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Children's bodily positioning in accounts of naptime in early childhood education and care: a Foucauldian perspective

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ABSTRACT



Naptime practices of early childhood education and care (ECEC) have been found to place children's bodies under adult governance, leaving children few possibilities for agency and influence (e.g. Kuukka 2015; Nothard et al. 2015). In this study, we explore children's (aged five to seven) accounts of naptime in ECEC, asking how children's bodily positioning is manifested in them. We analysed two data sets: (1) ethnographic conversations and interviews with children in ECEC, and (2) children's imaginative narratives on naptime in ECEC. The children's accounts manifested three bodily positionings: docile, demurring, and rebellious bodies. The findings indicate children have limited possibilities for agency and control over their bodies in this context, although, according to the UNCRC, they have a right to have an influence in matters affecting them (UNICEF 1989). The study highlights the significance of considering naptime anew from the perspective of diminishing adult governance of children's bodies in ECEC.

KEYWORDS

Bodily positioning; Children's agency; Early childhood education and care; Foucault; Governance; Naptime

Introduction

Internationally, early childhood education and care (ECEC) occupies a central role in the lives of many children below school age. The daily rhythm in ECEC is regulated, and many of the routines affect children's bodies on a daily basis (Kuukka 2015; Salonen et al. 2022). These routines, which both target a child's individual body and also call for a collective manner of bodily existence and behaviour, include naptime (Alasuutari 2015; Kuukka 2015; Nothard et al. 2015). Despite its role in ECEC, extant research has found mixed results related to daytime napping on children's sleep quality and thus, on their general wellbeing (Staton, Smith, and Thorpe 2015). From the perspective of children's agency in their everyday lives, naptime in ECEC has been found to be under adult control, leaving children without the possibility of influencing whether they sleep or not (Gehret et al. 2021; Nothard et al. 2015; Staton, Smith, and Thorpe 2015). Naptime practices also place children's bodies strongly under the governance of

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the ECEC institution (Kuukka 2015). However, children's own accounts of naptime in ECEC have rarely been studied from the bodily perspective.

Therefore, this study explores how children themselves discuss naptime in ECEC. We ask how children's bodily positioning – either real or imaginary – is manifested in their accounts of ECEC naptime. The data are drawn from two research projects in Finland. The first embodies ethnographic conversations and interviews with 20 children in ECEC, and the second involves nine children's imaginative narratives on naptime in ECEC.

Naptime in ECEC as a contested institutional practice

ECEC naptime is an institutional practice regulated by diverse rules, norms, and bodily dimensions (Alasuutari 2015; Kuukka 2015; Nothard et al. 2015). In Finland, the National Core Curriculum for ECEC (Finnish National Agency for Education [EDUFI] 2022) highlights rest as an essential part of the child's day and pedagogical work, as an educational and instructive situation that promotes children's health and well-being, and as important for children to learn to take care of themselves and manage daily life. Children's rest time is after lunch in Finland. Children change into appropriate clothes for rest and move to a separate nap room with individual beds. Prior to sleeping, they usually listen to a story or music. The nap-room setting is aimed at creating a calming atmosphere (e.g. through dimness, coolness, and decoration) that will contribute to children's rest and sleep (Kuukka 2015). Similar, yet somewhat varying, practices have been identified in the Australian context (Nothard et al. 2015). Importantly, these established practices have been found to strongly limit children's autonomy: children have few opportunities to influence the rules of naptime, including whether to sleep or not (Kuukka 2015; Nothard et al. 2015).

Naptime is justified by normative claims about what is considered good for young children: the benefits of sleep and rest for their health, growth, wellbeing, development, and psychological state (see also Alasuutari 2015; Cooke et al. 2023; Horton and Kraftl 2010). Accordingly, a child who has slept well is seen as a happy and healthy child capable of realising their true potential (Williams, Lowe, and Griffiths 2007, 10). Research, however, shows mixed results concerning the benefits of naptime. On the one hand, sleep is a physiological fact, biological need, and necessary condition for children's well-being, development, and learning (Staton, Smith, and Thorpe 2015). On the other hand, research shows that beyond the age of three, there are discrepancies between children's actual sleep needs and the prevailing ECEC practices of naptime (see also Gehret et al. 2021; Staton, Smith, and Thorpe 2015; Staton et al. 2021). Staton, Smith, and Thorpe (2015) argue that around age four, children's sleep rhythms evolve from multiple sleeps to a monophasic pattern of a single nighttime sleep. Napping during the day may thus impair the quality and length of their sleep at night (Staton et al. 2015).

