

**Social Exclusion from Peer Interaction and Relationships
in a Daycare Center - a Micro-Ethnography**

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Master's Thesis in Special Education
Fall Term 2017
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ABSTRACT

Paavilainen, Aleksi. 2017. Social Exclusion from Peer Interaction and Relationships in a Daycare Center – a Micro Ethnography. Master's Thesis in Special Education. University of Jyväskylä. Department of Education. 76 pages.

This study investigates social exclusion from peer interaction and relationships among children in one Finnish daycare center. Social exclusion is a multifaceted phenomenon that can be encountered as a result of for instance peer exclusion or social withdrawal. Persistent social exclusion can have severe negative consequences. However, social exclusion is also an inevitable part of social life. This study discusses the multiplicity of this phenomenon in one daycare center.

This study is a micro-ethnography. I wrote notes and video-recorded the everyday life of two child groups for 12 days. I analyzed the data by revealing how the context partly created the social exclusions occurring there. I paid special attention on free play times.

Children encountered social exclusion from peer interaction and relationships differently: Most children appeared to only encounter it momentarily and not very intensively, whereas some children appeared to encounter it persistently and more intensively than the other children. Most children encountered this kind of social exclusion mostly due to peer exclusion, whereas some children appeared to mostly socially withdraw from their peers. Free play times inside and outside differed from each other, but the entire daycare center space affected social exclusions occurring in both locations: An explicit rule of 'everyone should play with everyone' was always present as well as a more implicit rule of 'how boys and girls should behave.' Boys, who I perceived to perform non-hegemonic masculinity, appeared to be vulnerable to experience persistent social exclusion in my data.

Keywords: social exclusion, social participation, social inclusion, peer exclusion, social withdrawal, ethnography, early childhood education and care

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1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigates social exclusion among three- to five-year-old children in one Finnish daycare center. The aim of the study is to gain deeper understanding of the ways this phenomenon occurs in this setting through ethnographic observations. Adults often encourage young children not to leave anybody out, thus implying that exclusion is intrinsically bad (Killen & Rutland, 2011, p. 2). This perception is partly challenged in this research: Social exclusion might be more of an everyday phenomenon than one might think, and it might even play an important part in children's interactions and relationship building. Simultaneously, the severity of social exclusion as a continuous and long-term occurrence for some children is discussed. This study raises some new perceptions to the phenomenon of social exclusion and encourages educators and researchers to always study social exclusion situationally, in its context.

1.1 Social Exclusion, Social Inclusion, and Social Participation

Social exclusion is "a multifaceted phenomenon" (Abrams & Killen, 2014, p. 4) and "a pervasive aspect of social life" (Killen, Rutland, & Jampol, 2009, p. 249). Literature from different disciplines define the term slightly differently and sometimes vaguely. Generally, social exclusion could be interpreted to mean a phenomenon in which someone is being left out of some social totality. Moreover, it appears that it is an umbrella term that encompasses many kinds of exclusions of people (see Killen & Rutland, 2011, pp. 86–92, for intrapersonal-, interpersonal-, intragroup-, and intergroup exclusion), on a micro-level of peers (see e.g. Fanger, Frankel, & Hazen, 2012; Laine & Neitola, 2002), and on a macro-level of the wider functions of society (see e.g. Sealey, 2015; Klasen, 2001). Some studies have also combined these micro- and macro-levels when discussing exclusion (and inclusion, see e.g. Nutbrown & Clough, 2009). Killen and Rutland (2011, p. 6) concluded that "exclusion occurs among friends, in social groups, and

by institutions.” This study focuses on social exclusion of individual children on a micro-level of peer interaction and -relationships.

Because of the vagueness of the term ‘social exclusion,’ I hope to clarify it better by defining its ‘logical opposite,’ *social inclusion*. Social inclusion, also known as social participation or -integration (see Koster, Nakken, Pijl, & van Houten, 2009, for discussion of the terms¹), has been widely studied in the field of education. In these studies, it has often meant the social dimension of inclusion in the case of students with special educational needs. This narrow view that only children with special needs are to be the focus of inclusion research has been criticized by for instance Waitoller and Artiles (2013, p. 339), who proposed that “inclusive education can serve as a catalyst to examine and address forms of exclusion related to intersections of disability/ability, race, gender, language, and social class differences.” They noted that “compounding forms of exclusion” need to be studied interdisciplinary and with an intersectional approach² (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013, p. 345). In this study, the phenomena of social exclusion, -inclusion, and -participation (the relationship of these concepts is explained later in this chapter and on figure 1) are investigated without knowledge of possible special needs of the observed children.

Koster et al. (2009, pp. 134–135) pieced together literature considering social inclusion, -participation, and -integration of elementary- and preschool aged children with special needs, and theorized that the social dimension of inclusion contains four key themes: 1) friendships/relationships, 2) interactions/contacts, 3) perception of the pupil “with special needs,” and 4) acceptance by classmates. A child would be ‘fully’ socially included in their child group or class if all the aspects of each key theme actualized positively in this child’s life: A child should

¹ Koster et al. (2009, p. 131–134) concluded in their literature study of 62 research articles that these concepts are often used interchangeably. They decided that ‘social participation’ would be “the most suitable concept for the social dimension of inclusion.”

² The feminist concept of intersectionality “refers to the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power.” The concept is heavily ambiguous. It is unclear whether it is a theory, “a heuristic device,” or “a reading strategy for doing feminist analysis,” and whether it should be used to understand “individual experiences,” “social structures and cultural discourses,” both, or something else. (Davis, 2008, p. 68.)

have “positive social contact/interaction” with their peers, they should be accepted by their peers, they should have positive social relationships/friendships in their group, and the child him-/herself should feel that they are accepted by their peers. Consequently, if these aspects would actualize negatively, I would interpret that a child is ‘fully’ socially excluded in their child group or class. (See figure 1 for visualization of this.)

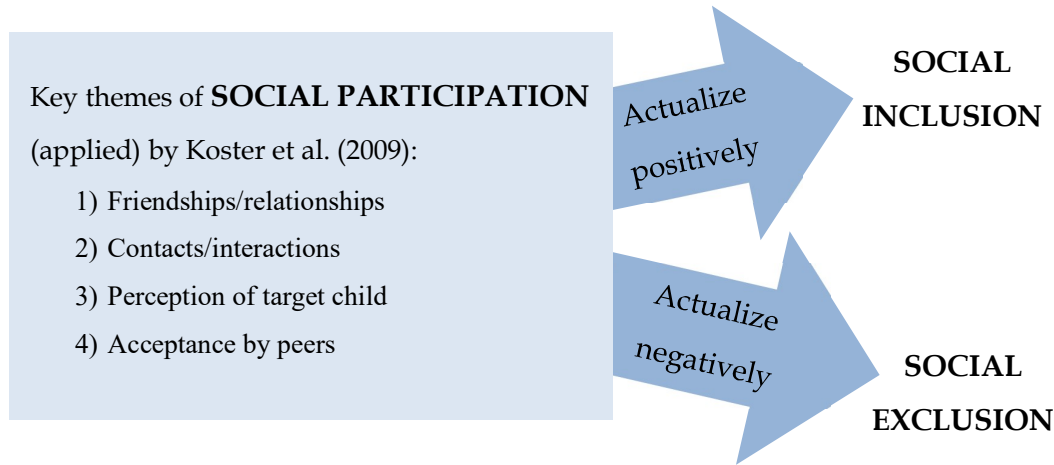


FIGURE 1. Conceptualization of the links between the phenomena of social participation, social inclusion, and social exclusion.

Even though this study does not specifically address social participation of students with special needs, I utilize these aforementioned conceptualizations by Koster et al. (2009) in this study of social exclusion as a phenomenon that may affect *all* children. Children with disabilities or other special needs often experience difficulties regarding social participation, but this is not a foregone conclusion (Kuorelahti, Lappalainen, & Viitala, 2012, p. 283), and children without special educational needs can experience these challenges as well. Because this is a small-scale research, I only mainly focus on the key theme of *contacts/interactions*, which consists of five aspects: 1) playing together, 2) working together on tasks, 3) participation in group activities, 4) (un)acknowledged initiations, and 5) social isolation. From these aspects, playing together is emphasized in this research. In addition to the key theme of *contacts/interactions*, I also consider the key theme on *friendships/relationships*, which consists of the aspects of friendship network and mutual relationships.

(Koster et al., 2009, p. 134.) (See figure 2 for visualization of the key themes and aspects of social participation that are highlighted in this research.)

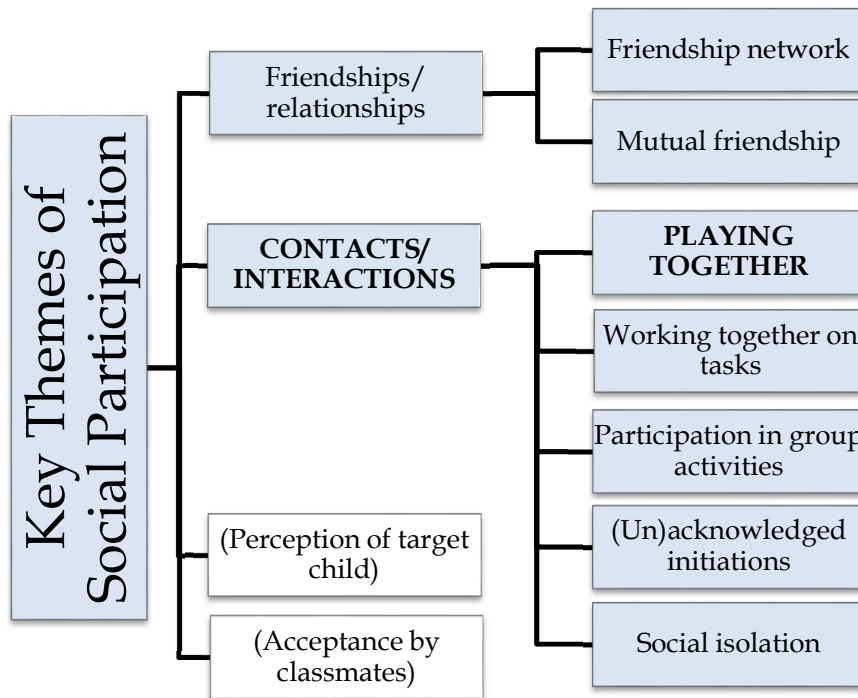


FIGURE 2. Applied version of the key themes and aspects of social participation by Koster et al. (2009, p. 134). Aspects somewhat considered in this research are in colored boxes. The main focuses of this study are capitalized and bolded. The key themes that are not investigated in this research are in brackets.

The two key themes emphasized in this study, contacts/interactions and friendships/relationships, can be divided into smaller and somehow measurable categories than the aspects mentioned before. Koster, Nakken, Pijl, van Houten, and Spelberg (2008) designed a questionnaire for teachers to measure the social participation of their pupils. This questionnaire contains 30 statements related to the four key themes of social participation. According to Koster, Minnaert, Nakken, Pijl, and van Houten (2011, p. 203), the statements relating to the key theme of contacts/interaction are (in an abbreviated form): Having fun with classmates, exclusion from activities by classmates, provocation by classmates, being asked to play by classmates, being teased by classmates, participating in games, classmates laughing at the student, classmates taking a seat next to the student, and working together on tasks. The statements in this questionnaire

relating to the key theme of friendships/relationships are: Membership of a group of friends, friends in the classroom, after-school play dates, invitations to play during holidays, and invitations to birthday parties. In this study, this questionnaire was not filled by anyone, as the approach here is a more qualitative and an observational one. It should also be noted that in these aforementioned studies (Koster et al. 2008, 2009, 2011), the focus has been more on little older children than the children in this research. Nevertheless, these statements along with the aspects give an idea of what the phenomenon under investigation in this study actually consists of.

Social exclusion can thus be claimed to occur when there is a *lack of social participation*. As the interest here is mostly on children's contacts/interactions, it must be explained what participation in these social activities can be. Children can demonstrate participation in multiple ways: They can attempt to participate for instance through "gaze, gesture, bodily orientation, verbal signals, and objects" (Goodwin, 1981, Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004, according to Karrebæk, 2011, p. 2912). However, these subtle participation demonstrations might be left unnoticed and without any response, which may create exclusions. Participation aloud by speaking and discussing seems to be the best way to demonstrate participation in daycare centers, as for instance Vuorisalo's (2013, pp. 102–103) study showed.

Playing situations, in which this study focuses extensively on, require a lot for the children who participate in them. According to Karrebæk (2011, p. 2928), a player constantly needs to show their competence in the play in two ways: Firstly, through "demonstrations of situated, adequate, and appropriate understandings of (play) frames, of prior and present themes, and of social relations and relative positions." Secondly, a player needs to show "situated, adequate, and appropriate usage of a communicative repertoire." In short, a child that wants to stay in a play needs to constantly show their understanding of the play, and of the other players in it, in situationally appropriate ways. I will explain more about the significance of the context in social participation later (part 1.4 on this chapter).

I view it as unlikely that any child, with special needs or not, would ever experience complete and constant social exclusion or -inclusion in their child group or class. My conceptualization in this study is that social exclusion and social inclusion occur in an imagined *continuum of social participation* with ‘complete’ social inclusion at one end and ‘complete’ social exclusion at the other end. Social participation in varying intensities is what happens on this continuum: When the ‘intensity’ of participation is closer to the social inclusion end of the continuum, it can be called social inclusion, and when it is closer to the social exclusion end, social exclusion can be said to occur. The ‘intensiveness’ of participation is not a simple matter of a child’s own efforts but peers, educators, and the entire daycare space have an influence on it. (See figure 3 for visualization of the continuum.)

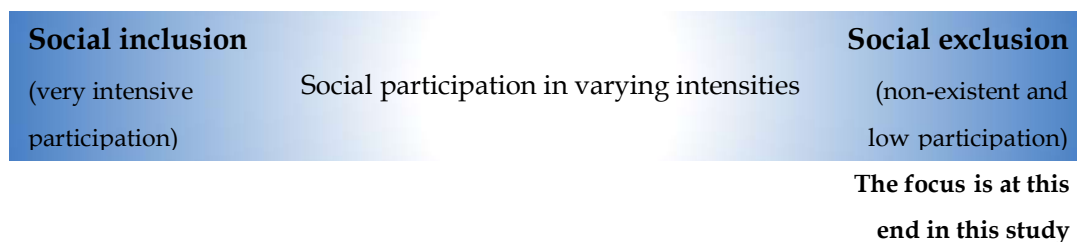


FIGURE 3. Continuum of social participation (in social interaction/contacts and friendships/relationships on this study)

Similar ideas of a continuum in relation to these topics have been suggested: Popay (2010, p. 296) presented an idea of a “continuum of inclusion/exclusion” with an emphasis on social exclusion as “relational.” Likewise, Levasseur, Richard, Gauvin, and Raymond (2010, p. 2146), although mainly discussing old people’s social participation, mentioned that “involvement of the person on social activities and interactions can be seen on a continuum from relatively passive to relatively active.” The continuum of social participation works as a conceptual tool here, and it is meant to emphasize the dynamic relationship of the phenomena of social exclusion, -inclusion, and -participation, which seem to be rarely discussed together.

