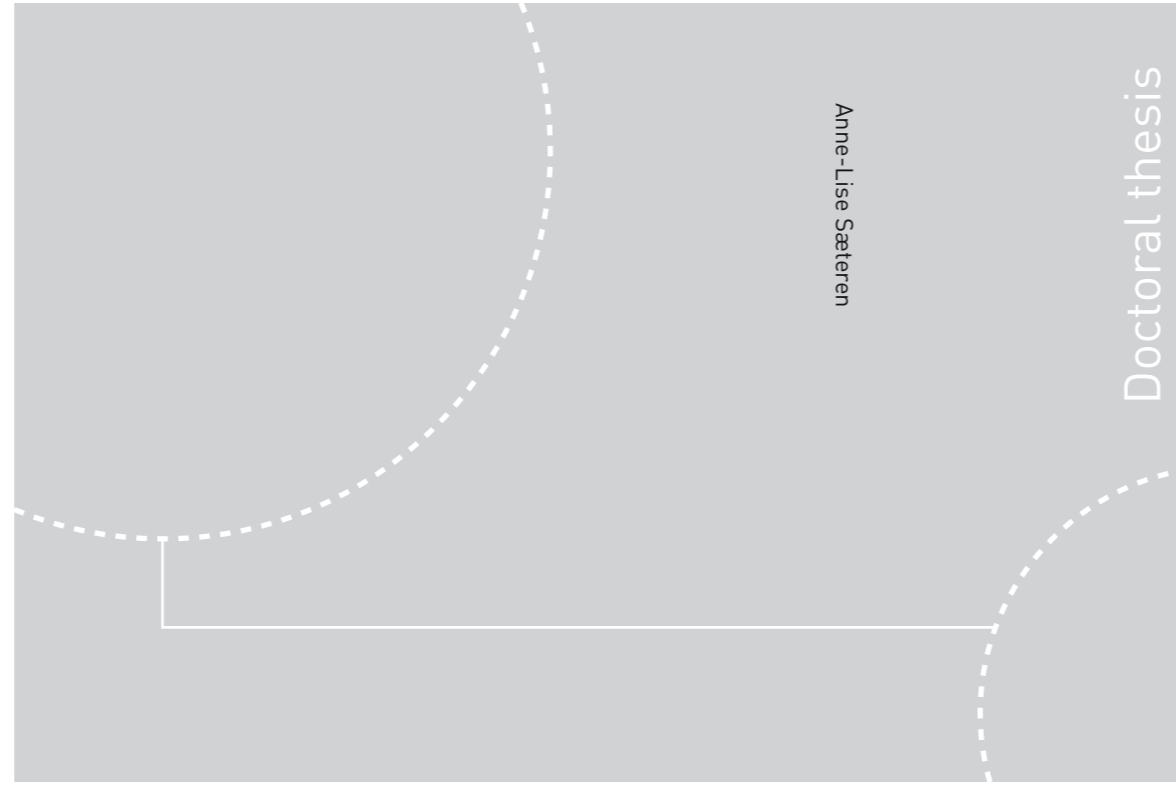


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A narrative study of one teacher's dealings with a child with withdrawn behavior in ordinary classroom activities

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Thesis for the Degree of  
Philosophiae Doctor  
Faculty of Social Sciences and  
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Thesis for the Degree of Philosophiae Doctor

Trondheim, June 2016

Norwegian University of Science and Technology  
Faculty of Social Sciences and Technology Management  
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To Emil and Emma



## Summary

This thesis focuses on how one elementary school teacher deals with a child with withdrawn behavior in ordinary classroom activities and how the teacher reflects upon her own practices according to the topic in question. The teacher I focus on, “Alice”, is a class teacher for the second grade, which means that the children in her class are about seven years old.

Being a teacher is a complex and intense job. The teacher has to deal with a diversity of children, and needs to adapt the teaching so each child can experience mastering at school, learn and develop. In addition to dealing with the children and guiding and leading their learning, the teacher also has to deal with the parents and interact in a professional fellowship.

Withdrawn behavior is an umbrella term that involves behaviors described as shy, inhibited, anxious, introverted, silent, and so on. Previous research indicates that children with withdrawn behavior appear to be ignored by their teachers and classmates, and that these children do not participate in academic or social activities at school.

The theoretical framework of this study is socio-cultural theory rooted in Vygotsky’s (1978, 1986) body of work, with special focus on the relationship between the individual and the social context, the relationship between thought and speech, and between learning and development. Moreover, the study is based on three months of observations and video recordings in Alice’s classroom and interviews with her to obtain a better understanding of her experiences and reflections. These observations, video recordings, and interviews with Alice constitute the primary data in this study.