These findings indicate a need for reforming and providing alternatives to such naptime practices. Still, in ECEC in Finland and other countries, naptime has remained a mandatory practice for a long time (Gehret et al. 2021; Nothard et al. 2015; Staton et al. 2015; Staton, Smith, and Thorpe 2015). Cooke et al. (2023) show ECEC professionals in Australia relying on contradictory dominant discourses of 'investment and outcomes' and 'children's rights' when talking about children's rest. In Finland, children's rest is discussed by parents and ECEC professionals in relation to the obligatory child's individual

ECEC plan (Alasuutari 2015). However, instead of listening to parents' ideas and wishes related to their child's sleep, children's napping is naturalised in these discussions, and children who do not sleep are defined as 'being difficult' or 'having difficulties' (Alasuutari 2015, 226–227; see also Sinclair et al. 2016).

Theoretical thinking tools for considering naptime as bodily practice and governance

In this article, we will utilise Foucault's (1980) poststructuralist thinking of the governance of the body and disciplinary power as an aid to examine the bodily practices related to children's naptime (see also Kallio 2009; Tamboukou and Ball 2003, 1–2). Disciplinary power functions at the level of the body by replacing visible, direct power with invisible coercion that targets the body and, through careful training, shapes the body to produce new skills, habits, and gestures (Gore 1998). Discipline works as a micropower in pedagogical practices through various techniques, such as distribution, surveillance, regulation, and normalisation (Foucault 1980; Turner 2008, 498, 1997, xi–xii). As a disciplinary technique, for example, distribution refers to the division of bodies in space (e.g. by partitions), the division of individuals into smaller groups and into their designated places in space, the establishment of bodily orders (e.g. queues or seating arrangements), and the possibility of being isolated from others (Foucault 1980).

Surveillance refers to watching and the assumption of being watched (Gore 1998, 235–236). Surveillance can, for example, be an observing gaze directed by adults towards children but also an observing gaze directed by children towards other children (Gore 1998). Regulation orders bodies by time through rules and norms (Foucault 1980). Normalisation, in turn, seeks to bring individuals up to normal standards of behaviour through reward, ranking, comparison, differentiation, evaluation, punishment, or exclusion alongside the abovementioned observing gaze (Foucault 1980).

Disciplinary techniques aim to produce a 'docile body' by focusing on details, timing, individual movements, and speed of movements. For Foucault (1980), discipline is based on body modification, such as the requirement of a correspondence between the body and its movements (Oksala 2010). According to Foucault (1980, X) a 'Docile body is one that can be subjected, used, transformed, and improved. The docile body can only be achieved through strict regiment of disciplinary acts'. In Foucault's (1980) conceptualisation, pedagogical power is a normalising power, which forces people into similarity but not into homogeneity. According to Watkins (2012) education is not only a cognitive process but also involves a bodily dimension. For young children, the bodily nature of education becomes most apparent when they enter institutional ECEC that highlights temporal and spatial rhythms and appropriate manners of behaviour (Watkins 2012).

In previous studies, Foucault's thinking has been used to some extent to examine the practices, pedagogy, and governance of educational institutions and childhood discourses (e.g. Markström 2010; Strandell 2012). In his school ethnographic study, Jenks (2001), referring to Foucault, points out that for children, especially in an institutional context, even the most essential bodily activities are scheduled and occur in a planned space within a specific curriculum. According to Holligan (2000), the Foucauldian perspective is well suited to ECEC research, as it offers a 'subversive' conceptual framework for exploring children's experiences of education and its aims, as well as the extent and

appearance of control. Governmentality is useful in demonstrating how children control and regulate their own behaviour in pedagogical interactions in ECEC. Schedules, daily rhythms, and teaching and learning strategies accustom the body to docility (Holligan 2000). Gehret et al. (2021), when studying naptime from the perspective of learning, argue that what children learn when adults control naptime is to conform, comply, and recognise adult regulation instead of understanding the meanings of rest and their self-regulation.