Here, I have explained that social exclusion is a vast concept and this study only investigates certain aspects of it in peer interaction and relationships in one daycare center. I have also theorized how social exclusion relates to social inclusion and social participation. Next, I will explain more about different forms of social exclusion among young children in daycare centers.

1.2 Forms of Exclusion and Related Concepts

In peer interaction and relationships, exclusion and inclusion are, in a way, 'natural,' inevitable processes in social life, meaning that everybody occasionally gets included and excluded from various social activities (Killen & Rutland, 2011, p. 7). Exclusion has even been described as "a necessary harm" that young people experience (Wainryb, Komolova, & Brehl, 2014, p. 483). Nevertheless, for some children "isolation is a daily recurring phenomenon" (van der Wilt, van Kruistum, van der Veen, & van Oers, 2015, p. 1). Both of these phenomena – social exclusion as 1) an ordinary and typical part of everyday interaction dynamics and 2) a recurring instance for some children – can occur in different forms. Academic literature does not always mention the term 'social exclusion' directly when discussing this phenomenon, because so many related concepts are also in use. In this section, I explain some of the forms in which exclusions may occur. A rough division can be done between 1) children excluding themselves and 2) children excluding other children.

For some children it can be typical not to seek other children's company. This self-exclusion from peers is called *social withdrawal* (Rubin & Asendorpf, 1993, according to Coplan, Ooi, Rose-Krasnor, & Nocita, 2014, p. 229). Coplan et al. (2014, p. 230) grouped children who socially withdraw from social interaction into shy children, unsociable children, and socially avoidant children: Shy children may not want to be alone but are too anxious to seek company, unsociable children prefer solitude, and socially avoidant children not only prefer solitude but actively avoid peer interaction. According to Skånfors, Löfdal, and Hägglund (2009, pp. 100-105), individual children can socially withdraw, or

“make oneself inaccessible,” by using strategies such as acting distant, reading books, and hiding. The fact that some children actually want and choose to play alone does not, however, necessarily always justify their exclusion, because this preference might be developed as a consequence of those children’s earlier negative experiences with their peers (Coplan et al., 2014, p. 236).

Peer exclusion refers to the concrete actions of intentional exclusion carried out by one’s peers (Fanger et al., 2012, p. 224). Fanger et al. (2012, p. 233) found six different ways that four- to six-year-old children excluded each other: unmitigated exclusion (=direct exclusion), mitigated exclusion (=indirect and disguised exclusion), exclusion planning, ignoring, self-exclusion (=threatening with self-exclusion to gain power), and partial exclusion (=inclusion only to a marginal role). The first four were the most common ways of peer exclusion in their study (Fanger et al., 2012, p. 244).

Peer exclusion has been described as a form of *social aggression*,³ which is defined as “a method of intentionally harming others by using relationships, friendships, or social status” (Fanger et al. 2012, p. 225). However, it has been debated that peer exclusion is not always aggressive (=meant to harm others), thus implying that peer exclusion is something more complex than “merely a subset of social aggression” (Fanger et al. 2012, p. 227). For instance, children’s exclusion experiences in Wainryb, Komolova, and Brehl’s (2014, p. 479) study suggested that these incidents were usually not “intentionally hurtful acts.” The study by Fanger et al. (2012, p. 248) suggested that peer exclusion in early childhood is often “normative rather than socially aggressive and may even reflect socially skilled behavior.” Children can for instance protect their ongoing play by excluding other children without an actual intention to harm them (Corsaro, 1985, p. 125).

³ Other terms used to describe the same phenomenon are “relational aggression,” “indirect aggression” (Fanger et al., 2012, p. 225), and “indirect bullying” (Kirves & Sajaniemi, 2012, p. 388).

Socially aggressive peer exclusion can be *bullying* (or victimization⁴) in some cases. Kirves and Sajaniemi (2012, pp. 384–385) concluded, based on studies about bullying/victimization in school settings, that bullying is most often defined as “a subcategory of aggressive behavior,” a group phenomenon, “an imbalance of power relations between the victim and the bully,” and as something that is performed repeatedly over time. Kirves and Sajaniemi (2012, p. 386) explained that researchers have divided varying forms of bullying differently, for instance into direct and indirect bullying, or into physical, psychological and verbal bullying. Monks and Coyne (2011, p. 4) separated the concept of social- and relational bullying from indirect bullying, because “social/relational bullying can also be direct in nature, referring to direct social exclusion where an individual is told face-to-face that they cannot join in.” Peer exclusion can thus be a direct or indirect form of social/relational bullying. It can also be grouped under the category of psychological bullying, as Höistad (2005, according to Kirves & Sajaniemi, 2012, p. 388) would do. “Exclusion from the peer group” was “the most common method of psychological bullying” among children according to the kindergarten staff in Kirves and Sajaniemi’s (2012, p. 391) study. However, some researchers have questioned whether bullying really happens during early childhood, claiming that one criterion of bullying, that it happens repeatedly over time, does not typically occur among young children (Monks, 2011, p. 15). It often appears that children’s aggressive behavior at this age focuses on a variety of peers without targeting one specific child (Monks, 2011, pp. 28–29).

Children can experience social exclusion also as a result of *discrimination*, which means “treating a person or particular group of people differently, especially in a worse way from the way in which you treat other people, because of their skin color, sex, sexuality, etc.” (Cambridge Dictionaries online, retrieved 21.6.2017). Even very young children seem to favor people that are similar to them: Children under three years old can already prefer people of the same

⁴ ‘Bullying’ and ‘victimization’ mean the same behavior. The first is more commonly used in the United Kingdom and the latter in the United States. (Monks & Coyne, 2011, p. 3.)

gender, age, and language, and this preference seems to gradually increase by age as culture reinforces which social groups are of most importance to them (Dunham & Emory, 2014, p. 94). It can be debated whether this kind of behavior can be called discriminatory, but this ingroup preference might nevertheless be “the seed for potential differential or exclusionary treatment” (Dunham & Emory, 2014, p. 82). Many ‘isms’ that relate to discrimination, can be hard to notice among very young children because of their perceived innocence and vulnerability (Lappalainen, 2006, pp. 49–50). However, young children can discriminate, as has been indicated by for instance Konstantoni (2010, pp. 246–256), whose ethnographic study showed how young children in a daycare center discriminated others explicitly and implicitly based on for instance gender, age, special or additional needs, body size, and ethnicity. This discrimination can often take the form of exclusion, which has even been named “the most recognizable form of discrimination among very young children” (Brown & Bigler, 2005, p. 534).

This section has showed that children can experience social exclusion due to different actions. The acts of exclusion, either carried out by peers (=peer exclusion) or by the excluded him-/herself (=social withdrawal), can be named differently (e.g. social aggression, bullying, and discrimination) depending on the manner the act is implemented and the intentions behind it. To conclude and clarify, social exclusion is a *phenomenon* and an *experience* that can occur due to concrete exclusionary acts, which can be named differently depending on each situation. (See figure 4 for visualization of these.)

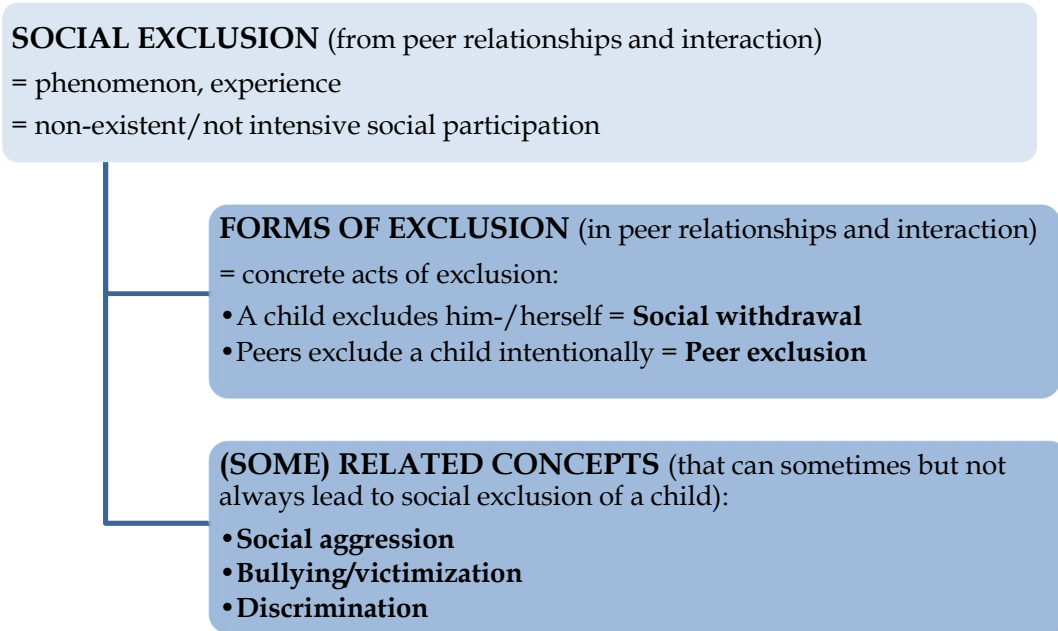


FIGURE 4. Short definition of social exclusion, forms of exclusion, and related concepts listed.

1.3 Reasons and Consequences of Social Exclusion

Reasons for exclusion can vary greatly. These reasons can be grouped in different ways: Firstly, according to Hitti, Mulvey, and Killen (2011, p. 588), children use moral- (such as unfairness), conventional- (refers to group norms), and psychological (refers to personal choices and preferences) reasons when they reason about social issues such as exclusion. Secondly, Killen and Rutland (2011, p. 6) divided reasons for exclusion into explicit (“based on the motivation to make a group function well”) and implicit (based on personal desires) reasons. Thirdly, Harrist and Bradley (2003, p. 186) explained that children exclude other children either because they *behave* in wrong ways or because they *are* different. Fourthly, in Wainryb et al.’s (2014, p. 470) study, excluders, or “perpetrators,” grounded their exclusion on group functioning, peer-group membership, peer pressure, or personal preferences/dislikes. Additionally, it should be noted that exclusion is not always a direct result of other children’s intentional exclusive actions, but some children can sometimes willingly exclude themselves – out of fear or

anxiety, out of low motivation, or just due to preference of being alone (Coplan et al., 2014, p. 230).

Social relations are a profound necessity for us, and therefore exclusion from them typically feels unpleasant (see Bennett, 2014, p. 183). Children aged three to six in Kirves and Sajaniemi's (2012, p. 391) study talked about exclusion as "a matter that made them feel bad or sad in kindergarten." Seven to seventeen year-olds in Wainryb et al.'s (2014, p. 470) research referred to emotions of hurt feelings, sadness, anger, and nonspecific negative emotions when they narrated about their experiences of being excluded. Even though exclusion typically seems to be a negatively felt experience, it is not always clear whether the excluders, at least if they are very young children, are aware of this: Kirves and Sajaniemi (2012, p. 393) found that children in their study often "thought that playing alone was not a problem for the excluded child."

If a child experiences social exclusion constantly and continuously, it can have more severe ramifications than just passing unpleasant feelings. Harrist and Bradley (2003, p. 186) collected these different consequences that persistently excluded children experience: They might face academic difficulties, they report high levels of loneliness and depression, and they can experience long-term psychological struggles that can last to adolescence and adulthood. Similarly, Godleski, Kamper, Ostrov, Hart, and Blakely-McClure (2015, p. 389) concluded that peer rejection and peer victimization can lead to "social-psychological maladjustment."

The consequences of social exclusion are likely to largely depend on why one is excluded. Of course, the reasons for exclusion are not always explicitly expressed to the excluded. Nevertheless, it can, for instance, feel worse to be excluded based on social group-memberships such as race or gender, than to be excluded for other reasons (Bennett, 2014, p. 186). On some situations, where the criteria for exclusion are commonly agreed upon, exclusion based on that criteria might even be viewed as acceptable by everyone, including the excluded person (Abrams & Killen, 2014, p. 4). For instance, sports teams or music clubs can

require abilities that exclude individuals with mutually agreed criteria in order to make the group function well (Killen & Rutland, 2011, p. 1)

Killen et al. (2009, p. 251) suggested that the experience of exclusion can also have positive effects, such as increased empathy, to the excluded. Of course, few possible positive effects of social exclusion do not justify unfair exclusions. Unfair exclusion based on for instance stereotypes does not only hurt the individual(s) that are directly excluded, but also furthers the ongoing societal hierarchies and inequities, thus contributing to social exclusion of numerous people on the macro-level (see Abrams & Killen, 2014, pp. 3–4; Killen, Rutland, & Jampol, 2009, p. 251). Because of the negative consequences of social exclusion for individuals and society at large explained here, this phenomenon needs to be researched. Only by understanding the ‘nature’ of social exclusion can we create better environments where no unjust and hurtful exclusions are experienced.

1.4 Daycare Center Space and Children’s Social Relations

Social exclusion on a micro-level of peers is not solely an interactional phenomenon between persons, but also requires consideration of contextual factors. Waitoller and Artiles (2013, p. 347, emphasis mine) underlined this when they noted that “researchers need to understand *locally situated forms of exclusion.*” Complex environmental conditions have an influence on what forms of exclusion children might experience. Therefore, children can experience social exclusion differently in different places at different times. Children can be positioned as “insiders” and “outsiders” differently in varying situations, as for instance Konstantoni’s (2010, p. 245) study has showed. Karrebæk (2011, p. 2912) similarly noted that “participant status is flexible and negotiable.” In this part, I explain how daycare space and children’s existing and forming social networks in that space may have an influence on social exclusion.

In order to understand exclusion in its context, the environment, or preferably the entire *space* where exclusions happen, needs to be theorized. Vuorisalo, Rutanen, and Raittila (2015, p. 68) have done this by launching a term

'relational space,' which intertwines physical, concrete space, "cultural and collective views" about the space, and individuals' "personal interpretations" of these physical and cultural spaces. The relational space in a daycare center thus does not only mean the physical environment, but also the social and cultural dimensions that are "relationally produced in everyday actions" (Vuorisalo et al., 2015, p. 68). This relational space makes children's different forms of participation both possible and impossible (Vuorisalo et al., 2015, pp. 75-76), enabling both social inclusion and social exclusion. Exclusions happen in daycare centers despite of the fact that children in these institutions are typically strongly encouraged to include everyone in every activity (Killen & Rutland, 2011, p. 2).

