According to a B&U journalist (Bo, 1990) and an ECEC programs teacher who held speeches on children’s sexuality in childcare institutions (Nielsen, 1998), the taboo on children’s sexuality also existed among childcare professionals. In fact, a recurrent theme in the features of this period was that childcare professionals had to determine and respect their own boundaries with regard to children’s sexuality, as some childcare professionals, despite their knowledge of children’s sexuality, felt uncomfortable when actually confronted with it, but were afraid to say “no” to children’s sexual behavior. The ECEC programs teacher emphasized children’s need for “healthy and natural development” (Nielsen, 1998, p. 9), but nonetheless advised childcare professionals to not act more liberal than they actually were. According to her, what kept some childcare professionals from regulating children’s sexual behavior was the fear of repressing children’s sexuality or ruining their pleasure (Nielsen, 1998). The idea that restricting children’s natural sexuality might have negative consequences for them reoccurred in the four features. The 1988 feature directly asked: “How do you stop sexual behavior without ruining something for the child?” (Mølviq, 1988, p. 12), and a Norwegian psychologist, Thore Langfeldt, emphasized the importance of childhood masturbation for a fulfilled adult sex life, advising the acceptance of children’s masturbation, and talking to them about their technique. He reported that he had resolved several children’s social problems by guiding them to “a result-oriented masturbation technique” (Bo, 1990, p. 14). In a study of 70 years of American early childhood education textbooks, Tobin found related ideas. From the 1920s through the 1950s, a psychoanalysis-inspired warning of the health risks of repressing children’s sexuality characterized these books (Tobin, 2001). Tobin

cited Grace Owens' 1920 book, *Nursery School Education*: "The truth seems to be that the repression of any innate impulse which is sufficiently powerful may be the source of mental and moral inefficiency," and "What the nursery school teacher can do is to prevent unnatural repression of primitive impulses" (Owens, 1920, pp. 6, 53). Also, in the 1960s and 1970s, psychoanalytic theory that suggested that more harm was done by repressing children's sexuality, than by its expression, was typically part of American early childhood education curricula (Tobin, 1997).

From 1986 to 1998, the debate in B&U regarding where to set the limits for children's sexual behavior at childcare institutions was always a question of the limits between the children and the setting. The main question related to morals: How much could and should the parents or the professionals accept? The discussion was *not* about the transgression of limits *between the children*, and the children were not blamed for their sexual activity. During this period, only one, otherwise extremely liberal, kindergarten director mentioned that sexually abused children could transgress other children's boundaries and that her staff was vigilant, so sexual games did not get out of hand (Bo, 1990), and a second, also very liberal, interviewee expressed the concern that no child should feel pressured to participate in sexual games (Riis, 1986). But these statements were rare exceptions in a discourse that was predominantly concerned with the reactions of others—not the children involved. For the children the negative consequences considered were those arising from being *prohibited* from engaging in sexual behavior, or not learning social norms such as discretion.

It follows that from 1986 to 1998, journalists' and interviewees' discourse on children's sexuality in B&U was almost exclusively positive and accepting. The journalist who wrote the 1988 feature asserted that "Everybody has played doctor as a child" (Mølvi, 1988, p. 12), and the journalist who wrote the 1990 feature agreed with Freud that children

“do have sexual feelings and sexual needs” (Bo, 1990, p. 12). A kindergarten director argued that since “sex is such a natural part” of children’s development, it ought to be part of the fixed syllabus for the ECEC programs (Bo, 1990, p. 13), and an ECEC programs teacher stated, “Children’s sexuality is very different from adults’ sexuality. They play with the body, explore it and touch it—because they are curious and spontaneous. (...) For them, it is fun, exciting and innocent” (Nielsen, 1998, p. 29). This period’s discourse was also extremely explicit. This was particularly evident in the fictive cases based on professionals’ experiences of children’s sexual behavior in ECEC, such as this: “The girl is lying over the edge of the table, masturbating all day long. She is completely blissful because of what her body does for her. She is four years old” (Mølviq, 1988, p. 12). Or this: “A group of 5-year-old boys step out of the cushion room, giggling, with flushed cheeks. ‘We’ve been playing sex games,’ one boy announces. ‘Yes, and I kissed Jacob’s willy,’ another boy adds” (Nielsen, 1998, p. 28). Clearly, the discourse of this period’s four B&U features contrasted with the taboo on childhood sexuality that was identified or denounced in the features and that inspired the 1990 and the 1998 headlines, “Children’s sex is hush-hush” (Bo, 1990) and “Children’s sexuality is taboo” (Nielsen, 1998).

The broadmindedness of the discourse in B&U’s features on childhood sexuality between 1986 and 1998 was reflected in the photographs illustrating these features (illustrations 5-10). They showed naked children, including genitals and buttocks, as we saw in the 1986 feature (illustration 5). Other examples are the 1990 feature that was illustrated by a photograph of a naked child in a zinc tub (illustration 9) and two photographs of a small, naked boy playing with and examining his penis (illustrations 8 and 10). It was characteristic of all the photographs of this period that they involved a very positive representation of children’s sexuality, showing happy children, smiling and giggling and at ease while examining their own bodies or playing with a friend.

The last B&U feature from 1986–1998 stood out as an exception, as it did not include photographs, but was illustrated with a drawing of children playing doctor in a not altogether happy representation of children’s sexuality: The playing children were smiling, but a shocked childcare professional had popped up, and a girl standing a bit aside seemed scared, either because of the games or the teacher’s arrival (illustration 12). In the subsequent period, from 1999 to 2019, all illustrations in B&U articles on children’s sexuality were drawings (except for the illustrations in the first feature of this period, which were blurred photographs of children’s heads and arms only, illustrations 13-14). Thus, the 1998 feature (Nielsen, 1998) was a transitional article that shared its liberal discourse with the other features from the 1986–1998 period, but its form of illustration belonged to the 1999–2019 period. The year before, in February 1997, B&U published a photograph of two naked boys playing with water in a childcare institution (illustration 11), which shows that B&U still published photographs of naked children at the beginning of 1997.

The Vadstrupgaard Case and Child Sexual Abuse

What had happened in 1998 that prompted a shift in B&U’s practices, from publishing photographs of naked children, to drawings? A 1998 article about care, ethics, and sexuality in B&U leads us to a plausible explanation. The article addressed childcare professionals’ dilemma of having to choose between personal boundaries and physical intimacy in their work with small children. The article cited professionals’ examples of such dilemmas: a boy asking a childcare professional for help because he had retracted his foreskin and was unable to put it back, children trying to touch teachers’ breasts, and teachers allowing sad children to sleep besides them on camps. In these situations, the professionals reflected on their boundaries and were concerned about parents’ reactions. In contrast to the features on

children's sexuality from 1986 to 1998, the professionals' concerns were not related to parents' reactions to the *children's* behavior, but parents' reactions to the *professionals'* behavior. The professionals feared parents might suspect them of inappropriate sexual behavior. According to this article, this dilemma was amplified because of recent cases of CSA in childcare institutions, especially the Vadstrupgaard case (Sander, 1998).

Let us pause at the Vadstrupgaard case for a moment, since it plays a key role in the historical and cultural context of the development in B&U analyzed in this article. In the Vadstrupgaard case, a male teaching assistant was sentenced to three and a half years in prison for sexually abusing twenty children in a kindergarten. The case began in the summer of 1997 and the final sentence was pronounced in the High Court in May 1998. Some argued that the case was a miscarriage of justice, as there was no concrete evidence, that the police made significant mistakes during their investigation and while interviewing the children, and finally, that the children's testimony in the case was uncritically believed (Berntsen, 2002; Blædel, 1999; Hemmingsen, 2002; Rantorp, 2000). The Vadstrupgaard case, the first major case of the sort in Denmark, elicited public outcry throughout Danish society, and represented a loss of innocence, in the view of Danish childcare institutions. As mentioned above, Danish society had paid attention to CSA since the latter part of the eighties; what was new with the Vadstrupgaard case was the public's realization that CSA could happen in a professional care setting. This shock made CSA a more significant threat to the general public. The Vadstrupgaard case put an intense focus on CSA in Danish society, from the media, the public, politicians, and children's organizations, and since this case, considerable juridical, political, and institutional efforts have been made to prevent CSA in Danish society. For instance, vetting of childcare staff was established in 2001, and became a legal requirement in 2005 (Andreasen, 1999; Held, 2006; Helweg-Larsen, Andersen, & Plauborg, 2010; Kutchinsky, 1989; Rantorp, 2000; Retsudvalget, 2012). Before the Vadstrupgaard case,

allegations of CSA in Danish childcare institutions were rare, but in the years following the case, the number of accusations of CSA against childcare staff increased considerably (Rasmussen, 2000).

Studies have shown that in the aftermath of the Vadstrupgaard case the fear of being suspected of inappropriate sexual behavior towards children, addressed in the above-mentioned B&U article (Sander, 1998), spread among Danish childcare professionals, and that guidelines to protect children against CSA and, in particular, staff against wrongful allegations—for example keeping doors open and restricting physical contact with children—sprouted up in Danish childcare institutions (Munk et al., 2013; Leander et al., 2019). As mentioned in the introduction, Leander et al. (2018) also showed how, after the Vadstrupgaard case, the tolerant practices surrounding children's nudity and doctor games in Danish childcare institutions changed. A direct parallel may be drawn between this cultural shift in Danish childcare institutions in the late 1990s and the changes in B&U around 1998. B&U's replacing photographs of happy, naked children with drawings in articles on childhood sexuality indicates a change in the way the child's naked body was viewed, and a heightened attention to who is looking at it.

The change in illustration type in B&U in the late 1990s was accompanied by a change in discourse. The article on care, ethics, and sexuality (Sander, 1998) signaled a new fear of misconstruction of adults' actions around children. This fear was not present in the four 1986–1998 features on children's sexuality. In the 1986 feature, an elementary school headmaster defended children's masturbation in childcare institutions by stating that childcare professionals masturbated too, and two teachers described how children joked around, trying to pull down their teachers' swimming trunks (Riis, 1986). In the 1990 feature, an ECEC programs teacher mentioned that her small daughter had pulled up her nightgown, caressed her vulva, and asked her mother to do the same because it felt “so nice” (Bo, 1990,

p. 14). These statements were carefree in the way they associated the child's body and/or sexuality with the adult body and/or sexuality, a carefree attitude that was characteristic of the extremely explicit discourse on children's sexuality in B&U from 1970 to 1998. During this period, no speaker or journalist manifested any fear of being misconstrued when expressing themselves extremely straightforwardly about children's sexuality. The carefree discourse and photograph choices of 1970–1998 indicated that the child's body was not yet sexualized in the adult understanding of the word, or associated with CSA, and I argue that the shock of the Vadstrupgaard case played a decisive role in putting an end to B&U's carefree discourse and photograph choices, with regard to childhood sexuality and naked bodies. These changes, of which we see only the beginning at the end of this period, and explore much more deeply for the subsequent period, indicated a loss of innocence with respect to the view of the child's naked body and sexuality, and that after the Vadstrupgaard case, the child came to be increasingly viewed as a potential victim of CSA. "The pedophile's gaze," the view of the child through the lens of CSA, took root in the field of childcare, and led to the questioning of one's practices around children—in childcare institutions *and* in B&U (Leander et al., 2018, 2019; Munk et al., 2013).

My count of the B&U articles that mentioned or addressed CSA between 1970 and 2019 (illustration 23) revealed a significant increase in B&U's coverage of CSA in the aftermath of the Vadstrupgaard case. An eighteen-year period (1970–1987) during which B&U published only two articles on CSA was followed by an eleven-year period (1988–1998) during which B&U published one to eleven articles on CSA annually, evidence that CSA attracted attention in Denmark in the second half of the eighties. However, in 1999, the year following the verdict in the Vadstrupgaard case, the number of B&U articles on CSA rose to 46, which remains the largest number of such articles in any year of its 50-year history. From 1999 to 2019, B&U's coverage of CSA continued to be significantly higher

than it had been between 1970 and 1998. To summarize, this investigation strongly indicates that the Vadstrupgaard case attracted great attention to CSA in B&U and in Denmark, which underpins my argument that this case and the intense focus on CSA strongly influenced the changes in B&U's coverage of children's sexuality at the end of the 1986–1998 period; changes that unfolded drastically in the 1999–2019 period, which I analyze next. Before I do this, I should add that even though the Vadstrupgaard case was the major one in Denmark, other significant cases sustained the attention on CSA around the turn of the millennium. In the aftermath of the Vadstrupgaard case, others followed in Denmark (Rantorp, 2000; Weiss, 2000), and internationally, the horrific case of the Belgian, Marc Dutroux, shocked.

Third period, 1999–2019: “Children sexually abuse children”

One year after the transitional 1998 feature on children's sexuality (Nielsen, 1998), B&U published a three-article feature on children's sexuality (Jensen, 1999). This feature was also the cover story, and one glance at the cover is enough to make us realize that we have entered a new period of B&U's coverage of children's sexuality. Gone were the happy, smiling, naked children. The cover showed a blurred photograph of the heads and arms of two children struggling (illustration 13). One head was over twice the size of the other, and the child with the larger head was above the other child, suggesting a difference in age and/or strength. The smaller child was in great distress, crying with closed eyes. The child aggressor's head was so large and blurred that it looked almost demonic. The photograph, in shades of red, suggested violence and danger, and the headline on the cover explicitly explained what was going on: “Children sexually abuse children.” The lead added that children sexually abusing other children was a widespread phenomenon, although denied in Denmark.

The headline of the 1999 feature, “Children sexually abuse children”, could also serve as headline for the 1999–2019 period. The 1999 feature introduced a new view of children’s sexuality that predominated in B&U throughout this period. The new view did not exclude the idea that children’s sexuality is natural and may be innocent. However, it included the new idea that children can have PSB and sexually abuse each other, that they can menace, dominate, or force other children to engage in sexual contact. The 1999 feature explicitly showed that this view of childhood sexuality was new in Denmark in 1999. The first article presented a case involving a boy who was “sexually abused” by children in his kindergarten. His mother explained that initially, when the boy told her that two other boys, aged 5–6, had put their fingers between his buttocks, she figured that it was “just a game in the cushion room” (Jensen, 1999, p. 6). She explained that at the time, the spring of 1999, the media was full of articles on “adult pedophiles,” but as she felt confident that this was not the scenario, the idea of “sexual abuse” did not enter her mind (Jensen, 1999, p. 6). It was only when her son and other children repeatedly experienced similar incidents, creating a tense situation in the kindergarten, with anxious parents complaining to the management, that the mother began conceptualizing the events as sexual abuse, and she stated, “I didn’t know that children do that to each other, and other people probably don’t either. And at least childcare professionals should be aware that the problem exists” (Jensen, 1999, p. 6).

The 1999 feature also presented an interview with Vernon Jones, a British social worker working in Denmark, where he was a counsellor for the parents involved in the Vadstrupgaard case. During 1998–1999, in several Danish media outlets, Jones—introduced as “a British expert”—called Denmark “a paradise for pedophiles” in which “pedophiles have almost a free rein” (Berg & Havemann, 1999, pp. 12–13; Held, 2000). In the 1999 B&U interview, “Danes deny the problem,” Jones expressed consternation that Danes still denied that children may also sexually abuse children. During a 1995–96 master’s degree project,

Jones had been able to find hardly any Danes who would acknowledge this problem. He explained that similar reactions occurred in England when the problem of children sexually abusing children became well-known in the mid-1980s, but that since the beginning of the 1990s, all English Social Services Departments had facilities for treating children who abuse children, facilities that the British social worker regretted did not exist in Denmark. He urged Danish childcare professionals to recognize the problem, because, he argued, “it is just as painful for a child to be sexually abused by a child as by an adult,” and because “it is possible to put an end to pedophilia and incest by stopping the abusive behavior that is founded in childhood and youth.” Jones explained that even very small children are sexually abused, and “when they repeat the abuse, it is because this sexual behavior has been forced on them. It does not belong to their own childhood sexuality” (Jensen, 1999, p. 11).

The idea that children who “sexually abuse children” are themselves sexual abuse victims was also central to the 1999 feature’s third interview with two psychologists¹¹ who worked with sexually abused children and children with PSB. Although they mentioned other factors that might cause children to be sexually abusive, they repeatedly emphasized that often, sexually abusive children had been sexually abused. The interview referred to a 1989 American study in which 100% of the girls aged 4–6 who had sexually abused other children, had been sexually abused. Therefore, this first B&U feature on “sexually abusive children” established two major stereotypes, which have been frequently advanced since the emergence of an interest in children with so-called PSB in the mid-1980s in the US—but that research has proven to be inaccurate for most of these children—namely, that they are sexual abuse victims and future sex offenders (Carpentier, Silovsky, & Chaffin, 2006; Chaffin et al., 2006; Dicataldo, 2009; Elkovitch et al., 2009; Friedrich, 2007; Furedi, 2006; Letourneau, Chapman,

¹¹ Marianne Gram and Dorthe Lippert.

& Schoenwald, 2008; Silovsky & Niec, 2002). The stereotype that sexually abusive children are themselves sexual abuse victims was largely based on the first studies of these children, in 1988–1989, which were American studies with small samples (Friedrich, 2007; Friedrich & Luecke, 1988; Gil & Johnson, 1993; Johnson 1988, 1989). The 1989 American study that the 1999 B&U feature referenced (uncited), in which 100% of the sexually abusive girls were previously sexually abused, was almost certainly a study by T.C. Johnson that used a sample of 13 girls in a Support Program for Abuse-Reactive Kids (SPARK) (Johnson, 1989). With the increased concern about the sexual abuse of children in the 1980s, it was not only children's PSB, but also any child's display of any sexual behavior that was initially mistaken for a sure sign of sexual abuse (Dicataldo, 2009; Friedrich, 2007). The 1999 B&U feature also mentioned this idea when one of the two psychologists explained, "Sexualized behavior is not normal at that age, so it must come from somewhere" (Jensen, 1999, p. 10).

The interview with the two psychologists referenced American studies on "children who sexually abuse children" four times (uncited). At the same time, they emphasized the lack of such studies in Denmark, which indicated that the two Danish psychologists were influenced by American research at a time when this view of children's sexual behavior had not yet gained ground in Denmark. The aforementioned British social worker also referenced American and Canadian results of treatment for sexually abusive children, as well as British results (Jensen, 1999). This indicates that, just as the intense focus on CSA was imported to Europe and Denmark from the United States during the 1980s (Bech, 2005; Furedi, 2006; Guillou, 2009; Jenkins, 1998; Kutchinsky, 1992; Vanggaard, 1990), the focus on "children who sexually abuse children" was also imported to Denmark, in the late 1990s, from the United States and other English-speaking countries, where this focus had existed since the mid-1980s (Dicataldo, 2009; Friedrich, 2007; Jensen, 1999; Johnson, 1988; Levine, 2002; Tobin, 2004). In fact, in 1988, T.C. Johnson—who, as mentioned above, authored one of the

first studies on children with sexually abusive behavior—in essentially the same words used in the Danish B&U feature eleven years later (Jensen, 1999), complained that American society, which was initially reluctant to acknowledge the extent of adults' sexual abuse of children, and subsequently, the seriousness of adolescents' sexual abuse of children, now denied the seriousness of the “newly identified population of child perpetrators” (p. 228):

It is now time to acknowledge the existence of another population whose sexual behavior must be taken seriously. This population is preadolescent, latency-aged, and preschool children who sexually victimize children younger than themselves. For clarity, in this article this population is referred to as “child perpetrators.” Sexual behavior between children 13 years old and younger is generally dismissed as “playing doctor” or normal childhood exploration. Although this is true in most cases, there is a sub-population of children whose sexual behavior is beyond what is to be expected normally and requires assessment and, possibly, intervention by the mental health system. (Johnson, 1988, p. 220)

Johnson (1989) also argued for filing police reports on, and the criminal prosecution of, “child perpetrators.”