The findings from the analysis are presented in three chapters: the first of these is entitled “Seeing children with withdrawn behavior.” This chapter explores Alice’s concern about seeing children with withdrawn behavior in particular, and all children in general, and also explores how she differs in her dealings with each child and how she adapts so she can see and respond to children with withdrawn behavior several times during the school day. To illustrate her practice according to seeing children with withdrawn behavior I present the narrative “the morning ritual,” which is analyzed and understood in light of theory on caring. Using the empirical data and theory on caring I develop the concept of *interaction sensitivity*, and argue that in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior, as well as other children in the learning position, the teacher has to be interaction sensitive.

In the chapter titled “Slowness in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior” the focus is on how Alice reduces the tempo of her teaching to involve children with withdrawn behavior in discussions and oral activities. She has experienced that giving children with withdrawn behavior time to think and to gather courage is a way to get them to be more involved in the classroom activities. To illustrate her practices according to slowing down the tempo of the teaching, the narrative “when can we start to think” is presented and used as a unit of analysis. As educational theories do not have much focus on slowing down the tempo of teaching, or on using pauses or silence in teaching, I have turned to theory from conversation analysis and research on wait-time to understand this aspect of Alice’s practice. In this chapter I argue that slowness in teaching has a potential for learning and development, and call this *the potential of silence*.

The last findings chapter is entitled “Challenging children with withdrawn behavior.” In this chapter Alice’s concerns about learning and development emerge, and I explore how Alice challenges children with withdrawn behavior in a smooth and appropriate way within their zone of proximal development. The narrative “the teller chair” is presented to illustrate Alice’s practice in this connection and is used as a unit of analysis. To understand this part of her practice I turn to theory on intersubjectivity and acknowledgement, and state that to challenge a

child you have to acknowledge him or her. I also argue that the teacher has to be interaction sensitive to challenge children with withdrawn behavior in particular and other children in general, in an appropriate way.

This study highlights the teacher's perspective, in contrast to many other studies in the field of withdrawn behavior.

## Sammendrag

Fokuset i denne avhandlingen er på en grunnskolelærers praksis når det gjelder elever med innadventd atferd. Det er tatt utgangspunkt i lærerens praksis i de ordinære klasseromsaktivitetene. I tillegg fokuseres det på lærerens refleksjoner omkring egen praksis når det gjelder innadventd elevatferd. Læreren har jeg kalt «Alice». Hun er kontaktlærer på andre trinn, noe som betyr at elevene i klassen hennes er cirka syv år.

Å være lærer er en kompleks og intens jobb. Hovedoppgaven for læreren er å veilede den enkelte elev i hans eller hennes læring og utvikling. Elevgruppene er sammensatte og mangfoldig, og alle elever har rett på tilrettelagt undervisning slik at de kan oppleve mestring, læring og utvikling basert på egne forutsetninger. I tillegg til undervisning og veiledning av elevene, skal læreren samarbeide med elevenes foreldre og være en del av et profesjonelt fellesskap.

Innadventd atferd er et paraplybegrep som favner atferd definert som for eksempel beskjeden, hemmet, engstelig, introvert, stille. Tidligere forskning indikerer at barn med innadventd atferd blir ignorert av sine lærere og medelever, og at de ikke deltar i akademiske og sosiale aktiviteter på skolen.

Studiens teoretiske rammeverk er sosiokulturell teori med utgangspunkt i Vygotskys (1978, 1986) fokus på forholdet mellom individet og den sosiale konteksten, forholdet mellom tanke og språk og mellom læring og utvikling. Videre baserer studien seg på tre måneder observasjoner og videoopptak fra Alices klasserom, i tillegg til intervjuer med henne for å få tak i hennes erfaringer og refleksjoner. Observasjonsnotatene, videoopptakene og intervjuene med Alice utgjør primær dataene i denne studien.

Funnene fra analyseprosessen presenteres i tre kapitler. Det første av disse kapitlene har tittelen «Seeing children with withdrawn behavior» og viser hvordan Alice er opptatt av å se barn med innadventd atferd, hvordan hun varierer i møtene med de forskjellige barna og hvordan hun legger opp til å se og møte barn med innadventd atferd flere ganger hver skoledag. For å illustrere Alices praksis i henhold til å se barn med innadventd atferd presenterer jeg narrativet «the morning ritual». Historien blir analysert og forstått i lys av teori om 'caring' (omsorg). Med utgangspunkt i empiri og teori om caring utvikler jeg i dette kapitlet begrepet *interaction sensitivity* (interaksjons sensitivitet), og argumenterer for at i møte med barn med innadventd atferd, som i møte med andre barn i læringsposisjon, må læreren være interaksjons sensitiv.