Through governmentality, children's agency is limited by their subordinate position compared to that of adults, but children are capable of resistance (Gehret et al. 2021; Moore et al. 2011; Rainio 2008). Resistance by children is quite often viewed as negative or problematic behaviour, signifying disobedience towards adults (Markström 2010; Rainio 2008), but it can also be recognised as a struggle for a voice, agency, and citizenship (Moore et al. 2011; Rainio 2008). James (2000, 33) refers to 'as if' activity, meaning children's manner of presenting their bodies for view 'as if' they were the bodies of those who are orderly and well behaved. As an example, James illustrates a classroom in which children who want to please the teacher straighten their backs, sit still, and look straight ahead as expected. However, outside the classroom, the same children must be made to look 'as if' they run fast, jump high, or fight well. According to Fingerson (2009, 224), children are not usually so organised and well behaved, but they work hard to promote this image of themselves. Thus, resistance can be undertaken through subtle or hidden means of opposing the prevailing norms and rules of the environment (e.g. Gehret et al. 2021; Markström 2010).

Methods

The data for the present study were extracted from two studies: an ethnographic study (Kuukka 2015) and a narrative research project 'Conflicts and power in children and young people's close relationships – Narrated emotions and agency as facets' (VALTAKO). The datasets from these studies include children's ethnographic conversations and individual and pair interviews (the first study), and children's narratives of naptime collected with the Story Magician's Play Time method (SMPT) (the latter study).

The ethnographic data collection, including the conversations and interviews, took place during one spring semester 2002. The participating ECEC group included 20 children aged five to seven years. The ethnographic approach is applied to make cultural phenomena and processes visible, along with shared cultural meanings and activities in different situations for individuals and communities (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Lange and Mierendorff 2009). The data analysed in this study include related conversations and interviews with the children but not observations.

To obtain meaningful interview data from children, the questions should be relevant to their experiences and knowledge (Alasuutari 2009). Thus, it was important to utilise words employed by the children themselves and link the questions to the children's everyday lives in the ECEC centre; to the practices and activities; and to the relationships between the children. Thematical interviews included topics related to children's views about peers and activities with friends in ECEC; spaces and places in the ECEC centre (pleasant, unpleasant, indoor, outdoor, forbidden); hobbies; body condition; dressing and clothing; and health and wellbeing. The interviews lasted from 15 min to over half an hour. The total interview material comprised 141 transcribed pages.

Related to the VALTAKO project, children's narratives were collected using the SMPT method for listening to young children's perspectives through guided storytelling and play (Koivula, Turja, and Laakso 2020). In total, 28 young children from two ECEC centres participated in individual SMPT sessions once or twice during the academic year 2020–2021 (54 sessions in all). During the sessions, the researcher asked the child to choose one of seven pictures illustrating everyday conflict situations, one of which depicted naptime in ECEC. The pictures were not explicitly named as conflicts to give room for the child's own imagination. The researcher asked the child to tell a story about the chosen picture and prompted the narration with questions, such as: 'What has happened in the picture?'; 'What happens then?'; 'How could the story end so that everyone would be happy?' However, she was careful not to lead the storyline. After the story was told, the child was encouraged to enact it with props, such as dolls and play furniture. The child could decide on the researcher's role and participation in the play. Sometimes, this phase led to a new narrative that differed from the one the child had told based on the picture. At the end of the session, the researcher asked if the child had been in a similar situation and what adults could learn from the story. For the present study, the narratives on naptime in ECEC were selected for analysis: 17 narratives by nine young children aged five to six years, of which 9 narratives were prompted by the picture, 4 narratives were developed during the play, and 4 were narratives of children's own experiences.

