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Broken Interaction Rituals, Struggles for Membership, and Violence among Young Children in Two Danish Schools

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> Children's conflicts, understood as disagreements involving negative emotional energy, constitute a particularly intense type of social interaction. In this paper, we show that children's conflictual interactions in school differ with regard to interactional dynamics and levels of confrontational tension, which together potentially lead to violence. We discuss how these differences relate to issues of inclusion and exclusion, to levels of interactional resources, and to neighborhood differences. Our conclusions are based on analysis of fieldwork data on children aged five to eight in two Danish schools. The analysis applies Goffman's and Collins's perspectives on interaction rituals and violence and the concept of emotional capital based on Bourdieu's theory of practice.

> Keywords: conflict, violence, children, interaction ritual chains, emotional capital, school environments, emotional energy, interactional resources

INTRODUCTION

Children spend most of their waking hours at school. This is where they interact with peers and learn to navigate peer dynamics. Thus, schools constitute a central platform where children experience social emotions that can be thrilling and energizing or emotionally draining and stressful. Conflicts or antagonistic interaction, understood as disagreements that involve negative emotional energy (EE), constitute a particularly intense type of social interaction in which the children's EE is

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relatively concentrated. In this paper, we investigate how interpersonal conflictual interactions play out between children in school. In particular, we focus on the question of why some conflictual interactions become violent while others do not. Furthermore, we wish to understand the social emotional dynamics involved in conflict interactions and explore how these relate to social structure and institutional context.

Previous research on children's conflicts has been primarily psychological. Such research focuses on conflict resolution and describes the psychological processes of individual children in relation to conflict (Chung and Asher 1996; Laursen, Hartrup, and Koplas 1996; Noakes and Rinaldi 2006). Studies of conflictual interactions between children from a sociological perspective are rare (Musolf 1996), and previous research has focused little on the emotional dynamics between children during conflict interactions. Children are often involved in or affected by adult conflicts, but they also engage in peer conflicts that are more or less independent of adult interaction, and such conflict interactions require investigation in their own right. The present paper contributes to research on children's conflicts by extending general sociological theories on interaction and violence to children's conflict, taking into account the particularities of children's social worlds and positions.

Based on an analysis of fieldwork data collected among children aged five to eight in two classes at two schools in Denmark, we show that children's conflictual interactions differ with regard to the level of emotional intensity and the interactional dynamics, which together potentially lead to violence. We propose that these differences are related to issues of inclusion and exclusion among the children, to the level of emotional and cultural resources of individual children, and to the school environment. To unravel the school children's interactional conflictual dynamics and emotional energies, we apply Goffman's and Collins's interactionist concepts, focusing on the conflict situation and the proximate context to illuminate and discuss children's ways in and out of conflicts. Further, to understand the embeddedness of these interactional dynamics in the two different school contexts and the broader social structures from which the children draw interactional and other resources, we apply the Bourdieu-inspired concept of emotional capital.

ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

The two fieldwork schools are embedded in a history of local and global schooling and are set in a social hierarchy of interest and power based on social, cultural, economic, and symbolic capital (c.f., Bourdieu 1998). As social sites (Schatzki 2002), the two differ remarkably with regard to their population of children, location, and status in the local governance of schools. For example, the two schools represent opposite sides of a municipal policy designed to break the school segregation between children of Danish and immigrant background, and improve the Danish language proficiency among children with language support needs (LSN). The policy is targeted at children who do not speak Danish at home and operates at the school level by classifying schools according to their share of (immigrant) children with LSN. Thus, one of the fieldwork schools is a "reception school," due to a low share of such pupils, and receives extra children with LSN from other school districts. The other fieldwork school is defined as a "magnet school," due to its high share of immigrant children (Brøndum & Fliess 2009). Since 2003, magnet schools have received extensive funding to enhance the quality of the teaching and the overall environment of such schools. The identity of both fieldwork schools is concealed in the following descriptions, in order to protect the identity of the children involved, and we refer to the schools simply as Reception School and Magnet School.

Driving through the quiet streets of suburban villas with well-kept gardens, you stumble upon Reception School. Classical three-story brick buildings and soccer fields are entrenched between the low houses surrounding the school. If you enter the school during teaching, the school yard is empty and the buildings almost silent. When the bell rings, children of all ages disgorge from the buildings and a myriad of activities unfolds – soccer, swinging, playing catch, and talking on the benches in small groups. The atmosphere is energetic and enthusiastic. Periodically, two or more children argue or push each other around. Such action immediately attracts a crowd of other children who gather around. If the situation continues or escalates, some of the other children fetch a teacher. The teacher's arrival most often stops the antagonistic interaction, even before the teacher speaks.

In another suburban area, Magnet School's one-story buildings stretch over a large area between terraced houses and apartment blocks. In the parking lot in front of the school, shattered glass lies across the asphalt — evidence of car-break-ins — and bikes are locked away in a designated shed. During teaching, the school is rather quiet. Most children are in their classrooms but a few wander around alone in the schoolyard and in the hallways. Occasionally, you hear children screaming or crying wildly. During recess, children disperse from their classrooms into the hallways, where they sit around and chat, or into the schoolyard where they play soccer or tag, climb trees, or play with sand. Frequently, two or more children start fighting, pushing or beating each other. In such instances, children nearby seem to ignore the fighting — they turn away (but do not move away) from it and continue their activities. Only close peers of the conflict interactants will hurry off to fetch a teacher, if they can see that a friend is physically injured.

Reception School district and Magnet School district differ significantly with regard to the socioeconomic status of their populations. According to the annual municipal reports, the Reception School district is close to the municipal average with regard to level of education, crime, and share of children who speak danish as a second language (DSL children)(see Table 1). In comparison, Magnet School is more unusual: It has a higher crime rate among young people, lower levels of education, and a much higher share of DSL children (see Table 1). Further, 40% of Magnet School district population belong to the two lowest income groups, earning less than 200,000 Danish Kroner per year (Brøndum & Fliess 2009).