I kapitlet med tittelen «Slowness in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior» er fokuset på hvordan Alice roer ned tempoet i undervisningen for å få elever med innadventd atferd mer deltakende i diskusjoner og andre muntlige aktiviteter. Hun har erfart at å gi barn med innadventd atferd tid til å tenke eller tid til å samle mot til å delta er en måte å få dem aktive i klasseromsaktivitetene. For å illustrere hennes praksis i forbindelse med å roe ned tempoet er narrativet «when can we start to think» presentert og brukt som analyseenhet. Siden læringsteorier i liten grad fokuserer på langsomhet, pauser og stillhet i undervisningen, har jeg brukt teori fra konversasjonsanalyser og forskning om ventetid for å forstå dette aspektet av Alices praksis. I dette kapitlet argumenterer jeg for at i langsom undervisning ligger det et potensiale for læring og utvikling for barna, og jeg kaller dette *the potential of silence* (langsomhetens/stillhetens potensiale).

Det siste funnkapitlet har fått tittelen «Challenging children with withdrawn behavior.» I dette kapitlet kommer Alices bekymring for læring og utvikling til syne, og hvordan hun på en fleksibel og hensiktsmessig måte utfordrer elever med innadventd atferd innenfor deres proksimale utviklingszone. Narrativet «the teller chair» blir presentert for å illustrere Alices praksis i denne forbindelsen. For å få innsikt og forståelse for denne delen av hennes praksis har



jeg støttet meg til teori om intersubjektivitet og anerkjennelse, og jeg argumenterer for at læreren må anerkjenne barnet for å kunne utfordre det. Jeg argumenterer videre for at læreren må være interaksjons sensitiv for å kunne utfordre barn med innadvendt atferd spesielt og andre barn generelt, på en hensiktsmessig måte.

I motsetning til andre studier som omhandler innadvendt atferd, løfter denne studien frem lærerens perspektiver.

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Anne-Lise Sæteren

Trondheim, June 2016



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# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

The focus in this study is how one elementary school teacher deals with children with withdrawn behavior in ordinary classroom activities. As a former elementary school teacher and special educational teacher I have developed a growing interest in how teachers deal with and reflect on their own practices in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior. Each class consist a diversity of children, and teachers have several tasks to deal with each day. According to the Ministry of Education and Research (2009) in Norway, the teacher's tasks can be divided into three main arenas: teaching the children, dealing with parents and other collaborators and, interacting in a professional fellowship. With regard to the first of these arenas, the teacher's main task is to guide and lead each child in their learning and developmental processes. The teacher must also be able to communicate know-how in different subjects and to ensure an inclusive fellowship in the classroom, where diversity and differences are valued and respected. The teacher has to adjust for each child so that he or she feels socially and academically included in the class. Moreover, the teacher has to deal with the diversity of the children, and know when and how the individual child needs support and help in the learning process. With regard to the second arena, parental expectations vary according to the teacher, the school, and their own children. Thus, the teacher has to be sensitive to the parents' various opinions, and must be able to adopt their perspectives in order to achieve reciprocity and equality in the collaboration. This arena also requires that the teacher is familiar with the relevant laws and curricula to be able to cultivate the children's educational setting. In the third arena, it is expected that as a member of the school's professional fellowship, each teacher has insight into and understanding of the school system and is able to collaborate in a professional way with their colleagues, management and other participants in the school organization (Ministry of Education and Research, 2009). Hence, the teacher role is found to be a complex and intense role



(e.g., Hargreaves, 1994; Haug, 2011; Moen, 2011a).

When the typical Norwegian elementary school teacher looks at the faces of the twenty or so children in the class, the children who look back have diverse needs. Within this diversity of children some of them will have behavior defined as extroverted, whereas others will have behavior defined as introverted, also called *withdrawn behavior*.<sup>1</sup> Withdrawn behavior is an umbrella term that embraces such characteristics as shyness, behavior inhibition, silent behavior, social reticence, social isolation and anxiety (e.g., Coplan & Rubin, 2010). Whatever term is chosen, children that can be described as having withdrawn behavior are characterized as having anxious behavior, such as biting nails, picking in their fingers and hair, and reorganizing their stuff on their desk. They also appear to be lonely, even in social settings, they withdraw from interaction with their peers and the teacher, and they do not participate in social and oral activities in the classroom. Moreover, they appear to be depressed and uncomfortable in social situations or the classroom context (e.g., Gazelle & Rubin, 2010; Lund, 2008). Previous research in the field has found that children with withdrawn behavior tend to be hesitant about starting their work, appear to take frequent breaks during their work, and appear to be inhibited in verbal situations (Gazelle & Rubin, 2010). In addition, they often watch other children's activities without entering into them. They may laugh along with the other children, but without getting involved in the actual activity, and thus they can be defined as *onlookers* (Rubin, 1989). Although children with withdrawn behavior tend to reject their peers and teachers, Lund (2008, 2010, 2012) found that they want to participate in the ongoing activities in the classroom but that they need help, primarily from the teacher, to manage or dare to participate.<sup>2</sup>

In order to elaborate on the topic in question I have spent time with one class teacher at second grade, in elementary school. This teacher has a child with withdrawn behavior in her<sup>3</sup> class. The overall research question for my study is: *How does the elementary school teacher deal with children with withdrawn behavior in ordinary*

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<sup>1</sup> I am aware that this is a narrow description of the diversity of needs and behavior in a classroom. However, using these two "categories" of behavior is only meant to point out the extremity of behavior that can manifest itself in the classroom.