How children behave in daycare centers happens within a framework of what is allowed and what is not. Already very young children are "aware of contextualized rules," and this "shared understanding of institutional norms, rules, and activities becomes an important tool for creating mutual activities" for daycare children (Kultti & Odenbring, 2015, p. 879). In Vuorisalo's (2013, p. 187) study, children were supposed to behave and participate within so-called *preconditions*⁵ of for instance conversation and equality. Vuorisalo et al. (2015, pp. 76-77) added to this that behavior that is perceived to enhance children's learning is accepted in daycare centers. Daycare workers are not the only ones setting these preconditions, or rules, but children perceive them differently and modify them in their behavior (Vuorisalo 2013, p. 187), as the idea of relational space also suggests. In Brennan's (2016, p. 12) study, "rule teaching and learning emerged as cultural tools that supported children's participation" in the regular daycare center life. In the same study, rule breaking was understood as "children's attempts to cope with the demands of the environment," which could cause the educators to consider whether the daycare rules are fit to its children's needs. Rule breaking is thus one way to alter the allowed behavior in daycare centers.

Vuorisalo (2013, p. 177) found and theorized that a daycare center contains a so-called children's field and a field of children and adults, and different forms

⁵ "The preconditions set possibilities and limitations regarding daycare center space, time, and norms in the daycare center everyday life" (Vuorisalo, 2013, p. 97, translation mine).

of participation may be allowed in those fields. For instance, some children can be very socially included in an adult-led activity in the field of children and adults, but when they act the same way among peers, they might not be able to fully socially participate but can experience social exclusion. The fields cannot be separated from each other completely, but together they form the “social space” of a daycare center (Vuorisalo, 2013, p. 177), which could be considered as a dimension of Vuorisalo et al.’s (2015) relational space.

In this study, the social space mainly in the children’s field (Vuorisalo, 2013, p. 177) is the most essential dimension of the locally created relational space. Children form complex, constantly changing, hierarchical social relations in daycare centers. Children’s *positioning* in this social network “appears as ongoing processes that can change quickly” (Kultti & Odenbring, 2015, p. 879), and therefore create uncertainty on peer relations (Vuorisalo, 2013, p. 130). The positioning happens collectively and individually, and also verbally and non-verbally, through bodily actions (Kultti & Odenbring, 2015, p. 879). According to Cobb-Moore, Danby, and Farrell (2009, p. 1478), children manage “their own social orders and peer cultures” largely through “rule production and enforcement” in their everyday interactions. While children create their own rules, they also strategically draw upon “existing adult formulated rules.” Everyone in a daycare center, including the educators, thus relationally creates the social space in children’s field.

Children’s positioning in their peer network creates hierarchies and power relations between individuals. Some children are popular (=their company is often sought), whereas some are not, and popular children have the most power in the peer group (Vuorisalo, 2013, p. 145). According to Vuorisalo (2013, p. 130), situations where children need to select their playmates show their relationship networks, and simultaneously their popularity and power, most crucially. In these events, children exclude and include their peers based on numerous and varying criteria. Another way that children can show and gain power in social interaction is also by claiming ownership of play materials and spaces, and determining who gets access to them and who does not (Cobb-Moore et al., 2009,

p. 1479). This is thus yet another way to exclude peers. Children's pursuing to popularity and power therefore creates exclusions, and partly determines which children experience exclusion and which ones exclude.

To conclude, daycare center space – the physical structures of it, its cultural and social dimensions, as well as its people's personal interpretations of that space – is continuously and relationally created. In this space, educators and children both create the preconditions for children's actions, which partly determine how social exclusion occurs there: What forms of exclusion are allowed, and who excludes whom. The social space has a great influence on social exclusion. Children's social network largely grounds on these exclusions, and the positioning in the network affects whether a child gets excluded or not on each situation. The relational space varies from place to place and in time, and thus social exclusion always needs to be examined in its context.

1.5 Research Approach and Research Task

This study concentrates on social exclusion of three- to five-year-old children in one Finnish daycare center. The focus is on the micro-level of peer interaction and relationships. Social exclusion is defined as a phenomenon that occurs at the other end of a continuum of social participation (see figure 3) and thus means low or non-existent social participation in the observed social activity. Referring to the figure that presented the key themes and aspects of social participation created by Koster et al. (2009, p. 134), this study concentrates mainly on the theme of contacts/interactions and also on the theme of friendships/relationships. The aspects of the former are playing together, working together on tasks, participation in group activities, (un)acknowledged initiations, and social isolation. The aspects of the latter are friendship network and mutual friendship. The main focus is on the aspect of playing together from the key theme of contacts/interactions. (See figure 3 for visualization of the main focuses of this study.)

I have presented these key themes and aspects of social participation in order to provide a larger framework for readers to understand the multiplicity of the phenomena we are discussing here. Therefore, it should be understood that this study does not investigate all the possible aspects of the multidimensional phenomenon of social exclusion but provides a rather narrow perspective to it. Moreover, the key themes and aspects considered in this study have not been clearly distinguished from each other. My data did not provide enough information in order to do that, and I did not find it as a necessary task for my purposes in this study. The aspect of playing together from the key theme of contacts/aspects became a main focus during the process of data analysis.

Studying social exclusion at the level of children's peer interaction and relationships requires observing children in their natural environment. Therefore, I utilized an ethnographic approach in this research, because ethnography allows observing children in their natural environment and thus can also enable observation of "naturally occurring data" better than some other approaches (O'Reilly, Ronzoni, & Dogra, 2013, pp. 214-217). These kinds of observational studies have been implemented to some extent both when observing peers excluding peers (=peer exclusion, e.g. Fanger et al., 2012) and when observing children excluding themselves from their peers (=social withdrawal, e.g. Skånfors et al., 2009).

I call this study a 'micro-ethnography' because not all the central aspects of ethnography are covered in this research (Wolcott, 1990, according to Bryman, 2012, p. 433). For ethnographic research, it is typical that a lot of time is spent in the research field, that the creation of research data is done with multiple methods, and that the analysis attempts to explain how the context is creating the actions within it (Paju et al., 2014, pp. 30-31). Ethnographies with children also often emphasize engaging with children's own perspectives (James, 2001, p. 247), which are not extensively taken into consideration in this study. Apart from the relatively little time spent in the field and the lack of research participants' own views, my study follows these guidelines of a 'typical' ethnographic study:

Multiple methods are utilized and the contextual factors play a significant role in understanding the researched phenomenon, social exclusion.

This research is a qualitative case study, which means that the research goal is to gain “deep understanding” of the researched phenomenon (Wood-side, 2010, p. 6), rather than to achieve extensive generalizability. According to Pink (2007, p. 22), ethnography is “a process of creating and representing knowledge (...) that is based on ethnographer’s own experiences” and therefore no one, truthful, and objective “account of reality” is produced. My voice is heard throughout this paper because everything is ultimately interpreted through my viewpoint. Of course, reflexivity, an essential aspect in ethnographic research (Lappalainen, 2007a, p. 78), has been practiced throughout the research process by critically questioning my own presumptions, perceptions, and beliefs (Lappalainen, 2007b, p. 115). Nonetheless, everything in this paper is only part of the truth already simply due to act of writing, which always reduces the reality it tries to describe – but also clarifies some aspects of it (Paju et al., 2014, p. 36). After reading this paper, *social exclusion in a daycare center at the level of children’s interaction and relationships* will likely be understood more thoroughly.

My aim in this research is to gain a deeper understanding of social exclusion at the level of peer interaction and relationships in a context of one daycare center. Social exclusion is a wide phenomenon and this research can only disclose it partially and in one context. Nevertheless, these parts, situational forms of social exclusion, are clarified in this study. This research adds in research regarding social exclusion, -inclusion, and -participation, as well as peer exclusion and social withdrawal, by bringing these concepts together in this study’s theory section and also by investigating them in naturalistic daycare center observations in the findings section. The research question is: *How does social exclusion occur in children’s peer interactions and relationships in daycare center?*

2 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY

This research was conducted as a part of a research project *Children's paths in early childhood education* by Rutanen, Vuorisalo, and Raittila at the Department of Education in the University of Jyväskylä (2016-). We all produced data at the same daycare center with our own research interests (=team ethnography) (Rutanen, Raittila, Vuorisalo, & Paavilainen, 2016). Vuorisalo and Raittila observed the same child groups as I did, but in this study, I have only utilized the data I produced. This research is a qualitative case study and a micro-ethnography, where I observed two child groups for 12 days within a period of one month (September 2016), writing notes and recording videos.

2.1 The Research Participants and the Research Field

The research field was a Finnish daycare center, which consisted of four child groups. The two child groups I observed, Lakat and Puolukat (names changed), consisted of approximately forty 3-5-year-old children and seven educators (teachers and nurses) during the time I was there. In addition, one intern was also a part of the other group during some of my observation times. Children in the Puolukat group were a little younger than the children in the Lakat group.

My access in the daycare center was easy, as matters of research agreements and such were mostly handled by Rutanen, Vuorisalo, and Raittila. I got in the daycare center as a research assistant of the *Children's paths in early childhood education* -project (Rutanen et al., 2016-). The daycare center staff and children's families were asked consent about participating in the research project via research permission documents created by Rutanen, Vuorisalo, and Raittila. Two of the educators decided not to participate in this research project, but otherwise everyone else in these two groups were research participants. Some of the educators did not want to be video recorded, but writing notes about their actions was allowed.

Asking permission from the children about participating in the research project was a little different compared to adults. According to Strandell (2010, pp. 96–97), the ‘permission-asking’ needs to be present at all times for children, and they have a right to deny the presence of a researcher, verbally or non-verbally, at any time. In practice, however, it was impossible to always be certain that all the children were participating in the research voluntarily. During the first days of observations, Vuorisalo, Raittila, and I introduced ourselves to both of the child groups during their circle times. We explained what we were doing at the daycare center in a way the children could understand: We told that we were there to learn more about their lives in this daycare center, and showed them our research gear: notebooks, pens, and video cameras. We also explained that we were little different adults from the educators, because we did not for instance know all of the rules there. These were ways to differentiate ourselves from the educators and to get rid of “pedagogical authority” that children often assume adults in daycare centers have (Lappalainen, 2007a, p. 66). We also hoped that the asymmetrical power relations between children and us, adults, would be equalized at least a little bit (see Paju et al., 2014, p. 33; Lappalainen, 2007a, p. 88).

Not all children were present during these times of officially presenting ourselves to them, and for those absent children I introduced myself personally. Many of the children spent very irregular hours at the daycare center (at least that is how it appeared to me), and for that reason, I am not sure whether I personally introduced myself to all of the children. However, every child’s guardians were asked whether their child was participating in the research or not. Nevertheless, I cannot be completely certain that all the children at all times were fully aware of what I was doing at the daycare center, although some of the children did occasionally express that they knew I was observing them for research purposes. I never learned all the children’s names – only the ones’ who spent the most time in the daycare center or otherwise grasped my attention (e.g. seemed to experience exclusion from social interaction more than others). Thus, my knowledge of *all* the children in these groups is not extensive: I got to know some of them much more than others.

The two child groups I observed worked partially in the same spaces, both indoors and outdoors. Both groups had their own 'main' rooms where e.g. circle times were held, and there was also another room that both of the groups sometimes used. The groups also had a common hallway area for clothes, and the building also had a common hall (for e.g. exercise classes) and a common dining space for all of the child groups. The outside area was also shared by all of the groups in the daycare center. The fenced daycare center yard had a big terrace, sandboxes, a play tower with a slide, a gritting box, and some trees and bushes.

The two observed child groups seemed to mainly work independently from each other. Often in the mornings the other group would be inside and the other outside, and then switch. In the afternoons, all children would be outside at the same time. The children from both groups did sometimes meet each other for instance in the hallways when changing clothes, in the dining room during eating times, and especially during afternoon outside free play times.

Free play times, which I focused on in this research, occurred often in the mornings after breakfast either inside or outside, directly after naptime and before snack time in the afternoon, and also outside in the afternoon before children were picked up from the daycare center. "Free play" is a vastly used term in early childhood education and care with somewhat ambiguous meanings (see Rutanen, 2009), but here I use it to mean the times when children were relatively free to choose what they wanted to do in the daycare center. During these times, educators typically did not directly tell children what they should do, although they might have influenced their actions with other arrangements, such as organization of the play space (determining what toys are available and suggesting who should play with whom).

2.2 Data Production

My role as a researcher in the field was close to Bryman's (2012, p. 443) definition of a "minimally participating observer:" I mainly observed and did not

significantly participate in the children's "core activities." I interacted with the children mostly only when they came to me and, for instance, wanted to see my camera or needed help with zipping their jackets. The main ways I produced research data in the field were through hand-written field notes and digital video recordings.

Note making by pen and paper in the field is relatively unobtrusive to daycare center everyday life (Lappalainen, 2007b, p. 116), which was good as I did not want to intervene it much. I usually started my note making by writing down the date, the time, the place where I was, and possibly the main activity of the situation (e.g. circle time, eating time) and the people/amount of people in that space. These were ways to contextualize my field notes (see Lappalainen, 2007b, p. 117).

After 'setting the scene' on my notes I would start describing the activities there more. At first, I found it very difficult to decide where to direct my observations. I tried to keep in mind my research focus, and to pay attention on situations where a child would end up doing something alone. This proved to be difficult, as these situations happened quickly, and I would see children by themselves without a clear observation of how that ended up being that way. Especially during outside times, observing children who ran around was very challenging. Catching more of children's conversations would have required better research equipment (e.g. microphones attached to children's clothes). Of course, my lacking ethnographic research experience was also a contributing factor on the difficulty of the fieldwork. In the field, I paid attention mainly on *children's interactions with each other* in order to observe if they would exclude anyone, but I also sometimes observed *what children did when they were alone* and not directly interacting with anyone. Observing became easier after some time spent in the field.

Another way I produced research data in addition to hand-written notes was through digital video recordings. Video recording is a good method when undergoing not-so-extensive ethnography, because it enables achieving very detailed material from the field (Paju, 2009, p. 220). Whenever I started recording

a video, I marked it down on my notes to ensure its compatibility with my other forms of data production. As with written notes, with video recording I also found it hard to decide what to observe – what to record with my camera. Video recording does not capture reality any more objectively than written notes do – as reality, in essence, is “not observable” – because this kind of technology has a “situational nature” which always leaves something out (White, 2009, p. 369). While video recording (and also while writing notes), I typically set myself on the level of the children, similarly to Paju (2009, p. 215), in order to achieve their perspective better. While recording a video I sometimes also simultaneously wrote down what was happening outside of what the camera captured. Although I tried to achieve children’s perspective on my recording and to mark down the bigger context around of what I recorded, I still acknowledge that the data production might have left some essential aspects regarding my research questions out. That being said, the audio-visual data of video recordings increases the amount of data from the field, which in itself could be perceived to increase the objectivity and reliability of this research.

Whereas writing notes in the field did not seem to be significantly disruptive to neither children nor educators, video recording did occasionally produce some unnecessary attention, which should be minimized (White, 2009, p. 399). Some children, when they noticed that I was video recording, sometimes came to me and asked if they could see themselves from the camera screen. In these situations, I did what the children asked. This kind of behavior decreased greatly after the first days. I always attempted to be very discreet while recording in order to avoid disturbing the everyday life too much. Usually I stopped recording if children seemed to start paying attention to it too much, especially during educator-led activities such as circle times. One could argue about the ethicalness of this kind of secretive recording, but I justify this by stating that it would be disruptive for the children to constantly be asked whether their actions could be recorded or not. This kind of discreet recording also perhaps allowed more ‘natural’ data from the field, which was what I wanted. However, video

recordings were not the main way of data production – I utilized more hand-written- than video-recorded data.