The two datasets complement each other. Ethnographic conversations and interviews can shed light on the daily situations experienced by children in ECEC. Children's narratives, in turn, open up meanings children construct and imagine when their possibilities for influencing the real situation might be restricted.

Ethics

The study was conducted according to the ethical guidelines of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (2019) and the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (Bertram et al. 2015). The VALTAKO project was approved by The Human Sciences Ethics Committee at the University of Jyväskylä (statement 06/2020). Prior to the data collection, written informed consent was obtained from the parents of the participating children. Furthermore, the children themselves were informed about the study and their consent was sought either verbally (ethnographic data collection) or through a playful form that was filled in by the child and the researcher together (SMPT sessions).

In addition to the formal ethical procedures, an ethics-in-action approach (see Rutanen et al. 2023) was applied during both the ethnographic data collection and the SMPT sessions to build trust and maintain ongoing assent with the young children. During the ethnographic data collection, careful attention was paid to the children's verbal and non-verbal expressions. If a child showed emotional strain towards the researcher or the data collection procedure, the researcher ended the observation. At the beginning of the SMPT sessions, the children were told they could withdraw from the study whenever they wished. During the sessions, the researcher also ensured that they continued to assent to the process.

Data analysis

Our analysis drew on abductive logic (Patton 2002), which enables a dialogue between theory and the empirical data. Abductive reasoning approaches what Jackson and Mazzei (2012, vii and 4) consider ‘thinking with theory’, a process in which data reading and theory thinking occur at the same time. By employing Foucault’s analytical ‘toolbox’ to read the empirical data and children’s accounts, we have used the notion of governmentality and disciplinary power as an analytical lens to illustrate how children’s bodies are put under surveillance and how children complied by conforming their bodies appropriately during naptime.

We were also interested in children’s possible resistance and its forms, for example, how they used their bodies as instruments of resistance during naptime. Accordingly, we identified how children’s bodily positioning was manifested in the children’s accounts. Positioning can be detected based on the rights and duties used in positioning the self and others in narration (Harré and Moghaddam 2014). In a Foucauldian sense, the positioning of a person is based on negotiation about what is considered institutionally and culturally normal and abnormal or problematic (Foucault 1977). Here, we were interested in interpreting positioning in children’s accounts as relational and contextual, unmasking how the child’s bodily presence is positioned in relation to the ECEC institutional order in the context of naptime.

We identified three types of bodily positionings in the children’s accounts: docile, demurring, and rebellious bodies. In docile bodies positionings, the child’s position was described through compliance portraying children’s embodied conforming to adult requests by, for example, lying down, being still, and sleeping/resting without any signs of resisting the adult order. In demurring bodies, the child’s position was described as bodily resistance which manifested in subtle or invisible ways, such as playing with their fingers, whispering, and giggling. In rebellious bodies, in turn, children’s bodily resistance was open and even assumed carnivalistic forms. The child was delineated in a bodily position of the right to oppose adult governance, although identified mainly in imaginative stories. In all accounts, the adult’s duty was to insist children stay quiet and rest, denoting governance and surveillance as an adult right.

Findings

In their accounts of naptime, the children described diverse norms and rules, thus denoting the institutional discipline and adult governance occurring during ECEC naptime. Many of these norms and rules focused on the child’s body, restraining their possibilities to control their body during naptime. The following three sub sections address different types of bodily positionings.

Docile bodies

Proper bodily behaviour, a docile body, was defined by the children as a compulsion that was under rather strict adult governance. In the ethnographic conversations, the children described that they could not move, sit, or talk during naptime without adults reminding them of the rules and telling them to lie down properly: ‘... you have to lie down all the

time ... and once you move, so blah blah blah' [imitates adult's voice]'. Adult governance was also maintained by rewarding proper conduct by letting the child leave the nap room first to choose the best toys. The children could find lying down tedious: 'Nap room is an awful place, when you have to lie so long in bed, just have to'. The modal verb 'have to', used by several children participating in the ethnographic conversations, highlights the compulsion of staying still.