A 1991 book, *When Children Molest Children*, by Cunningham and MacFarlane, on children aged four to twelve, is another example of the United States' first steps to define the newfound population of sexually abusive children. In this initial American text, we also find ideas and discourse that were echoed eight years later, when the idea of “sexually abusive children” was introduced in the Danish 1999 B&U feature:

This book is for and about sex offenders. No, not the ones in trench coats who hang out in playgrounds. This book is for the ones who go to playgrounds to play ball and swing on the swings (...) whom none of us wants to see labeled with pejorative terms like “offender” or “perpetrator.” And yet, these are children whose behavior can be defined by these terms. The

fact is, we don't yet know what to call them, how to explain them, or what to do with them. They make all of us uncomfortable—so uncomfortable we've had to deny their existence and/or minimize their behavior until now. We've called their behavior "exploration" or "curiosity" until they were old enough for us to comfortably call it what it is: sexual abuse of other children. (...) Like their adult counterparts, their behaviors include everything from voyeurism to rape: acts of violence, seduction, rage, confusion, sexual gratification, and the abuse of power. (...) Many have been sexually abused themselves, but some have not. Most reveal some history of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, while others have been exposed to neglect or inappropriate behavior (...) If we are to interrupt the cycle of abuse (...), we must take care not to participate in the collective paralysis and minimization that frequently accompany their detection. (Cunningham & MacFarlane, 1991, p. v–vi)

The interview with the two Danish psychologists in the 1999 B&U feature also used the term "child perpetrators of sexual abuse" (Jensen, 1999, p. 10)¹², and the psychologists also criticized Danish childcare professionals for not reporting sexual abuse among children. The interview stressed childcare professionals' responsibility: "Childcare professionals can and must see when something goes on in the cushion room that exceeds children's normal curiosity in "doctor and sex games"" (Jensen, 1999, p. 8). The psychologists specified that most people can sense when a child is sexually abused. Echoing the interview headline, "We know that it happens," they asserted that, "There is no doubt that sexual abuse occurs among Danish children and in Danish kindergartens," stating that they believed such abuse to be highly underreported (Jensen, 1999, p. 10). The psychologists painted a picture of the

¹² The Danish terms used in the discourse introduced in the 1999 B&U feature (Jensen, 1999) to convey the new view of childhood sexuality as potentially abusive were: "krænke (seksuelt)," "børn krænker børn (seksuelt)," "krænkere," "børnekrænkere," "seksuelle overgreb," "krænkelser," "krænkende adfærd," "børns misbrug af hinanden."

consequences of childcare staff failing to meet their responsibilities: “If a child has been sexually abused by an adult or another child, the abuse will often spread like ripples across the water. And a kindergarten group will typically constitute a setting for this” (Jensen, 1999, p. 10). In this, too, this B&U interview echoed the initial American texts. In a 1988 article, the pediatrician, Cantwell, repeatedly emphasized the cycle of sexual abuse of which “child perpetrators” were a part, and the great responsibility this placed on caretakers: “Sexual play between children requires increased attention from caretakers to determine whether it is abusive, imitated from prior experience, and potentially transmissible to other children.” She emphasized the danger that “Child perpetrators may be a large reservoir for future adult perpetrators” (Cantwell, 1988, pp. 579–580). Dicataldo called this type of discourse—the claim that sexual abuse among children may become epidemic, and that the known cases are only the tip of the iceberg—characteristic of “the promoters of the new category of (...) children with sexual behavior problems” (Dicataldo, 2009, pp. 137–139). Furedi found this discourse of fear “repeated time and again for a variety of hitherto undisclosed abuses” (Furedi, 2006, pp. 42–50). In the 1999 B&U feature—the year that articles on adults’ sexual abuse of children exploded in B&U in the immediate aftermath of the Vadstrupgaard case (illustration 23)—this discourse, echoing initial American texts and ideas, placed a great responsibility on Danish childcare professionals (Jensen, 1999). The violence suggested by the photographs that illustrated the 1999 feature heavily emphasized the message (illustrations 13-14).

Normal vs Abnormal Childhood Sexuality

In 2005, B&U published a lengthy interview on children’s sexuality (Jensen, 2005) with a Danish journalist, Anna Louise Stevnhøj—a recurrent figure in B&U’s coverage of childhood

sexuality throughout the third period, and today, still a central voice in Denmark on the subject of children's sexuality. According to her homepage, Stevnhøj has presented "a myriad of lectures to parents and professionals," and developed material on children's sexuality for parents and professionals in the municipality of Copenhagen (Stevnhøj, 2019). Since 2010, Stevnhøj has been a board member of the Danish Janus Center, which is introduced in the next section. In 2005, while working for a Danish child welfare organization, Stevnhøj held seminars for childcare staff, and published a book on children's sexuality (Stevnhøj, 2005). In the 2005 B&U interview, she stated that Danish childcare staff, who, according to the 1999 feature (Jensen, 1999) did not acknowledge the existence of children with PSB, were now, six years later, split into two camps. One still held the liberal 1980s attitude to children's sexuality and found all children's sexual activities innocent, worrying that interference could cause trauma. The other suffered from what Stevnhøj called a "fear of cushion rooms" (Jensen, 2005, p. 13), influenced by the reigning fear of pedophilia and thinking that children playing sexual games must be sexually abused. If we are to believe Stevnhøj, the problematized view of children's sexuality, introduced in the 1999 feature, had gained considerable ground by 2005.

Stevnhøj claimed that younger childcare professionals lacked knowledge of children's sexuality, and that older ones' knowledge was outdated. Therefore, childcare professionals needed knowledge of "what constitutes normal sexual development in children, and what doesn't" (Jensen, 2005, p. 13), to find the right balance of accepting innocent sexual behavior and spotting abnormal sexual behavior. This interview introduced B&U's first schematic overview of children's "common and abnormal sexual behavior," quoted from Stevnhøj's book, revealing that, by 2005, among experts, too, the problematized view of children's sexuality had gained ground (Jensen, 2005, pp. 14–15). From being globally disbelieved in 1999, abnormal and abusive childhood sexuality had now become "objective," schematized

knowledge, published by an expert on behalf of a Danish child welfare organization. In the previous period, the importance of childcare professionals knowing about children's sexuality was also sporadically emphasized. However, a dominant feature of this period was the insistence on the importance of childcare professionals' acquisition of knowledge, in order for them to be able to handle childhood sexuality in ECEC. The knowledge endorsed was, as in Stevnhøj's schema, characterized by a distinction between *normal* and *abnormal* childhood sexuality that, throughout this period, was central to all the B&U articles on childhood sexuality. According to this distinction, normal childhood sexuality was natural and innocent, whereas abnormal childhood sexuality was excessive, transgressive or abusive. This distinction did not appear in B&U between 1970 and 1998, as the category of abnormal childhood sexuality did not exist. Following predominantly morals-based views of childhood sexuality during the two first periods, the new view of childhood sexuality during the third period was based on a strongly normative knowledge of children's sexual behavior.

Stevnhøj's schema reflected a liberal attitude to children's sexuality, for instance, identifying playing doctor, undressing, showing the genitals and buttocks, and inserting objects into the vagina/rectum as normal among children aged 2–5. However, it also revealed that what was regarded as natural and innocent before 1999, at least by some, was not necessarily regarded as normal in 2005. Whereas the 1970s B&U reviews of sex education books for children endorsed giving children full and realistic knowledge of all aspects of sex, Stevnhøj judged "knowing too much about sex" to be abnormal for kindergarten children (Jensen, 2005, p. 14), and "having a knowledge of sex that is not age-appropriate, for instance detailed knowledge of intercourse techniques etc." as abnormal for children aged 6–10 (Jensen, 2005, p. 15). Another example was masturbation, which Stevnhøj did not include at all in her schema for children aged 2–5 and judged abnormal for children aged 6–10 if done in public or by more than two children together, but that was mentioned several times in

B&U in 1970–1998 in a less dramatic fashion, also among children aged 2–5, and at times even endorsed.

The drawing accompanying the interview with Stevnhøj showed three children playing doctor, two of them smiling, but the third seemingly bewildered, while a worried childcare professional watched from behind a curtain (illustration 15). This worry was also present in the interview. Although supportive of normative childhood sexuality, the interview addressed abnormal childhood sexuality extensively. The last paragraph discussed pedophiles, reflecting the intense focus on CSA that exploded a few years before in Denmark, and Stevnhøj concluded with this advice to childcare professionals, recalling the 1999 feature (Jensen, 1999): “Sexualized behavior may indicate that a child is not thriving. There may be serious problems at home (...). But it is also possible that the child has seen or been exposed to something that it is now processing” (Jensen, 2005, p. 16). The locus of the conflict had changed. From 1970 to 1998, adults, particularly parents, but also childcare staff, for morals-based reasons or out of ignorance, could react negatively to childhood sexuality. From 1999 onwards, the apparent conflict was positioned among the children themselves, between those with a normal and innocent sexuality, and those with an abnormal and abusive sexuality.

The Danish Janus Center: Abusive Childhood Sexuality

In 2006, an article dedicated entirely to abusive childhood sexuality featured the Danish Janus Center (Janus), which assesses and treats children with PSB (Lyngskær, 2006). The first center of its sort in Denmark, Janus was created in 2003 for children aged 12–18, and in 2006 it expanded the age range to include children aged 6–12. In 2020, there are four Danish treatment centers for children with PSB in Denmark’s four largest cities, two of them Janus centers. These centers offer assessment and treatment in all Danish

municipalities. Janus works closely with social services administrations, schools, and institutions, and provides knowledge, consulting, supervision, seminars, and training to professionals and parents (Janus Center, 2020). This development mirrors that seen in recent decades in the United States, where there has been a significant increase both in the number of children with PSB referred to child protective services and treatment in outpatient and inpatient settings, and in the number of specialized PSB treatment programs (Chaffin et al., 2006; DeLago et al., 2019; Silovsky & Niec, 2002). In the United States there were no treatment programs for children with PSB in 1984, but just a dozen years later, there were 50 residential and 394 nonresidential programs for such children under 12 (Chaffin & Bonner, 1998; Dicataldo, 2009; Jenkins, 2003; Levine, 2002). Many specialized PSB treatment programs treat children as young as 3 years old (Silovsky & Niec, 2002).

The B&U article on Janus stated that Janus's patients were children who had been neglected and abused, had low IQs, and often had difficulty interacting with peers (I describe Janus's patient group in greater detail below). The director of Janus, the psychologist Mimi Strange, stressed that this group of children needed help, and encouraged professionals to be aware of the risk of PSB among vulnerable children; she explained that often, their patients were unaware that their sexually abusive behavior was harmful. The discourse used in the article to describe Janus's patients included the expressions, "children who sexually abuse," "the young perpetrator of sexual abuse," "commit sexual abuse" (Lyngskær, 2006, pp. 24–26).

Childhood Sexuality Associated with Risk Rather than Pleasure

In December 2007, a male childcare teaching assistant was sentenced to three years in prison for the sexual abuse of at least 13 children in a Danish kindergarten, in the so called "Beder

case,” the largest and most publicized case of CSA by an employee of a Danish childcare institution, after the Vadstrupgaard case. An article in B&U described this case’s significant impact on Danish childcare professionals, and how subsequently, Aarhus municipality, the second largest in Denmark, and where the case occurred, sent childcare staff to a seminar on children’s sexuality to learn to spot signs of sexual abuse, as part of a preventive initiative against CSA in childcare institutions (Hansen, 2009). The Beder case formed the background for the next B&U feature on children’s sexuality, in February 2008 (Mathieu, 2008). Entitled “Concealment is the enemy,” this feature claimed that children’s sexuality was still a great taboo, and a Danish child psychiatrist, Mogens A. Lund, stated that cases as such the Beder case had frightened parents and professionals, and made it even more difficult to talk about children’s sexuality. Inspired by recent recommendations of Dr. Charles Saunders, chairman of the British Medical Association’s consultants’ committee in Scotland (Medicalxpress, 2007), Lund recommended that children receive age-appropriate sex education from the age of five. The feature opened with his views on children’s sexuality: “Children are sexual beings, and children’s natural sexuality must be supported, so that they grow up as whole human beings and learn to enjoy life” (Mathieu, 2008, p. 19). Even if several interviewees in B&U during this period regretted that what they acknowledged to be children’s natural sexuality had become problematized, in making this statement, Lund is one of a very few who described childhood sexuality in directly positive terms, associating it with *pleasure*.

In contrast to Lund, the second interviewee in the 2008 feature, Stevnhøj, associated childhood sexuality with *risk*. She wished to break the taboo on children’s sexuality to fight CSA. As in the 2005 interview (Jensen, 2005), Stevnhøj stressed childcare staff’s heavy responsibility, and the importance of knowledge of normal and abnormal childhood sexuality: “It is believed that we have seen only the tip of the iceberg with regard to CSA. (...) In many cases, the only opportunity to discover it is through childcare professionals. Knowledge of

what is abnormal sexual behavior in a child is the only way forward” (Mathieu, 2008, p. 20). The stereotype that children with abnormal sexual behavior are sexual abuse victims was suggested in Stevnhøj’s discourse, which generally echoed the Anglo-American countries’ interest in children’s sexuality in the 1980s and 1990s, where children’s sexuality was also considered a tool for revealing sexual abuse (Friedrich, 2007). Thus, after first expressing regret that recent cases of CSA in childcare institutions had made children’s sexuality an even harder subject to approach, the 2008 feature itself associated childhood sexuality with sexual abuse. This association was a key characteristic of this period’s discourse on childhood sexuality.

Stevnhøj, and the 2008 feature in general, advised childcare institutions to acquire knowledge of children’s sexuality through reading and seminars with experts, to maintain an open dialogue among staff and with parents, and to establish a policy: “Lay everything out on the table and discuss which written and unwritten rules you need” (Mathieu, 2008, p. 21). Under the headline, “We didn’t know enough” (Mathieu, 2008, p. 22), the story was told of a model kindergarten that had done just what the 2008 feature prescribed when staff had been bewildered because one child was very focused on playing doctor, and at times would pull down other children’s pants. Although the child’s parents thought this behavior innocent, the institution reported it to the municipality, and a psychologist assessed the child. However, it was never established that the child had been sexually abused (Mathieu, 2008). If we compare this case to the cases at childcare institutions presented by B&U before 1999, it is clear that the limit of what was found concerning regarding children’s sexual behavior had shifted considerably by 2008. For example, in the 1986 feature (Riis, 1986), BASC teachers stated undramatically that children fooled around, trying to pull down other children’s *and* teachers’ swimming trunks, and one teacher added, “Only the small children might pull down the pants completely” (Riis, 1986. p. 18). Also, the literary critic, Pil Dahlerup, talked

undramatically about how small boys will pull down small girls' pants (Øhlenschläger, 1972). None of these interviewees associated sexual curiosity and pulling down other children's pants with sexual abuse, as did the institution in the 2008 feature that worried about this behavior being both a possible sign of sexual abuse, and potentially transgressing other children's boundaries (Mathieu, 2008). Instead, these earlier interviewees associated this behavior with fun, just as the kindergarten director, who talked about "Little Lise" having "a good time" masturbating in the cushion room, associated sexual behavior with pleasure (Bo, 1990, p. 13). Also, the illustration for the 2008 feature (illustration 16) contrasted starkly with the photographs in B&U before 1999. Whereas these photographs showed real, naked children bathing or having their first hands-on experiences with sexuality in doctor games, looking happy, self-confident, and competent, and embodying a pleasurable childhood sexuality, the drawing illustrating the 2008 feature showed a small cartoon girl looking bemusedly at a bee collecting nectar from a flower. By referring to the euphemism used when explaining sex and reproduction to children, "the birds and the bees"—in Danish "the bees and the flowers"—this child, this *girl*, was portrayed in an old-fashioned way, looking innocent and ignorant of sexual matters, and as such disassociated from pleasurable childhood sexuality.

A 2009 B&U article stated that a hotline established by Denmark's second largest city, Aarhus, for parents who suspected CSA at their children's childcare institution, was used mostly by childcare staff. Many of their calls did not address adult sexual abuse of children, but children's abuse of children. A typical question might be, "What should we do when little Peter sexually abuses little Søren, when little Peter is only five years old?" (Qvist & Mortensen, 2009, p. 10). A survey of 268 participants, conducted by B&U in 2011, showed that childcare professionals associated children's sexual games with risk: transgressive doctor games ranked among the ten games the childcare professionals most

feared would harm the children in their care (Rebsdorf, 2011). A 2011 B&U article (Nielsen, 2011) reported on a survey of Danish kindergartens (Stevnhøj & Gundelach, 2011), which indicated that parents were also anxious about children's sexual games; in about one third of the kindergartens, parents were more restrictive than staff when it came to sexual games, leading to disagreements with staff. Gundelach, one of the forces behind the survey, argued that childcare institutions ought to offer to children from restrictive families an opportunity to explore their bodies, and that it would be harmful, and impossible, to stop sexual games. In his opinion, children risked sexually abusing each other if forced to play the games secretly (Nielsen, 2011). Gundelach's statements illustrated another characteristic of this period's discourse on childhood sexuality, namely that almost all interviewees in B&U who denounced the anxiety surrounding childhood sexuality, themselves established some association between doctor games and risk.

The Panic: Rules Against Children's Doctor Games and Nudity

That the view of doctor games as potentially harmful to children was well-established among both staff and parents at Danish childcare institutions a little over ten years into the new millennium was confirmed in 2012 by the previously-mentioned study by Leander et al. (2018) of children's doctor games and nudity at Danish preschools and BASCs. In 2013, B&U presented this study's findings (Larsen, 2013). The study revealed that by 2012, the majority of Danish childcare institutions had established rules forbidding or restricting children's nudity and doctor games. Children now bathed wearing underwear, swimwear, or diapers, and doctor games were either forbidden or restricted, the most common restriction being that children had to remain dressed while playing. There was an intense focus on protecting children's personal boundaries, and children were taught to protect their

boundaries and respect other children's boundaries. This was explained by professionals as preventing sexual abuse by both children and adults, and the study revealed a new discourse that viewed doctor games as potentially "abusive," with some children categorized as "perpetrators of sexual abuse." Leander et al. (2018) found that—just as was discussed in the articles from B&U's earlier years—childcare staff feared parents' reactions, although they now shared parents' new concerns about the risk of children overstepping each other's boundaries or being abusive during doctor games. The study revealed that this view of doctor games, introduced by B&U in 1999 as foreign to Danish childcare professionals (Jensen, 1999) and described as dividing them in 2005 (Jensen, 2005), was, by 2012, the *dominant* view among Danish childcare professionals. Only a minority criticized this development, fearing children might perceive nudity and sexuality as dangerous, and feel shame because of their childish curiosity (Leander et al., 2018).