In ethnographic research, fieldwork is not done solely by writing things down or recording them, but with all of the researcher's senses. Thus, my presence in the field was not purely observational, but I always participated in the field. (Lappalainen, 2007b, p. 113.) Moreover, I *felt* the field. These emotions have influenced this research, although it is difficult to clarify how, as feelings do not easily transfer into a written form (see Beatty, 2010). I sometimes wrote down my feelings about some situations I observed/participated in, but I separated them from my more 'observational' notes clearly. I did this already in the field but also after the time spent in the field while transcribing my data.

I transcribed my data on Microsoft Word –documents. I usually did this during the same day I had been in the daycare center in order to remember the observed events better. While transcribing, I completed my field notes from my memory, when necessary. (see Lappalainen, 2007b, pp. 125–127.) I also watched the video data of the day and typed its main events down on the same document. On the transcripts, I distinguished which events were available on video, too. I did not attempt to transcribe all the video data into extensively detailed written form, as it is impossible (Derry et. al. 2010, pp. 19–20). While transcribing, I also already wrote down some initial analytical thoughts. The analysis, which is a "cyclical" process (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 6), thus already started at this point if not earlier. In fact, the analysis can be perceived to have started already in the field when I decided what to observe and how to 'store' my observations (Palmu, 2007, p. 144). I saved the transcribed data and video recordings on Jyväskylä University database where only Rutanen, Vuorisalo, Raittila, and I could access them.

The data production in the field ended largely simply due to time constraints from my responsibilities outside of this study. A better way would have been to end the fieldwork after achieving a feeling that the research questions had been answered (Bryman, 2012, p. 452). I did not have a possibility to achieve this feeling in the field, but the lack of this was compensated for by

discussions with my research team, who continued their fieldwork. These discussions helped me to deepen my understanding of the daycare center and my research topic. Therefore, even though this was an independent study, Rutanen, Raittila, and Vuorisalo gave me great insights to both analysis and reporting.

2.3 Data Analysis

According to Ramazanoğlu and Holland (2002, p. 160), “data analysis is a process of envisaging patterns, making sense, giving shape and bringing your quantities of material under control.” They further continued that “data do not speak for themselves,” but the researcher ultimately decides what the data means. Interpretations of data are thus always “exercise of power,” and the best a researcher can do is to make the process of analysis and interpretations “as explicit as possible.” (Ramazanoğlu & Holland 2002, p. 161.) This is what I attempted to do here. However, clear explanation of how my research process progressed to my findings is difficult, as ethnographic analysis is often a rather artistic process (Beach, 2005, p. 9).

After finishing my time in the field, I read my transcripts multiple times. I also re-viewed my videos and completed my transcripts based on them when necessary. I marked down interesting events regarding my research question, which was still relatively unclear. My initial intention was to do feminist ethnography (see e.g. Paju et al., 2014), and to analyze my data with an intersectional approach (see e.g. Davis, 2008). My special interest was in intersections of gender, age, and ethnicity, and their possible intertwining on social exclusion. I considered this important, as for instance Konstantoni (2010, p. 47) had expressed “a need for further research to explore complexity and intersectionality between various parts of social identities and in children’s friendship formations and exclusionary/inclusionary practices.” Also Alanen (2016, p. 159) had underlined a need for intersectional childhood studies while also noting the difficulty of it.

I encountered this difficulty of doing intersectional feminist ethnography in my research. Soon after marking down, or coding, on my transcripts the situations where I interpreted that gender, age, or ethnicity might have had something to do with exclusion, I realized that I was uncertain about my claims. I felt that I had not enough data to confidently suggest that these dimensions of difference played a role in some of the exclusionary events I had observed. I had two options: Either to 1) go back in the field and produce more data focusing on these dimensions or to 2) work with what I had and re-design my research questions and interests. I decided to choose the latter option, and started to focus my research more on the phenomenon of social exclusion itself and the contextual factors affecting it. After all, social exclusion was visible in my data.

At this point of further re-framing my research, I noticed that I needed to articulate better what exactly I meant by 'social exclusion' in this study. On my theoretical background, I had earlier highlighted gender, age, and ethnicity in relation to a vast and rather ambiguous definition of social exclusion, but now I needed to focus my research more on social exclusion itself. I realized that social exclusion is a very vast phenomenon with strong connections to social participation and social inclusion as well, as I have presented in figures 1 and 3. I also found out that I could only focus on some of the many dimensions of social exclusion, and these were determined by the kind of data that I had already produced. At this time, I started to heavily re-construct my theoretical background. I found for instance the article by Koster et al. (2009), which, although not specifically concentrating on social exclusion but on social participation, helped me to locate my study in relation to these phenomena. Consequently, I focused on social exclusion at the level of peer interaction and relationships, which were two key themes of social participation from Koster et al.'s (2009, p. 134) study (see figure 2). This re-focusing of study and re-building of theoretical background is not unusual to an ethnographic analysis, where a researcher can move back and forth between theoretical literature, raw field-data, and the categorizations that are constituting from the data (Palmu, 2007, p. 145).

During this cyclical analysis process, I re-coded my data with my clarified research interest in mind. This coding of data is often considered necessary in order to make sense of it (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 26). On my printed transcripts, I manually marked down events, or “episodes” (see e.g. Lappalainen, 2007b, p. 117), where some sort of exclusions occurred, and also highlighted descriptions where a child was mentioned to be doing something by themselves or was otherwise mentioned to ‘be alone.’ While doing this, I discovered that most of the exclusion events and also the mentions of children alone were observed during free play times. This was mostly due to the fact that free play was happening a lot at the daycare center during my observations, but I had also initially suspected those situations to be of most interest considering my research interest and I had therefore paid a lot of attention to them. I decided to limit my research to consider only free play times. By doing this, I also further focused my study to mainly consider the aspect of playing together from the key theme of contacts/interactions from Koster et al.’s (2009, p. 134) figure of social participation. In addition, I also decided to concentrate on exclusions between children and not to pay much attention on events where an educator excluded a child from other children for some reason.

After identifying events of exclusion and other mentions of children being alone, I started to analyze them more deeply. I started with the exclusionary events, and attempted to type them in different categories. While doing this typing, I quickly realized that I was naming exclusion events very similarly to the categories of peer exclusion in Fanger et al.’s (2012, p. 233) study, which were unmitigated exclusion, mitigated exclusion, exclusion planning, ignoring, self-exclusion, and partial exclusion. I started comparing my study to their study, and decided to utilize their categorization rather than creating my own categories. I chose a few illustrative and differing exclusionary events from my data to represent each category (except self-exclusion, which I did not observe occurring at the daycare center) in order to showcase the diversity of peer exclusion in this daycare center. I analyzed these events by bringing the contextual factors of each situation visible, as ethnographers typically do (Paju et al., 2014, pp. 30–31). I

considered context to encompass the entire relational space of the daycare center (Vuorisalo et al., 2015, p. 68). I thus did not take the peer exclusion categories by Fanger et al. (2012, p. 233) completely for granted. They helped me to ‘control’ my data, but the findings of my study extend beyond these categories. I address that social exclusion is not a simple result of peer exclusion, which is only one form of exclusion (see figure 4), but that there might be other structures influencing this phenomenon, too, which I attempt to describe in the findings.

In addition to analyzing differing types of peer exclusions in their context, I also started to analyze the descriptions of children who I had mentioned to be playing alone. I noticed what I had already realized in the field: Some children seemed to have spent significantly more time by themselves than others. Literature supported this finding as well. I tried to find an answer to how exactly these children ended up being alone, and realized there was no straightforward answer to this. I decided to choose two children, who were often alone and of whom I had a good amount of data, Reko and Aimo, and to analyze their social exclusion from peer interaction more. It seemed to be that these children were usually not present in the peer exclusion events but rather socially withdrew from their peers by using similar categories mentioned in Skånfors et al.’s study (2009, pp. 100–105). However, in this case it did not seem applicable to categorize my data according to these categories, but to consider each child individually. I chose illustrative examples from my data of both Reko and Aimo to display how social exclusion appeared to encounter them at the daycare center. Here as well, I gave special attention on how the entire daycare center space influenced their social exclusion from peer interaction and -relationships. Gender, and especially masculinity, as socio-cultural aspects of the daycare center relational space, appeared to become significant at this point of the analysis.

In the end, I organized my findings according to these two somewhat independent parts of analyses described in the two previous paragraphs. Most children seemed to encounter social exclusion from peer interaction momentarily and mainly as a result of peer exclusion (chapter 3.1), whereas few children seemed to socially withdraw and to encounter rather persistent social exclusion

(chapter 3.2). Collectively constructed daycare center relational space appeared to influence all these occurrences in some ways.

During the analysis process, I did not only rely on my transcripts and video recordings, but, as Paju (2009, p. 211) stated it, also in my corporal understanding of the daycare center that I had gained through my own physical presence and participation in the research field. My knowledge from the field was gained from my perspective, although children's views in mind. Through my findings, I want to clarify aspects of social exclusion among children in daycare centers, in other words, to "unveil the invisible" side of it like a good research should (Lahelma, Lappalainen, Mietola, & Palmu, 2014, p. 54). Although the interpretations here are all mine and cannot be generalized in all contexts, I argue that they complete our understanding of the phenomenon of social exclusion (see Beach, 2005, p. 9).

3 FINDINGS

Social exclusion from peer interaction and relationships during free play times was an everyday phenomenon in the two observed child groups. Children encountered social exclusion in differing intensities (see continuum of social participation on figure 3) as a result of varying forms of concrete exclusion acts (see peer exclusion and social withdrawal as forms of exclusion on figure 4). Some children appeared to encounter this kind of social exclusion more frequently and in greater intensities than others did, but most children seemed to encounter it only momentarily and not in very great intensities.⁶ According to these observations, I have made a very vague division between two groups of children who encountered social exclusion from peer interaction and relationships differently. In relation to them, I present the findings of this study in two parts: In the first part (3.1), I discuss social exclusion as a phenomenon that can momentarily be encountered by *all* children in one way or another. In the second part (3.2), I discuss how *some* children seemed to encounter social exclusion more frequently and in greater intensities than other children. These sections are organized a bit differently from each other. However, in both of them, I attempt to explain how the entire daycare center space, and *not* solely actions of any individual children, influenced these exclusions.

Nevertheless, the two 'ways' that social exclusion from peer interaction and relationships occurred at this daycare center, 1) *social exclusion as momentary and 'less' intensive to most children* and 2) *social exclusion as persistent and 'more' intensive to some children*, are the main findings of this study. All the findings are also gathered together in figure 5 at the beginning of the Discussion section in chapter 4.

⁶ These expressions of frequencies and intensities are only indefinable and unmeasured estimates of how I perceived them.

3.1 Social Exclusion from Peer Interaction as Momentary and 'Less' Intensive to Most Children

Social exclusion from peer interaction affected all children. For the majority of them, this phenomenon seemed to be encountered only momentarily. This means that they did not spend significant amounts of time alone, but could find company if they wanted to, despite of occasionally being excluded from some social activities. In this chapter 3.1, I therefore aim to show *how most children encountered social exclusion from peer interaction momentarily and less intensively* compared to some other children that are discussed on chapter 3.2.

I indicate, with four excerpts from the research data, that many children seemed to encounter not very intensive social exclusion from peer interaction only momentarily, as a part of usual everyday life at the daycare center. This finding was made via investigating children's social interaction situations, usually plays, in which a child was somehow left outside of this interaction. Fanger et al.'s (2012, p. 233) classification of these concrete exclusion acts towards one's peers (=peer exclusion) lead the analysis of this part of the study.⁷ I have organized this section according to this classification, and I start with the most direct forms of exclusion, continuing to more subtle ways. My approach is ethnographical, and therefore I aim to explain how the context partly created, or at least enabled and contributed to, these exclusions.

Direct/unmitigated exclusion. Sometimes children very explicitly attempted to exclude others from their play or other kind of social interaction. According to Fanger et al. (2012, p. 235), direct exclusion occurs when the exclusion is "directly conveyed." I did not observe very many direct exclusion attempts, probably because of the common expectation in daycare centers that everyone should be included. All the direct exclusions that I observed were verbal. Fortunately, I did not observe any physically violent ways of exclusion. Nevertheless, the following

⁷ However, one form of exclusion from Fanger et al.'s (2012, p. 233) study, self-exclusion, which refers to exclusion of oneself "in order to gain power or change the dynamics of an interaction," is not considered in this study because I did not find such exclusions in my data.

excerpt shows that children could very straightforwardly tell their peer that they did not want to include them in their activity.

Children from Lakat-group are playing inside. They have placed their names on a play choosing board on an activity they want to do. Robin, Olli, and Jarno are playing with Legos on the floor in a room full of children. Robin does not stay with the Legos all the time but drives with a toy car around the room and talks to other people. He always returns to the Lego-spot in the middle of the room.

Satu enters the room. She walks in the room and looks around. She goes to the play choosing board and places her name on the Lego play spot on the play choosing board. Then she sits down by the Legos, where Robin, Olli, and Jarno are. Robin comes very close to Satu:

Robin [grimacing, and pointing Satu with his finger]: *"You are a robber."*

Satu looks at Robin with a calm face and starts taking legos. Irja, Reko, and EDUCATOR 1 are sitting close to them on the floor, playing with blocks. Irja comments to Erja that Robin would have hit Satu. EDUCATOR 1 glances at me, and starts talking to Robin:

EDUCATOR 1: *"Robin, did you hit Satu?"*

Robin does not answer anything.

Satu: *"Robin said that I'm a robber."*

EDUCATOR 1 starts telling that everyone should be friends and play together, and that it must have been an accident if Robin hit Satu.

Olli [to Satu]: *"You are not in this plaaaay!"*

Satu [pointing to the play choosing board]: *"I put my name there, so I am."*

Right after this, EDUCATOR 2 asks Satu to come play a board game into another room, and she goes there.

(EXCERPT 1. Written notes on 2016/09/28)

In this excerpt 1, two peers tried to relatively directly exclude Satu from playing with Legos with them. First, Satu was denied access to Legos by Robin, who expressed discontent towards Satu entering the play by his facial expression and by claiming that Satu was a robber. In another context, this behavior could have been interpreted even as an invitation to play, but in this case, it certainly was an exclusion attempt. Calling others as "robbers" seemed to be a common form of lowering others' status in the child group, especially among boys. Playing 'cops and robbers' was a somewhat popular game played from time to time, and being a robber in this play was not usually a role that anybody voluntarily chose. Being a robber was a subordinate position compared to being a police officer, as it is in real life (see Karrebæk, 2011, p. 2913). Robin, who was now calling Satu a robber, had himself been 'attacked' a little over a week ago by other boys who had claimed that he was a robber (2016/09/16, written field notes).