<sup>2</sup> In the Norwegian school, approximately one child in each class has withdrawn behavior as described above (e.g., Nordahl, Mausestaden & Kostøl, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> I had no gender criteria, by mere chance I ended up with a female teacher in this study. According to the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training (2014) most teachers in Norwegian school are female, in fact only 26 percent are male. In the following I refer to the teacher and teachers in general as "her/she."

*classroom activities?* Implicit in the research question are the questions relating to what the teacher does in her teaching, and how she reflects upon her own practices according to the topic in question. In order to understand and gain insight into the teacher's actions and reflections, I observed her actions, and conducted several interviews with her. The participating teacher in this study has several years of experience in teaching children with withdrawn behavior. I have chosen to call the participating teacher "Alice".<sup>4</sup> In the data collection the focus was on Alice's actions and interactions, as well as her thoughts and reflections on her own practices when it comes to teaching children with withdrawn behavior.

One way to understand educational practice and the complexity in the classroom is to interact with the teacher to gain insight into her thoughts, reflections, and actions, and to then construct narratives from the teacher's practices (e.g., Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Guðmundsdóttir, 1997/2011, 2001). To understand and gain insight into Alice's practices when dealing with children with withdrawn behavior, I present narratives constructed from her practice that hopefully makes her practices more visible and apparent. By means of narratives, it is possible to understand and interpret other people's actions, experiences, thoughts, and intentions (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Thus, by telling this story about how Alice deals with withdrawn behavior in ordinary classroom activities, it is possible to render children with withdrawn behavior more visible and, hence, highlight how teachers may deal with withdrawn behavior. Moreover, this study and the narrative about Alice is one way of revealing a teacher's voice, a voice that often is lacking when it comes to research and debates on educational practices (Elbaz-Luwich, 2005). Focusing on an experienced teacher and telling her story about the classroom practices in which she participates is one way to reveal new insights into the topic of withdrawn behavior, which may contribute to additional knowledge in the field. How the teacher in my study deals with children with withdrawn behavior may be a point of departure for creating new perspectives or concepts of value. Moreover, the focus on interaction between an experienced teacher and children with withdrawn behavior, and on this teacher's reflections can be used as a thinking tool (Guðmundsdóttir, 2001) on at least two levels. At the research level, this study can be used to provide new insights and understanding, and then to generate more research on the topic. At the classroom level, this research can serve as a thinking tool for teachers to

---

<sup>4</sup> All names in this study are pseudonyms.

reflect upon and change their own practices or to inspire discussion and dialogues about teaching children with withdrawn behavior.

There are several reasons why this study is important. The interaction between a teacher and children with withdrawn behavior takes place in the classrooms, but as will be seen in the next chapter, few qualitative classroom studies have addressed this area. According to previous research in the field, withdrawn behavior and its consequences can be a negative and demanding experience for the children who struggle with it (e.g., Coplan & Rubin, 2010; Lund, 2008, 2012; Rubin, Coplan & Bowker, 2009). Hence, more knowledge is needed about how schools and teachers can adapt their teaching so children with withdrawn behavior can experience better school days. Moreover, a number of studies into children's behavior have focused on how teachers deal with children with extroverted and aggressive behavior in the classroom (e.g., Abikoff et al., 2002; Thurber, Heller & Hinshaw, 2002). With such a focus, the diversity of children the teacher deals with every day disappears. Given that the teacher role, as mentioned above, involves numerous tasks, lifting up the teacher's voice and highlighting the nuances in her role that seem to be invisible in research and debates, provide further justification for a study like this. Given that withdrawn behavior in school appears to be a neglected topic in research, it is important to turn our attention towards it.