The experts interviewed in the B&U article, that presented the findings by Leander et al. (2018), expressed concerns about the new rules at Danish childcare institutions. I stated that doctor games are a safe venue for children's first sexual experiences, which are valuable to them later in life. The president of BUPL, Henning Pedersen, in 2013 one of the most influential voices on ECEC in Denmark, and the professor of sexology, Christian Graugaard, underscored the risk of passing on to children anxieties about the body and sexuality. Henning Pedersen emphasized that childcare professionals were aware that children's sexual games are natural. Graugaard contested the idea of children as possible "perpetrators of sexual abuse" and elaborated on how children's sexuality differs from adults' in not being conscious or goal-oriented. Also, the director of Janus contested this discourse, finding the term "perpetrator of sexual abuse" appropriate only for young people and adults whose intent was to sexually abuse; in her opinion, the correct term for small children was "children with concerning sexual behavior" (Larsen, 2013, p. 7). Paradoxically, in the same issue, B&U

announced a new report from Janus, in a short piece that bore the headline, “Child perpetrators of sexual abuse have been abused themselves” (Børn&Unge, 2013, p. 5). And, in fact, the discourse that designates some children, including preschoolers, “perpetrators of sexual abuse” had been used by Janus itself (e.g., Janus Center, 2010, 2013; Sæhl & Sheikh, 2010).

Framing Children's Sexuality in Terms of CSA

The last two B&U features on childhood sexuality of this period, in 2014 and 2017, centered on portraying and debating the panic surrounding children’s sexuality and nudity in Danish ECEC. In 2014, a 13-page B&U special feature section on children’s sexuality, “Doctor Games in the Land of Taboo,” indicated that children’s sexuality could give rise to severe conflicts in Danish ECEC (Bille, 2014). Stevnhøj and the director of Janus explained that professionals often consulted them on how to handle children’s sexuality, or parental reactions. Three large Danish municipalities stated that they had policies for children’s sexuality at their institutions, and/or special consultants available to professionals and parents. The special feature section mentioned two main reasons for the panic: a general discomfort regarding children’s sexuality among childcare staff and other adults, and the significant focus on CSA. However, the special feature section itself demonstrated how linked children’s sexuality and CSA had become by 2014.

The 2014 special feature section clearly built on an understanding of children’s sexuality as natural, presenting an overview of normal childhood sexuality, and parameters from a book by Stevnhøj (Stevnhøj, 2014) for when doctor games “are okay”: the children must be friends equal in age, status, intellect, and initiative, the games should be spontaneous, voluntary, and fun for all, and finally, the children should be discreet, but without becoming

too angry or frightened if interrupted by adults (Bille, 2014, p. 15). However, kindergarten staff explained that the conflicts arising from children's sexual games often resulted from a gap between children's own intentions and experiences, and parents' interpretations. The special feature section presented two kindergarten cases illustrating this. Case 1) One summer, some 3-years-olds undressed behind a playground bush and tickled each other's buttocks with pine needles. Some still had pine needles between their buttocks when they got home. Although the childcare staff were confident that all children found this game funny, parents promptly began a discussion of who had sexually abused who. Case 2) In a kindergarten called "Vinkelvejen," some children inserted small toy parts into their rectums. They later explained to staff that they wanted to see if the items fit in there. They reassured staff that they had taken them out again and put them back in the box. Staff found the children unaffected, but parents were upset.

The general message of the 2014 special feature section was that establishing a policy for children's sexuality was the solution to conflicts at childcare institutions. The director of Janus and Stevnhøj advised institutions to acquire knowledge to distinguish between normal and abnormal childhood sexuality, determine limits for doctor games, and maintain an open dialog with parents about childhood sexuality in general and specific incidents in particular. The Vinkelvejen kindergarten was presented as a model kindergarten that established such a policy. Besides the above-mentioned incident, the kindergarten found that an older boy forced a younger child to take his penis into the mouth. These cases led Vinkelvejen to develop a policy to avoid panic among staff and parents (Bille, 2014). Later in 2014, B&U checked in on Vinkelvejen again, reporting the policy as successful. Staff no longer went into panics, discussions of children's sexuality had become natural among staff, and parents reacted more calmly to doctor games. When evaluating the new policy, the director of Vinkelvejen stressed the institution's new focus on "children sexually abusing children," a

risk that concerned staff more than the risk of adults abusing children: “We are more focused on whether something transgressive happens between the children during their normal doctor games, because we have become aware that sexual abuse may also occur between children” (Jensen, 2014, p. 15). This priority illustrated the extent to which the fear of CSA had moved to the level of the children themselves by 2014.

The articles on Vinkelvejen described how the institution required knowledge of childhood sexuality to develop its policy. It invited Stevnhøj to speak at a parent–teacher meeting, and used Janus’s “Barometer of Concern” for children’s sexual behavior, which distinguishes between normal behavior and behavior that demands enhanced attention or immediate intervention (Janus Center, n.d.). Vinkelvejen’s staff also attended a seminar that presented material for preventing sexual abuse among children aged 3–14, called “Play Room.” “Play Room” received DKK 7,800,000 in funding from the Danish Government, and was developed by a researcher on childhood sexuality and CSA, the Danish psychologist Katrine Zeuthen, in collaboration with Denmark’s National Board of Social Services (Svendsen & Zeuthen, 2015). In the 2014 special feature section, Zeuthen explained the idea behind “Play Room”: in her opinion, children could not understand sexuality before puberty, and therefore, should not acquire extensive knowledge of sexuality or sexual abuse. Instead, in “Play Room,” through conversations with an adult on drawings of general everyday situations such as cooking, the child is helped to navigate the sensations and desires that, according to Freud, constitute infantile sexuality. The child becomes aware of its own boundaries, which later in life prevents sexual abuse (Bille, 2014, p. 19). On the homepage of The National Board of Social Services, it reads that initially, “Play Room” was developed for handicapped children and children in foster care, who are at greater risk of sexual abuse, but that the material “may be advantageously used with normal children” (Svendsen & Zeuthen, 2015). In fact, since its launch in 2011, “Play Room” has been distributed to normal

kindergartens, such as Vinkelvejen, throughout Denmark; by 2018, about 1000 childcare professionals from Danish kindergartens and special institutions had attended the prerequisite course prior for using “Play Room” (Det Samfundsvidenskabelige Fakultet, 2019; Hagemann, 2017). The idea of actively preparing *all* children to avoid sexual abuse makes “Play Room” highly characteristic of the 1999–2019 period, with its significant focus on CSA. Generally, Vinkelvejen’s path to a policy on children’s sexuality illustrated—as did B&U’s 2014 special feature section on childhood sexuality, with interviews with the same experts that Vinkelvejen consulted—how much the production and dissemination of knowledge of children’s sexuality in Denmark, as in other Western countries, has, in recent decades, been closely intertwined with producing and disseminating knowledge of CSA and children’s PSB, and preventing and treating these concerns (Bancroft, 2003; Dicataldo, 2009; Friedrich, 2007; Sandfort & Cohen-Kettenis, 2000; Sandfort & Rademakers, 2000).

In the 2014 special feature section, I called for an approach to children’s sexual games in ECEC that instead of focusing largely on risk, supported the games’ positive character, for example, that discovering how human bodies are different is fun and interesting. In a larger sense, the 2014 special feature section identified the intertwining of the subject of children’s sexuality with CSA as problematic: “As a result of the intense focus on sexual abuse, all discussions on children and sexuality quickly evolve around abuse and how to avoid it. In consequence, we talk very little about “the normal child’s sexuality” (Bille, 2014, p. 21). However, this intertwining was significantly present in the special feature section itself. Stevnhøj agreed that there was a problem, and that children must be able to “develop through mutual play, also in the sexual field,” but added, “If you don’t know what normal behavior is, you don’t know what abnormal behavior is. And then you can’t find the few children who need help” (Bille, 2014, p. 21). Later, Stevnhøj advised childcare staff to inform parents that doctor games are normal, but to assure them that staff are “watching from

the sidelines, and of course, will take action against transgressive behavior” (Bille, 2014, p. 22). Also, sexology professor Graugaard, who warned against rigid rules and called for a more positive environment around children’s sexuality in Danish ECEC, wound up his argument with a reference to CSA prevention: “The best prevention is to strengthen children’s curiosity and their desire to explore the body, the sexes, and the world, on their own. Typically, children who are anxious and scared of the body are not very good at taking care of themselves” (Bille, 2014, p. 21). These examples demonstrate how, during this period, references to CSA and CSA-prevention were a persistent refrain in statements on children’s sexuality, including the most liberal.

The 2014 special feature section concluded with an interview with Graugaard on historical changes, for example, highlighting how during the 1970s, Danish children were supposed to know everything about sex, in contrast to Danish children in 2014. This was illustrated with a contemporary case concerning a kindergarten worker who read a 1970s sex education book to a girl, and was reproved by her parents (Bille, 2014, pp. 20–21). In the 2014 special feature section, Zeuthen demonstrated this contrast when she explicitly rejected the outspokenness of the 1970s, instead presenting her sex education material, “Play Room”, without sexual content. This historical contrast also stood out in the special feature section illustrations. In contrast to B&U’s realistic photographs of children between 1970 and 1998 (illustrations 1-11), these represented cartoon children looking innocent and puzzled when contemplating an image of female breasts (illustration 19). However, the illustrations also portrayed the cartoon children playing doctor, naked, looking curious and excited, clearly enjoying the games, while large eyes on stems symbolized the concerned adult view of the games that framed them in terms of CSA, as both thematized and illustrated by the 2014 special feature section (illustrations 17 and 18).

A Room for Children's Sexuality in Danish ECEC

In 2017, B&U published the 1999–2019 period's last feature on children's sexuality (Bille & Andersen, 2017). The 13-page special feature section's main message was the recurring message of this period, namely that childcare professionals lack knowledge of childhood sexuality. The occasion for this was a new study on Danish kindergartens' handling of children's sexuality from The Danish Family Planning Association (DFPA), including responses from 337 directors and childcare professionals. The introduction to the special feature section read: "Many, especially childcare professionals, find children's sexuality complex to relate to. A new study shows that they feel a need for useful knowledge" (DFPA, 2017, p. 11). The providers of knowledge on children's sexuality, Stevnhøj and the director of Janus, confirmed this message, reiterating what they had repeatedly stated in B&U during this third period, here, stated again by the latter: "Childcare professionals are often hesitant, and lack concrete knowledge of what is normal, and when to be concerned and act" (Bille & Andersen, 2017, p. 14). However, the results mentioned in the 2017 special feature section and the study's report (DFPA, 2017) only partly supported this message. In fact, 84.7 % of the participants felt professionally equipped to handle actual situations involving children, relating to sexuality; 64.5 % encountered no or few dilemmas regarding children's sexuality; 78.5 % felt professionally equipped to communicate with parents about children's sexuality, and 90.5 % were satisfied with the cooperation with colleagues on this matter. In fact, what the respondents primarily called for was *material* on childhood sexuality: 73 % wished for educational material, 66.8 % requested informative material for using when they collaborated with colleagues, and 88.8 % called for information material for educating parents. 63.4 % of respondents encountered challenges when collaborating with parents on children's sexuality. Although 23.8 % answered that their own lack of knowledge on childhood sexuality contributed to these challenges, 75.9 % blamed parents' lack of knowledge. Also, a little less

than one third of respondents indicated that any difficulties with colleagues were due to the lack of knowledge. In the qualitative responses, 34 respondents mentioned that generally, more knowledge would strengthen work related to children's sexuality. Thus, respondents did thematize a lack of knowledge on children's sexuality among childcare professionals, but in each case this reflected a minority of respondents, whereas the principal request for knowledge concerned parents. According to the DFPA study, for childcare professionals, the most prevalent challenge regarding children's sexuality involved collaborating with parents.

Although most respondents to the DFPA study felt professionally equipped to handle children's sexuality, 46.8 % felt that language for discussing children's sexuality with parents was missing (DFPA, 2017). Similarly, in the 2017 B&U special feature section, several interviewees mentioned a discursive vacuum surrounding children's healthy sexuality. One childcare professional stated that childcare professionals rarely discussed children's sexuality unless a child exhibited a disturbing behavior, and a BUPL spokesman warned against discussing children's sexuality in ECEC only when children played problematic games or a major CSA case made Danish headlines. Stevnhøj noted that the professional discussions of children's natural and healthy sexuality had faded into oblivion after 30 years of intense focus on CSA. DFPA's recommendation for escaping the discursive vacuum and supporting childhood sexuality at ECEC, was to include this subject in the Danish Government's pedagogical curriculum, which constitutes the statutory framework for the educational practices in ECEC (Bille & Andersen, 2017; DFPA, 2017). The BUPL spokesman agreed and argued that children's sexuality should be included in the revised 2018 version of the pedagogical curriculum,¹³ so the ECEC could address children's sexuality on the same terms as other pedagogical subjects (Bille & Andersen, 2017).

¹³ This did not happen (Ministry of Children and Education, 2020).

Two cases in the 2017 special feature section illustrated how CSA, PSB, or general concern framed the child's body and sexuality. A kindergarten director spoke of a generation gap among her staff, in the attitude to children's nudity. Younger childcare professionals did not permit children's bathing in the nude at the beach, as they were concerned about the possibility of pedophiles watching the children from the dunes, whereas older childcare professionals found it "problematic that kindergarten no longer provides a natural space for children to see each other naked" (Bille & Andersen, 2017, p. 20). The director also stated that parents' attitudes had changed. Recalling a discussion in her kindergarten in the 1980s about children's nudity, she explained that today, the subject was not open for discussion, as parents taught their children to only take off their pants at home. A second case concerned a kindergarten that was concerned about a toddler girl's frequent masturbation. The psychologist, Zeuthen, commented that it was normal for a child to discover that masturbation was pleasant, and that adults should not interfere with moderate masturbation easily abandoned. However, excessive masturbation was always a concerning sign that the child wanted to escape something. Zeuthen encouraged adults to always trust their feelings when they found children's masturbation transgressive. Like the views on children's masturbation expressed in B&U between 1986 and 1998, Zeuthen's attitude was liberal, and acknowledged children's pleasurable masturbation, but whereas the earlier views included concerns about the reactions of others, Zeuthen's concern over frequent masturbation concerned the child, as she distinguished between children's normal and abnormal masturbation. This contrast illustrates that when and why adults find children's masturbation transgressive depends on the historical period. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, older children's masturbation was considered an epidemic threat to their health, and the future of society and the human race (Bullough, 2004; Foucault, 1976; Graugaard, 2013). In

1904, the American psychologist G. Stanley Hall, in his moral condemnation of adolescents' masturbation, called it "self-abuse" (Arnett, 2006, p. 193).

The DFPA study confirmed Leander et al.'s findings (2018) that the majority of Danish childcare institutions have guidelines for controlling children's sexual behavior (Bille & Andersen, 2017; DFPA, 2017). In an article in B&U's 2017 special feature section, which focused on the "cushion room," I explained that the institutions' goal of controlling children's sexual behavior increased surveillance, and that there was a tendency to close or closely supervise cushion rooms (Bille & Andersen, 2017; Leander et al., 2018), a tendency Stevnhøj and a childcare professional confirmed. The cushion room popped up in articles on children's sexuality throughout the 50 years of B&U, and also in this article, entitled "Goodbye to the 'dangerous' cushion room," it embodied *the locus* of children's sexual behavior in Danish ECEC. The cushion room was also the motif of the drawings illustrating the 2017 special feature section. In the first drawing (illustration 20), a boy and a girl were playing doctor, the boy lifting the girl's skirt. They hid behind boxes in a dark room, supervised by a childcare professional. The light from the open door created a contrast between the children looking small and innocent, and their shadows on the wall showing them as large and dark, the boy appearing threatening, and the girl unhappy. The scene illustrated how children's sexuality may be viewed in different lights—as innocent, or transgressive, almost demonized. In the second drawing (illustration 21), some children, obviously having fun, had undressed and retreated to the darkened cushion room next door, where buttocks and a hand about to touch them showed through the slightly open door. In the third drawing (illustration 22), this cushion room had been cordoned off with barrier tape, and now appeared a forbidden, dangerous place, or even a crime scene, emphasized by the room's unsettling obscurity. Besides illustrating the surveillance and criminalization of childhood sexuality, these drawings highlighted a gap between children's own experiences and adult interpretation.

Most interviewees in the 2017 special feature section, including me, were concerned about the development that led to closed cushion rooms, guidelines forbidding children's doctor games, and a discursive vacuum around natural childhood sexuality in Danish ECEC. According to Graugaard, this development risked undermining childcare professionals' competence. Zeuthen and Stevnhøj considered the cushion room an important learning space for children's sexuality, and I was concerned that children might feel shamed. These statements, along with DFPA's recommendation to include childhood sexuality in the government's pedagogical curriculum, revealed a fundamental acknowledgement of childhood sexuality and the conviction that there must be room for childhood sexuality in Danish ECEC. This reiterated concern in B&U over the panic surrounding children's sexuality echoed a broader debate simultaneously developing in Danish society (e.g., Astrup, 2017; Christensen, 2014; Gunge, 2014). However, B&U's 2017 special feature section also indicated a softening of the panic, probably at least partly the result of this ongoing debate. The special feature section stated that the municipality of Copenhagen had recently begun operating with "allowed to policies" in ECEC, focused more on what children were allowed than not allowed to do, reflecting a wish to increase awareness about children's sexual games being a part of their development that should not be suppressed. This positive approach was also reflected in the text box that accompanied the 2017 special feature section, which presented questions childcare institutions could use to address children's sexuality. The general idea was to move from "negatively articulated bans" opposing "the positive and developing character of children's sexual games," to a focus on children thriving as sexual beings (Bille & Andersen, 2017, p. 21). Inviting childcare institutions to critically reflect on existing barriers to children's sexual behavior, these questions presupposed institutions' readiness to support children's sexuality and to teach children about reproduction. For instance, B&U suggested that institutions ask themselves this question, contrasting with the

closing of cushion rooms discussed elsewhere in the special feature section: “How does the physical arrangement of the institution support the children’s sexual well-being – are there private and adult-free spaces inside and outside?” (Bille & Andersen, 2017, p. 21). Most strikingly, these questions did *not* present a distinction between normal and abnormal childhood sexuality, and did *not* mention PSB or CSA—they expressed no concerns about childhood sexuality, contrasting sharply with the guidance offered to childcare institutions during this period.

B&U’s third period ended on a mixed note: In the midst of reports of institutions controlling the child’s body, the challenges of collaborating with parents on childhood sexuality, and the continuing framing of childhood sexuality in terms of CSA, a strikingly different and positive attitude to children’s sexuality, which viewed it independently of CSA, emerged on various levels (Bille & Andersen, 2017).

General findings concerning children’s sexual behavior

The B&U material showed that over the decades, Danish childcare staff encountered children’s sexual behavior—masturbation or doctor games—at their institutions. Despite changing attitudes, and restrictions and bans, surveillance, and closed cushion rooms, which curtail children’s sexual behavior (Larsson, Svedin, & Friedrich, 2000; Leander et al., 2018; Reynolds, Herbenick, & Bancroft, 2003), this behavior persists. Therefore, my findings support the international findings, mentioned in the introduction, that sexual behavior in children is ubiquitous.