Magnet School District	Reception School District	Municipality
25	10	8
65	60	59
10	30	33
8	2	3
70	10	18
	25 65 10 8	School District School District 25 10 65 60 10 30 8 2

TABLE 1. Socio-Economic Characteristics of Inhabitants in Fieldwork
School Districts Compared to the Municipal Average, in Percentages

Note: Numbers represent the share (in percentages) of the population in the school district/municipality, that fall into the listed categories (levels of education, criminal charges, and children who speak Danish as their second language). Numbers have been rounded slightly in order to secure anonymity of the fieldwork schools. The sources are the annual municipal reports published for each school in the municipality. In order to secure the anonymity of the fieldwork schools, these reports are not included as references.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In exploring how children's conflicts play out at Magnet and Reception School, respectively, we apply a micro-sociological approach to study conflict dynamics in situational face-to-face interactions. We draw on Goffman's interaction ritual (IR) theory (Goffman 1959, 1967) and Collins's microsociology on IR chains (IRC) and violence (Collins 1981, 1988, 2004, 2008). Further, we embed the conflicts among children at the two schools within larger institutional and structural dynamics of stratification, by drawing on the concept of emotional capital, developed from Bourdieu's (e.g., 1977, 1990) theory of practice. From this perspective, interactional resources rely on economic, social and cultural capitals, and interactional accomplishments on struggles over such capitals.

Goffman's key concept and analytical lens is the IR. IRs constitute codes of behavior by which actors sustain social reality, for instance through "face-work." Face-work is the situational exchange of speech and body language, tones and volumes, gestures, and facial expressions in face-to-face interactions, through which the actor presents him or herself to maintain a preferred self-image (a person's face) at the same time as preserving the preferred self-images of others (giving face to others) (Goffman 1959, 1967). Face-work is enacted through specific "lines," defined as "pattern[s] of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself" (Goffman 1967:5). Face-work, Goffman suggests, is used to sustain a performance that fits the requirements of particular situations, following two structural features: the frontstage and the backstage, which follow different norms and rules, and allow for different forms of interaction. However, maintaining a barrier between two domains is critical, since on frontstage people perform a role "to define the situation for those who observe the performance" (Goffman 1959:22) and simultaneously conceal contradicting behaviors, attitudes, and emotions for the audience. In contrast, on backstage they openly

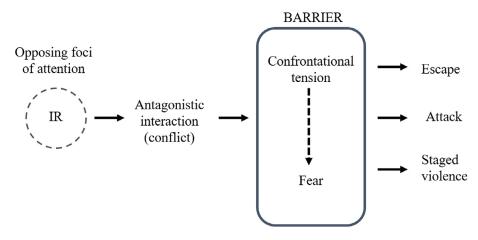


FIGURE 1. The Development of Violent Situations as Theorized by Randall Collins

violate expected role behaviors, and "knowingly contradict" the impression fostered by the performance (Goffman 1959:112–113). In the context of IRs, frontstage is where a mutual focused attention – as a precondition for shared EE to arise – is established, while backstage is where the IR is prepared to be effectively carried out (Collins 2004:24).

The empirical unit of Goffman's and Collins's microsociology is the social situation. In these situations, individuals are understood as an "ingredient, not the determinant, because a situation is an emergent property" (Collins 2004:5). Consequently, in studying children's conflicts we do not look for violent children across situations, as characterized by specific psychological profiles or background properties (such as poverty, race, or divorced parents). Instead, we seek to unravel the situational dynamics at play to identify the environments that facilitate situations and "the contours of [these] situations, which shape the emotions and acts of the individuals who step inside them" (Collins 2008:1).

According to Goffman, interactions are ritually organized and function to ensure consensus, cooperation, and maintenance of the social and moral order, as well as dignity and reverence in the relationship with other people through interaction rules (e.g., face-work, maintaining separation of front and backstage in self-display, accounts, excuses and justifications, etc.; Goffman 1959, 1967). Durkheim ([1912] 1995) also considers rituals to preserve social integration and solidarity. Based on these assumptions and his own empirical studies, Collins argues that violence is rare and that people generally cooperate to avoid it, but that it develops under specific situational circumstances that make people overcome the confrontational tension and fear that the threat of violence entails (Collins 2008:27–29, 338). Figure 1 illustrates Collins's understanding of the dynamics of the (exceptional) occurrence of violence.

Violent situations potentially occur when IRs break down — for example, when interactants apply different definitions of a situation or lose or deprive each other of face. The IR may then become an antagonistic interaction, and if no remedy is applied to re-establish solidarity between the interactants, confrontational tension may build to the point where the interactants want to break away from it, either by fleeing, attacking, or staging a violent encounter (Collins 2008:20).

Collins focusses empirically on (violent) adult interactions. However, he theorizes that children already within their first years of living are socialized to tune into other people emotionally by engaging in IRs with caretaking adults. Through turn-taking pseudo-conversations, young children engage in emotional entrainment, collective effervescence, and affect attunement through matching and building up emotions (Collins 2004:79). Moreover, children are inclined to avoid violent confrontations just like adults. Even though fighting among children is more common in the family than spousal violence or violence against children (Collins 2008:17, 137), and even though aggressive scuffling starts at quite young ages (Collins 2008:10, 18; Trembley 2004 as cited in Collins 2008:27), violence among children rarely becomes severe and injuring. Both because children have less physical capacity to severely hurt each other, and, more importantly, because they tend to perform their scuffles and fights in front of potentially intervening adults (Collins 2008:17). Collins proposes that micro-situational theory "does quite well in incorporating data on children" (Collins 2008:26); this is what we – based on his observations and concepts – test out and demonstrate in our analyses.

While IRs are situational, individuals transport EE from one interaction to the next, a mechanism Collins terms "interaction ritual chains". Thus, momentary situations, charged with emotions and consciousness from previous (chains of) encounters (Collins 2004:3), in aggregation make up the emotional environment (of EE) for future IRs, which then make people behave in specific ways situationally and across time and space (Collins 2004:990). Thus, IRCs potentially transport collective effervescence and solidarity. However, they also establish social stratification and power structures at the micro-level of social exchange, through the interactional production and distribution of authority and property in processes of inclusion and exclusion vis-à-vis groups, places, and things (Collins 1981:997–99):

Situational emotions carry across situations, in the form of emotional energy, with its hidden resonance of group membership, setting up chains of interaction rituals over time. Membership and its boundaries, solidarity, high and low emotional energy: these features work together. Hence the stratification of interaction — interacting with people who are higher or lower in power, and interacting from a position of status acceptance or rejection — gives each individual a jolt, upward or downward, to their level of EE. Social structure, viewed up close as a chain of interactional situations, is an ongoing process of stratifying individuals by their emotional energy. (Collins 2004:xii–xiii)

Following Collins, we understand the social organization of life among peers in school as constituted by patterns of children's IRCs (Collins 1981:985). By looking at

these patterns, we may learn how a specific IR (e.g., the conflict cases of the analysis) is impacted by both IRCs of particular individuals and by patterns of interpersonal relations in school life. Collins suggests that a successful IR requires two ingredients: Similar cultural resources and similar emotional energies (Collins 1981:999). "These two ingredients – cultural resources and emotional energies – come from individuals' chains of previous interactional experience and serve to reproduce or change the pattern of interpersonal relations" (Collins 1981:999). Thus, in order to understand why a particular IR breaks down or not, we focus on the EE and cultural resources of the individuals involved, which again must be traced through their individual IRCs.