The children's bodily docility was not only fostered by adults but the children themselves. Based on the ethnographic conversations and interviews, the nap room discipline had developed to children's personal knowledge and self-regulation through which they conformed to the norms. When asked why they have to sleep or rest in ECEC, the children associated naptime with health and wellbeing and described the necessity of sleep and rest for several body parts: 'If you don't feel tired, then the brain and arms and everything have to rest'. Sleep and rest were also associated with getting stronger as the children mentioned that during naps 'you grow' and 'get more strength'. Furthermore, the children talked about threats related to a lack of sleep: a child who does not sleep 'won't grow' and 'will die' even. These definitions seem to follow a medical, naturalistic, and psychological agenda, focusing on the relationship between sleep and a healthy, competent body (e.g. Moran-Ellis and Venn 2007,). Such knowledge worked to motivate children to comply with nap-room norms, making them believe that complying contributed to their future health and wellbeing, thus serving their own good. Respecting their 'bodily needs', therefore, became their responsibility and obligation.

The narratives collected using the SMPT method manifested somewhat similar internalisation of nap-room norms. Obeying the adult request to be quiet and sleep usually led to a happy ending in narratives in which children had first resisted sleeping in either subtle or more pronounced bodily ways. This solution was often described to make both the adult and the children in the narrative feel good or happy. Some of the child participants even described sleeping to serve the narrated children's own wishes. The following data example includes this kind of narration:

- Researcher: [...] She [the educator] becomes happy. How?
 Child: When they [the children] sleep. [...] Yea, because they are terribly tired and because they feel like yawning.
 Researcher: How would Runo and Kuura's story end then?
 Child: They [the children] wanted to sleep.
 Researcher: They wanted to go to sleep then, did they?
 Child: Yea, because they were so [tired]

In the example, naps were a solution that served the adult's will (she became happy) and the children's wishes (they wanted to sleep) and bodily needs (they were terribly tired). As in the ethnographic data, sleeping was described as serving children's own good. However, instead of referring to future health and well-being, the desirability of sleeping was based on the children's present feeling of tiredness. When asked what could be learned from their story, the children's answers echoed the nap-room discipline: 'be quiet in the nap-room' and 'one can sleep'. In this way, the docile bodily position (i.e. lying down and yielding to adult governance) was presented as the child's unquestioned duty and responsibility (cf. Gehret et al. 2021).

Demurring bodies

The children's accounts manifested not just compliance with nap-room norms but also many subtle ways of bodily resistance. Ethnographic interviews revealed that the children could make small unobtrusive movements and gestures when lying in their beds, although sitting and playing was not allowed. When they could not fall asleep and naptime felt long, they passed the time, for example, by watching and listening to what was going on around them, or by thinking or doing small things. The following extract demonstrates this kind of subtle resistance:

- Researcher: What do you do then ... how do you pass the time?
 Child: Well, I wait, I look at the clock [on the wall], and then I listen to the story, and then I, well, I look at what the others are doing, and sometimes, I even play with my fingers.

The children knew it was their responsibility to lie down properly during naptime. To pass the time without challenging adult control, they found small ways to escape boredom, considering it right to do something inconspicuous, small, almost imperceptible, movements and gestures, such as in above example playing with own fingers. These can be interpreted as a means of challenging the prevailing norms, a kind of 'as if' activity, a child's way of adjusting their behaviour and making their body appear to behave according to nap-room norms.

During the SMPT sessions, the children were prompted to narrate subtle bodily resistance to adult governance, as the picture of naptime depicted such a situation (in the picture, two children got up from their beds and interacted while an adult character tried to hush them). All the children recognised the depicted situation and started their narration accordingly. The bodily resistance in the children's narratives took similar, but more visible, forms to those found in the ethnographic data: the children sat on their beds, snickered, chatted, and played: 'This one gets up and sits [...] plays with a teddy bear [...] now she chats with a friend'. In one story, the children demurred by lifting their heads from their pillows:

- Child: Then, they [the children] lift their heads as this one [adult] went away.
 Researcher: Is it exciting when one lifts one's head?
 Child: Yes.
 Researcher: Does the adult always notice when they lift their heads?
 Child: No. [...] Yippee. Then, she went and ... now this one, too, lifted their head.
 Researcher: This one, too?
 Child: Yes.