The second direct exclusion attempt towards Satu was executed by Olli, when he said to Satu that she "is not in" their Lego-play. This exclusion attempt was so clear that Satu replied to it verbally, and not just by a look, like she had done when Robin called her a robber. Satu answered to Olli that she belongs to

the play because she had placed her name on the Lego spot on the play choosing board. We do not know whether this was a good enough explanation for Olli, because Satu decided to leave the room due to EDUCATOR 2's demand.

The daycare center space certainly had its significance in this social exclusion situation. Particularly one aspect of the surrounding physical space was of importance here: The play choosing board. On this board, children would place their name tag onto an activity they wanted to take part in. The intention of the board, in my understanding, was that children would engage in long lasting plays at one place and not wander around the premises. The board was still a rather new way to choose free time play activities for the group, and it might be that all children, and possibly educators, were not yet completely sure about how it should be used.

Satu utilized this play choosing board both in order to get access to the Lego play and to stay in it. By placing her nametag on the right spot on the board she thought she got access to the Lego play where Robin, Olli, and Jarno already were. This way she tried to "claim ownership" of the Lego play space and materials, and consequently enter the already ongoing play (Cobb-Moore et al., 2009, p. 1479). However, at least Robin and Olli were not compliant to let Satu join their play even though, according to the board, four players were allowed to play with Legos at once. Thus, the children clearly had different interpretations about who was allowed to participate in the play: Satu relied on the play choosing board, but Robin and Olli did not think she could enter the play so simply.

Robin and Olli might have been reluctant to include Satu because the play had already started and Satu's access was disrupting the play, or they did not want to play with Satu for other reasons. One possibility is that Legos was more of a 'boys' game' to which Satu, as a girl, was not 'allowed' to participate in. During these inside free play times, it was common that most boys would play on the floor with blocks, cars, and such, and most girls would draw and make crafts by tables or play at the home play corner. By trying to access the boys' Lego play, Satu was, in a way, 'breaking' this unwritten 'rule' of what girls and boys

usually do during free play times. Robin and Olli, instead, tried to follow and simultaneously strengthen this unwritten rule by directly excluding Satu from their activity. Of course, it could have also been that Satu was excluded just because she did not have a strong relationship to any of the children in the play. Nevertheless, I think the lack of it also had something to do with children's gender, as boys and girls very rarely played together.

The assumed unwritten rule of different allowed activities and behavior for boys and for girls was an aspect of the cultural space in the daycare center. For instance, it seemed that some boys could sometimes get away with behavior that was usually regarded as unacceptable at the daycare center. In excerpt 1, Irja told EDUCATOR 1 that Robin would have hit Satu – which he did not, as Satu corrected that Robin actually just called her a robber – and EDUCATOR 1 only responded to this by repeating the common cultural expectation in daycare centers that 'everyone should be friends and play together.' Regardless, right after this, Olli still told Satu that she was not in the play. Robin and Olli thus both altered and broke the cultural rule of 'everyone should be friends and play together' and strengthened the rule of 'boys and girls do different things' – whereas Satu tried to strengthen the previous and break the latter, and was not successful in it in the end. Robin and Olli in a way managed to exclude Satu from their play, even though it was EDUCATOR 2 who finally asked Satu to come elsewhere. EDUCATOR 2 might have assumed that the situation could have escalated into a bigger quarreling if they did not intervene in it. At least that is how I expected the situation might have continued.

In this excerpt 1, direct exclusion attempts by Robin and Olli were successful despite Satu's (and partly Irja's) resistance. Even though most of the interaction was between children, educators also had a major influence on how the situation proceeded. The daycare center space, the physical play choosing board, social-cultural expectations of allowed behavior and daycare center's explicit and implicit rules, and children's and educator's interpretations of them, caused Satu to not be fully included in the Lego play.

Indirect/mitigated exclusion and ignoring. There were also more indirect ways peers excluded each other. Indirect peer exclusion occurs when children do not directly tell a peer to ‘get lost,’ but make up excuses for it, or otherwise ‘tone down’ their “expression of exclusion” (Fanger et al., 2012, p. 235). I would say ignoring is also an indirect form of peer exclusion, but Fanger et al. (2012, p. 235) wrote about it as a separate category that occurs when a child deliberately ignores a peer’s attempts to enter play. These kinds of exclusions were difficult to realize because of their subtleness, but I managed to observe some events where they were used.

The following excerpt 2 exhibits indirect exclusion and ignoring towards Vilma during an outside free play time. Before it, I explain a little bit of the relationships between the three children present in the excerpt, Vilma, Anu, and Elina: Vilma and Anu were part of the Lakat group, but Elina was part of the Puolukat group. Elina was therefore a little younger than the other two. Anu often played with either Elina or Vilma individually, and Anu seemed to be the best friend for both Elina and Vilma in the day care center. Anu, Vilma, and Elina rarely played together as a triplet, and I never saw just Vilma and Elina playing together. Elina and Vilma seemed to spend more irregular times in the daycare center than Anu did. In the following excerpt, they all participate in common activities at least partly.

It is an afternoon free play time outside. Children from all groups are playing outside, and guardians come and go to pick up their children.

Anu and Vilma come to me, and Anu starts telling me about someone’s birthday and also explains me about the ‘machines’ they are holding [shovels with buckets hanging from them]. Vilma stays quiet. After telling this, they move further away from me, and then back and past me. Elina follows them, holding a similar ‘machine’ as Anu and Vilma. Then Elina sits in a sandbox under the slide tower. Anu and Vilma continue past the tower, but then return and come under it to join Elina in the sandbox. Right after this Vilma goes away from Anu and Elina, who started doing something together. Vilma still stays close to them, and climbs up the tower a little bit. Then she climbs back down, stands on a terrace, and seems to be looking at the day care center gates. Then she goes closer to Anu:

Vilma: *“Hey Anu, let’s play with cars.”*

Anu says she does not want to play with cars now because she is playing another play now. Vilma moves a little closer to Anu.

Vilma: *“You can’t play with me?”*

Anu: *“I’m playing birthday now. [Says something else too].”*

Vilma still stays close to Anu and Elina, bustling around them, and glancing at the daycare center gates. She takes a small car from a toy box close by, and pushes it a little bit on the terrace. Then she returns closer to the sandbox where Anu and Elina are. She climbs the tower ladder up and down, and looks at the daycare gates. Then she looks at Anu and Elina, and descends to the sandbox and joins them.

Anu [to Vilma]: *“Can’t take Elina’s invention. [Says something else]. Are you playing with cars or what?”*

Vilma either does not respond anything or I do not hear it. She nevertheless stays with Anu and Elina.

Soon Anu decides it is time to leave the sandbox:

Anu: *"Come on, let's take shelter in the slide!"*

Anu and Vilma climb up the tower quickly.

Anu: *"Come quick, Elina!"*

Elina climbs up the tower as well. The three of them are up in the tower, looking down to other children. Then Anu looks up, and starts explaining how rain clouds are approaching them and might hide *"our lovely sun."* The three girls start chanting *"Rain away, rain away!"*

Anu, Vilma, and Elina come down from the tower and run behind some bushes in the yard. Elina falls behind, but Anu and Vilma return to take her with them, and all of them go behind the bushes.

After a while, Anu, Vilma, and Elina run back to the tower. Anu tells Vilma and Elina to follow her, and they climb up. Anu asks Elina to follow her, saying *"Elina, are you coming? This is a shelter."* Everybody are up in the tower again.

Anu [pointing to Satu, who is by the bushes with Elsa]: *"Satu is there. Elina, Elina, Satu is there."*

Elina: *"But there are crocodiles."*

Anu: *"No, no. We have wings and magic powers."*

The girls descend from the tower. Anu explains that they are fairies. They go to Satu and Elsa, and talk something with them. Elsa spreads her arms, runs in a circle and says *"I'm flying!"* Vilma mimics her. Then, Elsa and Satu go sit on top of a grit box by the bushes, the same place where they were before Anu, Vilma, and Elina joined them.

Anu comes to me again, and tells that they are fairies. All the five girls seem to be playing fairies now. Elsa and Satu are playing together. Anu, Vilma and Elina are playing close to the fence. Vilma seems to be glancing the day care center gates again.
(EXCERPT 2. *Written notes on 2016/09/26*).

In this excerpt, Vilma was indirectly excluded by Anu at least two times. First this happened when Vilma directly asked Anu whether she is not playing with her anymore, to what Anu answered *"I'm playing birthday now."* Thus, Anu did not directly tell Vilma to go away nor asked her to join in this birthday play, but left it to Vilma to resolve what she meant by her sentence. Vilma appeared to have gotten a little confused about this, and decided to stay close to Anu and Elina's birthday play, although not joining in it.

A little later, the second indirect peer exclusion occurred when Vilma tried to be included in the birthday play by descending in the same sandbox where Anu and Elina were. To this, Anu reacted by telling Vilma to stay away from Elina's 'invention' and by noting that she thought she was playing with cars. Vilma responded to this the same way she did with the earlier indirect peer exclusion attempt, by remaining silent. This time, she nevertheless stayed in the same play area.

After these two indirect peer exclusion attempts, Anu tried another strategy: Ignoring. Anu decided to leave the sandbox, and enlarge their playing

area. The three girls changed their spot numerous times, and mostly Anu was clearly deciding where they went and what they did. Elina, being younger and clumsier, was often falling behind, but Anu always took care that she was with them. Anu asked Elina to follow her a few times by calling her name, and also directly talked with her – the same did not apply to Vilma. Vilma only followed Anu and mimicked what the other girls were doing. Neither Anu nor Elina talked with her directly. Vilma showed discomfort to the situation by constantly glancing the daycare center gates. It seemed that she wished to be picked up to home already.

The physical space of this extract was very different compared to the extract 1. Here, the children were outside in the daycare center yard, which provided a different framework for children's social interactions. Importantly, it allowed children from different groups to interact. Inside, children could mostly only play with children from their own groups, but during afternoon outside times, children from all groups were sharing the same yard. Outside, the activities were also less tied in one place. There, children could change their playing spot freely – like Anu, Vilma, and Elina did – whereas inside educators determined children's places more strictly via, for instance, the play choosing board.

Because educators structured activities outside less, Anu could play with Elina in the yard. This probably partly caused Anu to try to exclude Vilma, with whom she very often played inside. Outside time was one of the only times Anu could play with Elina, and perhaps that is why she only seemed to want to play with Elina and not with Vilma as well.

It seemed that girls tended to follow the daycare center rules more strictly than boys did, which was also apparent in excerpt 1. Perhaps this was why Anu did not directly ask Vilma to go away, but did this indirectly and by ignoring. Direct exclusion would have been more visibly against the rule of 'being friends with everyone.' The indirectness of exclusion could have also been simply because Vilma was nevertheless Anu's friend, and she did not want to hurt her feelings too drastically.

Vilma and Elina were both not at the daycare center every day. Elina seemed to often enjoy just playing by herself, but Vilma seemed to always be with Anu. I doubt that she did not have any other close enough friends in the daycare center with who she thought she could have played with. This is why she 'stuck around' with Anu and Elina, even though she probably knew that her company was not necessarily wanted. Anu seemed to be able to play with anybody at the daycare center, but seemed to have wanted to play with Elina possibly because she probably had realized that it was rarely possible.

With this excerpt 2, I showed that afternoon outside times allowed peers to socially interact with children outside of their own child groups, which might have encouraged differing exclusions compared to those occurring inside. This also affected children's social networks, which play a role in peer exclusion. In addition, it might have been more difficult to find playmates and create friendships for children who spent less time at the daycare center compared to others. The expectation that all children should play with everyone affected during outside times, too, and girls might have experienced this pressure harder than boys did, which might have encouraged girls to use more subtle ways of exclusion. All of the above affected Vilma not being fully included in Anu and Elina's play.

Partial exclusion. Sometimes, children would use even more subtle ways to exclude, ways that one could interpret as inclusion as well: Children could include another child in their play, but only allow them a very minor role in it, thus preventing their full participation. This kind of peer exclusion is called partial exclusion. (Fanger et al., 2012, p. 235.) In these incidents, the intensity of the excluded child's social participation was closer to social exclusion than -inclusion end of the continuum of social participation (figure 3).

The following excerpt 3 exhibits multiple partial exclusions executed by Erkka during the same play. In it, Erkka asks or demands Milja to hold on shovels that act as traffic lights in order for him to push his truck through them. Milja is later replaced by Noel, then by Mikko, then the shovels are given to me, then

Ninni has them for a while, and finally nobody is playing the role of traffic lights anymore, although vehicles are still used in the same play.

Only the older children of Puolukat-group are playing outside in the day care center yard, after visiting the park and before going back inside for lunch. EDUCATOR 3 is outside with the children.

Milja and Erkka are playing together: Erkka guides Milja to pretend to be traffic lights. She is supposed to hold two sand shovels in her hands, one of which works as a green light and the other as a red light. Milja is holding the shovels, notices me, and tells me that she needs to stand still, because she *“is traffic lights.”* Milja starts lifting the shovels for Erkka, who pushes a sandbox truck past Milja when ‘the light is green’ (=when the correct shovel is up). Milja watches Erkka ‘driving’ with his car, and when he stops by her, she raises the other shovel up and tells *“Now you may go”* or *“Now it’s green.”* The play continues like this for some time. Then Erkka tells Milja to look at him as he parks the car, and Milja looks. Erkka suggests that *“Now they could be lights for pedestrians!”* The traffic light game continues.

My attention switches to Noel, who is walking with a rake on the terrace by himself, then leaves the rake on the ground and starts pushing a wheelbarrow. He goes close to Erkka. **Erkka** [to Noel]: *“I want to play with Mikko but I guess I can play with you too.”* [Mikko is not outside yet.] Erkka continues by suggesting that Noel could be the traffic lights.

Noel: *“Why?”* and Erkka replies to him that someone has to be one. [At some undocumented moment, Milja has left the traffic light role]

Now Noel is walking with the traffic light shovels. He says *“Stop!”* to a child passing by, but the child does not react. Erkka comes closer to Noel, pushing the truck.

Noel [lifts one shovel]: *“Stop!”*

Erkka stops by him.

Noel [lifting the other shovel]: *“Red.”*

Erkka [starts ‘driving’]: *“Hey, that’s not red, that’s green.”*

Erkka and Noel walk on the terrace, Erkka with the truck and Noel with the shovels. Mikko comes outside with EDUCATOR 3, who is helping him to put on the outdoor clothes better.

Erkka: *“Hey, does Mikko also want to be the traffic lights?”* Erkka and Noel walk to Mikko and Lilli, and Erkka explains to them how the traffic light game goes. Mikko agrees with Erkka that he can be the traffic lights. Noel runs away from the three with the shovels, and soon Erkka follows him, and soon also Mikko.

Some moments later, Mikko has replaced Noel as ‘traffic lights’ [I have not documented how this happened]. The game continues like this, Mikko pretending to be traffic lights and Erkka stopping by him and then pushing the truck past him.