We argue that among children, the emotional energies and cultural resources invested in and gained from a particular IR are closely related to alliances and membership negotiations between peers and the status hierarchies following from and reflected in these negotiations. Collins emphasizes how membership negotiations reflect interactants' position as either dominant or subordinate:

Why will a particular person, in any given interactional situation, achieve or fail to achieve ritual membership? And why will particular persons dominate or be subordinated in an IR? The answers lie in a combination of the emotional and cultural resources of all the participants in any encounter. These, in turn, result from the IR chains that each individual has previously experienced. Each encounter is like a marketplace in which these resources are implicitly compared and conversational rituals of various degrees of solidarity and stratification are negotiated. (Collins 1981:1002)

Since children in this study are situated very differently across the two school settings both in terms of socioeconomic position, social status of their parents, and of schools, it is critical to understand how dynamics of social structure at the meso- and macro-level intersect with interactional conflict dynamics. For this purpose, we apply the concept of emotional capital developed from Bourdieu by sociologists of education (e.g., Allatt 1993; Manion 2007; Nowotny 1981; Reay 2000, 2004; see Gillies 2006:284–285; and also Zembylas 2007:450–455). We define, following Zembylas (2007:444), emotional capital as "emotional resources" entangled with other forms of resources, or capital, a person can possess or lack in different compositions.¹

Habitus is a central component in the exchange between micro interactions and macro social structures through emotional capital. Habitus represents our systems of dispositions: the strategies we adapt and act on in meeting the world (Bourdieu 1977), our embodied norms of everyday life and a practical sense of how to move through social spaces (Zembylas 2007:446). Habitus exists in social fields, the social arenas within which networks, relations, and struggles over resources take place (Bourdieu 1977). These struggles — which form the power relations within the field — are over capital in various forms. In the context of this study, the children's *economic capital* is reflected in their physical and material living environment. Their *cultural capital* is reflected in their embodied values and aesthetic style; in the cultural objects they are taught to use (e.g., riding a bike, drawing, and laying a puzzle); and in their knowledge of the schools' explicit academic and implicit normative requirements. The children's

social capital is reflected in their social relations, networks, and group membership among peers within or across social status groups. These capitals may all transfer into symbolic capital, representing legitimation, status, power, and prestige. Approaching children's conflicts as sites where resources in terms of emotional capital are crucial, illuminates not only how the children's emotional resources determine the situational outcome, but also how emotional capital is influenced by other forms of capital, such as symbolic capital (e.g., acknowledgement among the children and teachers) and social capital (e.g., friendships).

Since a social field receives its form from power relations and the struggles over capital, the social environments and levels and forms of conflict at Reception and Magnet schools, respectively, reflect that the children possess different forms and compositions of capital unevenly, and are (therefore) unevenly positioned in the interactional struggles over capital (c.f., Zembylas 2007:450). However, habitus works through not only permanent, but also acquired and generative dispositions (Bourdieu 1990:53), and therefore carries "transposable" potentials for adapting to and reproducing itself under changing circumstances, and is relatively generative of its own possibilities (Probyn 2004). This transposability makes possible that institutions, such as schools, manipulate children's habitus and increase or decrease children's capitals through specific social environments for and responses to children's social interactions and conflicts, and thereby produce real effects inscribed in children's bodily and emotional practices.

In education research the concept of emotional capital is considered as either cultural capital (Cottingham 2016; Parcel, Hendrix, and Taylor 2016:3), or (private) social capital (Allatt 1993:143; Nowotny 1981:148; see also Zembylas 2007:450). Thus, while Parcel et al. (2016:3) consider emotional capital the stock of emotional resources that are established within families reflecting general cultural values, Nowotny (1981:148) talks about emotional capital as "knowledge, contacts and relations as well as access to emotionally valued skills and assets, which hold within any social network characterized at least partly by affective ties." Allatt (1993:143) builds on Nowotny's work and defines emotional capital as social capital: "emotionally valued assets, skills, love and affection, expenditure of time, attention, care and concern." Here, emotional capital is understood as the emotional resources – such as support, patience, and commitment – that are built over time particularly within families. Further, Zembylas (2007:450) sees emotional capital as a useful resource for individuals in their social relationships, including certain norms and obligations maintained through rewards and punishments. In bridging these perspectives, following Gillies (2006) we consider emotional capital as "integrally interlinked with other primary resources and as such blends with cultural and social capital to facilitate particular actions and decisions" (Gillies 2006:285). Thus, more emotional capital provides children with better competencies in navigating both the invisible school curriculum of dominant norms of knowledge and skills (i.e., cultural capital), and the social rules of the game and relational norms to access and create networks (i.e., social capital). As we return to in the analysis and discussion, schools

	Number of Children		Percentage Girls		Percentage Ethnic Minority	
	Fieldwork Start	Fieldwork End	Fieldwork Start	Fieldwork End	Fieldwork Start	Fieldwork End
Reception School class	21	23	52	56	29	26
Magnet School class	16	21	62	57	38	38

TABLE 2. The Children in the Fieldwork Classes

may potentially play a role in developing children's emotional capital, for instance through the ways they prevent or handle children's conflicts.