DISCUSSION

Two major findings emerged from my analysis of half a century of B&U coverage of children's sexuality. First, the analysis revealed a pronounced liberalism between 1970 and 1998. It was evident in the discourse on, and views of childhood sexuality in B&U, and in the journal's photograph choices. Furthermore, these photographs indicated a wide acceptance of children's nudity at Danish childcare institutions during this period. Similarly, from 1986 – when B&U began writing about children's sexual behavior and attitudes to this at childcare institutions – to 1998, the articles and photographs indicated a wide acceptance of children's sexuality at Danish childcare institutions, confirming Leander et al.'s preliminary findings (2018). The carefree discourse and photographs of naked children and children's sexual behavior between 1970 and 1998 in B&U (illustrations 1-11) showed that the child's body was not yet associated with sexual abuse and risk during this period.

That the pronounced liberalism in B&U between 1970 and 1998 was representative of a more widespread, liberal attitude to children's sexuality and nudity in Denmark during this period is supported by a 1992 Danish national television program on sex. The program dedicated about one minute to childhood sexuality, showing six images of kindergarten-age children, most of whom were naked, in the following situations: 1) two children bathing at an institution, 2) a child watching another child urinate, 3) a child watching another child bathing, 4) three children playing doctor, putting a doll close to one girl's vagina, 5) two children kissing on the mouth, 6) two children sitting together. While presenting these images, the presenters, two doctors, explained:

Sexual pleasure begins long before most people think. From infancy, we explore our bodies, and children quickly discover that some parts of the body provide particularly pleasurable

feelings. And, they soon become curious about exploring other children's bodies, to find out whether these resemble their own. Also, children often play doctor or sex games in which they touch each other. In that way, children too have a sex life. But parents often stop this: "Let your willie be!," "Don't touch your butt!," "Don't put your fingers into your vagina!" (Danish Broadcasting Corporation, 1992).

Parents' restrictive attitudes to children's sexuality, mentioned by the presenters, contrasted with the liberalism of this television program. Similarly, it is important to emphasize that the liberalism found in B&U between 1970 and 1998 was just one part of the picture. The combination of children and sexuality was also controversial during this period: from 1970 to 1985, reviewers in B&U spoke of a traditional, cautious approach to children and sexuality in both sex education books and works of fiction for children, and from 1986 to 1998, the articles on childhood sexuality portrayed upset parents, and also childcare professionals who felt intimidated when confronted with children's sexuality at childcare institutions.

Nevertheless, my analysis documented a second major finding, a main paradigm shift in the view of children's sexuality around 1999, when the concepts of "the child perpetrator of sexual abuse" and "abnormal and sexually abusive childhood sexuality" entered the scene. It also showed that the 1997 Vadstrupgaard case formed the key background for this shift. The idea that sexually abused children may abuse other children had already reached Denmark in 1990, as one kindergarten director, as an exception in the 1970–1998 period, mentioned it in this year (Bo, 1990). However, my analysis revealed that in 1999, these concepts were new to Danes, and that they travelled from the English-speaking world, mainly the United States, through books and research, and were introduced to Denmark by experts influenced by American and British ideas. However, the fear arising from the Vadstrupgaard

case created the breeding ground in which these ideas spread. A 2000 article on the Vadstrupgaard case and the media, by a Danish ECEC programs professor, supports this finding:

First, it was all about a single male sexual abuser, then generally about men as sexual abusers, then we learned that women, too, were sexual abusers (...) and finally, it was children's and youth's turn to be sexual abusers. Denmark had been virtually transformed into a society of individuals who are potentially each other's sexual abusers. (Held, 2000, p. 134)

The Danish focus on “children who sexually abuse children” was born of the significant attention to adults' sexual abuse of children around the turn of the millennium, and this model for interpreting children's sexual games gradually gained ground in Danish ECEC in the following years. This informed new practices surrounding children's sexuality at Danish childcare institutions (Leander et al., 2018), and my analysis revealed just how strongly this influenced the view of childhood sexuality: From 1999 to 2019, all B&U articles on children's sexuality, in one way or the other, addressed CSA by adults and/or children's PSB. The equivalent would be for all articles on adult sexuality to touch on sexual abuse. This development unmistakably emerged in the radical change in illustrations in B&U before the turn of the millennium: The photographs of happy, naked children and the carefree way in which they were presented vanished, as the fear of the pedophile's gaze seized public consciousness.

My analysis presented the narrative that fueled the above-mentioned paradigm shift and its role in igniting the subsequent panic about childhood sexuality. This narrative was mentioned several times, fully or partially, in B&U from 1999 on: Children who display PSB are likely to have been sexually abused and may abuse other children (in their institution), who may in turn abuse, each risking becoming an adult sex offender. The core of this narrative also figured in the previously-mentioned 1999 BUPL and PMF pamphlet published in the aftermath of the Vadstrupgaard case as a CSA prevention guide for childcare institutions, providing another example of the large audience at Danish ECEC that it reached at that time. After explaining that a child rarely exhibits clear symptoms of CSA, the pamphlet continued, “An exception is if the child suddenly becomes extremely sexually focused in its behavior or begins exposing other children to exaggerated acts of a sexual nature” (Rantorp & Sanders, 1999, p. 14). As mentioned previously, this narrative was imported from the United States. Tobin, in his study of 20th-century American early childhood education textbooks, found the same paradigm shift later evident in B&U, by the late 1980s, when children’s sexual behavior was no longer viewed as natural, but discussed as “possible indicators of abuse and precursors of sexual danger” (Tobin, 2001, p. 185). Friedrich stated the consequences of this narrative: “Because of such stereotypes, children often face repercussions that do not correspond to their actions” (Friedrich, 2007, p. 4).

It was never mentioned in B&U that a child with PSB is more likely to *not* be sexually abused than sexually abused (Chaffin et al., 2006; Elkovitch et al., 2009; Friedrich, 2007; Silovsky & Niec, 2002). Instead, a weighty triple responsibility was placed on Danish childcare professionals: they had to identify children at the kindergartens with PSB to stop sexual abuse, at worst an abusive circle, save children from sexual abuse in other settings, and prevent the children from becoming adult sex offenders. Tobin also found this responsibility stressed in American early childhood education textbooks, as in a 1987 book:

“It is part of your professional responsibility to learn to identify and report child abuse” (Feeney, Christensen, & Moravcik, 1987, p. 374; Tobin, 2001). This responsibility was assigned to childcare professionals at a moment in history when CSA had become a major cultural concern, viewed as one of the greatest evils in Western culture (Bech, 2005; Best, 1990; Furedi, 2006; Furedi & Bristow, 2010; Jenkins, 1998; Jenks, 1994; Johnson, 2000; La Fontaine, 1998; Meyer, 2007; Tobin, 1997; Webster, 2005). This offers a deeper understanding of the panic among staff and parents, and the conflicts that emerged in Danish childcare institutions, and why institutions began to surveil, restrict, and suppress children’s sexuality and nudity in the new millennium (Leander et al., 2018).

Skewed knowledge

In the third period of B&U’s coverage of childhood sexuality, “childcare professionals lack knowledge” became a mantra, as their acquisition of knowledge was seen as the key tool for successfully meeting their responsibility to reveal CSA, enabling them to identify children with PSB, and also as a key tool for easing the panic in Danish ECEC, surrounding children’s sexuality. Paradoxically, during the same period, the B&U articles indicated an increasing focus on childhood sexuality at Danish childcare institutions and in Danish society:

Institutions established new policies, acquired knowledge of normal versus abnormal childhood sexuality, attended seminars, invited experts such as Stevnhøj to speak on childhood sexuality, municipalities established guidelines, counseling, and seminars, experts conducted studies and published books and other material, and the coverage of childhood sexuality was ongoing in B&U since 1986. Furthermore, in 2014, the subject, “Gender, Sexuality and Diversity,” which included children’s sexuality, became mandatory at all Danish ECEC programs, although previously the subject of children’s sexuality had been

taught in an unstructured way. This development (also see Leander et al., 2018) does not support the message that childcare professionals were generally ignorant of the subject of children's sexuality. An important question arising from my analysis of B&U is whether the knowledge of childhood sexuality that has prevailed in Denmark since the turn of the millennium—and since the mid-1980s in the English-speaking world—characterized by the dichotomy between normal and abnormal/problematic/abusive childhood sexuality, may help to resolve the panic, or whether it has contributed to it.

My analysis of 50 years of B&U clearly reveals that knowledge of childhood sexuality is indeed historically and culturally contingent (Bullough, 2004; Dicataldo, 2009; Dixon, 2012; Ford & Beach, 1951; Graugaard, 2013; Tobin, 1997, 2001), and that the prevailing knowledge is born of intense attention to CSA in the Western world. It is not, as often implied by the encouragement of childcare professionals to acquire knowledge, an objective, absolute tool just waiting to be acquired. On the contrary, two problems are related to this knowledge. The first concerns the narrative that children who display PSB are sexual abuse victims and future sex offenders. Although this has proven to be incorrect for the majority of these children, for years it influenced the understanding of this topic internationally, and still haunts the mindset surrounding children's sexuality today (Bancroft, 2003; Chaffin & Bonner, 1998; Dicataldo, 2009; Friedrich, 2007; Jenkins, 2003; Martin, 2014; Smith et al., 2014). The second problem is one of disproportionality, clearly illustrated by B&U's coverage of childhood sexuality between 1999 and 2019. During this period, most interviewees regarded children's sexuality as natural; nevertheless, the focus on CSA and children's PSB extensively overshadowed the focus on natural childhood sexuality. Not one article from B&U's third period merely discussed children's natural sexuality. Instead, CSA and PSB were main topics in all the articles. This, despite the fact that children with PSB typically have characteristics that differ from those of the average child (DeLago et al., 2020;

Friedrich, 2007; Janus Center, 2016 (see below); Silovsky & Niec, 2002), and are a small minority. In a report from the American Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, on children under 12 with PSB, a task force of leading experts concluded that “By definition, most of the behaviors involved are fairly rare” (Chaffin et al., 2006, p. 4). Elkovitch et al. (2009) concluded that problematic or non-normative childhood sexual behaviors, that is, behaviors that are “intrusive, aggressive, or more imitative of adult sexual behavior” are “rare (typically <3% of children in community samples) throughout childhood” (Elkovitch et al., 2009, p. 587). And Finkelhor, Omrod, and Chaffin, analyzing American crime data, concluded that, “Very few juveniles of any age commit sex offenses” (2009, p. 8). However, the prevalence of children’s PSB was never mentioned in B&U, creating the impression that PSB in children is frequent, and presents a considerable risk. Instead of speaking of PSB in a limited group of children, the discourse on PSB was expanded to all children.

The disproportionate focus on PSB is illustrated by B&U’s ongoing presentation of experts related to treatment, research, and education regarding CSA and children’s PSB. The director of Janus is an obvious example. A Janus 2016 Status Report describing the 420 children aged 4-18 (89% boys, 11% girls) assessed and treated at Janus from 2003 to 2016, stated that Janus’s patients suffered from a range of neuropsychiatric disorders such as ADHD, autism, and various psychoses, and generally had difficulty socializing. Almost half the patients had a below-average IQ, and 41.3% lacked sufficient language skills to benefit from psychotherapy. The majority had suffered physical, sexual, or psychological abuse, or neglect; 44.5% were in residential or family foster care, and 60.3% attended special educational programs. The average age of referral to Janus was 12.6 years, and the average age of the first sexually abusive incident, 11.4 years (Janus Center, 2016). From 2006, when Janus began treating children aged 6–12 with PSB, until 2019, B&U published six features on childhood sexuality. The director of Janus was interviewed in four of these, despite the fact

that Janus treats a small minority of children, whose profile is very different from that of the average child, and whose average age does not correspond to that of the ECEC children predominantly addressed in these features. This illustrates the weight B&U attached to non-normative childhood sexuality during its third period.

“The best prevention is knowledge” was repeated in B&U (Mathieu, 2008, p. 20).

When the main reason that childcare professionals are encouraged to acquire knowledge of childhood sexuality is *preventive*, sexual abuse becomes the lens through which this knowledge is acquired. When this knowledge is also characterized by a skewed focus on CSA and children’s PSB, childcare professionals risk associating children’s sexuality with sexual abuse, and gain the impression that CSA and PSB are more widespread than they are. This is very likely to influence their view of children’s sexual games in their daily work, creating concern and fear about childhood sexuality. In general, I argue that the disproportionate focus on PSB in children in Denmark from the late 1990s onwards, and from the mid-1980s in the English-speaking world, and the knowledge it has established and disproportionately conveyed, is a significant part of the reason for the widespread panic about childhood sexuality, rather than the solution to it.

During B&U’s third period, despite the persistently expressed concern that children’s natural and healthy sexual behavior suffered from a skewed focus on CSA and PSB, the result was that children’s natural sexual development was seldom addressed in its own right. One reason was that the experts who were concerned about this skewed focus often fed it themselves or framed their discourse on childhood sexuality with concerns and associations with CSA and PSB. Hence, my analysis of B&U showed that what is needed is knowledge and information on children’s natural sexual development, *liberated from the iron grip of today’s focus on CSA and children’s PSB*. Nystrup (2019) found a dearth of literature on children’s sexuality in Danish ECEC programs and that the existing material, authored by

Stevnhøj and the director of Janus, was largely focused on CSA. International research indicates that generally, in Western cultures, discourses and research on children's sexuality, and professionals' education on this subject, focus largely on PSB and CSA prevention, and that there is a great lack of knowledge and information on children's natural sexuality (e.g., Balter et al., 2018; Bancroft, 2003; Dicataldo, 2009; Friedrich, 2003; Reynolds et al., 2003; Sandfort & Rademakers, 2000; Tobin, 2001; Zeuthen, 2019). Dicataldo characterized the American research in this way: "Research into childhood sexuality has been confined to identifying the signs of sexual abuse or other problems attendant to sexual behavior and determining how they can be eliminated" (Dicataldo, 2009, p. 118). Tobin summarized the status of discussions of sexuality in contemporary American ECE textbooks: "'Normal' infantile sexuality is rarely discussed; when sex is discussed, it is as a danger" (Tobin, 2001, p. 186). Determining that children's sexuality remains "relatively uncharted terrain," Friedrich found that, "Sexually intrusive behavior in children has taken center stage in educational and political circles" (Friedrich, 2003, pp. 119, 116). Balter et al. (2018) found that Canadian ECEC educators lacked the developmentally appropriate knowledge and skills to address sexuality in ECEC, the most common training they received being specific to preventing CSA.

Children who display PSB are also victims of the disproportionate focus on problematic childhood sexuality that potentially pathologizes and criminalizes general childhood sexuality. To be clear, nothing in this article is intended to suggest that PSB among children does not exist or cannot be serious. What I question are proportions. Friedrich stated, "Far too many sexual behaviors that children exhibit are pathologized, while a small subset of children, usually older preteens, commits sexual behaviors that are not appreciated for the pathology they represent" (2007, p. 3). When discourse on PSB is expanded to all children, children with PSB are not properly identified. Although children with PSB do not have just

one background, they are often vulnerable: They may have mental health problems and/or live with adverse conditions such as neglect, sexual or physical abuse, or other difficult family circumstances. Also, the majority are boys with problems peaking in early adolescence (DeLago et al., 2020; Finkelhor et al., 2009; Friedrich, 2007; Janus Center, 2016; Silovsky & Niec, 2002). Identifying children with an increased risk of displaying PSB, and the correct extent of this problem, not only prevents panic among caretakers and parents, for example, at ECEC, it also informs parents and professionals around vulnerable children that these may need guidance and sex education, especially during early adolescence (DeLago et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2014). This calls for future research and information on childhood sexuality to be precise, factual, and proportionate.

The significant role of discourse

The question of the discourse used to designate childhood sexuality is also relevant to the discussion above. Terms such as “sexual abuse” and “perpetrator of sexual abuse”—previously used exclusively to describe adult sex offenders—criminalize the individual child, and childhood sexuality in general. For children playing species-typical doctor games such a discourse is totally inappropriate; however, it is also inappropriate to young children who display PSB, as it suggests premeditated acts (Chaffin & Bonner, 1998; Finkelhor et al., 2009). In recent years, it has become more common, especially among researchers on children’s PSB, to reject part of this discourse, particularly labels such as “sex offender” and “(child) perpetrator,” used since the idea of “children who sexually abuse children” was first introduced (e.g., Cantwell, 1988; Johnson, 1988, 1989). Instead, these researchers use the expression “children with PSB,” insisting on person-first language that respects children first as children and avoids stigmatizing them by designating them primarily according to their

behavior (Silovsky et al., 2020; Tener, Newman, Yates, & Tarshish, 2020). However, the criminalizing discourse is well-established among many professionals, with regard to both children's species-typical sexual games and children's PSB (Chaffin & Bonner, 1998; Leander et al., 2018; Shawler et al., 2020; Tener et al., 2020), and such discourse powerfully influences people's judgment, and stigmatizes children (Harris & Socia, 2016). Moreover, my analysis of B&U revealed how the criminalizing, and pathologizing, discourse on childhood sexuality goes beyond specific terminology. The articles in B&U generally presented a discourse that framed childhood sexuality in terms of CSA and overstated the prevalence of children with PSB. Some interviewees even used a discourse of fear and gave the impression that children with PSB were numerous, and just waiting to cause an epidemic of CSA in ECEC. Others persistently spoke of childhood sexuality in terms of the normal–abnormal dichotomy, encouraging constant watchfulness for the abnormal, as a sign of CSA. This dichotomy, as the prism through which childhood sexuality was constantly presented, severely exaggerated the extent of the abnormal. Generally, the discourse in B&U from 1999 onwards associated childhood sexuality with danger and wrapped it in concern. This was mirrored in most illustrations from 1998 onwards, which showed worried childcare professionals and instances of childhood sexuality that resembled crime scenes (illustrations 12-15, 17-18, 20-22). Thus, this discourse was central to promulgating the view of children's sexuality as problematic and abusive, feeding the panic surrounding it.

(Mis)interpreting childhood sexuality

The cases presented by childcare staff in B&U illustrated the diversity of children's sexuality, and that children can be very imaginative when expressing it: some tickled each other's buttocks with pine needles, others inserted small toy parts into their rectums, and older

children played striptease. This diversity, especially among very young children, makes it difficult to determine what is “developmentally inappropriate” or “excessive” sexual behavior in a child. Along with “potentially harmful behavior,” these criteria are frequently used to define children’s PSB (Chaffin et al., 2006; Elkovitch et al., 2009; Silovsky et al., 2020; Silovsky & Niec; 2002). Friedrich, one of the first to describe children with PSB, and a key researcher in this field, stressed that *context* was crucial to understanding children’s sexual behavior, reporting instances that, “on face value would seem to be quite deviant,” which, when children’s and caretaker’s explanations were heard, were actually “benign.” He concluded that “additional information clarifies and typically normalizes the sexual behavior” (Friedrich, 2003, pp. 108, 111). The concrete instances Friedrich referred to in his text cited here concerned the insertion of objects into the vagina. In the literature on children’s PSB, the insertion of objects into the vagina and rectum is labeled a “low-frequency activity,” “problematic,” “aggressive,” “non-normative,” and “imitative of adult sexual behavior” (e.g., Elkovitch et al., 2009). Leander et al.’s findings (2018) questioned this labelling and invited the inclusion of more benign interpretations. Also, the cases presented by childcare staff in this study included cases of children inserting objects into their rectums and between their buttocks. These B&U cases support the arguments that playful explanations exist for this behavior among children, and that considering the context and the child’s perspective is crucial for understanding children’s sexual behavior, especially that of young children, and avoiding automatically interpreting it through the lens of adult sexuality and abuse (Skundberg, 2020).