Lifting their heads without the adult noticing suggests that even this minor bodily action challenged nap-room norms, just like was told by the children in the ethnographic conversations and interviews. The child did not openly challenge adult governance, but the subtle, indirect bodily acts of resistance were narrated as the child's 'right'. Litowitz (1997) remarks that the child has possibilities for resistance by moving beyond, i.e. withdrawing from participating in a certain responsibility, thus positioning themselves beyond being dependent on and controlled by the adult.

Rebellious bodies

In addition to subtle demurring, both datasets included accounts of more open, even rebellious, bodily resistance to nap-room norms and adult governance. In the ethnographic data, the children challenged the norms and performed their social agency through speech and thought, using extreme expressions, such as ‘I will never, ever sleep’, when talking about naptime. This example demonstrates such an account:

- Child: [...] I don't like to sleep in the nap room.
 Researcher: Why not?
 Child: Well, we'll be there for so long.
 Researcher: Do you sleep at all?
 Child: No, never [...]

We interpreted such extreme expressions and the total lack of sleep as pointing to rebellious bodily resistance. Similar accounts were sometimes given by the children during the SMPT sessions, when they talked about their own nap-room experiences after first telling their imaginative story.

In the imaginative narratives collected using the SMPT method, there were more possibilities to rebel. We interpreted the children's narrated bodily actions as rebellious when they got up from their beds and so challenged adult governance more openly. Sometimes, the open resistance took the form of requesting help from the educator. For example, the narrated child could lose their nap toys, which had to be sought, or they could ask for permission to go to the toilet.

Furthermore, some narratives turned into imaginative, even carnivalesque, stories in which children's bodily agency far exceeded the daily reality of ECEC. In these narratives, children escaped from adult surveillance and control by hiding their bodies from the educators' gaze and even running away from their reach, for example, to play computer games or go outdoors. The following example demonstrates this kind of bodily rebellion:

- Child: The children then got up from their beds and ran away, out of the door.
 Researcher: Uh-oh, what did Mervi [the adult] do then?
 Child: She then quickly put on her clothes and went after them and roared like this, 'Aaaarh!'
 Researcher: She roared at them, did she? What do you think the children felt like?
 Child: They then hid themselves behind the trees.
 Researcher: OK, they hid themselves there.
 Child: And they hid themselves behind the stones.
 Researcher: Behind the stones, too. What about Mervi then? She first shouted 'Aaaarh!', but what did she do then?
 Child: She first tried to catch the children, but they went back and forth.

This narrative demonstrates extreme and rebellious forms of bodily resistance to nap-room discipline, as the children ran away from the nap room and, regardless of the shouting educator, kept hiding and avoiding getting caught. However, at the end of the narrative, even these most rebellious bodies turned into docile ones, as the children complied with the educator's demand to return to the nap room to sleep.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to apply a Foucauldian perspective to address how children portray their bodily positionings during naptime in ECEC. Viewed through Foucault's concepts of disciplinary power and governance, the children's accounts clearly illustrate how diverse techniques of adult surveillance and control over children's bodily positioning in naptime construct adult power and institutional order in ECEC (see also Gehret et al. 2021). The children's accounts suggest that 'being proper' required children to control their body posture and speaking voice. Thus, through the Foucauldian perspective, the study produces novel understandings of naptime practice in ECEC by showing how adult governance and surveillance operate, target and shape children's bodies through disciplinary techniques, meaning they have a vast but invisible influence on children's possibilities for agency and the dismissal of their participatory rights (cf. Holligan 2000; Kuukka 2015; Salonen et al. 2022).

The children brought out various rules and norms surrounding their afternoon nap that regulated their chances for bodily being and doing. This regulation seemed to be partly based on the wellbeing regime, which relies on expert knowledge about children's health and development from various scientific fields, thereby justifying the norms defining nap activities and providing instructions for their correct implementation (see Cooke et al. 2023; Horton and Kraftl 2010; Staton, Smith, and Thorpe 2015; Tourula 2011). In the children's accounts, on the one hand, governance during naps was practiced by monitoring the children's bodies and their resting and sleeping techniques (see Gehret et al. 2021). On the other hand, governance seemed to be based on children's self-surveillance.