METHODS

The analysis presented here is based on data collected by Sidsel Vive Jensen (SVJ, female, ethnic majority) through three periods of fieldwork over the course of 14 months, beginning in 2014. The two fieldwork schools were selected in collaboration with the municipal administration. In both schools, the school administration chose a school class for SVJ to follow, based on the teachers of the two classes being highly experienced in both teaching and having observers in their classes. Table 2 gives an overview of the relatively even distribution of pupils in the two classes:

The fieldwork comprised observations of children's peer interactions, field conversations, and interviews with children, parents, and school staff. The observations of peer interactions focused on peer relations and were recorded in a predefined template, in order to ensure the registration of time, place, situation, and activity, as well as detailed descriptions of interaction. Observations were made in equal distribution as regards different school settings (e.g., teaching and recess), classes, and children in each of the fieldwork schools. A total of 341 field notes were collected, comprising 1124 observations of peer-to-peer interactions (489 in Reception School and 635 in Magnet School). All observations were coded (using NVivo) with regard to the relational content of the interactions and the setting in which they took place. Conflict interactions were defined as interactions in which interactants express negative emotions in relation to each other's actions. Children's emotions were deduced from their body language (e.g., pushing or moving away from each other, standing with crossed arms) and facial expressions (eyes, mouth) and were further informed by the children's own evaluations of (some of) the interactions. A comparative analvsis of conflict interactions in the two schools demonstrated that there were more conflict interactions relative to other types of peer-to-peer interactions in Magnet School than in Reception School (see Table 3). In particular, we find that the conflict frequencies are similar during recess and at the daycare center (where teachers are often not in close proximity of the children), while conflicts are more frequent at Magnet School during playtime and in class (where teachers are most often in close proximity of the children). We will return to these differences in the discussion.

		_
Setting	Reception School	Magnet School
In the bus	10	а
During recess	14	14
During playtime	8	12
At the daycare center	7	7
In class	2	9
Total (all settings)	7	10

TABLE 3. Conflictual Interactions Recorded among All Peer-to-Peer
Interactions in Different Settings in Sample, in Percentages

Note: The percentage of conflictual interactions among all peer-to-peer interactions in specific settings is calculated on the basis of a categorization of all observed peer-to-peer interactions (1124) into settings and types of interaction. The table displays the settings in which most interactions were observed. Conflict interactions were coded along with 11 other types of peer-to-peer interaction, with the objective of covering the variety in peer-to-peer interactions in which interactants express negative emotions in relation to each other's actions.

^aSince children in the Magnet school do not travel by bus to school, no interactions are recorded in this setting.

We have selected two cases of conflict interactions, one from each of the fieldwork schools, in order to conduct a comparative analysis of the interactional and emotional dynamics involved. Since we are especially interested in understanding why and how conflicts turn violent (or not), we have selected the conflict interactions with the highest levels of confrontational tension observed in each school. The selection of such extreme cases allows us to specify elements that are easily overlooked or not overtly present in less spectacular instances of conflict interactions in the two schools. Our assumption is that all other conflict interactions in the two schools have lower levels of confrontational tension than the two cases included in our analysis. As Durkheim ([1897] 2005) and Goffman (1967) suggested, examining extreme or abnormal cases can shed light on the normal: The study of very high levels of confrontational tension and violent situations is worthwhile because all of the children experience conflict from time to time. Further, a comparative analysis of the two extreme cases may elucidate the impact of the structural differences between the two school settings on the interactional dynamics of the children.

As interactions were not video-recorded and only occasionally audio-recorded, the level of detail in field note descriptions of interactions varies, largely dependent on the distance between the observer (SVJ) and the interactants. The analysis of situational and emotional dynamics requires a high level of detail, and accordingly the analytical cases are drawn from those observations where SVJ was close to the action and able to record it in great detail. The disadvantage of this approach is that the presence of SVJ played a role in how the conflicts developed in both analytical cases. Thus, our conclusions do not include situations in which adults are completely absent (to study how children's conflicts unfold without the presence of adults, Collins (2008:5) suggests the use of video surveillance recordings, for instance).

Since conflicts are related to emotional stress, SVJ's role as a minimally involved observer was challenged by children appealing to SVJ for help, and by SVJ's own feelings of discomfort and the urge to avoid conflicts and resolve disagreements. The

ethical guideline followed in such situations was to interfere as little as possible with the situation, unless directly invited to help or SVJ felt compelled to intervene (e.g., if a child was being hurt). Generally, SVJ's relationship with the children was a cross between the neutral observer and the least adult participant (Corsaro 1985; Mandell 1988). In some situations, SVJ took notes alongside children's activities without taking part in them, but she was always placed among children (using only children's facilities) and she never reprimanded children or asserted authority as an adult. The children reacted to this by often inviting SVJ into their activities and involving SVJ in considerations about their peer relations.

The comparative analysis of the two conflict cases is performed in two steps. In the first and central part of the analysis, we apply Goffman's and Collins's analytical concepts in a step-by-step examination of the emotional and ritual dynamics of each of the conflict cases, in order to identify pathways to and away from violence. In the second part of the analysis, we discuss how the IRCs of two of the conflict interactants differ and relate to the school environments in which they occur and to the cultural and emotional resources of the individual interactants. By definition, this type of analysis relies on a multitude of individual and contextual conditions. However, more general conclusions on the interplay between these conditions can be drawn from the systematic variation uncovered through the analyses (Tavory and Timmermans 2014).

ANALYSIS

Case 1: Verbal Acrimony at Reception School

As we will show in the following analysis, conflicts between children in Reception School tend to follow basic IRs and rules, as proposed by Goffman (1959). Thus, while the children may momentarily break these rules, they ritually repair the interaction to sustain solidarity and shared positive EE.

The conflict example from Reception School involves a rather tight knit group of four girls, Anemone, Trine, Signe, and Charlotte, who have known each other since kindergarten. The conflict takes place in first grade and begins during recess when Anemone, who is a new girl in her class, is playing with Marie, Charlotte, and Camilla, from the same class. Marie plays a harsh grandmother who catches her grandchildren (played by the other girls) and puts them on a bench from where they escape, after which she catches them again. Trine and Aja join the game as extra grandchildren. Marie (the grandmother) then leaves the game, and soon after the game finishes. Anemone comes over to SVJ, who is sitting at one of the tables in the schoolyard. Anemone sits down next to her on the bench and explains that she is upset because Marie has left the game, because she does not want to play with Trine. SVJ suggests that Anemone plays with the other girls, but Anemone replies sadly that she just needs to sit and rest for a while. Trine comes over and invites Anemone to be part of a new game. Anemone repeats that she needs to sit for a while. The girls' schoolyard game fails as an IR, as the emotional and bodily rhythms and the shared focus of attention (playing grandmother who catches children and being together in the game) is broken. When the game falls apart, Anemone becomes upset — needs to sit and rest for a while — and resigned about the interactional functioning of the group. Now, a conversation at the bench between Anemone and Trine follows, with SVJ as the intervening, mediating adult (c.f., Collins 2008:17–18). Anemone opens the conversation by resignedly complaining to SVJ about the distribution of roles between her and Trine, which — like in the current situation — disturbs the interaction and group solidarity:

Anemone:	[to SVJ, resignedly] It's just that me and Trine, we both want to be in
	charge And then, when we are together, it's just a little
Trine:	[interrupts, angrily] And does that mean that we can never play
	together?
Anemone:	[angrily, stressing every word] That's not what it means.
SVJ:	Can't you take turns being in charge?
Anemone:	[resignedly] But we can't work out how to do that because we can't
	agree who should be in charge first, and then we argue.
Trine:	[angrily, fast] But she said it and like that it doesn't have anything
	to do with that it's not only me.
Anemone:	[sadly] No, no, but
Trine:	[interrupts, angrily] And then Charlotte leaves and says [yelling] "Do
	you want to see what I can do?"
Anemone:	[angrily] Not like that, she says it more like, "Do you want to see what
	I can do?"
Trine:	[yelling] And I shout and shout and shout. I probably shout five times
	and then once more, that is six times.

Here, the girls enter into what Collins terms "verbal acrimony," where they circulate and release emotions. Verbal acrimony is a form of "small-scale griping and quarrelling of everyday life" (Collins 2008:338), which confines the interaction to within the limits of normal everyday interaction, which is regulated by face-work (Goffman 1967). Acrimony is normally carried out through four kinds of reactions with ascending intensity: griping, whining, arguing, and quarreling (Collins 2008:342–344). Since griping constitutes negative conversation carried out about third parties who are not present (and therefore does not necessarily lead to conflict), what we see is Anemone "whining" as she complains to SVJ about Trine and their relationship in front of Trine, which provokes Trine's verbal outburst. The interaction then turns into "arguing," defined as explicit verbal conflict carried out relatively good-naturedly (people "agreeing to disagree"), with Anemone's response to SVJ's suggestion of taking turns to be in charge: "But we can't work out how to do that because we can't agree who should be in charge first, and then we argue." As the argument becomes more heated, Anemone and Trine violate the turn-taking ritual of normal talk, breaking into each other's utterances (Collins 2008:36), to control the actual speaking and hearing situation (Collins 2008:362). Finally, the exchange becomes a "quarrel," a verbal exchange of serious statements about the relationship

of the girls themselves (Collins 2008:343). Anemone, who acts as the injured party, passive-aggressively – through what Collins refers to as "guilt tripping" (Collins 2008:340) – criticizes Trine for her situational claim to be more than she can prove herself to be (the ruler, when she does not have the legitimacy to rule the group). Trine – who initially may have attempted to dominate the game, ends up being subordinated through the other girls' indirect exclusion of her (by leaving the game after she entered it) – uses explicitly aggressive face-work (Collins 2008:340) to defend her position. However, Anemone tries to handle outbursts on Trine's part with ritual repairs during the conversation, when she (though also angrily) corrects Trine's interpretation of the situation as being less antagonistic than Trine expresses (Anemone: "That is not what it means" and "Not like that, she says more like ..."). Attempts at ritual repair also take place a few days after the schoolyard situation, and involve both bystanders to the conflict and the other girls from the group.

Back in the schoolyard, the bench conversation is interrupted (a boy has hit his head on the swing and gotten a nosebleed, and everyone is called over to see what happened), and Anemone and Trine do not interact any more during that recess. A few days later, Trine approaches SVJ during recess and explains in tears that she is upset because Anemone, Signe, and Charlotte do not want to play with her ever again, because of another schoolyard episode in which she shouted at them. Two girls from the class, Aja and Louise, join them, and Louise gives Trine a piece of her snack. Trine says thanks and smiles slightly. Aja says that they both saw what happened and that it was a shame — now they have come to comfort Trine. Louise suggests that Trine tell the teacher about what happened during recess. Charlotte comes over and apologizes to Trine. Trine nods her head and walks inside with Aja and Louise. Anemone and Signe join Charlotte, and she tells them that they should apologize to Trine. Signe replies that she is still angry with Trine because she hit her. The bell rings, and the girls walk inside.

The IR around playing Grandmother is broken and restored with no clear winner and loser, and with the girls agreeing to continue as friends despite their agrimony and Signe's feelings of anger toward Trine. Together, the girls succeed in resolving their disagreement by applying interaction rules, which downscales the emotional conflictual intensity, and by drawing on SVJ as a mediating adult. Children's conflicts, however, also potentially accumulate emotional tension that is circumvented into violence. We will now analyze an example of how this takes place at Magnet School.

Case 2: Violence—Loss of Face at Magnet School

The situation at Magnet School developed during recess among a small group of first grade girls who were drawing with color pencils on paper at a table in the hallway with SVJ.

Farida: [to Hamida] I think you are drawing a heart.Hamida: [looks at Farida, then back at her drawing] Mmmm.Farida: [looking at her own drawing] Mine is going to look better than yours.

Hamida: Mmm. Hamida starts a new drawing. Farida whispers to SVJ that Hamida's new drawing is no good, but that she will not tell Hamida, because it would make her sad.

At the outset, the girls collectively engage in the same activity, which implies that they present lines in order to remain situationally consistent and to uphold a common definition of the situation (Goffman 1959:254). However, Farida breaks the proprieties of this IR by challenging this definition and thus the experience of a shared reality as powerful and elevating for the participants (Collins 2004:24). Thus, Farida (re)frames the situation from being about drawing as a consensual focused activity that primarily serves to value (and celebrate) the intersubjective solidarity to being about competing to make the best drawing, perhaps to gain SVJ's (adult) recognition. She even does this through performing backstage (commenting to SVJ on Hamida's drawing), while still being frontstage as part of the drawing activity; thus, she transgresses the boundary between the (frontstage) sphere, in which attention is focused, and the (backstage) sphere, where the IR focusing is prepared (Collins 2004:24).

Hanna now approaches from the table where she, Rebekka, and some other girls have been drawing as well, bringing Rebekka's color pencils with her. Hanna sits down with Farida and Hamida, and starts coloring her drawing with Rebekka's color pencils. Sticking to her own definition of the situation (as one of a drawing competition), Farida now turns to Hanna:

Farida: [to Hanna, looking at her drawing] That looks really pretty!
Hanna: Thanks.
Farida: Can I have it when it is done?
Hanna: [still drawing] No.
Farida: Please!
Hanna: No, sorry.
Farida: [louder] Please, Hanna, why not?
Hanna: I want to keep it.