My analysis of B&U illustrated how assessments of childhood sexuality such as “developmentally inappropriate,” “excessive,” and “normal” are related to time and culture. Okami analyzed what he called the “crusaders against “child perpetration”” of the 1980s, including Johnson, finding that they broadened the definition of sexual abuse, and that much

of the sexual behavior they deemed abusive was actually species-typical (Okami, 1992, p. 120). Even in the same time frame and culture, different actors view children's sexual behavior differently (Smith et al., 2014; Zeuthen, 2019). In a study of special investigations reports by childcare licensing consultants in Michigan, Martin (2014) showed how differently consultants, childcare providers, and parents judged children's sexual behavior. Parents tended to see sexual abuse, childcare providers tended to see misbehavior, and childcare licensing consultants tended to see violations of supervision rules, or signs that the children had been sexually abused. The question of interpretation has consequences for the assessment of, and the estimation of the prevalence of, children's PSB and sexual offenses (Thigpen et al., 2003). When considering the development in the English-speaking countries, in Denmark, and in an increasing number of other countries (Silovsky et al., 2020), one has to ask how many of the incidents in the sudden tsunami of children's PSB would have been judged benign just a few decades ago, or judged differently today by other actors, or in other countries, or would have been "normalized," had children's perspective been heard. With regard to the significant increase in referral rates for children with PSB in the United States, Chaffin et al. (2006) stated, "It is not known whether this represents an increase in the incidence of such behaviors, changing definitions of problematic sexual behavior, increased awareness and reporting of what has always existed, or some combination of these factors" (p. 4). However, few ask whether this international development may also be a result of problematizing harmless, species-typical behavior. This question is crucial, because, depending on cultural setting, children assessed as displaying PSB risk very serious consequences, such as stigmatization as sex offenders, continued supervision, being reported to the authorities, being subjected to treatment, investigations, the suspicion of having been sexually abused, out-of-home placement, foster home and adoption disruptions, legal-system involvement, which in the United States includes sex-offender registration and community

notification (ATSA, 2020; Baker et al., 2001; Chaffin et al., 2006; Chaffin & Bonner, 1998; Dicataldo, 2009; Elkovitch et al., 2009; Friedrich, 2007; Jenkins, 2003; Letourneau & Caldwell, 2013; Martin, 2014; Smith et al., 2014; Stillman, 2016; Tobin, 2009; Zimring, 2004). Friedrich (2007, p. 11) provided a concrete example of children's common sexual behavior being seriously problematized when describing a program that he reviewed, run by state officials in an unnamed American state, in which preschoolers in foster care were placed in new settings, put on multiple psychiatric medications, and missed out on adoptions, because they had touched teachers' breasts—a behavior that has proven to be common among preschoolers in international studies (Friedrich, 1997; Elkovitz et al., 2009).

A culture of fear and abuse

To obtain a broader perspective on the crucial question presented above, of whether the exploding prevalence of PSB in children during the last 35 years is also the result of harmless, species-typical sexual behavior being problematized, it is important to consider the emergence of the category of “the child perpetrator of sexual abuse” as part of a larger development in Western societies since the 1980s. Furedi (2006) and Lukianoff and Haidt (2018) described how in the United States and the United Kingdom, childhood has, since the 1980s, been increasingly viewed as dangerous, and has been reconstructed around safety. Experiences once considered typical parts of childhood, such as climbing trees or bicycling to school, are now seen as risky. The obsession with avoiding risk has led to children being heavily supervised, and free play is restricted. Furedi (2006), Guldborg (2009), Haslam (2016), and Svendsen (2008) described how the definition of children's bullying has expanded to encompass even mildly unpleasant events. In the United Kingdom and the United States, some schools have reduced or eliminated recess, the main reasons including

the prevention of behavioral problems such as bullying. Furedi (2006), Guldberg (2009) and Lukianoff and Haidt (2018) argued that a safety- dominated childhood prevents children from exploring, and gaining the experience, skills, and risk assessment needed to become independent, healthy adults; that in fact, overprotecting children make them more fragile. There is a strong parallel between this development and general restriction of children's play, and the problematization and restriction of children's sexual games since the 1980s, which, I argue, also risks depriving children of important experiences. Children's species-typical sexual games may be considered sexual rehearsal games, a safe venue for children to learn about sex (Dixson, 2012; Josephs, 2015). Forbidding children to play these games denies them the valuable opportunity to practice sexual behavior and interactions, to acquire an experience of intimacy, boundaries, and the thrill of sexuality, and finally, to gain knowledge about genital differences and the human body in general, before facing the more complex teenage and adult sexuality (Leander, 2021).

Furedi (2006) found a general, significant growth in risk-consciousness in Western societies, where all human relations are viewed as inherently risky. He argued that this development ran parallel to "a culture of abuse," which also emerged in Western societies in the 1980s, in which increasing numbers of experiences are reinterpreted as abuse, and expanding groups of victims arise, resulting in a general amplification of abuse. Confirming Furedi's findings, Haslam (2016) detected a more general "concept creep" in psychology's use of *harm-related* concepts, including abuse and bullying. He showed how these concepts have undergone semantic expansion, both "horizontally," to encompass a broader range of phenomena, and "vertically," to encompass less extreme phenomena. Haslam et al. (2020) established that this concept creep, reflecting an increased sensitivity to harm, began in the 1980s. I argue that the emergence of the new category of "the child perpetrator of sexual abuse" in the mid-1980s in the United States was a manifestation of this dual semantic

expansion of the concept of abuse: the population of sexual abusers now also encompassed children, and children's actions, even those of kindergarten children, were equated to adults' sexual abuse of children. Haslam (2016) explained the concept creep as partly a result of a post-war psychologization of human experience, and of psychological concepts' "Darwinist" capacity for expanding their semantic range. Jenkins (2003), while explaining the emergence of the idea of the danger from "children who sexually abuse children," described this development in the health-care industry since the 1980s more boldly: "Moral issues have been medicalized and institutionalized, producing a huge constituency with an overwhelming interest in keeping these issues at the center of public concern" (p. 16). In B&U, we saw how children's sexuality was treated as a question of morals until the end of the 1990s, when the new category of abusive childhood sexuality emerged, pathologizing children's sexuality and introducing new experts who offered knowledge and treatment on this subject.

According to Furedi, the normalization of abuse since the 1980s has established the victim as a key identity in Western societies, fostering a polarization between two main cultural archetypes, "the victim" and "the aggressor"—this also being the case with children, who are viewed as the ultimate victims, but who are also demonized (Furedi, 2006; Guldberg, 2009; Haslam, 2016; Haslam et al., 2020; Svendsen, 2008; Waiton, 2020). In the cultural landscape of perpetrators and victims, there is little faith in people. The culture of abuse is governed by the distrust of others, and a loss of faith in ourselves and the general capacity of human beings (Furedi, 2006). The birth of this culture is strikingly demonstrated by the illustrations for B&U's coverage of childhood sexuality. The 1999 feature, which introduced the new view of childhood sexuality, characterized by the polarity of "victim" and "aggressor," showed a large, aggressive child victimizing a small child (illustration 13). Generally, in the character gallery of the third period illustrations, we find "the child perpetrator," "the victim," children supervised by worried adults, and desexualized cartoon

children (illustrations 13-22). These characters did not exist in the second period, when the real children in the photographs looked strong and competent, happy, and at ease with their bodies (illustrations 5-10). The representation of children's sexual behavior as harmless, fun, pleasurable, trusting, and instructive, disappeared when "the victim" and "the aggressor" entered the scene.

To summarize, the development that I analyze in this article, characterized by a dramatic change in views of and practices surrounding childhood sexuality in the last 35 years, is closely related to a broader development in the West since the 1980s, characterized by a highly increased focus on risk and abuse. This emphasizes the need to question whether the current disproportionate focus on PSB in children is not to a significant degree the expression of *society's* problematizing children's species-typical sexual behavior.

Disciplining childhood sexuality

A complex societal development such as the one sketched above is never the result of one or two isolated factors. It is beyond the scope of this article to fully investigate the question of why a general focus on risk and abuse took center stage from the 1980s onwards, or why children's sexuality was problematized to the degree that I have demonstrated. However, as the final point of this discussion, I draw on Foucault's theory of discipline (Foucault, 1977) to deepen the understanding of the problematization of children's sexuality in the last 35 years, and in speculation, suggest some possible triggers for this development. According to Foucault, the disciplinary power that gained traction in the eighteenth century is one of the central governmentalities of modernity. Foucault defined discipline as "methods, which made possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility–utility," a control

exercised along the three dimensions of “time, space, movement” (Foucault, 1977, p. 137). Enforcing visibility and surveillance are key methods of the disciplinary power, which were, for instance, used historically to optimize education and control sexual behavior at schools. In this space of complete visibility, the disciplinary technology gains its efficiency from its relational character, that is, from its capacity to govern individuals to govern themselves, motivated by the risk of being supervised at all times. Similarly, methods for restricting children’s nudity and doctor games in today’s Danish childcare institutions, such as increased staff supervision of children, the closing of cushion rooms to increase visibility, and the often detailed rules for children’s doctor games (e.g., “no doctor games” or “only above the waist”) and for undressing to take place in specific rooms (Leander et al., 2018), may be conceived of as disciplinary methods. Tobin (1997) found that American preschools made the same effort to keep children constantly visible, in order to control their sexual games, and he also recognized this as a disciplinary method.

It is characteristic of the disciplinary technology that disciplinary methods are combined with specific knowledge, and that the circular reinforcement of methods and knowledge increases the disciplinary power. The dichotomy between the normal and the abnormal is central to the knowledge inherent in a disciplinary technology, as this technology always aims to make subjects meet specific norms. In fact, discipline functions by ranking individuals according to their success in following norms, and punishing abnormal behavior. It deprives deviants of their rank and creates outcasts, although disciplinary sanctions always have the normalizing aim of correcting deviants (Foucault, 1977). My analysis revealed that the distinction between normal and abnormal childhood sexuality was the pivot of the new knowledge of childhood sexuality introduced in B&U from the English-speaking countries in 1999, and that from that moment on, this highly normative knowledge increasingly informed disciplinary methods of surveillance and restrictions against childhood sexuality at childcare

institutions, and the increasing treatment of problematic childhood sexuality in Denmark. The new knowledge privileged no or moderate sexual behavior, whereas sexual behavior seen as abusive, unusual, too frequent, or advanced was marginalized. I argue that the radical change in norms for childhood sexuality in the last 50 years, which this study revealed, was part of a disciplinarian technology disciplining childhood sexuality. The interaction between knowledge and disciplinary methods was doubly effective, as it not only disciplined children's sexuality, but also the professionals around them, who were told that their vigilance, their control of children's sexual behavior, and their acquisition of knowledge were key to preventing CSA. The relational character of the disciplinary technology resulting in the government of oneself is extremely effective when it comes to phenomena associated with CSA, as nobody wants to be blamed for not doing their utmost to prevent this evil.

Historically, disciplinary power has had two major purposes: originally, the purpose was to control important threats to society, such as epidemics, and later, the purpose was to serve society's major goals (Foucault, 1977). I argue that both "purposes" may be found in the disciplining of childhood sexuality today. Concerning the control of important threats, Danish liberalism surrounding childhood sexuality was replaced by a disciplinary technology, when children's sexuality came to be viewed as abusive and a sign of CSA. CSA may be considered the greatest evil in Western culture today, and is often described as an epidemic threat to society (Furedi, 2006). In America, scholars have argued that the widespread focus on CSA, beginning in the late 1970s, and the subsequent focus on the "the child perpetrator of sexual abuse," were covert moral crusades against the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s (Jenkins, 2003; Okami, 1992). Elaborating on this idea from the perspective of Foucault's theory of discipline, I argue that the significant increase in focus on CSA in the aftermath of the sexual revolution may be viewed as a disciplinary counter-reaction to this revolution's central idea of discarding all sexual taboos and inhibitions to revolutionize

society, which could ultimately invade the borders of childhood. Concrete examples of extremes of the sexual revolution show that this idea, and the general euphoria of the sexual freedom of those decades, did in fact intensify the threat of CSA. In Denmark, extreme circles of the sexual revolution flirted with the idea that sexual relations between adults and children were liberating, also to children (Edelberg, 2018; Graugaard, 2013; Thorsen & Bendtsen, 2018; Villemoes, 2020). Identical ideas were politically supported and practiced in Germany during the sexual revolution (e.g., Baader & Levis, 2015; Fleischhauer & Hollersen, 2010; Gebhardt, 2020; Hamann, 2013). In Denmark—the first country in the world to legalize pornography, in 1969—child pornography was legal and easily obtainable from 1969 to 1980 (Graugaard, 2013; Graugaard et al., 2004; Trøiborg, 2020). These circumstances demonstrate that minimal attention was paid to CSA at this time (Edelberg, 2018; Graugaard, 2013; Okami, 1992). Foucault claimed that discipline reaches further than laws and politics, regulating minor behaviors in society. He defined discipline as a micro-power and counter-law operating on the obscure underside of a society's official laws, politics, and rights (Foucault, 1977, pp. 222–223). If we regard the sexual revolution as the powerful agenda of the 1960s and 1970s, we may consider the significant increase in international attention to CSA in 1970s/80s as a disciplinary counter-law that brought the sexual revolution to a halt in front of the child.

There is no doubt that the focus on CSA has proven to be an extremely effective way of disciplining adult behavior around children. Studies from Denmark, the United Kingdom, and the United States have shown that, from fear of suspicion and wrongful allegations, some men keep their distance from children, and childcare institutions have established defensive guidelines for staff's conduct around the children, such as limiting touching and being alone with children (Furedi & Bristow, 2010; Johnson, 2000; Leander et al., 2019; Munk et al., 2013; Piper & Stronach, 2008). I argue that at Danish childcare institutions, these guidelines,

combined with the restrictions on children's nudity and sexual behavior, are the sign of a general disciplining of bodies, reducing care, intimacy, sensuality, and children's free play. This brings me to the second purpose of the disciplinary technology, namely, serving society's major goals. Since the 1990s, the transnational paradigm of education in the West has become economic, viewing education as central to the states' ability to compete in the globalized world. Humans have become capital that is optimized through education from birth to death, and educational systems focus on optimizing the knowledge and skills that support the labor force and national competitiveness. During this period, Danish kindergartens lost their separate identity as childcare institutions, and are now part of an educational continuum: free play, fantasy, and care have significantly given way to systematic learning and skill development (Korsgaard, Kristensen, & Jensen, 2017). This same development has occurred in the United Kingdom and the United States, where structured learning has reduced the time for free play in kindergartens. Similarly, in the United States, the time older children spend in school and on homework has increased considerably, whereas time spent playing has decreased (Guldberg, 2009; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018). Also, children's sexual games belong to childhood play (Leander, 2021). Drawing on Foucault's theory of discipline, I argue that the change in views on children's sexual games—problematizing, pathologizing, and criminalizing them, and thereby curtailing them considerably—and the general disciplining of bodies at childcare facilities, may be regarded as part of this general educational development, serving today's priority of systematic childhood learning by marginalizing the “disturbing” and “useless” aspects of the body, rendering it docile and utilitarian, and thus serving current major political and economic goals in Western societies.

Although a strengthened focus on CSA was urgent in the 1970s/80s, and strong CSA-prevention is crucial at all times, this article has shown how today, children's natural

sexuality is overshadowed by a disproportionate focus on sexual abuse. Foucault's noting how the strong normativity central to the disciplinary technology creates deviants and outcasts is useful for illustrating the consequences to children of a disciplining of childhood sexuality that has grown out of proportions. The change in norms for childhood sexuality that this article presents, and the view of children as potentially sexually abusive, identifies some children as deviants and outcasts. It entangles children, even young ones, in drama in kindergarten, in school, and at home, where they are subjected to suspicion, accusations, and stigmatization, and, as mentioned above, in the worst-case scenario, removal from their homes and legal system involvement. The clearest example of children identified as outcasts are those in the United States registered as sex offenders, and subjected to community notification (ATSA, 2020; Chaffin & Bonner, 1998; Dicataldo, 2009; Friedrich, 2007; Jenkins, 2003; Letourneau & Caldwell, 2013; Martin, 2014; Stillman, 2016; Tobin, 2009; Zimring, 2004). The fate of children identified as deviants and outcasts has parallels to the discrimination against male childcare professionals as a result of the panic about CSA in Western societies. In Denmark, since the Vadstrupgaard case, male childcare professionals have been stigmatized, and, at times, subjected to discriminatory guidelines that apply only to men, for example, restricting them from changing diapers or having children sit on their laps. Male childcare professionals in particular, fear wrongful allegations of CSA, which impose vast personal costs both in Denmark and internationally, and are virtually impossible to be cleared of (Burnett, 2016; Johnson, 2000; Leander, 2015; Leander et al., 2019; Munk et al., 2013; Piper & Stronach, 2008). It is a paradox that with the intention of protecting children, we accept the fact that some children will undergo similar ordeals. The intense attention on CSA has so effectively taught us to regard children as CSA victims that we accept the treatment of a group of children as adult criminals.

We have seen that there is no reason to idealize the past. Still, seeing the happy, naked children from the first periods of B&U is an eye-opener. It shows us what was lost when adult sexuality and sexual abuse became the main lenses through which the child's body is viewed. We lost our ability to look at children as children, and at the child's body in its own right, and the child lost its right to fun, pleasurable, and instructive childhood sexuality. My analysis of B&U showed that the way we understand children's sexuality today is not the only way—it is one way, deeply influenced by recent decades' tremendous attention to sexual abuse. I argue that it is time to find a new balance in our views on childhood sexuality. The ubiquity of children's sexual behavior, which this study confirms, establishes them as natural and expected (Dixon, 2012; Friedrich, 2007), and contradicts their current problematization and strong association with CSA in Western cultures. The disproportionate, mistaken focus on childhood sexuality as risky and abusive generates panic around childhood sexuality, classifies some children as perpetrators of sexual abuse and deviants, and deprives children in general of meaningful, first experiences of sexuality with peers. We must remain aware that a small percentage of children develop PSB and need help to avoid harming other children and themselves, but it is time to free children's natural sexuality from the iron grip of the focus on CSA and children's PSB. The positive attitude to children's sexuality, free of the CSA framework, evident in the most recent B&U feature on this topic (Bille & Andersen, 2017), demonstrated a way to achieve this. In general, the ongoing critical debate about the panic surrounding children's sexuality seen in B&U and in Danish society in recent years, suggests that a new balance may be gaining ground in Denmark, one that puts children's natural sexuality center stage (Edelberg, 2018).