There are two parts of this thesis. The first part, entitled "Theoretical and Methodological Framework," comprises Chapters Two to Five. In Chapter Two, I review research on the topic of withdrawn behavior for the period from 2003 to 2013.<sup>5</sup> Chapter Three, deals with socio-cultural theory, which is the theoretical framework of the study. The theory presented is mainly outlined by Vygotsky, who emphasized the importance of the individual's context in the processes of learning and development (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's thoughts about the teacher as one of the most important persons in children's learning and development in school, provide an important perspective in this thesis as seen in the theory chapter. In Chapter Four, I bring the methodological approach into focus. This chapter involves a description of narrative research, and I argue that a narrative research approach is one way of grasping the teacher's actions, thoughts, and reflections. In this chapter, I also give a description of the research process

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<sup>5</sup> The review chapter was written at the end of 2013. Some research has been added to this field during 2014 and 2015, but in these studies, no extraordinary findings were revealed about the categories I present in the review chapter. At any rate, new studies have confirmed earlier findings.

of this study. Chapter Five presents an overview of Alice's current context as a teacher. This chapter comprises a description of today's inclusive education, since its overall purpose and curriculum constitute the framework within which Alice has to act from day to day as a teacher. In this chapter, I also give descriptions of the classroom in which Alice works, the group of children in the class, the team in which Alice works and the daily routines in the class. These descriptions will provide a more comprehensive picture of the research context.

Part Two of the thesis, entitled "Findings and Discussion," comprises Chapters Six to Nine. In Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight, I present the themes I have found that characterize Alice's current teaching practice in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior. Each of these themes is illustrated by means of narratives and analyzed in light of relevant theory. Chapter Six has the title "Seeing children with withdrawn behavior." Chapter Seven is entitled "Slowness in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior," and Chapter Eight is "Challenging children with withdrawn behavior." The last chapter in this thesis, Chapter Nine, provides a brief account of the study and a final discussion on the three themes presented in Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight. Chapter Nine, and the thesis as a whole, comes to a close with some thoughts on prospective research on the topic of withdrawn behavior in ordinary classroom activities. Moreover, I present some ideas about useful knowledge that may be included in teacher education in light of the findings in this study. References and appendices follow.



**Part One:**  
**Theoretical and Methodological Framework**



## Chapter 2

### A Review of Research on Children with Withdrawn Behavior

Even though classroom studies of the interaction between teachers and children with withdrawn behavior appears to be lacking in the field, the topic of withdrawn behavior has been explored from multiple perspectives, first of all with roots in psychology. In educational research it appears that withdrawn behavior has drawn more attention recently, even though more research on this topic is needed. In this chapter I will present a review of research in the field withdrawn behavior. The chapter commences with a description of the process used to search for relevant research on children with withdrawn behavior that led me to twelve studies I find relevant for my thesis. I will describe how I categorized the twelve studies before I present them in tables and discuss their findings. Each category will be concluded with a summary of the presented research. The chapter will conclude with some final comments on the reviewed studies.

#### The Process of Selecting Relevant Research

The search and selection process comprised three steps, from A to C. Step A involved searching for relevant research in databases connected to BIBSYS Ask.<sup>6</sup> For this I used the search words/strings *withdrawn behavior, shy/shyness, silent, introvert, reticent, solitude, education, teacher, classroom, relation, and including*. The search was restricted to studies ten years back in time, that is research conducted between 2003 and 2013. This period was chosen so that the latest research and findings would be included. Other criteria in this step were that the research had to examine children or adolescents, and

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<sup>6</sup> BIBSYS Ask is a search engine that is freely available to everyone on the internet. NTNU (my university) has subscriptions to several databases through BIBSYS Ask. BIBSYS Ask can be used to search for documents, articles, journals, and books in databases, such as: Library, ForskDok publications, ForskDok projects and BIBSYS Portal.



the articles had to be published in scientific peer-reviewed journals. Moreover, the articles had to be published in English, based on empirical data, and had to be conducted in Norway or countries comparable to Norway, such as the European countries, Northern America countries or New Zealand.<sup>7</sup> Only research based on education or psychology was considered in this step, but psychological studies with a clinical perspective were rejected. This process generated 29 articles. Step B in this process involved a thorough reading of each of the 29 articles, and out of these 29 articles 12 were found to be relevant for this thesis.

Step C, which started after the sorting of the relevant studies, involved the analysis of the research material. This analysis was aimed at finding similarities in the studies, and these resulted in classification of three categories based on the focus in the studies. The categories have been labelled: “withdrawn behavior and mental health,” “withdrawn behavior and friendship” and “withdrawn behavior in the context of school”. Each category has four articles.

### **Presentation of the Selected Research**

As mentioned above, each category is examined in a table, where the tables present the year of publication, the researchers/authors, the country where the study was conducted and the title of the article. The tables also provide a brief account of each study’s research methodology (participants and measures), its aim(s), and the main findings. The discussion following the tables attempts to give a richer account of each article and the findings from each study.