Farida here proposes a line, in which she shows admiration for Hanna's drawing in return for getting it, hereby also asking for Hanna's recognition and solidarity. However, when Farida's line is rejected by Hanna, Farida turns her attention to Rebecca's pencils, which Hanna is using:

Farida: [pointing at the pencils] Can I use these?Hanna: [considers a while] I can't let you use them because they aren't mine, so I don't get to decide who uses them.

Hamida now intervenes to support Farida, despite Farida's earlier criticism of her drawing, as an apparent gesture of helping the IR back on track to sustain the group coherence. She does this by attempting to include Farida in the shared social solidarity among the girls:

Hamida: [gets up] I will go and ask Rebekka if you can use them. Hamida: goes to the other girls' table to ask Rebekka and returns immediately. Hamida: [to Farida] Sorry, she said no.Farida and Hanna look at each other with disappointed faces, then Hanna lights up in an active act of solidarity toward Farida.Hanna: [smiling] Let me try and ask her, I know just what to say so that she will let you use them.

Hanna returns with a sad face: she was unable to persuade Rebekka to lend Farida her pencils. Hamida and Farida continue drawing.

Farida: [to Hanna] Can I have your drawing? Hanna: No. Farida reaches over and grabs Hanna's drawing. Hanna: Give it back! Farida: No. Hamida: Give her drawing back!

At the same time, Hamida reaches over and snatches Hanna's drawing from Farida and gives it back to Hanna. Farida sits completely still and stares intensely at Hamida before her face turns angry and she reaches over and grabs Hamida's drawing and crumples it up. Almost instantly, Hamida reaches over and grabs and crumples up Farida's drawing. They both look increasingly frustrated, breathing heavily, eyes wide open, and mouths tightly closed. Farida reaches over the table to punch Hamida, and Hamida punches her back. They punch each other harder and harder until they get up from their seats and start kicking each other as well. They pull each other's hair, and Farida gets a firm grip on Hamida's braid. Farida pulls Hamida's head down by the braid while she kicks her in the stomach. Hamida grabs Farida's arms and presses her nails deep into Farida's skin. Hanna and SVJ shout, "Stop!" but the girls keep on fighting. "Do something," Hanna's begs SVJ, who tries to get her body in between Hamida and Farida, but they keep punching and kicking each other around and through her. With Hamida behind her, SVJ is pushed against the hallway door by Farida. SVJ manages to open the door and let Hamida through, telling her to stay on that side of the door. Hamida starts to cry wildly and runs away from the door toward the classroom on the other side. Farida tries to run after her, but SVJ blocks the door with her body. Farida struggles with SVJ for a while, and SVJ tells her to sit down at the table. Farida sits and stares down onto the table. Hanna is still standing on the other side of the table, away from Farida, looking at both SVJ and Farida. SVJ makes a quick drawing for Farida that looks like Hanna's drawing and gives it to Farida for her to color. Farida takes it and starts to color it. Hanna sits back down and continues her drawing. When the bell rings a few minutes later, Farida and SVJ collect the pencils that have been scattered all over the hallway floor and bring them back to the classroom.

What we see in this interaction among children at Magnet School is the gradual escalation of conflictual energy and the eventual overcoming of confrontational tension/fear, consequently turning the situation violent. First, Farida's breaking of the common definition of the situation and thus the girls' common focus of attention.

Secondly, Hanna's and Rebekka's rejecting of Farida's appeals for recognition and solidarity, leading to both Farida's and later Hamida's turning down several invitations to bypass the spiral of aggression. Thus, despite Hamida and Hanna's attempts to re-establish solidarity with Farida to reframe the situation as one of solidarity and consensus Farida keeps reacting to their acts as rejections that make her lose face (Goffman 1967:7-8). Moreover, rather than accepting the ritual repairs from the other girls, who in different ways try to give face to Farida, she sticks to her line as a defense against the attacks she has met. As Goffman (1967:44) writes: "the main principle of the ritual order is not justice but face, and what any offender receives is not what [s]he deserves but what will sustain for the moment the line to which [s]he has committed [her]self, and through this the line to which [s]he has committed the interaction." Eventually, by grabbing Hanna's drawing Farida "makes a scene" (Collins 2008:349; Goffman 1967:25) in order to save her own face or to distract attention from her lost face. Now the EE and bodily rhythm produced through solidarity and focused attention toward the same shared activity (consensual drawing together) is definitively broken, and the confrontational tension builds through the stare-down. Farida eventually circumvents the emotional tension and attacks Hamida when she punches her across the table. The reciprocal punching escalates, and the girls get caught in a "tunnel of violence" (Collins 2008:338). Farida and Hamida become so overwhelmed by their senses – "tunnel-visioned" – that all else fades into oblivion (Collins 2008:65).

The fight is real but also staged for the audience, whose influence is all the more powerful as the girls know Hanna and SVJ. This acquaintance increases the fighters' stakes of maintaining or losing face (and reputation) (Collins 2008:368). At the same time, the role of the audience is that of trying to intervene and stop the fight. After the girls initially ignore SVJ's attempts to intervene (Collins 2008:66), SVJ succeeds in separating the two, and the fight ends by Hamida's running away. Not being the one who fled the fight, Farida is the situational winner, without the conflict actually being resolved however, the fight merely being (temporarily) called off. SVJ does not observe any later attempt at resolving this episode, neither among the girls nor with their teachers.

DISCUSSION

Social Structure and Broken IRs

In the above analysis, our agenda has been to understand how conflict interactions among peers differ with regard to levels of emotional intensity and violence. We found that even the most intense of the conflicts observed at Reception School follows general interactional rules, which seem to direct (at least some of) the EE toward de-escalating the conflict. The Magnet School case of conflict demonstrates how general interactional rules are broken, allowing the EE to escalate to very high levels of confrontational tension and fear.

In the following, we discuss how the differences of conflict and violence among the children relate to different aspects of social structure. First, we apply Collins's perception of social structure as an ongoing process of social stratification (in terms of power and status) through chains of IRs, thus moving our analysis from the situated to the aggregated micro-level. We understand social (micro) stratification as produced through the exchange of emotional energies and cultural resources, and through the negotiations of membership alliances continually taking place in IR chains. Social stratification at the aggregated micro level might reflect the impact of macro- and meso-structural dynamics on micro-dynamics. Second, to actually understand the ways in which macro- and meso-dynamics condition micro dynamics such as the interactional conflicts between the children in Reception and Magnet Schools, we draw on the concept of emotional capital. As a result, we may better understand how the different positions that the children inhabit in the larger social structures, via both the schools, their family socioeconomic and minority or majority status, and the schools' composition of minority and majority children, form the social field among children in each of the schools and condition their interactional possibilities.