Limitations and future directions

The analysis of 50 years of one journal's output is a strength of this study that facilitated an in-depth chronological analysis of a historical development, but it is also a limitation. I have mitigated this limitation by including other Danish historical sources, and my findings are also supported by the clear parallels to developments in the United States and the United Kingdom that I presented, based on international literature. Furthermore, *B&U* is a leading journal on the subject of Danish ECEC, and the experts interviewed are some of the most important voices on childhood sexuality in Denmark during this period, and thus represent prevailing views in Denmark. Consequently, this study contributes valuable knowledge of the understudied area of attitudes to children's sexuality at Danish childcare institutions in the past, and the problematization of childhood sexuality during the last 20–35 years in Denmark, the United States, and the United Kingdom. However, more research is needed to shed light on these subjects. Research is especially needed to investigate the short- and long-term consequences for children, of problematizing, pathologizing, and criminalizing their sexuality since the 1980s. We know very little about what it does to children when they are prevented from playing sexual games in childhood or the consequences of stigmatizing, pathologizing, or criminalizing children because of their species-typical sexual behavior. Furthermore, the importance of considering a given context and the child's perspective when interpreting childhood sexuality calls for more qualitative research on childhood sexuality, which would provide children and caretakers with the opportunity to elaborate on children's intentions (Rademakers, Laan, & Straver, 2000). Research is also needed to further investigate the role of mental health problems in the development of PSB, and how such conditions are considered when assessing children's and adolescents' sexual behavior, for instance, by the criminal justice system, and how we best provide sex education and guidance to vulnerable children, such as those with mental health problems. Finally, this article has touched only

very briefly on important historical circumstances that merit further investigation, for instance, the fact that child pornography was legal in Denmark from 1969 to 1980.

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Illustration 2: © Unknown photographer/VISDA. Two naked children bathing and playing with water at a childcare institution, in *Børn&Unge*, no. 4, 6 October 1970, supplement, p. 10.

Illustration 3: © Unknown photographer/VISDA. Naked children bathing in a lake at a camp organized by a BASC, in *Børn&Unge*, no. 29, 29 August 1974, p. 7.

Illustration 4: © Unknown photographer/VISDA. A male director holding a naked child at a childcare institution, in *Børn&Unge*, no. 39, 6 November 1975, p. 9.

Illustration 5: Photograph by Gregers Nielsen. In *Børn&Unge*, no. 15, 24 April 1986, cover. Caption: “Do you want to play? – Where is the limit”

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Illustration 23: Graph illustrating the number of B&U articles that mentioned or addressed CSA between 1970 and 2019.

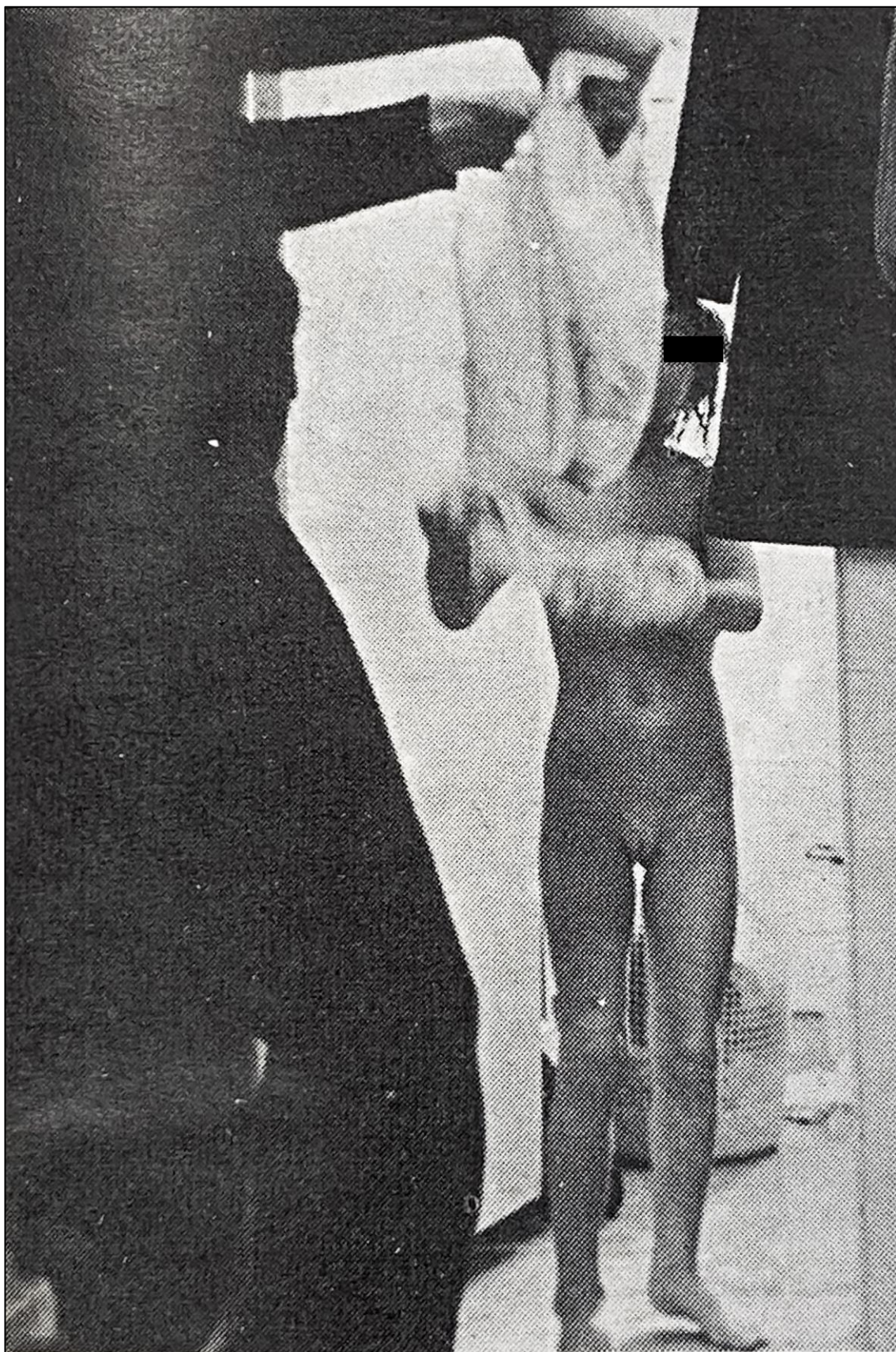


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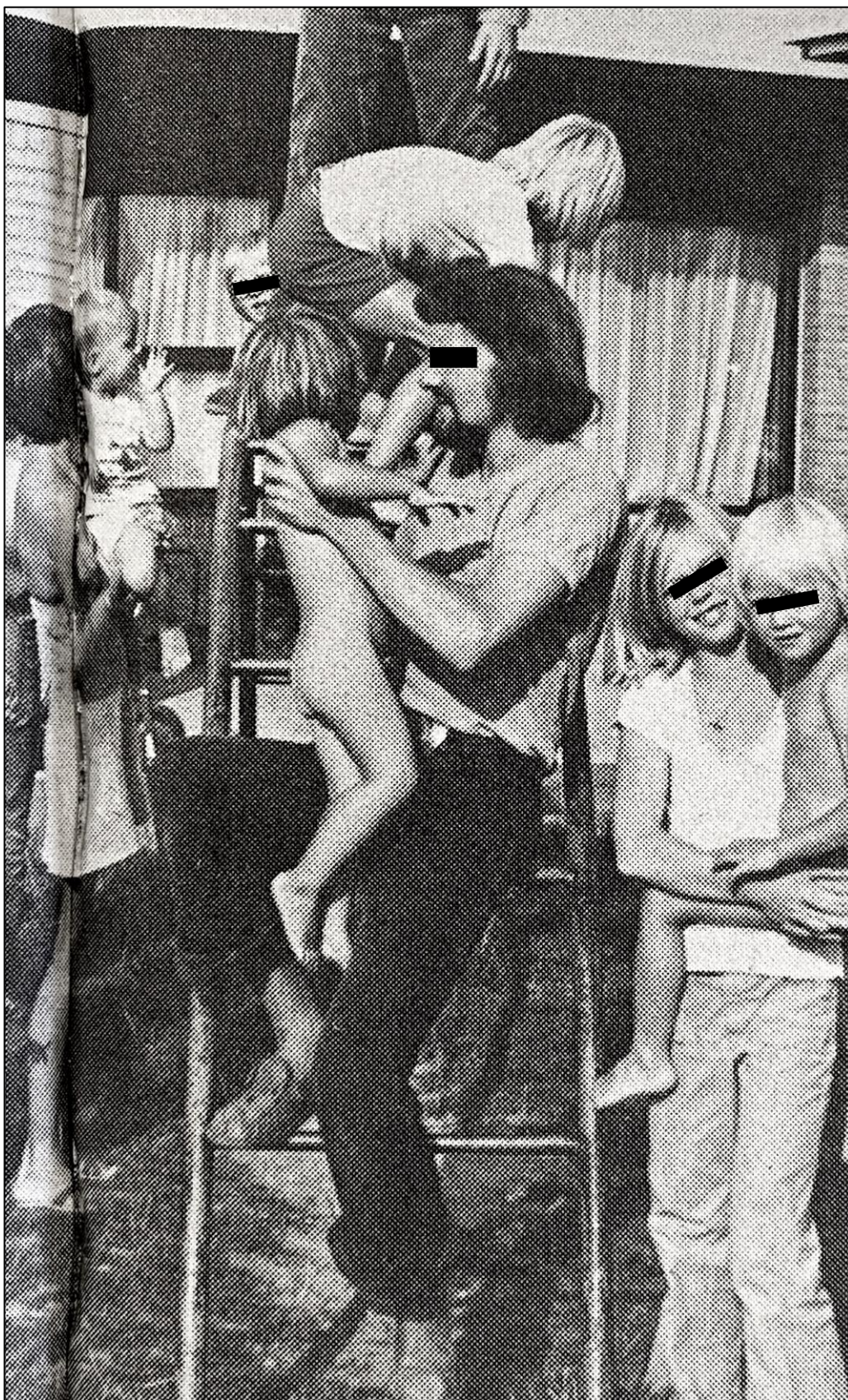


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NR. 15
24. APRIL 1986 · 17. ARGANG

DET SOCIALPÆDAGOGISKE FAGBLAD

Børn & unge

LØSSALG: 9 KRONER



Skal vi lege?

Hvor går grænsen

side 17, 18, 19

FAST ARBEJDE?



Pædagog – et job med fremtid i

side 5–7

Debat-oplæg:

Hvad skal der ske når arbejds-tiden sættes en time ned?

Fire tag-ud sider

LDK SIGER NEJ TIL BUPL

s. 3, 4

Illustration 5: Photograph by Gregers Nielsen. In *Børn & Unge*, no. 15, 24 April 1986, cover.
Caption: "Do you want to play? – Where is the limit?"

Hvor fræk må en fritter være?



Illustration 6: © Unknown photographer/VISDA. In *Børn&Unge*, no. 15, 24 April 1986, p. 17.
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Børn og sex

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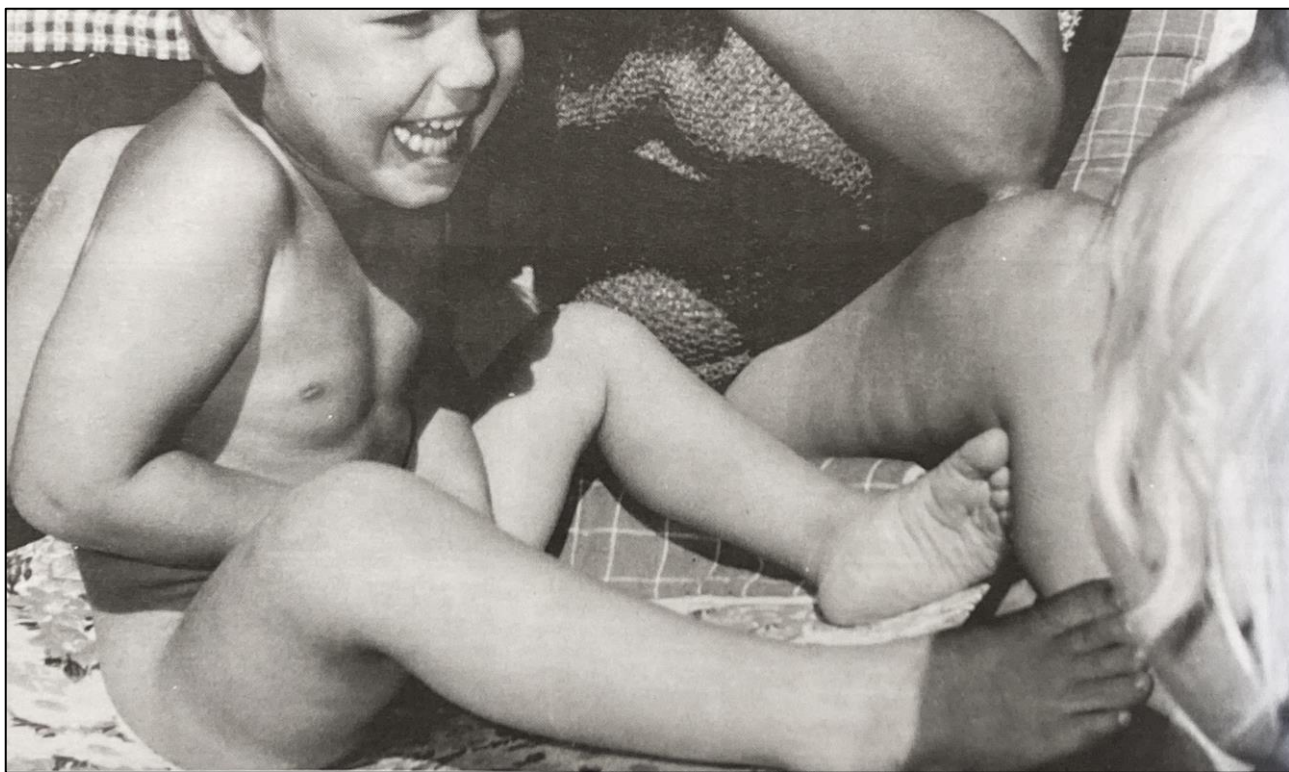


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Nyhed: SF vil give 500 millioner ekstra til pædagoger **6** • **Inspiration:** Tag energien med hjem til familien **28**

BØRN&UNGE15

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*Illustration 17: Drawing by Pia Olsen. In Børn&Unge, no. 15, 4 September 2014, cover.
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MED DE HISTORISKE BRILLER PÅ

Seksualitet er (igen) tabu i børnehaven



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Caption/article headline: "A historical perspective: Sexuality is taboo in kindergartens (again)"

BØRN & UNGE

Nr. 05

14. marts 2017

BLIV INSPIRERET
I ÅRETS DAGTILBUD ER
ALLE PÆDAGOGER

VÆR VELKOMMEN
SÅDAN MODTAGER
I EN NY KOLLEGA

KRITISK SYG?
FORSIKRINGEN KAN
BRUGES TO GANGE

KREATIVITET
KUFFETER SÆTTER
FUT I PENSLERNE

BØRNS SEKSUALITET

Vì vil have mere viden

Ny stor undersøgelse fra Sex & Samfund
viser, at pædagoger savner viden, og at
forældresamarbejdet kan være svært.

Side 11-23



Illustration 20: Drawing by Rasmus Meisler. In *Børn & Unge*, no. 5, 14 March 2017, cover.
Caption/cover headline: "Children's sexuality. We need more knowledge"



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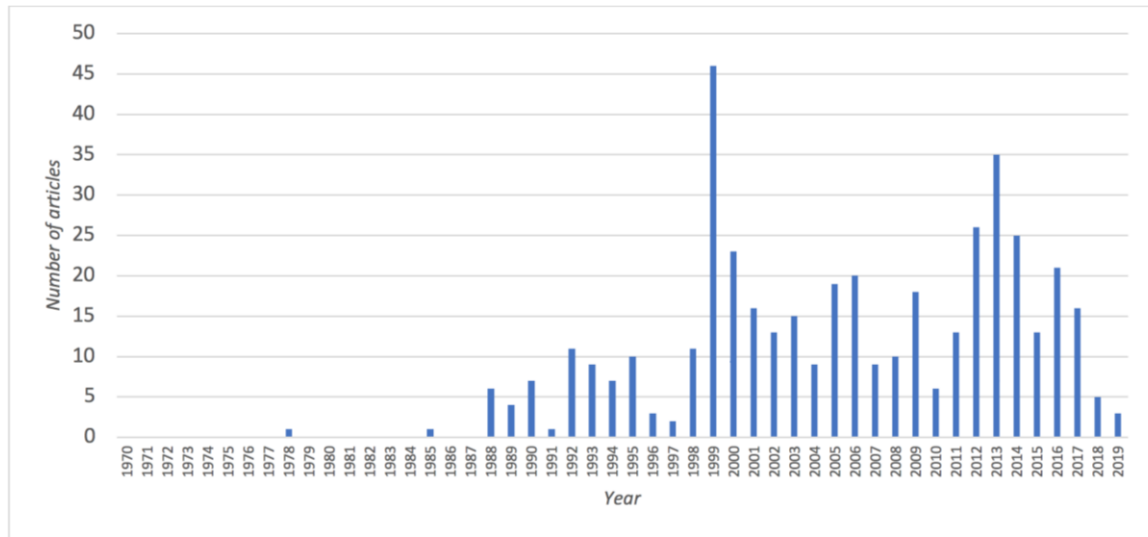


Illustration 23: Graph illustrating the number of B&U articles that mentioned or addressed CSA between 1970 and 2019.

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Article 4:

Doctor Games

Leander, E.-M. B. (2021b). Doctor Games. In D. P. VanderLaan & W. I. Wong (Eds.). *Gender and sexuality development: Contemporary theory and research*. New York, NY: Springer.

DOCTOR GAMES

“Doctor games” are play situations in which children may engage prior to the age of 12, where two or more children undress and examine or otherwise play with their bodies, especially the genitals and the bottom. They look at and/or touch each other. The children may also kiss each other, or lick the skin—at times, the genitals. They may get on top of each other, simulating intercourse. Finally, they may insert objects into the vagina/rectum. The framework of the games may be a visit to the doctor, but other play themes are as likely to inspire the games. These may also simply take the form of “I’ll Show You Mine If You Show Me Yours” (Friedrich, 2007; Lamb & Coakley, 1993; Leander, Larsen, & Munk, 2018).

Sexual games among children are pervasive throughout Western and non-Western cultures. They are observed by parents, childcare staff, and researchers, and are retrospectively reported by adults, in various cultures (e.g. Ford & Beach, 1951; Lamb & Coakley, 1993; Larsson & Svedin, 2001; Leander et al., 2018; Lopez Sanchez, Del Campo, & Guijo, 2002; Miragoli, Camisasca, & Di Blasio, 2017; Okami, Olmstead, & Abramson, 1997; Reynolds, Herbenick, & Bancroft, 2003; Sandfort & Cohen-Kettenis, 2000; Schoentjes, Deboutte, & Friedrich, 1999). Furthermore, all great apes display sociosexual patterns during infant and juvenile life (Dixson, 2012).

The ubiquitous character of doctor games establishes them as expected, developmentally appropriate sexual behavior in children (Dixson, 2012; Friedrich, 2007). However, their role in sexual development is understudied. One theory is that these are sexual rehearsal games, a safe venue for children to learn about sex (Dixson, 2012; Josephs, 2015). Research on the role of play in general in child development supports this theory. It indicates that children’s play, ubiquitous in human societies, has evolved to develop and train future behavior in a safe environment (Buchsbaum, Bridgers, Weisberg, & Gopnik, 2012; Lillard,

2017; Steen & Owens, 2001), and that while playing, children acquire generic knowledge (Sutherland & Friedman, 2013) and cognitive and social skills (Buchsbaum et al., 2012; Lillard et al., 2013; Lillard, 2017). Seen through this lens, doctor games may be considered opportunities for children to develop and practice sexual behaviors and interactions, to acquire an experience of intimacy, boundaries, and the thrill of sexuality, and finally, to gain knowledge about genital differences and the human body in general.