After a while, Mikko comes to me with the shovels and asks me to be the traffic lights. I try to resist this role, saying that I do not really know how to do that, but Mikko assures me that I can, leaves the shovels to me and goes away. I take the shovels for a very little moment, but then leave them lying on the terrace and walk away from them with my notebook and camera. After switching my observation spot, I notice that now Ninni is holding the shovels and switching the traffic lights to both Erkka, who is still pushing the truck, and Mikko, who is now pushing a pushcart. Some moments later, I do not see anybody pretending to be traffic lights, although Erkka and Mikko are still pushing their vehicles.

(EXCERPT 3. Written notes and video recordings on 2016/09/23)

The play consisted of at least two roles: The driver, who was always Erkka, and later also Mikko, and the traffic lights. Erkka was leading the play judging from that he started it, he was the only one staying in it the entire time, and he asked other children to be the traffic lights for him. Erkka included other children in the play only to a marginal role, thus partially excluding them.

There are at least five reasons, which indicate that the traffic light role did not allow full participation in the play, and that this role was an undesirable one: First, the play director, Erkka, never was the traffic lights himself. Second, nobody asked to be in this role but was only assigned to it. Third, nobody stayed in this role for a long time, but the role changed five times in total within a short period of time. Fourth, the person being the traffic lights was many times guided by Erkka on what to do, and corrected, if they did something 'wrong.' For instance, Erkka told Milja to change the lights to be pedestrian lights, and corrected Noel when he raised a 'wrong' shovel. Lastly, being traffic lights was mostly about standing in one place. During outside times, most children seemed to enjoy the freedom of being able to change their playing spot multiple times.

Because the play happened outside, where children could usually change their playing spot freely, children could 'escape' the traffic light role relatively easily. Children could leave the role and go play something else so effortlessly, that I have not even documented how it happened exactly – except in my case, where I just left the shovels on the ground and went elsewhere. I assume Milja, Noel, Mikko, and Ninni did the same. Inside, leaving one playing spot would not have been as easy because of more limited spaces and greater educator control.

An important part of the physical space in this excerpt 3 is the sandbox truck that Erkka pushed. There was only a limited number of these bigger sandbox cars, and usually some of the daycare center's older boys pushed them around during outside times. These cars were desired especially among certain boys from Lakat group, the oldest group of this daycare center. Children can often perceive "being older" as being better than being young (Konstantoni, 2010, p. 146), and I assume this was what Erkka thought also. Fortunately, for Erkka, during this outside time he was outside only with his own group and could therefore use one of the big sand box cars. My interpretation is that by having the car and partly mimicking what the older boys usually did with them, he gained more 'power' both in the eyes of others and in his own. This perhaps caused him to place his peers more easily in inferior roles in his play.

It seems that there were both an age and a gender dimension related to the big sandbox cars. The children who used them were usually older boys, at least in my observations. I suppose that many children interpreted that they were only in the use of these certain older boys who 'drove' them fast around the whole yard, 'showing them and themselves off.' Other children might have wanted to play with these cars as well, but it seemed that they were not accessible to them. A few times some boys would argue about the cars, and sometimes boys could already inside discuss with each other's and/or with the educators about who could use them. In addition, pushcarts, which Mikko pushed at the end of the excerpt, were sometimes argued over. The pushcarts were similar to the trucks because children could use them the same way.

Mikko was the only child who also became a driver with Erkka in this play after the traffic light role. This was possible for him, because he seemed to have a closer relationship with Erkka compared to the other children. Already before Mikko had gotten outside, Erkka had expressed that he wanted to play with him. In addition, Mikko was also an older boy among the children outside at the time, which possibly enabled him to also perceive himself as entitled to 'drive' instead of just pretending to be traffic lights. Mikko also actively got rid of the traffic lights by offering the role to me. By persuasively giving the traffic lights shovels to an adult, although a distant one without much authority, I think Mikko quite powerfully indicated his superiority over most of the children in the yard who did not dare to do the same.

Regarding excerpt 3, I interpreted that boys' and older children's more powerful position over girls and younger children encouraged Erkka to partially exclude his peers from his play. Erkka claimed this powerful role by acquiring the car and mimicking older boys' activities with them, which was possible to do now that no older boys than him were in the yard. Erkka wanted others to enrich his game, but did not want them to influence the play's direction too much, if at all. The social network, children's social relationships in the group, enabled Mikko to 'rise' from the traffic lights role to a driver just like Mikko. I

suspect that other children did not have this possibility because of their 'lower' status in the group and their weaker relationship to Erkkka.

Exclusion planning/exclusion in speech. Sometimes, exclusionary behavior could occur without actual, concrete exclusion of anyone. Peer exclusion could occur only at the level of speech. Fanger et al. (2012, p. 235) wrote that planning exclusion occurred when "children talked about excluding someone in the future or verbally conveyed that they were not going to include an absent peer in their play." Exclusion planning could thus occur without the verbally excluded peer actually experiencing any exclusion - although they might experience it in the future, if the excluders' plans would actualize. This act of peer exclusion cannot really be placed on the continuum of social participation (figure 3) because nobody really gets socially excluded nor included at the moment this act of exclusion occurs. In the future after this action, however, a child might be excluded for instance directly, indirectly, by ignoring, or partially.

I did not observe much of this kind of exclusionary behavior, probably because children knew educators did not perceive this kind of behavior as favorable. Nevertheless, the following excerpt 4 presents Ninni and Säde playing together with toy cars and talking about not playing with Aino and Roosa, who were not at the daycare center at the time. The children were all from the Puolukat-group. Typically, Ninni and Aino seemed to often play together and appeared as best friends, and the same applied to Säde and Roosa.

A few children have just entered the room with EDUCATOR 4. They have some time before the morning circle begins, and they start playing. More children enter the room little by little, and they also start playing freely. Ninni and Säde are on the floor, both with little cars on their hands. They start talking to each other:

Ninni [to Säde]: *"Aino is not coming today 'cause she has a day off. So we can play."*

Säde: *"Yeah!"*

The two of them start rolling the cars on the floor. Other children in the room at the moment are Erkkka and Mikko, who are playing together, Elmo and Viivi, who are also playing together, and Tatu, who seems to be playing by himself. Soon, Ninni and Säde continue their discussion:

Ninni: *"We're playing speeding"*

Säde: *"We're playing speeding... Yes, we're playing with Ninni."*

Ninni: *"Yes, we're playing with Säde."*

Ninni and Säde are 'driving' the cars and making ambulance sounds. Erkkka and Mikko come close to them with their cars. The four of them interact for a moment with their cars, and then part.

Säde [to Ninni]: *"This one is speeding, Ninni."*

Ninni and Säde roll their cars back and forward at the same spot very fast. Tatu is also 'driving' with toy cars close by but is not talking with anyone. Soon EDUCATOR 4 tells the children to clean up, as it is time to begin the morning circle. Children start cleaning

up and EDUCATOR 4 and EDUCATOR 5 discuss something about what they are going to do today. Säde and Ninni are facing each other and hold each other's hands. Now they are talking about Roosa, who is not yet at the daycare center [but will arrive later that day]. I hear them saying "*she will not come to our play.*"
(EXCERPT 4. *Written notes on 2016/09/23*)

In the excerpt 4, Ninni and Säde first excluded Aino, and then Roosa, in their speech. Ninni initiated the interaction with Roosa by pointing out that Aino had a "day off," so now the two of them could play together. This verbalization was perhaps not really a very clear exclusion but more of a statement. This statement worked as an explanation to why Ninni asked, or almost demanded, Säde – and not Aino, with whom she usually played with – to play with her.

A much clearer peer exclusion planning occurred at the end of the excerpt, when Ninni and Säde specifically discussed about not letting Roosa to take part in their play later. Unfortunately, I have not observed whether this planned exclusion happened in reality or not.

Ninni and Säde seemed to be building and/or strengthening their relationship partly based on the verbal exclusion of their assumedly more preferred friends, Aino and Roosa. In fact, their actual physical absence from the room initially enabled this situation to occur. Ninni and Säde did not often play together, and because the situation was new to both of them, they called each other by their name often, as if they were getting used to them. Especially Säde, who was perhaps a little more reserved than Ninni on new situations, said Ninni's name often. At the end of the excerpt, the duo was holding hands while planning Roosa's exclusion. From this physical connection and planning of playing together again, it could be interpreted that a new friendship was formed or an old one strengthened.

The absence of Aino and Roosa enabled Ninni and Säde to play together, but also the social space, children's peer network, probably encouraged this. Ninni could have asked any other child in the room to play with her, but the children's positions in the peer network probably led her to choose Säde as a playmate. The peer network potentially also led one child in the room, Tatu, to play by himself, although it can be that he wanted to socially withdraw and play

alone this time. Nevertheless, the entire peer network was in action in this room even when not all of its members were present.

This free play time in excerpt 4 was a lot different compared to those in excerpts 1–3. Although children could play relatively freely with the materials and other children in the room, this time was not a free play time ‘per se.’ It was more just an ‘in-between’ moment while waiting for all the children to finish breakfast so that the morning circle could start. If it would have been a ‘proper’ free play time, children would have had more time to play, they would not all have been playing in the same room, educators might have had a greater effect on playmates, and there might have been a greater selection on playing materials. This kind of in-between free play time thus allowed children more release from educator control in a small space without much play materials. These factors combined encouraged children to interact together, which created possibilities for inclusions and exclusions in and from these social interaction situations. The playing duos, and Tatu playing alone, were quickly created. Ninni and Säde were both lacking their usual friends, but the situation at hand encouraged Ninni to find a playmate from Säde.

Summary of chapter 3.1. The above excerpts 1–4 from the research data along with my explanations displayed different ways children excluded each other. The children used both direct and indirect ways of exclusion, and sometimes exclusion was only partial or existed only in speech, without actual physical exclusion of individuals at that moment. These peer exclusions typically led children to not socially participate in the social activity/play at all, or to participate in it only minimally, thus to experience social exclusion from peer interaction (see figure 3 exhibiting the continuum of social participation).

Most children, however, experienced this kind of social exclusion only momentarily and not very intensively. For most children, being excluded by some peers did not lead them to spend significant amounts of time alone. Instead, they would find company elsewhere if that was what they wanted. The so-called ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ statuses were thus flexible and depended on each

situation. In addition, many children who were 'victims' of these peer exclusion attempts resisted them, sometimes successfully.

Exclusionary behavior organized peer relations at the daycare center: By excluding peers, children showed whom they preferred to play with and whom they considered as their friends. Children's friendships, which should be supported, are partly build on exclusion of others. Peer exclusion and its probable consequence of momentary experience of social exclusion from peer interaction are thus presumably unavoidable in the everyday life of daycare centers.

Nevertheless, sometimes these exclusions can be unfair and even discriminatory, and those exclusions should be prevented. By exploring the context where social exclusion occurs one can disclose factors affecting it. The physical, social, and cultural space – that educators in many ways create – influences social exclusion significantly. Spaces indoors and outdoors offered different possibilities for children's free play: Inside, free play was more structured by educators by for instance a play choosing board, whereas outside children could organize their plays and the participants in them more freely. These both contributed to the manifestations of social exclusion. The different times that children spent at the daycare center affected the social relationships of the children, possibly making it harder for children spending little time at the center to create close relationships with others, and thus making them more vulnerable to experience social exclusion. Social and cultural beliefs and 'rules' considering children's behavior at the daycare center – for instance the visible view that everyone should be friends with everyone, and a more invisible assumption about how boys and girls were supposed to behave – seemed to encourage children to exclude each other from certain social activities.

Although most children usually found playmates when they wanted to, some children usually solely played alone. I will discuss this phenomenon next.

3.2 Social Exclusion from Peer Interaction as Persistent and 'More' Intensive to Some Children

Some children spent significantly more time by themselves than others. Being alone during free play times seemed typical to them. This impression was clear despite of my short observation period. It was hard to grasp how these children ended up alone in each situation. It just seemed to be the state of affairs with some children to not play with other children, and this appeared to be rarely actively questioned either by educators nor other children. Oftentimes it seemed that these children preferred to play by themselves, or alternatively sought attention from educators rather than their peers. It also seemed that there were more boys than girls in this group of children who spent most of the free play times alone. It might also be that I just paid more attention to boys than to girls.

In this chapter 3.2, I discuss *how social exclusion from peer interaction and relationships appeared as persistent and more intensive to some children* compared to the majority of the children. I do this with two excerpts from the research data. The first excerpt is about Reko and the second about Aimo, who were both children from Lakat-group. They both were by themselves almost always during free play times and therefore grasped my attention during the fieldwork. Both excerpts exhibit a typical situation of both children's free play times on a usual day.

Reko. Reko was one of the children for whom playing alone was more of a rule than an exception. If educators did not intervene much on children's play during free play times, he would usually play alone, both outside and inside. Only a few times I observed him for instance playing a board game with an educator and some other children.

On my data, I have numerous short mentions of Reko doing something alone. Outside, Reko typically played with cars in a sandbox, swiped the terrace, or raked leaves. Inside, he usually built towers from blocks or played with a parking garage. He often placed his toy at the center of the room where most children were playing, but did not interact with others. This might have been

either because there was no room to place his play anywhere else, or because he wanted it to be exactly there, at the center of everyone. Perhaps the closeness of others made him feel like he was part of the group.

In the following excerpt, Reko is playing inside in this room with a parking garage, as usual. He is playing by himself, but other children show interest towards him and/or what he is doing as well.

Children mostly from Lakat-group are playing in a room after nap time. Children come to the room little by little, get dressed and choose their activity freely. EDUCATOR 6 is in the room and advises children on choosing an activity when needed.

Reko is playing on the floor at the center of the room with a parking garage and a little car. He is kneeling, looking at the parking garage very closely and lifting a car elevator up and down. Sometimes he raises his head up and seems to look at what others are doing.

Olli sits on a chair close to Reko and looks around. Then he moves on the floor, close to Reko, and looks at what he is doing. [My recording doesn't show how Reko reacts to this very well, but it seems that he does not mind this and keeps playing with the cars and parking garage the same way he played with them before]. Olli sits by Reko for a while, looking at what he is doing and also looking around at what others are doing. He seems to be interested in Reko's play as he looks at it intensively and even moves the cars sometimes [my recording does not show this very clearly either]. After approximately two minutes, Olli stands up again and leaves Reko on the floor with the parking garage.

Reko is still playing with the parking garage and cars by himself at the same spot. Nestori comes on the floor, looks at Reko, and quickly moves himself right next to him and starts touching the cars in the parking garage. Reko immediately pulls the parking garage further away from Nestori. Nestori looks at Reko and tells him "*I want to play too.*" Reko looks back at Nestori, but does not say anything. He pushes the parking garage to another direction, and Nestori follows, crawling on all fours after the parking garage. Reko turns the parking garage in a way that his own body comes between Nestori and the garage, and pushes the garage away from him. Reko stops and looks behind, noticing that Nestori gave up and is not there anymore. He looks back again, and then continues playing. It looks like he enjoys his play as he seems to concentrate in it very well.
(EXCERPT 5. Video recordings on 2016/09/06)

It can be interpreted that at least two children tried to join Reko's play, but without success. First, Olli came close to Reko and showed interest in his play by staying close to him and looking at his actions. Reko did not seem to respond to Olli's interest. It might be that he maybe did not notice or understand his assumed interest in joining him, as Olli did not indicate this very clearly. He did not for instance say anything to Reko, nor seemed to manage to make an eye contact with him. It might also be that Reko did not want Olli to join him. One could argue that Reko was using a social withdrawal strategy of acting distant (Skånfors et al., 2009, p. 100).