First, our analytical cases show that both Farida (at Magnet School) and Trine (at Reception School) struggle to achieve membership through IRs. However, the IRCs of Farida and Trine demonstrate that they differ dramatically with respect to their capacity to gain ritual membership. This is largely due to their divergent cultural resources – and thus to their social statuses as members of alliances – which in turn also affects their emotional energies in different directions. Trine had high levels of particularized cultural resources (Collins 1981:1003) upon her entering Reception School at age six. She knows most of the children in her grade from kindergarten, sports, and via parents' relations and she has a long history of common experiences and a whole catalogue of developed play routines with a large number of peers (particularized resources, c.f., Collins 1981:1003). In contrast, Farida had neither attended kindergarten nor sports before starting school, and the only person she knew on the first day of school was her older brother. The IRCs of Farida and Trine reveal that they both aspire to dominate the IRs in which they participate. Accordingly, Trine often successfully orchestrates the content of the IRs and dominates the other participants in the IRs, by applying her vast particularized cultural resources. Even though Trine's emotional resources are low in terms of social warmth (Collins 1981:1003) exercised toward her peers, she gains EE from the majority of IRs through dominance and builds emotional confidence. This confidence is only occasionally challenged by Anemone who draws attention to Trine's lack of social warmth and her (in Anemone's view) illegitimate dominance. Contrarily, observing Farida's attempts at dominating IRs with peers, we find that such attempts most often fail due to Farida's lack of cultural and emotional resources to support a dominant position.

If cultural and emotional resources are the ingredients of IRs, we may think of Collins's (1981:999) concepts of authority and property as the "product" of IRs. Or at least, from observing patterns of IRCs we are able to deduce the distribution of property (access to and exclusion from particular physical places and things;

Collins 1981:997) and authority between peers. Thus, from our empirical analysis we propose that the different emotional energies and IRs characterizing conflicts are related to differences in the general level of emotional resources in the two schools.

Second, introducing the concept of emotional capital may extend our understanding of how the social stratifications enacted in the children's conflicts relate to more general social structures at the macro and meso level. Theoretically, we perceive the emotional and cultural resources continually produced through IRCs as constituents of emotional and other forms of capital. That is, we equate emotional resources to emotional capital and we equate generalized and particularized resources to other forms of capital (cultural, social, and economic). Collins's idea that EE and cultural resources *together* produce the emotional outcome of a particular IR fits nicely with Bourdieu (1998) and Zembylas's (2007) conception of exchanges of capitals. As illustrated above, Trine is able to exchange her cultural and social capital (in the shape of knowledge and network) for emotional capital (in the shape of emotional confidence) whereas Farida has no possibility to enhance her emotional capital through her cultural and social capital.

We argue that the broken IRs and confrontational tension between children, intensified through disagreements about membership and dominance and struggles over authority and property, spring from and relate to more fundamental struggles over the dominant and legitimate forms of capital both vis-à-vis the school setting and society more generally. In our observations of children's conflicts, we find that children's ethnic minority or majority status in many cases was highly relevant for their interactional status. For example, Farida's IRCs demonstrate that her attempts to dominate IRs are dependent on the majority or minority status of the other participants in the IR. As evident in Magnet School conflict case, Farida takes a subordinate position toward Hanna (ethnic majority) and a dominant position toward Hamida (ethnic minority). This pattern characterizes not only Farida's IRCs but also those of other ethnic minority children in both schools, and we propose that this difference relates to the uneven levels of especially social and cultural capital, that minority and majority children typically possess. Majority cultural knowledge about particular TV-shows, computer games, and leisure activities for children is held by most ethnic majority children and is less accessible for ethnic minority children (because of their parents' knowledge and preferences). Because the ethnic majority is also the numerical majority in both classes and because the cultural (child) knowledge is aligned with ethnic majority teachers' knowledge and expectations of child culture, the ethnic majority cultural knowledge is the dominant capital. Accordingly, the cultural capital of minority children cannot – and especially not in interactions with ethnic majority children - be exchanged for emotional capital. Simultaneously, ethnic minority children also have inferior social capital in comparison with ethnic majority children; their networks are smaller and include primarily other ethnic minority peers. However, ethnic minority children with emotional capital in terms of (for example) social warmth might improve their social relations, expand their networks, and thus improve their social capital over time.

Following Bourdieu, we understand the dominance of some capitals over others as expressions of the habitus that characterize a particular social field. We might think of our two schools as both part of the same social field of primary education in Denmark and as two individual social fields that relate to the particular local contexts of the individual schools. From our general analysis of children's interactions (not just conflict interactions) we find that a common "primary schooling" social field is constituted in both schools, in which the children interact in very similar ways across schools but within settings (see Jensen 2018 for this analysis). To put it crudely, this means that the children, for example, have fun and fight during recess, and collaborate and compete during class. However, as noted in Methods section and illustrated in Table 3, we found that the schools differed with respect to conflict interactions (and *only* with respect to conflict interactions): they were not only generally more frequent in Magnet School, they were frequent in different settings of the schools (in comparison with Reception School). This finding points to the significance of the social fields constituted *locally* in the two schools.

The schools' positions as local social fields are based on, first, the amounts of capital possessed by the children's parents and the neighborhood resources (such as leisure activities, and physical and aesthetic facilities) available to the children. Second, the two schools are differently positioned within the de-segregation policy which increases the span of social status hierarchies with regard to ethnic minority children. In Magnet School, the minority children struggle for both property and authority, primarily among themselves but also with majority peers. Even if the ethnic minority children do not have vast amounts of cultural capital in comparison with ethnic majority children, they still do have experiences from "cultural institutions" of the local area (e.g., the library and the soccer fields) and social capital in the shape of networks at school (including family members and kindergarten peers). These resources enable and justify the minority children's struggles for property and authority, even if they do not often come out as winners. Simultaneously, Magnet School has a relatively higher concentration of ethnic minority children with very low levels of emotional capital (such children are not referred to reception schools because they are considered too vulnerable to cope with the emotional stress associated with referral). Thus, Magnet School holds several minority children with few emotional resources to invest in successful IRs.