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<sup>7</sup> In countries in Asia, such as China, Korea and Indonesia, it has been found that children produce more anxious, sensitive, reticent, and socially restrained behavior than countries in the West, such as North America (e.g., Chen et al., 1998). Moreover, in Asian countries, withdrawn behavior is interpreted and understood in a different way than in the Western part of the world. In the Western sphere, withdrawn behavior is interpreted as socially immature, and as a sign of incompetence and being psychologically maladaptive, whereas in Asian countries withdrawn behavior is valued and encouraged, and regarded as being socially competent, as children with withdrawn behavior are seen as the ones who hold back personal desires in favor of the interests of the collective (e.g., Chen et al., 1998). I argue that the countries I defined as comparable to Norway have a common interpretation, understanding, and perspective on withdrawn behavior.

### **Withdrawn Behavior and Mental Health**

Table 2.1: Withdrawn behavior and mental health

Year, researchers/authors, country, title of the article	Participants and methodology	Aim of the study/article	Findings in the study (relating to withdrawn behavior and mental health)
2012 Karevold, E., Ystrom, E., Coplan, R. J., Sanson, A. V., & Mathisen, K. S. Norway Title: A Prospective Longitudinal Study of Shyness from Infancy to Adolescence: Stability, Age-Related Changes, and Prediction of Socio-Emotional Functioning	Participants: 921 children observed from age 1.5 to 12.5 Methodology: Parental reporting (questionnaires) five times during the study and children self-reporting (questionnaire) at 12.5 years old. Quantitative study	The aims of the study were first to examine the stability of shyness, second to study the development of shyness trajectories (p. 1167)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anxiety, depression, and social skills</li> <li>- Shyness increases over time</li> <li>- Shyness is associated with anxiety, depression, and social skills</li> </ul>
2010 Coplan, R. J., & Weeks, M. Canada Title: Unsociability in Middle Childhood: Conceptualization, Assessment, and Associations with Socioemotional Functioning	Participants: 186 children Participants were between 6 and 8 years of age Methodology: Multisource assessment, mothers' ratings (questionnaire), Teachers' ratings (questionnaire), individual interviews with the children Quantitative study	"The goal of this study was to explore the socioemotional adjustment for unsociable (versus shy) children in middle childhood" (p. 105)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shy children lonelier</li> <li>- Peer difficulties</li> <li>- Like school less than their peers</li> <li>- Peer and gender difference</li> </ul>
2009 Findlay, L. C., Coplan, R. J., & Bowker, A. Canada Title: Keeping it all inside: Shyness, internalizing coping strategies and socio-emotional adjustment in middle childhood	Participants: 355 children in the 9-11 age group Methodology: survey of shyness and social functioning through questionnaires Quantitative study	Explore links between shyness, coping strategies, and social functioning in middle childhood (p. 47)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Loneliness, anxiety, lower self-worth, lower well-being</li> <li>- Less social anxiety among boys</li> <li>- Lower peer self-concept</li> <li>- Internalizing coping strategies</li> </ul>
2004 Goodwin, R. D., Fergusson, D. M., & Horwood, L. J. New Zealand Title: Early anxious/withdrawn behaviours predict later internalising disorders	Participants: 1265 children (21 year longitudinal study) Methodology: questionnaires, parental interviews, teacher reports, self-reporting, psychometric assessment etc. Mixed-method study	Study the connection between anxious/withdrawn behavior at 8 years old and the development of internalizing problems later in life/adolescence (p. 874)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anxious/withdrawn behavior associated with social phobia, anxiety, depression</li> </ul>

Karevold, Ystrom, Coplan, Sanson and Mathiesen (2012) had two main goals in their study. First, they wanted to “examine the stability of shyness from infancy to early adolescence” (p. 1167), second, they wanted “to explore the impact of developmental trajectories of shyness (across different age periods) on socio-emotional functioning in early adolescence” (p. 1167). They observed 921 children from 1.5 to 12.5 years of age. The participants (children and their families) were recruited from areas in Norway that were found to be representative of the country. In this period of time the parents of the participants answered a questionnaire about their child’s shyness on five points. At age 12.5 the children also completed questionnaires about their own social skills, anxiety, and depression. The study started with 939 participants when data collection began, and as mentioned above, 921 participants completed the study. The sample of participants comprised predominantly middle-class ethnic Norwegians. Findings from this study indicate a correlation between shyness and anxiety, depression, and social skills. A change in anxiety and depression over time was also identified among children with shy behavior, and the study finds that this shyness may increase over time. The findings in this study also indicate that the ratings for shyness can be stable over time, but that the level of shyness increases with the children’s age. At lower ages, the shyness level seems to increase more compared to early adolescence, but the researchers also maintain that in early childhood the individual variations are greater. However, the finding of increasing shyness with age is not linear as it rather appears to be connected to children’s developmental periods. According to this study, a high level of shyness in early childhood appears to predict “lower levels of social skills and higher levels of anxiety symptoms” (Karevold et al., 2012, p. 1172).