The second joining-in attempt was made by Nestori, a younger boy from the Puolukat group instead of Lakat, to which Reko and Olli belonged to. Nestori

showed his interest more clearly and straightforwardly than Olli: First, Nestori just started touching the cars in Reko's play. Reko noticed this immediately and reacted to it by withdrawing from Nestori with his parking garage. After this, Nestori looked at Reko and said that he wanted to play with the parking garage as well. Reko responded to this by still moving the parking garage further away from Nestori and turning his back at him. Nestori followed him for a moment, but then gave up and went elsewhere. From Skånfors et al.'s (2009, p. 101) social withdrawal strategies, hiding seems closest to describe Reko's behavior here. Although Reko was not really in any hiding place but quite visibly at the center of the room, because the room did not really offer any hiding places, Reko 'scaring' Nestori away fits to this category's description.

It might be that Reko interpreted that Nestori was trying to steal his parking garage instead of wanting to share it in mutual play. At first, Nestori tried to join the play without asking, and next he just told that he also wanted to play, still without really asking whether that was possible. His play entry attempts might have been too aggressive for Reko. Perhaps Reko also did not want Nestori to join him. This could have been because Reko did not know Nestori well, because he was younger and from another group, or because he thought he would not know how to play his play properly and would therefore rather keep the play to himself.

On the grounds of Reko's actions, it seems clear that he wanted to play by himself. Two children appeared to want to play with him, but Reko seemed to self-exclude, socially withdraw, himself from them. As Reko actively rejected his peers from joining him, his behavior could be interpreted as socially avoidant (Asendorpf, 1990, according to Coplan et al., 2014, p. 230).

It is difficult to pinpoint what contextual factors led to Reko's social exclusion in this situation, and more generally in many other situations. In many ways, this situation was similar to that in excerpt 4, where children could relatively freely choose what they did and with whom in a small room. In these kinds of situations, children's peer network 'activates' when children make these playing mate decisions based on their peer preferences. It seems that Reko was

not a very popular child as he was playing alone so often. This was not because he spent little time at the daycare center nor because other children did not want to play with him, as this excerpt 5 suggests. I interpret that Reko lacked skills and/or will to play with others, and other children also did not know how to include Reko in their play or to get included in Reko's solitary plays.

Aimo. Another child who spent most of his time alone during free play times at the daycare center during my observation times was Aimo. Compared to Reko, Aimo was more mobile during free play times. Whereas Reko typically stayed at one place for long periods of time, Aimo would often move from place to place. Inside, Aimo usually played with cars or read books in the small room where most children, including Reko, typically played. He often held a car in his hand and 'drove' with it around the room, close to the walls. If he read books, he usually changed them often. Aimo thus seemed to perhaps also use the social withdrawal strategies of acting distant and hiding just like Reko, but also the strategy of reading books (Skånfors et al., 2009, pp. 100–101).

The following excerpt 6 shows how Aimo spent one afternoon outside time without much interaction with any of his peers. Instead, Aimo seemed to show a lot of interest towards the educators.

Children from all groups are playing outside in the afternoon, waiting for pick up. I decide to observe how Aimo is spending his time outside.

Aimo walks to a sandbox and walks along its side. Then he moves to the terrace, and back to the sandbox again, and sits there for a while. Then he moves on and talks to EDUCATOR [whose name I do not remember as she works in another child group] for a while.

Now Aimo is holding a small car. He walks and looks around. He climbs up the slide tower a bit and then climbs back down. He grabs a rake and carries it. Then he takes a Frisbee. He looks at Robin, who is close by. Robin points Aimo with a sand shovel and yells "Aa aa!" which causes Aimo to rear back, raise the Frisbee in front of himself as a 'shield' and say "Don't, don't." Robin goes elsewhere.

Aimo throws his Frisbee up. Then he takes it back to a toy box and takes a shovel from there. He walks along the sandbox, and then on the terrace. He goes to another toy box, and takes a Frisbee from there. He goes to a terrace again and talks to the same EDUCATOR he talked to before. A boy [younger than Aimo, from another group, whose name I do not remember] points at Aimo with a shovel, and Aimo again 'protects' himself with a Frisbee. Then Aimo puts his Frisbee back in the toy box.

Aimo takes a shovel on his hand and sits under the slide tower. Then he leaves the shovel on the ground and climbs up to the tower. He lies on top of the tower for a moment. Then he stands up, slides the slide, and moves to the terrace.

[Nestori comes talking to me and I chat with him for some time].

Aimo goes to the sandbox and starts digging the sand there. He is sitting and digging with a big sand shovel. Then he gets up, goes to a toy box, and takes a star shaped mold from there. He does something with the shovel and the mold for a moment. Then he goes to the toy box again and takes a smaller shovel. Then he suddenly leaves his things out of his hands and climbs up the tower for a bit, but then comes back down right away. He goes back in the sandbox and feels the sand with his hands. Then he starts digging the sand with two shovels in the sandbox under the slide tower.

Aimo looks at EDUCATOR 4 and EDUCATOR 5 who are talking on the terrace. Aimo goes to EDUCATOR 5 and touches his leg with a Frisbee. EDUCATOR 5 does not seem to respond to this. Aimo looks at EDUCATOR 5, EDUCATOR 4, and EDUCATOR 6 [who came there as well], but then walks away from them. Soon he comes back close to them, carrying two shovels and a Frisbee. He walks back under the tower and looks at the educators from there. Then he leaves his things on the ground again, and goes up and back down the slide tower ladder. He takes the shovels, goes to another sandbox, and starts digging there. He looks around often. Then he goes to the terrace, stands there, and looks at adults. Then he goes under the tower again and holds his hand by his ear.

[I observe some other children for some time].

Aimo is sitting on the terrace, then walking, and holding his hand by his ear. He goes to another sandbox and then returns. He walks close to the adults. I realize that he is pretending to be talking on a phone and saying things like "Yes, alright." He walks around the yard and sometimes sits down and lies down for a while. All the time he is talking on his phone, sometimes I hear real words and sometimes gibberish such as "zz zz" or "vaak vaak." He talks shortly something with NILO, and then grabs a broom that Reko had left lying on the ground.

[Anu and Tatu come to talk with me for a while]

Aimo is babbling gibberish to his rock 'phone' and walking with a broom on a terrace. He steps on the broom for a while and balances on it. Then he continues walking and talking on his 'phone.' He sometimes shakes his head while talking, and also sits down on various places. Soon, he walks past me and I start a short conversation with him:

Me: "What do you have there?"

Aimo: "A broom."

Me: "What do you have there on your other hand?"

Aimo: "It's a rock. Here in my play it's a phone."

Me: "Are you talking with someone? Is there someone on the phone?"

Aimo: "Pretty often I am a cleaner and somebody calls me on that."

Aimo walks further away. Soon he comes close to me again and steps on his broom and balances on it again. Then he continues walking, sits by the sandbox, and lies on the terrace on his back while still talking on his rock phone.

(EXCERPT 6. Written notes on 2016/09/15)

During this outside free play time, Aimo seemed to be searching for an enjoyable activity: He changed his spot rapidly, and tried different toys such as shovels, Frisbees, toy cars, and a rake. It appears that he was more interested in objects than other children. However, Aimo did seem to try to seek company from the educators in the yard. He chatted three times with two of them, and also attempted to get attention from EDUCATOR 5 by touching his leg. Sometimes it looked like he was looking at the educators from afar.

Although Aimo did not seem to actively look for company from his peers, other children initiated contact with him at least two times. Both times, Aimo was pointed at with a shovel, and both times Aimo 'protected' himself from these

'attacks' with a Frisbee that he was already holding. The interactions between Aimo and those peers did not continue from these incidents, but the children let each other be. These contact efforts could be interpreted as invitations to play, to which Aimo did not respond in a way that Robin and the other boy wanted, as the play with them did not continue.

Robin and the other child's actions could also be interpreted as some kind of 'threats,' and not as play invitations. The pointing with shovels was usually an activity that only boys took part in, and it was often a part of the 'cops and robbers' game, where the robbers were not always voluntarily chosen (see also excerpt 1 where Robin called another child a robber). Therefore, the pointing might have been a way to show where Aimo's 'place' in the peer 'hierarchy' was: 'Below' the pointer, just like robbers are subordinated to police officers.

The interpretation that the two children's shovel pointing incidents were rather threats than play invitations gets support from Aimo's reaction to them: Aimo raised a 'shield' in front of himself, stepped back, looked scared, and said "don't, don't" when Robin pointed at him. Aimo thus seemed to have been a little scared of the incidents.

Aimo, like Reko in excerpt 5, socially withdrew from his peers' possible interaction attempts. Unlike in Reko's situation, here in excerpt 6 the children possibly tried to invite Aimo in their play, whereas children tried to join in Reko's play in excerpt 5. However, in both situations Reko and Aimo actively rejected their peers, so Aimo's behavior here could, similarly to Reko, be interpreted as socially avoidant (Asendorpf, 1990, according to Coplan et al., 2014, p. 230).

By the end of the excerpt 6, Aimo found an activity in which he stayed for a longer time: Pretending to be a cleaner who talks on a phone and swipes with a broom. The long time that he stayed in this activity suggests that he enjoyed doing this. Alternatively, it could be interpreted that he only chose this activity because no other people, peers or adults, seemed to have anything else to offer him that he would like to access or could achieve an access into. Staying 'busy' like this also could have been another strategy to "make oneself inaccessible" in order to avoid peers (see Skånfors et al., 2009, p 100).

The events in excerpt 6 took place outside in the daycare center yard in a similar afternoon free play time situation as in excerpt 2. Children could play whatever they wanted with whoever they wanted without much educator influence. The educators were mostly busy on talking with children's guardians about how children's days went as they were picking up their children. They also discussed with each other, and with the children if they had something to share that was considered important. Aimo wanted to interact with the educators, but they did not have much time or will for that during these occasions. During morning outside times, they sometimes played with children, but in the afternoons, this was rarer. Therefore, educators could not spend time with Aimo nor other children. Aimo usually played alone during free play times, but he had also played with other children when an educator was with them. For instance, I have notes on Aimo, Anu and an educator playing with a ball on 2016/09/16.

Aimo was at the daycare center only every other week, which potentially made it more difficult for him to build social relationships with other children (similarly to Vilma and Elina in excerpt 2). However, I also interpret that Aimo did not fit into the idea of what boys were supposed to be and act like in the daycare center, and perhaps partly because of that he was often alone. This "idealized form of masculinity in any given time and geographic location" is often called hegemonic masculinity (Miehls, 2017, p. 57). For instance, Konstantoni (2010, p. 173) has found these 'hegemonic' (= 'bad/rough' boys) and also 'non-hegemonic' (= 'soft' boys) masculinities from the daycare center groups that they observed. Aimo, and also Reko, mostly seemed to perform non-hegemonic masculinity, to which Konstantoni (2010, p. 173) associated for instance softness, quietness, interest in more 'mature' company, close relationships with girls, not too 'rough' playing styles, and academic knowledge. The majority of the boys in the daycare center seemed to perform more hegemonic masculinity, meaning for instance that they were loud, 'naughty,' and showed physical strength (Konstantoni, 2010, p. 173). I perceive for instance the 'cops and robbers' game to be a manifestation of hegemonic masculinity, to which neither Reko nor Aimo took part in.

Therefore, it can be interpreted that Aimo and Reko experienced persistent social exclusion from social interaction partly because of not performing the 'right' kind of masculinity at the daycare center. The social and cultural space at the daycare center seemed to contain notions of the correct kind of behavior for boys and girls, which Aimo and Reko did not typically meet. These notions also included the idea that girls should play with each other and boys with each other, as I explained in relation to the excerpt 1 as well. This gender segregation led the small group of boys, who did not fit into hegemonic masculinity, alone.

I never saw Aimo and Reko playing together, although they were in the same group and I could notice some similarities between them, like the avoidance of 'rough' plays. This could be because they either preferred solitary play, and/or because they were lacking the skills to play together and/or they did not dare to initiate a play together. Reko, at least, seemed to talk very little and I could describe him as shy. Doey, Coplan, and Kingsbury (2014, p. 258) found in their literature review considering childhood shyness and gender, that many studies have found that shyness is "more strongly associated with peer exclusion and rejection among boys than girls."

Language plays a great role in children's play. I do not know much about Aimo and Reko's language abilities in addition to Reko's quietness, but some studies have found that these verbal skills might influence social exclusion especially among boys. Van der Wilt et al. (2015, p. 7) found no relationship between children's oral communicative competence and peer rejection, but they did find that there existed a high relationship between oral communicative competence and peer acceptance in the case of boys, but not in the case of girls. Similarly, Braza et al. (2009, p. 711) found that verbal ability was "a relevant predictor for peer acceptance only for boys." Reko only spoke very little at the daycare center, and Aimo also possibly lacked behind in some of these skills compared to his peers. These might be relevant factors regarding their social exclusion, but this is only a cautious guess.

Summary of chapter 3.2. These excerpts showed how some children at the daycare center typically stayed by themselves during free play times. Possible play invitations, usually initiated by other children, did not result in joint play. It cannot be said with full certainty whether these children played alone because that was what they preferred, because they had earlier bad experiences from peer interaction (rejection, for instance), because they did not know how to successfully join others' play, or because of all of the above or some other reason(s). Nevertheless, it seemed that these children actively socially withdrew from social interaction with their peers. In fact, they even seemed to enjoy their plays, judging from their often intensive concentration in them. Of course, children should be allowed to sometimes play alone if they want to, but when this solitary play is constant, educators should intervene. Persistent social exclusion does not allow developing unnecessary social skills, and can have severe ramifications (Harrist & Bradley, 2003, p. 186).

I made some interpretations about how the children considered here, Reko and Aimo, might have ended up alone in the given excerpts 5-6 and more generally. I do not want to claim that their social exclusion from peer interaction and relationships was in any way these children's 'fault,' but rather that this was a reciprocal interactional phenomenon, to which contextual factors also contributed.

As I also explained in chapter 3.1, the entire daycare center space affects the occurrence of social exclusion. This is true also for these children who experienced it more in frequency and intensity. Generally, free play times especially outside were the times when the educators 'controlled' the children the least. Thus, the social interaction among children occurred without much educators' intervention in the so-called children's field (Vuorisalo, 2013, p. 177). There, children's social networks affected play mate decisions, easily leaving the most unpopular children out from plays. Children, who spent little time at the daycare center and therefore had fewer chances to create relationships with other children, assumedly were more vulnerable to experience social exclusion (e.g. Aimo).