In Reception School, ethnic minority children generally refrain from struggles over property and authority altogether; most conflicts observed in Reception School involved ethnic majority children exclusively. This lack of struggle may be connected to the minority children's status as "guests" or "outsiders" from other school districts, with no relevant social and cultural capital (no network and no knowledge of the local area) to sustain claims of authority and property. In comparison with the local ethnic minority children of Reception School, the status of the referred minority children was even lower as evident from the distinction expressed by a local ethnic minority child, who underlined (when speaking to SVJ about the referred children): "I am not one of them. I live *here*!" Even if struggles between minority children were rarely observed at school, struggles over property and authority are relatively frequent (as evident from Table 3) when the referred minority children ride the bus to and from school. In one such situation, SVJ observed an older girl scolding a couple of fighting boys just as the bus was arriving at Reception School: "When you're at school, you behave! If you fight, it reflects back on all of us!" This interaction demonstrates the referred minority children's embodied Reception School habitus; that fighting is socially unacceptable behavior especially for the referred children. Further, the situation demonstrates that the minority children expect of each other to be able to interact successfully in IRs at school (in contrast to Magnet school where some minority children do not have the capacity to do so).

The differences in the status hierarchies of the minority children in the two social sites demonstrate that the significance of the ethnic majority/minority status for the children's interactions in general and their conflict interactions in particular is determined by the habitus of the local social field. In other words, the macro structure of ethnicity is given meaning through the meso structure of the school. This conclusion bears a promise of potential change if our goal is to provide equal schooling experiences for ethnic minority children. Naturally, schools cannot dissolve or ignore the social structure of ethnicity, but teachers might affect the forms and frequencies of children's conflicts and the impact that these conflicts have on (especially the ethnic minority) children's emotional capital. As Zembylas (2007:453-454) argues, based on his own research: "emotional capital - expressed through the circulation of emotional resources among teachers and students - is systematically transformed into social and cultural capital - such as stronger relations in the classroom and empowered feelings in the school community." The difference between conflict-frequency in teacher-present settings and teacher-non-present settings in Reception School (see Table 3) illustrates that there is a potential for Magnet School teachers to also reduce conflicts through their presence. For example, enhancing children's emotional capital through positive teacher-child interactions that boost children's EE may enable the children to participate in more successful IRs, decreasing their experiences of broken IRs and increasing their experiences of solidarity and membership. Such positive experiences could, if they were repeated, initiate a positive spiral that ultimately would enable the exchange of emotional capital for other types of capital. Again, this potential for change does not interfere with the profound significance of ethnic minority/majority status for children's interactions in school, but it does entail a potential relief for the struggling ethnic minority children in Magnet School. For the referred children in Reception School, on the other hand, there is no apparent meso level remedy for their lack of cultural and social capital; accordingly, these children rely solely on their emotional resources to engage in successful IRs. Because of the huge differences in emotional, cultural, and social capital between the referred minority children and the local majority children at Reception School, it is seems logical that the referred children avoid interactions – conflictual and otherwise – with the local ethnic majority children and seek interactions with other referred or local minority children.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have shown that two cases of peer conflict among young children in two school classes differ significantly with respect to the level of confrontational tension. Using Goffman's (1959, 1967, 1972) and Collins's (1981, 1988, 2004, 2008) theories of interaction, we demonstrate that very high levels of confrontational tension is induced by unsuccessful participation in ritual repair and other efforts to (re-)establish solidarity during conflict. We find that the conflict case of Magnet School is a case of violence where general interaction rules are broken, causing the confrontational tension to reach a point from which the children are forced to break away through escape or attack. The confrontational tension in the Reception School conflict case is escalated but at the same time continually reduced through compliance with interactional rules, inciting the children to offer and accept efforts to re-establish solidarity. We argue that peer conflicts in Reception School class are likely to follow general interaction rules, since the most intense conflict follows such rules.

This finding contributes to the literature on children's conflicts by drawing attention to situational and inter-personal aspects of conflicts when analyzing how conflicts dynamics play out (along with, e.g., individual psychological profiles). Such attention may also aid adults who help children to resolve conflict. To the literature on IRs and violence, we contribute an in-depth application of especially Collins's concept of confrontational tension that illustrates how well this framework supports analyses of children's interactions.

In our discussion, we set out to explain why general interactional rules are broken in one school class and not in the other. In order to connect our micro-level findings to meso- and macro-level explanations, we apply the concept of emotional capital to our analytical results. This application rests on the assumption that the capacity to participate in successful IRs relates to emotional capital. Observing the IRC's of Farida and Trine, we find that they both struggle to achieve membership, and we interpret the different outcomes of these struggles as relating to the application of cultural resources in peer interactions. At the macro level of interpretation, we perceive of the children's struggles over membership as related to more fundamental struggles over capital in school and society. Specifically, we speculate not only that low levels of emotional capital among ethnic minority children relative to ethnic majority children may be related to the subordinate status of minority cultural capital in majority ethnic schools, but also that the ethnic minority children in Reception School might have "double-subordinate" cultural and social capital causing them to evade conflict.

Our discussion contributes to the literature on children's conflicts the awareness that conflicts between or involving ethnic minority children might not exclusively be caused by individual feelings of antagonism but also related to actual lower levels of interactional resources to invest in successful IRs. Thus, we call for a more structural rather than a strictly personal approach to children's conflicts. To the literature on emotional capital we contribute an example of how meso and macro concepts can be related to micro level interactions and situations through an aggregated micro-level analysis (using Collins's IRCs). The actual application of meso- and macro-level categories to micro level data, however, still requires a leap of faith.

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ENDNOTE

The concept of emotional capital is both distinct from felt emotional experience and the management hereof, and draws on emotional management theory, cf. Hochschild (1979, 1983), McCarthy (1989), Shott (1979). While emotion management theory also considers emotion as inherently social – as individuals and groups alignment of felt and expressed emotions with interactional norms (or feelings rules) (Cottingham 2016:453) – this approach tends to stress the conscious and rational management of emotions (Theodosius 2006). In contrast, the concept of emotional capital stresses the embodied and nonconscious aspects of emotion acquired through both primary and secondary socialization (e.g., school and work) (Cottingham 2016:451; Lois and Gregson 2019; Schweingruber and Berns 2005) and practiced as emotional dispositions within social hierarchies of power and distinction (Cahill 1999:112).

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