How and how much children play doctor games is influenced by their acceptance in a given context, and views on doctor games vary, depending on culture and historical period (e.g. Ford & Beach, 1951; Larsson, Svedin, & Friedrich, 2000; Reynolds et al., 2003). There was a significant shift in views of doctor games in Western societies at the end of the 1900s, beginning in the English-speaking countries in the late 1980s. The new view of doctor games focused heavily on abnormal sexual behaviors in children and the idea that children could sexually abuse each other (Dicataldo, 2009; Leander et al., 2018; Levine, 2002; Okami, 1992; Tobin, 1997, 2004, 2009). It was largely influenced by the great attention to sexual abuse that began in the USA in the 1970s, leading to an interest in children's sexuality beginning in the 1980s, as children with "sexual behavior problems" were considered sexual abuse victims who repeated the abusive behavior and were future sex offenders—stereotypes that have proven inaccurate for the majority of these children (Carpentier, Silovsky, & Chaffin, 2006; Chaffin et al., 2006; Friedrich, 2007; Letourneau, Chapman, & Schoenwald, 2008).

Leander, Larsen, and Munk (2018) showed how the abovementioned shift in culture emerged in childcare institutions in Denmark, a sexually permissive society. Their study revealed that before the millennium, doctor games were generally tolerated at Danish childcare institutions, and it was usual for children to bathe naked in the summer, but today,

the majority of institutions forbid undressing and nudity —partly to keep children from playing doctor—and many institutions have explicit rules against these games. They either forbid doctor games or allow them with certain restrictions. The most common restriction is that children must remain dressed—all their clothes, or their underwear—while playing; other restrictions are that children may play doctor from the waist and up, or look at each other, but not touch. As a result of staff’s efforts to ensure that children obey the rules, there tends to be increased surveillance of children; for instance, some institutions forbid blanket forts, or install windows to supervise children’s play. Danish childcare facilities try to reassure parents who they report as uneasy about children’s nudity and doctor games, but most professionals share parents’ concerns that doctor games risk being transgressive. A new discourse on these games that has gained ground in Danish childcare institutions since the millennium reflects a significant focus on the risk of children overstepping each other’s “boundaries” during these games, and many Danish childcare institutions teach children to feel and respect boundaries. The new discourse reveals that, at worst, doctor games are viewed as “abusive,” and some children as “offenders.” However, other childcare professionals express concern that the new rules suppress children’s sexuality, and will harm them in the long run, whereas many try to balance things, for instance, by not shaming the children when interfering in the games. Another reason that Danish childcare staff restrict children’s doctor games is that they fear false allegations of child sexual abuse (CSA) (Leander et al., 2018), a fear that also restricts normal physical contact between staff and children, which underscores how profoundly the child’s body has become associated with CSA (Leander, Munk, & Larsen, 2019).

Much research indicates that in Western cultures, both parents and childcare professionals lack education on children’s developmentally appropriate sexuality (e.g. Balter, van Rhijn, & Davies, 2018; Martin, 2014). Current research on children’s sexual games and professionals’ education on this subject focus largely on problematic sexual behavior and

CSA prevention (e.g. Balter et al., 2018; Reynolds et al., 2003). However, the rarity of problematic sexual behavior among children (Chaffin et al., 2006; Elkovitch, Latzman, Hansen, & Flood, 2009) does not support this principal focus on risk, in theory or in institutional practice, and the ubiquity of doctor games contradicts their current problematization and persistent strong association with CSA in Western cultures. The consequence of these disproportions is not only that the developmental appropriateness of doctor games is overshadowed, curtailing them, but also that young children, such as preschoolers playing doctor in daycare, may be stigmatized as sex offenders, with serious consequences (Chaffin & Bonner, 1998; Dicataldo, 2009; Martin, 2014; Tobin, 2009).

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PART 3

GENERAL FINDINGS AND FINAL DISCUSSION

For my doctoral project, I combined various research strategies to investigate the unintended consequences of the last decades' widespread fear of child sexual abuse (CSA) (Bech, 2005; Best, 1990; Burnett, 2016; Cohen, 2002; Critcher, 2003; Furedi, 2006; Furedi & Bristow, 2010; Jenkins, 1998; Jenks, 1994; Johnson, 2000; La Fontaine, 1998; Meyer, 2007; Munk, Larsen, Leander, & Soerensen, 2013; Piper & Stronach, 2008; Piper, 2014; Rantorp, 2000; Tobin, 1997; Webster, 2005). I used a mixed-methods approach, and also applied triangulation to all levels. I investigated more than one phenomenon, I mixed qualitative and quantitative methods, I analyzed different qualitative data sets—documents and answers to open-ended survey questions—I analyzed both discourse and images, my theoretical framework included multiple, interdisciplinary theories and concepts, the time frame addressed by the investigation was half a century, the scope of the doctoral project was national and international, and more than one researcher was involved in two of the dissertation's articles (Altrichter, Feldman, Posch, & Somekh, 2008; Denzin, 2006; Frederiksen, Gundelach, & Nielsen, 2014; O'Donoghue & Punch, 2003). In this concluding chapter, I integrate the principal findings from this pluralistic investigation. The two key focuses of my doctoral project are 1) the influence of the fear of CSA on childcare practices, male childcare–staff working conditions, and teacher–child relationships at Danish childcare institutions; 2) the influence of the fear of CSA on the view of childhood sexuality and Danish childcare institutions' practices surrounding children's sexual behavior (mostly addressed independently in the dissertation's four articles). The main purpose of this last chapter is to address these focuses jointly, as I draw the bigger picture and add some general conclusions to the conclusions already presented in the articles.

Our findings (my co-authors' and mine) revealed that the guidelines for preventing CSA and wrongful allegations of CSA, addressed in article one (Leander, Munk, & Larsen, 2019), and the rules for children's sexual games and nudity, addressed in article two (Leander, Larsen, & Munk, 2018), developed simultaneously in Danish childcare institutions, and displayed strong similarities. In article one, Foucault's theory of discipline and its emblem, the panopticon, formed the main theoretical approach for analyzing the guidelines for staff (Foucault, 1977). In article three (Leander, 2021a), I also argued that the radical change in norms surrounding childhood sexuality over the past 50 years was part of a disciplinary technology, the inherent knowledge of which was central to disciplining childhood sexuality at childcare institutions. In fact, the rules for children's nudity and doctor games at childcare institutions may also be recognized as part of the disciplinary "childcare panopticon" described in article one. Both the policies for staff and the policies for children consisted of very detailed restrictions that formalized and standardized movements and interactions, limiting spontaneity and physical interactions. The dual purpose of this control of the body was to minimize the risk of sexual abuse and any misconceptions in this regard. Key aspects of both policies included a high degree of surveillance combined with arrangements to optimize visibility, such as viewing windows into the nursery area to supervise staff, and closing cushion rooms, to supervise children. At the heart of Foucault's disciplinary panopticon is the self-regulation that results from the ever-present, hypothetical gaze of the panopticon's supervisor. In article one, we presented the new concept of the "multidimensional panopticon of intersecting gazes" to describe the multitude of gazes that characterize the childcare panopticon, where childcare workers watch one another, and also themselves, through the internalized gaze of colleagues and parents. Articles two and three revealed how children were also supervised to assure their compliance with the rules for sexual games and nudity. Moreover, article two showed that, as a result of this surveillance,

there was a tendency for children to self-regulate, like staff: Some childcare professionals spoke of a reduction in children's attempts to play sexual games, others stated that children were more modest than before, and finally, there were incidents of children telling on other children who broke the rules. Children behaving, and supervising one another, in response to the hypothetical gaze of staff, is consistent with the key characteristics of the panopticon, and the rules for the children's sexual behavior and nudity, and their disciplining effects, add yet another dimension to the multidimensional childcare panopticon of intersecting gazes, and strengthens this as my dissertation's central allegory of today's childcare institution reacting to concerns of CSA and false allegations of CSA. The childcare panopticon disciplines bodies—both adults' and children's—and the child's body is the center of this discipline. Any wrongdoing, by adults or other children, related to the child's body, is “the main sin” in the view of the childcare panopticon, and this dissertation shows how powerful a locus of control the child's body has become, as a result of the widespread fear of CSA and wrongful allegations of CSA.

The similarity and concurrence of staff guidelines for preventing CSA and wrongful allegations of it, and rules for children's sexual games and nudity, show that there was a general cultural–historical shift at Danish childcare institutions around the turn of the millennium. This is one of this dissertation's most significant findings. It is not only evident in my co-authors' and my findings in *The Guideline Study*, presented in articles one and two, but is also supported by the findings of my analysis of B&U presented in article three. Through text and images, this analysis offers insights into the entire development from the liberal Danish childcare of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, when children bathed naked and doctor games and masturbation were accepted—as childcare professionals reported in *The Guideline Study*—to the emergence of the restrictive rules for doctor games and nudity in the new millennium. In fact, this dissertation documents that the child's body came to be closely

associated with both the risk of CSA and of wrongful allegations, and that this significantly influenced Danish childcare practices. The body as such, and physical contact and interaction between adults and children, and among children, were problematized to a degree that forced childcare institutions to introduce preventive and defensive policies that supervised, controlled, and reduced physical contact. I wish to repeat what was stated in article one, namely, that the panopticon is not the whole truth about Danish childcare institutions. Findings in this dissertation, with regard to both guidelines for adults and rules for children, nuance the picture: There were institutions without guidelines or rules, and childcare professionals who actively worked against the panopticon, or who balanced things. However, *The Guidelines Study* found that, to varying degrees, the pattern of the panopticon, with regard to both staff guidelines and rules for the children, was evident in the majority of the childcare institutions, and in B&U, this was confirmed by the stories from childcare institutions. The extent of the panopticon and its refined methods of surveillance and (self)-regulation in Danish childcare indicates that generally, trust, as a foundation for the care of children in loco parentis, diminished considerably after the cultural–historical shift in childcare institutions.

The findings in articles one and two revealed that both guidelines for staff and rules for children had adverse, unintended consequences for practices at Danish childcare institutions. Staff guidelines undermined care, learning opportunities, and trusting relationships between children and childcare professionals and discriminated against male staff, and the restrictions and bans relating to children’s sexual games and nudity risked depriving them of early sexual experience and knowledge of the body and transmitting to them a problematic perspective on the body and sexuality. The argument I put forward in article four (Leander, 2021b), that children’s sexual games must be understood as part of general childhood play, which has evolved to practice future behavior in a safe environment

(Buchsbaum, Bridgers, Weisberg, & Gopnik, 2012; Lillard, 2017; Steen & Owens, 2001), supports the hypothesis that these restrictions deprive children of important sexual rehearsal games (Dixon, 2012; Josephs, 2015). A characteristic of the policies for staff and for children was that they presented professional dilemmas for a group of the childcare professionals surveyed for *The Guideline Study*, who, to comply with these policies, had to ignore their professional judgement, convictions, and standards. This sign of dysfunctionality in pedagogical practices was a clear indication that a disproportionate fear had been institutionalized and routinized at Danish childcare institutions (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009; Svendsen, 2008).

This dissertation also documents a second cultural–historical shift in Denmark around the turn of the millennium: a significant shift in the view of childhood sexuality that introduced the idea of problematic and potentially abusive childhood sexuality. My findings indicate that this was a cultural import of American ideas from the mid-1980s, which first found an audience in Denmark among key childhood-sexuality specialists, and later gradually became dominant at Danish childcare facilities, where it influenced the restrictive rules for children’s doctor games and nudity. Thus, these two cultural–historical shifts were closely entwined, and may be viewed as one larger cultural–historical shift in which any innocence surrounding the child’s body was lost, as it came to be closely associated with CSA. The analysis of childcare professionals’ survey responses in articles one and two, and the analysis of newspaper articles in article one and of *Børn&Unge* (B&U) in article three converged, situating this major shift at around the turn of the millennium, and revealing the crucial role of the Vadstrupgaard case in triggering it. The view of childhood sexuality, childcare institutions’ guidelines for staff conduct, and for children’s sexual behavior and nudity changed significantly after this case. That the Vadstrupgaard case placed an intense focus on CSA was also supported by article three, with my count of the B&U articles that addressed

CSA between 1970 and 2019, as it revealed a significant increase in B&U's coverage of CSA in the aftermath of this case. However, as mentioned above, my article on B&U presented a more complex background to the Danish development and demonstrated that this was also closely related to a broader, international development that originated in the United States in the 1980s, and was characterized by a general culture of fear and abuse (Furedi, 2006). The international character of the cultural–historical shift in childcare institutions was further supported by the strong parallels between my findings at Danish childcare institutions, and those in the international literature, which found similar patterns in British and American childcare institutions, of defensive staff behavior and discrimination against male childcare professionals, as a result of the significant focus on CSA (Furedi & Bristow, 2010; Johnson, 2000; Piper & Stronach, 2008; Sargent, 2004). With regard to rules for children's sexual games in childcare institutions, a subject that is not studied in the United Kingdom, the cultural–historical shift at Danish childcare institutions was also found in the United States in the late 1980s (Tobin, 1997, 2004, 2009). My findings also revealed that the cultural–historical shift at Danish childcare institutions was not limited to these settings. Supported by agents such as unions and municipalities, childcare institutions reacted defensively to parents' fears about CSA. The new view of childhood sexuality as potentially abusive was introduced to Danish childcare institutions through B&U interviews with Danish childhood-sexuality specialists. Also, as I mentioned in the introduction, “the government's action plan 2003” for preventing CSA, developed in the aftermath of the Vadstrupgaard case, and later supported by Danish researchers (Helweg-Larsen, Andersen, & Plauborg, 2010), included recommendations for implementing guidelines for physical interactions between childcare professionals and children at childcare institutions, and identified the preventive measure of increasing children's awareness of their personal boundaries. This shows that Danish

childcare institutions were a concentrated locus for a much broader development in Danish society.

This dissertation analyzed various sets of data that cover 50 years and offers insights into the culture surrounding the child's body and nudity, and teacher-child relationships related to these, at Danish childcare institutions, before the abovementioned cultural-historical shift. Survey responses from Danish childcare staff presented in articles one and two, and the interviews, stories, and photographs that emerged from Danish childcare institutions presented in article three, converged to portray a very different period before the cultural-historical shift, when the child's body was not yet associated with sexual abuse. This contrast is striking, if we compare the male kindergarten director in an image in B&U from 1975, who holds a naked child in his arms (Børn&Unge, 1975), with the male childcare professionals interviewed for *The Guideline Study*, who are not allowed to take a child onto their laps, be alone with a child, or put sunscreen on a child. Childcare institutions' practice, before the turn of the millennium, of letting children bathe naked and play doctor games unsupervised, the way childcare professionals spoke open-mindedly about children and sexuality in the earlier years of B&U, the fact that B&U felt comfortable publishing photographs of naked children and distributing their magazine to childcare professionals all over the country, the staff anecdotes in *The Guideline study* about how it was once natural to take children home for buns and hot chocolate and so on, collectively paint the picture of a period in Danish childcare when teacher-child relationships and practices surrounding children's bodies were significantly more relaxed than they are today.

In article one, an interdisciplinary array of theories and concepts served to show how the intense focus on CSA that replaced the relaxed period sketched out above has affected relationships in childcare institutions and threaten the trust and recognition which are

crucial to social interaction (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Fukuyama, 1995; Hart, 2006; Hochschild, 1979; Honneth, 1992; Sommer, 2010; Sommer, Samuelsson, & Hundeide, 2013). My dissertation demonstrates that in the multidimensional childcare panopticon, a vicious cycle of fear, suspicion, and defensiveness threatens trusting relationships, and that this affects all relationships: relationships between adults, relationships between adults and children, and relationships between children. Although concerns about CSA come from the desire to protect children from the sexual predator, paradoxically, this figure now haunts childcare institutions. A key finding of my dissertation is that Danish male childcare professionals have suffered particularly from this development. This dissertation confirms Munk et al.'s findings (2013), which showed that Danish male childcare professionals thought about the risk of wrongful allegations of CSA and had changed their behavior towards children to a significantly greater extent than female childcare professionals had. It extensively documents the stigmatization of male childcare professionals, and the fact that they have sometimes been subjected to illegal, discriminatory guidelines that applied only to men, which limited their ability to do their work and maintain trusting relationships with the children in their care. My dissertation gradually revealed another group of individuals that suffered from the fear of, and the sometimes disproportionate focus on CSA in recent decades, namely, children. The amplitude of this finding was perhaps the most surprising and disturbing to emerge from my research. I discuss this below.

The threat to children's fundamental status in society

As I accumulated data, it became clear that in more than one way, fears about CSA and wrongful allegations of it, disrupted the prioritized place children normally occupy, in relation to adults. The League of Nations Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the United

Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1959, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, emphasize the child's rights to take priority, and special protection and care (League of Nations, 1924; United Nations, 1948, 1959, 1989). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that the child is "entitled to special care and assistance. All children (...) shall enjoy the same social protection" (United Nations, 1948), and the Declaration of the Rights of the Child states that "the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care" (United Nations, 1959). This dissertation documents two ways in which children's fundamental rights to special protection and care are threatened by the fear of CSA and the subsequent fear of wrongful allegations of it: 1) the impact that this has on childcare institutions' practices, which may become so defensive that consideration for children's needs recedes; 2) the view of children's sexual behavior as sexual abuse, and of children as perpetrators of sexual abuse, which deprives children of their very status as children. I will elaborate on this last point below.

When children's sexual games are regarded as sexual abuse and children are viewed as perpetrators of sexual abuse, children are equated to adults; there is the presumption that children have the maturity and the capacity to appreciate the nature and the consequences of their acts. The fact that children are not capable of this is the very reason they are protected by adults in most areas of life, and the reason the concept of a minimum age of criminal responsibility exists. In Denmark, the minimum age of criminal responsibility is 15. In England and Wales, the minimum age of criminal responsibility is 10, and in Canada, it is 12. In the United States, the minimum age of criminal responsibility varies from 7 to 10, depending on the state, whereas 33 states set no minimum age of criminal responsibility (Child Rights International Network, 2021). Worldwide, the median age of criminal responsibility is 12 (Penal Reform International, 2013). Even though the minimum age of criminal responsibility varies, most countries seem to agree that young children cannot

have criminal intent or be held responsible for their actions. However, these premises are rejected when children are viewed as “perpetrators of sexual abuse” and their sexual behavior as “sexual abuse,” which is revealed by the very use of this discourse, once reserved for adult offenders. My dissertation demonstrates that the view of childhood sexuality as potentially abusive embraces a presumption that contradicts international legal standards.

The minimum age of criminal responsibility aims to protect children. In the United States, the legal practice of subjecting children to sex offender registration, community notification, and residency restriction laws clearly illustrates what happens when children are deprived of this protection—that is, when they are treated as adults. In fact, in the United States, many sex offender registration laws treat youth sex offenders no differently from adults (ATSA, 2020). A Human Rights Watch report—“Raised on the Registry: The Irreparable Harm of Placing Children on Sex Offender Registries in the US”—described the devastating and long-lasting consequences for children of being placed on sex offender registries in the United States; these include severe psychological damage, depression, suicide attempts, stigmatization, isolation, difficulty living with their families, housing difficulties, difficulty pursuing higher education and getting a job, acts of aggression against them and their families. The report concluded that some of the most fundamental rights of children are threatened by sex offender registration laws. According to the report, the human rights of children that are threatened by youth sex offender registration are the rights to family unity, education, health and well-being, freedom of movement, special treatment in the criminal justice system and protection from harm (Human Rights Watch, 2013).