Coplan and Weeks (2010) had three aims in their study. First of all they wanted “to investigate whether shyness and social disinterest are indeed distinct constructs in middle childhood” (p. 109). They also wanted “to explore the socioemotional adjustment of unsociable (versus shy) children during this age period” (p. 109). Their third goal was “to examine the potential moderating role of child gender” (p. 109). A total of 186 children between 6 and 8 years of age participated in the study. The data collection comprised maternal ratings, teacher ratings, and interviews with individual children. The first data collection took place near the start of the school year, while the second was concentrated at the end of the school year. At the beginning of the school year the mothers answered questionnaires dealing with child shyness, social disinterest, and

child temperament. At the end of the school year the mothers answered questionnaires about child behavior, and the teachers also filled in a questionnaire dealing with child behavior and interaction with peers. Children were also interviewed at the end of the school year based on a questionnaire on loneliness and social dissatisfaction. The findings from this study indicate that children with shy behavior are lonelier than their peers, and also indicate that children with shy behavior have more difficulties with their peers than other groups, where a gender difference is also evident. Boys with shy behavior seem to have more difficulties with their peers than girls with shy behavior. Furthermore, it appears that children defined as having shy behavior in this study like school significantly less than their classmates, and in this case there also appears to be a gender difference as well. Girls with shy behavior report that they like school more than boys who are defined as shy. In contrast to the longitudinal study presented above, the findings in this study indicate that shyness does not increase during middle childhood where shyness is rather found to be a stable “condition” (Coplan & Weeks, 2010). In this case it is important to take the research period into consideration; the Norwegian study is longitudinal while the Canadian paper is based on a short-term study.

Findlay, Coplan and Bowker (2009) aimed through their study “to determine whether or not self-reported shyness would demonstrate similar relations with internalizing difficulties for middle-childhood-aged children” (p. 49). They also wanted “to investigate the relation between shyness and various coping strategies” (p. 49). A total of 355 children in school years four and five participated in the study. The participants were recruited from 16 public schools in eastern Ontario in Canada. They answered questionnaires dealing with self-reported shyness, coping strategies, social anxiety, loneliness, and general well-being. The results from this study indicate a correlation between shyness and loneliness, anxiety, lower self-worth, and lower well-being. The study also finds that children with shy behavior seem to have a more negative self-concept than their peers, and that children with shy behavior are more likely to use internalized coping strategies, which are often mentioned as strategies with an emotional focus, such as distancing from or avoiding a problem or challenge. Internalized coping may also include blaming oneself and being unsure of what to do in certain situations. Moreover, internalizing difficulties may also be seen as a mediator between shyness and loneliness, social anxiety, and negative affectivity. The findings from this study indicate that “shy children’s coping styles may partially account for some

of the negative outcomes associated with shyness” (Findlay et al., 2009, p. 52).

The aim of the study by Goodwin, Fergusson and Horwood (2004) was “to examine the association between anxious/withdrawn behaviours at age 8 and the development of internalising disorders in adolescence and young adulthood (ages 16-21)” (p. 874). The data were collected over a 21-year period where the groups of participants have been studied at birth, four months, age one, 16 years, 18 years, and 21 years. The data material was collected through parental interviews, teacher reports, self-reporting, psychometric assessments, medical records, and police records. The data collection focused on mental health, anxiety disorders, depression, withdrawn behavior, gender, sexual and physical abuse, changes of parents and family life, and attentional problems. The researchers find a clear association between early anxious/withdrawn behavior and later internalizing disorders among young adults. According to their study, early anxious/withdrawn behavior may lead to social phobia, anxiety disorders, depression, and panic. The study also indicates conditions in childhood that are associated with developing anxiety/withdrawn behavior in early childhood, such as sexual abuse, physical abuse, parental anxiety disorders, parents’ depression, and attentional problems in early childhood. Even if the researchers controlled these factors for the potential influence of the increased risk for anxiety and internalizing disorders, the association between early withdrawn behavior and later anxiety and internalizing difficulties was still significant. In this case, the researchers claim that “(...) independently of childhood psychosocial context, children with early anxious/withdrawn behaviour are an at-risk population for later internalising disorders” (Goodwin et al., 2004, p. 880).

#### *Summary of the Reviewed Studies*

In the reviewed studies in this category there appears to be a link between withdrawn behavior and anxiety, and between withdrawn behavior and developing depression. According to the presented studies, children with withdrawn behavior in childhood are at risk of developing anxiety and depression later in life. It also appears that shyness and mental suffering may increase over time and the presented studies indicate a correlation between withdrawn behavior, problems with peers, loneliness, and social anxiety.