Pedagogical practices that use disciplinary power define the norms to which children are directed and justify them as being for the individual's own good (Howson 2013). During naptime, children's bodily life was tinged by freedom and control (cf. Gehret et al. 2021; Nothard et al. 2015; Staton, Smith, and Thorpe 2015). Among other things, this appeared in the fact that the more an individual controlled his or her bodily movements, the greater the possibility of gaining freedoms. (cf. Gehret et al. 2021).

Although children submitting to the norms and order of the ECEC produced a docile body (Foucault 1980), children also resisted the norms of ECEC and challenged the boundaries of obedience. In docile bodies, children complied with adult demands without resistance, embodying the expected behaviour. However, demurring bodies represented subtle forms of embodied resistance in a situation that prescribed docility and compliance as the child's responsibility. In the category of rebellious bodies, children's bodily resistance was open and even assumed carnivalistic forms. Interestingly, the accounts actually described the means to literally escape the adult 'gaze' and surveillance. The rebellious bodily positionings showed how the children tried to maintain their agency, despite their seemingly minimal actions (also Nothard et al. 2015). In all cases, the adult's position and power were consistent: the adult's duty was to label governance and surveillance as an adult right while insisting the children remain quiet and still (see Gehret et al. 2021).

In conclusion, naptime in ECEC involves more than just rest for children. Despite the growing body of research questioning the general obligation for all children to stay still and sleep, the goal of this study was not to examine whether and what length of rest time

children need in ECEC. Instead, it sought to uncover the children's perspectives on and their possibilities for influencing this ECEC practice affecting their everyday lives, thereby contributing to our knowledge of the politics of children's everyday life in ECEC. Although the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018) and the Core Curriculum for ECEC (Finnish National Agency for Education [EDUFI] 2022) in Finland emphasise children's participation and influence in matters affecting their everyday lives, thus, following the ideas of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund UNICEF 1989), when viewed through the children's accounts, their possibilities for contesting naptime practices seem minimal (also Gehret et al. 2021; Nothard et al. 2015). This study showed how through the strict control of bodily practices, children learn the basic idea of adult governance, i.e. compliance with adult order (also Gehret et al. 2021; Markström 2010), which yields passive-recipient subjectivity in children (see Cooke et al. 2023; Foucault 1980). Additionally, they learn that their opinions and resistance have no effect on nap-time practices.

When reading the study a few limitations need to be considered. The use and bringing together of two rather different data collection methods could be seen as a limitation of the study. Further, in SMPT sessions, adult governance and children's subtle resistance to that governance were depicted in the naptime picture prompting the children's storytelling. However, the utilisation of the two datasets and the similarities between the imaginative narratives and real-life accounts speak to the credibility of the findings. Furthermore, the accounts were situated in three ECEC centres, strengthening the transferability of the findings. Ellingson (2009, 15–16) emphasises the importance of engendering multifaceted understanding through the creative combination of theory and the embodied, situated lives of the participants and researchers. Thus, the trustworthiness of the analysis was increased by the crystallisation of diverse perspectives, which enabled the identification and bringing together of children's bodily positioning from the two datasets, as well as a discussion of the theory-laden interpretations among the three researchers (Ellingson 2009). The study's findings shed light on the adult governance of children's bodily positioning during and children's minimal possibilities for influencing the institutional practices of naptime in ECEC in Finland. Along with other recent studies on naptime practices in ECEC (Alasuutari 2015; Cooke et al. 2023; Gehret et al. 2021; Nothard et al. 2015; Staton, Smith, and Thorpe 2015; Staton et al. 2015), this study highlights the need to rethink and reorganise naptime practices by considering children's (and their parents') perspectives. The study advocates increasing the comprehension of the harms of bodily governance and the importance of building pedagogical (naptime) practices in ECEC that align with the children's rights perspective to ensure child citizens' 'voices' are taken seriously in matters influencing their everyday lives.

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