Especially boys like Reko and Aimo, who appeared to perform more non-hegemonic masculinity unlike most boys, appeared to be vulnerable to encounter persistent social exclusion from peer interaction. It seems that socio-cultural rules of 'correct behavior' for boys' and girls' still influence children's behavior, especially for boys. This can lead boys, who perform their gender 'wrong,' outside of peer interaction and relationships.

It can, of course, be that Reko and Aimo lacked some skills that are necessary for successful play with peers. I have not measured these in any way. Nevertheless, it should be the educators' responsibility to ensure with their pedagogical solutions that all children can sometimes be socially included in collective plays (Opetushallitus, 2016, p. 39). Social exclusion is a phenomenon occurring due to children's interactions and is thus an interactional phenomenon. No child can individually change their positioning inside or outside of social interaction, because the entire daycare center space with its social networks and socio-cultural rules influences it.

4 DISCUSSION

<i>How does social exclusion occur in children's peer interactions and relationships in a daycare center?</i>	
Social exclusion from peer interaction and relationship was encountered...	
...only momentarily and not very intensively by most children . - appeared to result mostly from peer exclusion	...quite persistently and 'more' intensively by some children . - appeared to result mostly from social withdrawal
(Some) contextual factors in the daycare center space influencing social exclusion (always interpreted individually by each child):	
Physical space: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indoors: Limited spaces and greater educator control over children compared to outdoor free play times - Outdoors: More space and less educator control over children compared to indoor free play times 	Socio-cultural space: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An explicit rule of 'everyone should play with everyone' - Implicit rules of how boys and girls should behave - Children's social relationships

TABLE 1. Findings of the study – answers to the research question.

The main findings of this study are listed above on table 1. The purpose of the study was to find out how social exclusion from peer interaction and relationships occurred among children in one daycare center. I found out that children encountered this phenomenon differently: Most children seemed to

encounter it only momentarily and not very intensively, whereas some children appeared to encounter it much more often and more intensively compared to the other children. However, it should be noted that I do not know how the children in this study *experienced* their exclusions. I considered social exclusion from peer interaction in this study more as an observable *phenomenon* rather than an experience that children underwent, although social exclusion can also be discussed as an experience (see figure 4). In addition, this division between ‘two groups’ of children is very reductive and only an impression that I got from the field. I have not grouped each participant child in one group or the other.

Children, who usually only encountered social exclusion from peer interaction and relationships not very intensively and only momentarily, usually confronted it due to observable peer exclusions. I observed children excluding each other in five different ways that had also been observed by Fanger et al. (2012, p. 233): Direct exclusion, indirect exclusion, ignoring, partial exclusion, and planning exclusion. My data did not contain very many of these exclusion events, and therefore I cannot say whether any way was more common than others – I can only say that peer exclusion in all these forms occurred at this daycare center, sometimes leading to social exclusion. However, many of the ‘victims’ of these exclusion attempts did not ‘surrender’ right away but ‘fought back,’ as for instance Satu and Vilma did in excerpts 1 and 2. This group of children seemed to get playmates by being active in making play initiations and/or not accepting being excluded right away. It appeared that for this reason, they did not seem to encounter social exclusion from peer interaction and relationships very intensively nor frequently.

Children, who encountered social exclusion from peer interaction and relationships persistently and intensively, appeared to socially withdraw from peer interaction. They did this by utilizing similar strategies observed by Skånfors et al. (2009, p. 100–105): Acting distant, reading books, and hiding. They seemed to be socially avoidant, which means they often appeared to actively avoid social interaction with peers (Asendorpf, 1990, according to Coplan et al., 2014, p. 230), as the excerpts 5 and 6 showed. However, I do not want to give

them this label, or any other label either, because behavior should always be contextualized. For instance, their avoidant actions could have been only due to disinterest in current activities, and if a very “attractive invitation” for social engagement would have appeared, perhaps they would have accepted it (Coplan & Armer, 2007, p. 28). In addition, I do not know the histories and backgrounds of these children as members of their peer group, and knowing them could explain a lot of their avoidant behavior (see Coplan et al., 2014, p. 236). Nevertheless, the actions of this group of children differed from most children in a way that they did not appear to seek company from other children as actively, if at all, which led them to encounter social exclusion from their peers. However, they did sometimes play with other children if educators had initiated that and also participated in that play. There seemed to be a little more boys than girls in this small group of children, but this is only my perception of the matter.

Again, these categorizations of children and of the ways they encountered social exclusion from peer interaction are very reductive, and they are not based on definite quantitative observations. The reality surely is much more complex than these categories illustrate. Social exclusion can manifest itself to different children very differently in different situations. Indeed, contextual factors, the entire relational space (Vuorisalo et al., 2015, p. 68) in the daycare center, influenced the exclusions occurring there.

The spaces inside differed a lot from outside spaces especially when free play times were concerned, as they were in this study. Inside, there were only a limited amount of rooms where children could play. Probably partly because of the lack of physical space, educators controlled the ‘freedom’ of children’s play more than outside. They did this by for instance limiting the number of children who could play in one playing spot and by advising them to stay in one play instead of changing their spot too often. These arrangements inside made it more difficult, at least in some ways, for children to exclude their peers or to socially withdraw from them: Other children were always near, and one could not always completely determine who to play with.

Nevertheless, children did exclude each other and themselves inside by using the aforementioned strategies. I even observed some very straightforward peer exclusions, like in excerpt 1, and social withdrawals, like in excerpt 5. Perhaps the inside spaces 'forced' children to be very direct if they really wanted to exclude someone, because they could not just be subtle and 'walk away.' Then again, the educators supervised children slightly more inside than outside, which might have discouraged the most unfair exclusions from occurring. For instance, I did not observe any physically violent ways of exclusion. Nevertheless, the children were able to execute unfair exclusions inside without educators preventing them. It is possible that the physical closeness of children to each other inside induced the educators to think that everyone was playing together, which appeared to be desirable.

During free play times outside, children seemed to be the freest from educators' supervision. They could choose what they played and who they played with rather freely. They could often play with children from other groups, too. They could also change their playing spot easily, because they were able to be much more mobile outdoors than indoors. Due to the lack of educator control, children were acting even more only in the children's field (Vuorisalo, 2013, p. 177) outside compared to inside. Therefore, the importance of who was friends with whom was emphasized during outside free play times, leaving the children with weaker relationships to their peers socially excluded more easily. This may have caused children, who spent the least time at the daycare center, more vulnerable to encounter social exclusion compared to others, because they had less time to build relationships with others at the center. However, free play times in general, and especially outside, were in fact these times during which children could create and strengthen (and terminate and weaken) their relationships with each other. This was partly done via excluding others, as in excerpts 2 and 4. (See also Karrebæk, 2011, p. 2913.)

There were also factors in the socio-cultural space of the daycare center that I suspected to have influenced many social exclusion situations there. Firstly, there was a clear expectation that children should not leave anybody out but

'everyone should play together.' This was also often verbalized to children, like in excerpt 1. It was therefore a well-known rule, and according to Killen and Rutland (2011, p. 2), similar expectations are common in daycare centers. Nevertheless, children did not always follow this rule – perhaps because of its relatively unclear meaning: It is admittedly impossible that everyone could constantly play with everyone. Everyone cannot be included in everything, and social exclusion, to some extent, is an unavoidable part of social life (Killen, Rutland, & Jampol, 2009, p. 249). Perhaps educators in daycare centers should be more specific on rules regarding social exclusion, and not rely on nondescript phrases such as “everyone should play with everyone.” Especially girls seemed to trust in this rule and perhaps found it difficult to directly exclude anybody, even if they wanted to be with another friend alone for a change, like in excerpt 2. Educators should always consider exclusions within their context, and enable excluded individuals to get access to some other play, if the previous exclusion was justified. This justification of any exclusion can surely sometimes be difficult to evaluate. I do, of course, think that social inclusion rather than -exclusion should generally be encouraged at daycare centers, but each situation is different and should thus be considered individually, within its context.

A more invisible 'rule' or perhaps a “precondition” (Vuorisalo, 2013, p. 97) in the socio-cultural space of the daycare center consisted of correct behavior for boys and girls: Some plays and toys appeared to be more meant for boys and some for girls, and boys and girls mainly only played with children of their own gender. In addition, at least boys seemed to have to perform qualities of hegemonic masculinity in order to be included in other boys' plays. These gender-rules seemed to have influenced peer exclusions at least in excerpts 1 and 3, and the more persistent social exclusion of Reko and Aimo in excerpts 5 and 6. These gender expectations were not clearly verbalized neither from part of children nor educators, but they were nevertheless visible from the behavior of the research participants. Some might claim that these observed differences in behavior are innate to each sex or gender, but I support the perception of gender as a culturally and socially constructed dimension of difference (see e.g. Huuki,

2010, p. 19), and therefore believe that these behaviors were more learned than biologically determined. Studies have shown that children can start preferring their own gender already at the age of three (Martin & Rube, 2004, p. 68), and at the age of five gender segregation can already be very significant (Gasparini, Sette, Baumgartner, Martin, & Fabes, 2015, pp. 435–436). These preferences seemed to influence social exclusion in this study, although they were often not explicitly indicated. Konstantoni's (2010, p. 246) study has found that children can use gender as an explicit reason for exclusion as well. In this study, gendered exclusions seemed to appear more on the basis of gendered toys and play-spaces, like in excerpts 1 and 3. Similar findings have been made by for instance Ärlemalm-Hagsér (2010, p. 521) in outdoor play.

Children could either reinforce or dilute these rule-like aspects, or “implicit and explicit rules,” of the socio-cultural space of the daycare center, which influenced social exclusion. The same surely applies to educators, whose set rules children often follow but can nevertheless also alter (see Cobb-Moore et al., 2009, pp. 1477–1478.) I already discussed that educators should pay more attention to the rule of ‘everyone should play with everyone,’ and the same applies to implicit gender rules. It seems, that if no special attention is given to questioning outmoded gender rules, they can easily be renewed in everyday interactions despite of individual children attempting to break them. This potentially leaves children, who perform their gender in non-hegemonic ways, socially excluded. The new Finnish National Curriculum Guidelines on early childhood education and care (Opetushallitus, 2016, p. 30, translation mine), coming into effect in August 2017, will require educators to be “gender sensitive” and to encourage children to “make choices free from gender- or other kinds of person specific stereotypical roles or prejudices.” Moreover, learning environments should “enable children to break gender stereotypes” (Opetushallitus, 2016, p. 32, translation mine). This study suggests that practices at least in this daycare center will need to change in order to meet these new requirements.

In the Introduction on chapter 1.2, I explained that sometimes social exclusion can be a result of social aggression, bullying, or discrimination. I cannot

say with full certainty that any of the exclusion events in excerpts 1–6 were meant to harm anybody, so I should be cautious before claiming that they were socially aggressive (see Fanger et al. 2012, p. 225). In many ways, Reko and Aimo could be interpreted to have experienced bullying, because their social exclusion was recurring, it occurred on a group level, and there appeared to be a power-imbalance between them and other children (Kirves & Sajaniemi, 2012, pp. 384–385). However, most confidently, yet still cautiously, I would claim that Reko and Aimo encountered subtle discrimination at the daycare center for performing non-hegemonic masculinity. Many studies support this finding that “boys, whose actions do not fit in the idealized conception of masculinity within the culture,” are in danger to become positioned “in the periphery of the hierarchical boy culture” (Huuki, 2010, p. 33, translation mine). Moreover, exclusion has been recognized as a common form of discrimination in early childhood (Brown & Bigler, 2005, p. 534), and studies have proven that young children can discriminate based on numerous attributes (e.g. Konstantoni, 2010, pp. 245–256).

The children in this daycare center appeared to be very similar regarding for instance ethnicity and socio-economic class, which might be why gender seemed to be the most significant dimension of difference affecting social exclusion there. For instance Konstantoni (2010, pp. 234–244) has found that in a “mainly white nursery” segregation based on gender and also ethnicity was significant, but in a “multiethnic nursery” these categorizations were less rigid, but age and language could occasionally divide children. In this study, age also seemed to influence social exclusion in some instances, like in excerpt 3. Similar intersection of gender and age have been found by Hellman, Heikkilä, and Sundhall (2014, p. 339), whereas Lappalainen (2004, p. 143) has found that intersections of gender and nationality influenced boys’ exclusionary behavior in their study. My findings, and the findings of these studies, emphasize the need to study these issues from an intersectional perspective. Also for instance Alanen (2016, p. 159) has expressed a similar need for intersectional childhood studies.

This intersectional approach should also consider various ‘special needs.’ In special educational studies, social exclusion has been studied vastly, yet

indirectly, from the perspective of social inclusion and social participation. In chapter 1.1, I conceptualized how social exclusion, social inclusion, and social participation relate to each other and crafted a continuum of social participation depicting this (figure 3). I also utilized the literature study by Koster et al. (2009, p. 134) that identified key themes and their aspects central to social participation, and therefore also to social exclusion, in order to express the multiplicity of the phenomena, and to locate my study in this multiplicity: I only considered certain parts of social participation in this study, and these were presented in figure 2. Therefore, social exclusion in its entirety was not studied here, but this is left for other studies. Social exclusion should be researched at daycare centers with focus on other key themes of social participation as well, and extensive studies considering all the key themes and aspects would be especially welcome. These studies have been done to some extent (e.g. Viitala, 2014, pp. 90-95), but usually the focus has been only on certain children with special needs. As this study has showed, these issues can, and I think should, be studied also without focus on any specific children, as social exclusion can, and does, encounter all children to some extent. Again, intersectional approach to social exclusion, that considers all the possible dimensions of difference and their interconnectedness, could be beneficial.

This study could have benefited from deeper knowledge of the children. It would have been especially good to better get to know the children who seemed to encounter social exclusion from peer interaction and relationships persistently. This could have been done with better collaboration with the research participants, including both the children and the educators, and children's families. For instance, I have no knowledge of any possible special pedagogical arrangements that might have been agreed to be implemented for some children, nor about children's backgrounds that could possibly explain their behavior. In addition, I have assigned genders to children purely based on their appearance, although I do not think gender is that simple a matter. In this study, I could have been more respectful towards children and other research participants by allowing their voices to be heard more (see Paju et al., 2014, p. 32). This study

only provides a glance on some aspects of social exclusion from a limited perspective and in one context. Nevertheless, this glance is deep and provides good understanding of the importance of contextualizing social exclusion from peer interaction and -relationships among children in daycare centers.

I believe this study benefits researchers and educators interested in social exclusion and related phenomena. This study has indicated that by investigating individual events of exclusion ethnographically, the contextual factors affecting these situations can be revealed. The entire daycare center relational space influences the occurrence of social exclusion in the case of each child. Free play times are never completely 'free' (see Rutanen, 2009, pp. 224–226) but the physical spaces available, explicit and implicit 'rules,' and children's social networks, still provide a framework for children's actions, although children can also alter this. The framework can cause some children to encounter social exclusion significantly more than others. By being aware of the influence of contextual factors on social exclusion during free play times, educators can develop pedagogical solutions to prevent children from encountering harmful degrees of it.

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