Subjecting children to sex offender registration, community notification, and residency restriction laws in the United States is the extreme consequence of the recent view of children’s sexual behavior as potentially abusive, and of children as potential perpetrators

of sexual abuse. On a smaller scale, this is the same thing described in articles two and three, when the behavior of Danish kindergarten children was assessed as sexual abuse, when children were identified as “perpetrators of sexual abuse,” or when childcare institutions reported “cases” of children sexually abusing other children. What is similar in the two scenarios, and what is really at stake here, is the withdrawal of children’s fundamental right to be regarded as children, different from adults, and consequently a withdrawal of the protection this status gives children. This is at stake both where children’s natural sexual behavior is treated as sexual abusive, and in cases where children display problematic sexual behavior (PSB). As I discussed in the third article, children with PSB are often among the most vulnerable children in society, and may suffer from neuropsychiatric disorders or low IQs, and/or be victims of other adverse circumstances, such as neglect and abuse. Given such backgrounds, one may argue that children with PSB particularly need the protection of society, for example, against being stigmatized as criminals. It is telling that when children lose their special protection as children, they may suffer similar devastating, stigmatizing, long-lasting personal consequences, namely those described above, to adults who are wrongfully accused of CSA (Burnett, 2016; Leander, 2015; Sikes & Piper, 2010).

Furthermore, by integrating various sets of empirical data that cover the various, unintended consequences of the recent decades’ significant focus on CSA, I reveal that there is a direct line between the stigmatized male childcare professional working under illegal and discriminatory conditions in the panopticon at Danish childcare institutions, which aims to distance the pedophile’s ghost clinging to male childcare staff, and the kindergarten child whose natural sexual behavior is associated with sexual abuse in these settings, and who, at worst, also risks being viewed as a perpetrator of sexual abuse.

My findings reveal a current schism between the view of children as innocent beings who must be protected against the danger of CSA, and the view of them as embodying

this danger themselves, as perpetrators of sexual abuse. In article three, I described this as the polarity between “victims” and “aggressors,” drawing on Furedi’s terminology for the two archetypes that characterize the Western culture of fear and abuse in recent decades (Furedi, 2006). This polarized view of childhood sexuality is not new. Throughout history, understandings of children’s sexuality have varied between the view of children as asexual or sexually innocent, and the view of them as sexually depraved or dangerously seductive. Also, throughout history, there have been varying understandings of the limit between childhood and the age of maturity, and childhood has not always enjoyed the legal protection it does in the Western world today. In English law, the age of consent was raised from 10 to 12 in 1861 and to 16 in 1885 (Bullough, 2004; Graugaard, 2013; Nielsen, 2011). The Danish criminal code of 1866 forbade sexual intercourse with girls under the age of 12 (Danish Criminal Code, 1866). However, parent–child incest was blamed not only on the parents, who were punished with penal servitude for 4 to 10 years, but also on the children, who were punished with “improving housework, or under mitigating circumstances, with prison on water and bread, for not less than four times five days” (Danish Criminal Code, 1866). Seidelin’s (2018) investigation of the period from 1933 to 1967 demonstrated that well into the 20th century, adolescent Danish girls who were victims of CSA at the hands of their fathers or stepfathers were categorized by their families and the police, as “decent” girls or “immoral” girls, and the latter were at risk of being held at least partially morally responsible for the sexual abuse. Similarly, when investigating cases of teachers’ sexual misconduct towards their pupils in Danish state schools between 1900 and 1970, de Coninck-Smith found that the student’s possible complicity was often discussed (de Coninck-Smith, 2008). Furthermore, de Coninck-Smith (2004) found that the idea that children could lure adults sexually still appeared in popular science literature in 1950s’ Denmark, but that the new idea of the dangerous child-lurer caused this idea to lose ground to the idea of the sexually innocent child. Bak (2018) emphasized the radical changes

in the legal perceptions of CSA in the 20th century. When the Danish penal code was revised in 1930, the age of sexual consent was raised to 15, and now also included boys; furthermore, the age of sexual consent was extended to 18 in the case of stepchildren, and when the accused was a teacher—as in contemporary law. Bak concluded: “The protection of childhood from sexual assaults from adults and trustees became enshrined in the law. It also absolved the child from guilt” (Bak, 2018, p. 169). As Seidelin’s (2018) and de Coninck-Smith’s (2004, 2008) findings indicate, these legal changes did not immediately absolve the child of guilt, in practice. Nevertheless, as illustrated by the 20th century declarations of the rights of the child, throughout the 20th century, childhood came to be increasingly viewed as a period of life characterized by mental and physical immaturity, distinct from adulthood, and therefore requiring special protection and care (de Coninck-Smith, 2004; League of Nations, 1924; United Nations, 1948, 1959, 1989).

One may argue that since the 1980s, the reconstruction of childhood around the principle of safety, as a result of the Western culture of fear and abuse, has consolidated the modern concept of childhood. This culture identifies children as fragile and potential victims who must be protected against a wide variety of dangers (Furedi, 2006; Guldberg, 2009; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018). In particular, the intense focus on CSA has effectively taught us to regard children as victims. Furthermore, as I suggested in the third article, the intense focus on CSA since the 1980s may also be viewed as a defensive reaction to the sexual revolution of the 1960s and the 1970s, the extremes of which threatened to invade the borders of childhood by engaging children in the discarding of all sexual taboos. However, my findings show that, paradoxically, the culture of fear and abuse now threatens its original aim of safeguarding children, by tearing down the protective boundary between adulthood and childhood that developed during the 20th century. The significant focus on CSA has made sexual abuse the constant interpretation of physical intimacy, even between children. The narrative inherent in

the initial focus on children's PSB, namely that children who display PSB were sexually abused and will go on to abuse other children, and eventually become sex offenders as adults, boomeranged on children. The idea that one could fight CSA by fighting children's sexuality put children in the spotlight of the fear of CSA, juxtaposing them with the dreaded sexual abusers from which the focus on CSA aimed to protect them. My dissertation demonstrates that this may leave children very vulnerable, and the foregoing, roughly outlined historical perspective illustrates the parallels to earlier times, when children were also vulnerable, because they were considered sexually dangerous or responsible, or because no laws or rights protected their status as children, as we understand it today. It is a striking paradox that at this time in history, when the idea of children being guilty of the sexual abuse they are subjected to by adults has become abhorrent—when their role as victims in such cases is no longer disputed—we have gone even further, and perceive some children as perpetrators of CSA, when only children are involved.

My findings contradict the theory of the child's current unique moral status in the Western world that Furedi (2013) emphasized as a key factor for understanding recent decades' significant focus on CSA. Furedi argued that today, childhood is sacralized and stands as a symbol of purity, which explains why it has become a catalyst for so much fear. He posited: "The unique moral status of the sacred child is so powerful that it is literally beyond discussion" (Furedi, 2013, p. 48), and exemplified the consensus surrounding the child's moral status with "the veneration of the innocence of childhood and a universal loathing for the child abuser" (Furedi, 2013, p. 45). However, my findings show that the widespread fear of CSA, and its problematization of childhood sexuality—with its extreme consequences, the criminalization of childhood sexuality—divides children themselves into "the innocent" and "the abusers," and thus my findings reveal a more complex, dualistic contemporary view of the child that also includes "the universally loathed." Also, Best (1990) argued that since the 1970s, "children

have become the last sacred category of innocents to require society's protection" (p. 182). He described a historical turn in which, following the moral crusaders of the 19th century warning against the vice that risked corrupting the innocence of children, the child-saving discourse in the United States in the 20th century identified rebellious children as child-victims who were not to be blamed for their offences. Clearly, the current view of children as potential perpetrators of sexual abuse, which may have legal consequences, particularly in the United States, shows that there has been a return to earlier views, in that today, children are once again blamed for CSA.

This dissertation documents a historical development, whereby the significant fear of CSA has had serious consequences for male childcare professionals and children, which violate legal standards and human rights: male childcare professionals' right to recognition and equality in the workplace, and children's rights to special protection and care. This sheds light on disturbing circumstances that previously were largely unknown to the Danish society. Prior to *The Guideline Study*, no research had investigated the guidelines for preventing CSA and wrongful allegations of CSA at Danish childcare facilities, originally indicated by Munk et al. (2013). *The Guideline Study* documented these guidelines, including the special guidelines for male staff, and their unintended consequences. Furthermore, as mentioned in the introduction, previous to this dissertation, there was no Danish research on the view of childhood sexuality as potentially abusive that has led to some children being viewed as perpetrators of sexual abuse, and problematized children's doctor games at Danish childcare institutions. Building on Munk et al.'s initial findings (2013), which indicated that a climate of fear prevailed at Danish childcare institutions, this dissertation's multiple perspectives and extensive empirical findings reveal the full range of the adverse impact of the significant focus on CSA on practices at Danish childcare institutions, where Danish children spend a great portion of their childhood.

The fact that this dissertation's findings are empirical, extensive, and multifaceted makes it a significant contribution to the limited international literature on the unintended consequences of the significant focus on CSA in the West since the 1980s. In particular, my dissertation's revelation of the amplitude of the unintended consequences for the children is unique in the international context. When children are exposed to the negative consequences of the disproportionate focus on CSA in various areas of their lives, the overall impact is correspondingly more serious. In my doctoral project I have investigated the international problematization and criminalization of childhood sexuality since the 1980s, I have raised questions that are very rarely asked in the English-speaking world, where, in under 40 years, children's PSB has become an established industry in terms of treatment, legal response, and research. A primary purpose of this dissertation is to question prevailing knowledge, practices, and dogmas. The dissertation's historical perspective, which shows that the idea of abusive childhood sexuality was constructed at the end of the last century, and a scrutiny of the related knowledge, paved the way for my question regarding whether this is an appropriate response to childhood sexuality, or instead, as my findings indicate, a harmful, disproportionate focus that is deeply influenced by Western society's fear of CSA.

This dissertation's controversial, general finding is that the significant focus on protecting children from CSA that has gained ground in the West since the 1980s is not entirely good for children. No one can argue that this focus is not crucial at all times, and I have not addressed all the important beneficial aspects of this development. Instead, I show the complex and paradoxical aspects of this historical development; I show that there is a hidden side to it that merits attention, as these largely overlooked, unintended consequences are serious, too. Also controversially, my findings indicate that the significant fear of CSA in the West since the 1980s is not all about protecting children. A lot of the fear that is related to this development is adults' fear of being morally judged or of becoming outcasts because of

the significant focus on CSA—for example, being wrongfully accused of CSA, or not having done everything possible to protect the children in their care. Furthermore, the persistence of the unintended consequences for children in the various areas I investigated, challenges the very concept of “unintended consequences” in this context (Merton, 1936; Norton, 2008). I do not mean that any individual, authority or organization intended these consequences. However, I do argue that in several ways, this dissertation reveals that these consequences are part of a broader, international pattern in Western societies, as described in article three, in particular. In fact, these unintended consequences have a pattern that seems to *serve* broader social agendas, which are not primarily concerned with children’s welfare. As I argued in article three, disciplining both children’s and adults in childcare settings as a result of the fear of CSA and of wrongful allegations of it, “fits into” the present economic paradigm of education in the West, which focuses on optimizing human potential and systematic learning instead of free play, for example (Korsgaard, Kristensen, & Jensen, 2017). From this perspective, sexuality, nudity, and intimacy may be considered chaotic and useless elements that disturb structured learning at childcare institutions. When investigating the period from 1900 to 1970, de Coninck-Smith (2008) found that in the twentieth century, too, the risk of allegations of CSA served a disciplinary function that sustained an educational ideal, which determined norms for physical contact between male schoolteachers and pupils, as male schoolteachers who wished to abandon the traditional, authoritative teaching role, to embrace a progressive, child-centered educational paradigm, risked being accused of CSA. Today, the fact that children learn to restrain their sexuality and cause adults around them to display physical restraint and extreme moral propriety may also be seen as part of a general trend of increased puritanism, and more formalized and contractual (physical) interactions between people in Western society. This development may also be seen elsewhere, though for other reasons, for example, in workplaces and institutions of higher education, which have

established codes of conduct that regulate the body, behavior, and speech (Furedi, 2006; Furedi & Bristow, 2010; Lukainoff and Haidt, 2018). Furedi recognized this pattern in his analysis of the culture of fear and abuse in the West since the 1980s and identified the core values of *the new etiquette* introduced by this culture as “caution, self-restraint and responsible behavior” (Furedi, 2006, p. 156). Furedi saw this as *a new morality* with a far-reaching effect on everyday life that is nevertheless widely accepted in society because of its appealing message of safety, which does not come from any traditional authority (Furedi, 2006).

“The appealing message of safety” is difficult to question. It is controversial and paradoxical to argue that our focus on CSA is excessive (Furedi, 2013). Nevertheless, my findings indicate that this is the case. Although there is no question that a society must always do its utmost to prevent CSA, my findings contradict the conclusion that an overwhelming focus on CSA is the best preventative. Svendsen defined a disproportionate fear as one that is dysfunctional (Svendsen, 2008). This dissertation demonstrates that a generalized focus on, and a disproportionate fear of, CSA creates new fears, and new problems and dysfunctions. One need only consider this paradox: Today, the most suspect things in childcare are the very things children need most—care, affection, and attachment. To prevent CSA, a new balance must be sought, based on facts, a sense of proportion, and with a useful focus, without making children more vulnerable and undermining their fundamental status as children—a status that should provide them with the vital protection of other generations, and society as such. My hope is that by presenting extensive empirical findings that demonstrate the serious, unintended consequences of the significant focus on CSA of the last decades, this dissertation will pave the way for new insights, reflections, and discussions that may be helpful in pursuing this balance.

POSTSCRIPT

THE IMPACT OF THIS DISSERTATION'S FINDINGS UP TO NOW

I ended the last chapter with the hope that this dissertation would prompt new reflections and discussions on the unintended consequences of the fear of child sexual abuse (CSA). One aim of this dissertation has been for the knowledge it presents to make a difference with regard to the urgent, topical questions it addresses. Therefore, since I began my doctoral project, I put this knowledge “out to work.” I had my articles published in influential international journals and one book, and also disseminated my findings to the Danish public.

This postscript gives an impression of the preliminary results of presenting my work for the Danish public. The findings of *the Guideline Study* were presented to the Danish public in the following ways:

1. The findings of *The Guideline Study* were first published in a non-academic report in January 2013. Leander, E.-M. B., Munk, K. P., & Larsen, P. L. (2013). *Retningslinjeundersøgelsen 2012 – en undersøgelse af retningslinjer til forebyggelse af dels seksuelle overgreb på børn, dels uberettiget mistanke mod personalet om seksuelle overgreb på børn i danske daginstitutioner og SFO'er*. Center for Sundhed, Menneske og Kultur, Aarhus Universitet.
http://smk.au.dk/fileadmin/www.smk.au.dk/forskning/paradox/Rapport_Retningslinje_undersoegelsen_2012_AU_09-06-2013.pdf.
2. I published two other texts that presented my findings to the Danish public:
 - a. Else-Marie Buch Leander: “Når det bliver farligt at tage et barn på skødet”, in Else Marie Bech (Ed.): *Professionel kærlighed – Er der plads til følelser i professionelle relationer?*, Dafolo, 2014.

- b. Else-Marie Buch Leander: “Pædofilifrygtens følgevirkninger: Der går en lige linje fra mistænkeliggørelsen af den mandlige pædagog til problematiseringen af børns doktorlege.” in *Vera: tidsskrift for pædagoger*, Vol. 70, 01.03.2015, p. 54–56.
3. I have appeared in the media on numerous occasions: on television, on the radio, and in national and regional newspapers. For example, the findings of *The Guideline Study* were published on the front page of the national newspaper, *Politiken*, on January 7th, 2013.
4. I have been interviewed by *Børn&Unge* several times.
5. I have given lectures in various settings.

For more details, please see the attached overview of my activities during my time in the Ph.D. program.

Presenting my findings to the Danish public has had significant effects:

1. The findings of *The Guideline Study* have generated significant debate in Danish society on the subjects of Danish childcare institutions’ staff guidelines for preventing CSA and wrongful allegations of CSA, and on the subject of Danish childcare institutions’ rules for children’s nudity and doctor games.
2. After the publication of the report on *The Guideline Study* in January 2013, The Danish Union of Early Childhood and Youth Educators (BUPL) announced on their homepage that they no longer recommended guidelines (of the sort investigated in *The Guideline Study*) for Danish childcare institutions.
3. On June 2, 2014, the minister for gender equality, Manu Sareen, was summoned by members of the Danish parliament, to answer their questions¹⁴ on the subject of the

¹⁴ In Danish: ”kaldt i samråd.”

special guidelines for male childcare professionals at Danish childcare institutions revealed by *The Guideline Study*. The above-mentioned report on *The Guideline Study* was quoted during the political meeting.

4. In 2014, I gave a lecture to the Department for Children and Youth in Aarhus, the second largest municipality in Denmark. In 2015, the department consulted with me on a written statement it sent out to all childcare institutions in Aarhus in April 2015, to establish that special guidelines for male childcare professionals were not to be part of the institutions' practices. This was a direct result of the debate in Danish society inspired by the findings from *The Guideline Study*, and the Department for Children and Youth mentioned this debate in the letter to the childcare institutions.
5. In 2016, the minister for Children, Education and Equality, Ellen Trane Nørby, wished to attract more male childcare professionals to Danish early childhood education and care (ECEC); as part of this initiative, she focused on special guidelines for male childcare professionals that she stated presented an obstacle to this goal. At the same time, she established an interdisciplinary committee of experts to increase gender equality throughout the childhood education system; the goal of attracting more male childcare professionals to ECEC was one of the focal points. *The Guideline Study*, which documented the special guidelines for male childcare professionals, led to *The Paradox Research Group* – consisting of associate professor, Dr. Karen P. Munk, Aarhus University, psychologist Per Lindsø Larsen, and myself – being invited to join this committee. I represented The Paradox Research Group on this committee throughout the period from 21/6/2016 to 23/12/2016.
6. After *The Guideline Study* revealed the existence of special guidelines for male childcare professionals at some Danish childcare institutions to the Danish public, prompting a debate about these in Danish society, The Danish Institute for Human

Rights filed a complaint before The Board of Equal Treatment. The case targeted a specific Danish kindergarten that wrote on their homepage that their male workers did not diaper, but the judgment concerned the principle generally. The Danish Institute for Human Rights won the case in 2017, and consequently, it was officially established in Denmark that special guidelines for male childcare professionals are illegal.

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*After my Ph.D. defense, article 3 was published in Archives of Sexual Behavior in a slightly shortened version:

Leander, EM.B. Children's Sexuality and Nudity in Discourse and Images in a Danish Education and Care Journal over 50 Years (1970–2019): The Emergence of “The Child Perpetrator of Sexual Abuse” in an International Perspective. *Arch Sex Behav* 52, 49–78 (2023).
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