The presented studies in this category reveal possible negative outcomes of withdrawn behavior in childhood, and indicate that these problems or negative outcomes may increase with age. These findings provide some knowledge on withdrawn

behavior that might be useful on the classroom level. Teachers who deal with children with withdrawn behavior need knowledge about the outcome of this type of behavior to deal with these children in an appropriate way, to adjust their teaching to include these children, and to adjust their own expectations for children who struggle with withdrawn behavior.

### ***Withdrawn Behavior and Friendship***

Table 2.2: Withdrawn behavior and friendship

Year, researchers/authors, country, title of the article	Participants and methodology	Aim of the study/article	Findings in the study (relating to withdrawn behavior and friendships with peers)
2013 Coplan, R. J, Rose-Krasnor, L., Weeks, M., Kingsbury, A., Kingsbury, M. & Bullock, A. Canada Title: Alone Is a Crowd: Social Motivations, Social Withdrawal, and Socioemotional Functioning in Later Childhood	Participants: 367 children 9 to 12 years of age Methodology: Children (self-reporting, questionnaire) Parents (self-reporting and parental reporting, questionnaires) Observations (researchers) Quantitative study (observations are made through a scale with predetermined categories) Quantitative study	Test a conceptual model that links social approach, social withdrawal, avoidance motivation and peer difficulties to three subtypes of withdrawn behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Peer problems</li> <li>- Internalizing problems</li> <li>- High level of social anxiety</li> <li>- Indices of depression</li> </ul>
2012 Fredstrom, B. K., Rose-Krasnor, L., Campbell, K., Rubin, K. H., Booth-LaForce, C., & Burgess, K. B. USA Title: Brief report: How anxiously withdrawn preadolescents think about friendship	Participants: 827 children, mean age 10.33 years. Methodology: Friendship nominations Child behavior Interviews Quantitative study	Examine differences in how anxiously withdrawn preadolescents and their classmates understand friendship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understanding of establishing friendships</li> <li>- Lower understanding of closeness, intimacy, and termination</li> <li>- Immature resolution to solve problems</li> </ul>
2006 Rubin, K.H., Wojslawowicz, J.C., Rose-Krasnor, L., Booth-LaForce, C., & Burgess, K.B. USA Title: The Best Friendships of Shy/Withdrawn Children: Prevalence, Stability, and Relationship Quality	Participants: 169 children defined as shy/withdrawn, 163 children in the control group Mean age 10.33 years. Methodology: teacher reports (questionnaires), friendship nominations, questionnaires for children Data collected on two occasions, with a 7-month interval	Examine the mutual best friendships of shy/withdrawn children, prevalence, stability, characteristics of the best friend, and quality of these friendships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More excluded and victimized</li> <li>- Have a mutual best friend</li> <li>- With mutual best friend more popular and sociable</li> <li>- Best friend more shy, victimized, and excluded</li> <li>- Stable friendships</li> <li>- Lower quality in friendships</li> </ul>

	Quantitative study		
2006, Burgess, K. B., Wojslawowicz, J. C., Rubin, K. H., Rose- Krasnor, L., & Booth- LaForce, C. USA Title: Social Information Processing and Coping Strategies of Shy/Withdrawn and Aggressive Children: Does Friendship Matter?	Participants: Children in fifth and sixth grade, where 78 were defined as shy, 76 aggressive and 85 children were in the control group. The participants were drawn from a larger study on relationships (see above) Methodology: Sociometric friendship nominations and questionnaires Quantitative study	The aims of this study were to "examine attributions, emotional reactions, and coping strategies of shy/withdrawn and aggressive girls and boys" (p. 371). Another aim was to examine whether these cognitions differ within friendships	(I only provide the findings according to shy/withdrawn children from this study) - Socially wary and anxious - Shy children blame themselves for their social problems - Friendship protects

The primary goal of Copland et al.'s (2013) study was "to test a conceptual model linking social approach and avoidance motivations, socially withdrawn behaviors, and peer difficulties in later childhood and to compare the socioemotional functioning of different subtypes of withdrawn children (shy, unsociable, avoidant)" (p. 861). A total of 367 children aged 9-12 years participated in the study. Participants were recruited from seven public schools in southeastern Ontario in Canada. The data material for the study was collected over six months during one school year and comprised parents' demographic information and ratings of children's socioemotional functioning, children's self-reporting on social motivation (e.g., shyness, activities outside school, emotions, loneliness, victimization), and observation of the participants in the playground and during lunch at school. The findings indicate that neither the children's age nor the parents' education level is associated with shyness or preference for solitude. It was also found that shyness and preference for solitude are associated with withdrawn behavior and that this behavior is associated with peer difficulties and loneliness. The study also identified strong associations between shyness and internalizing problems such as social anxiety and depression. This study focuses on three types of withdrawn behavior (see above), and indicates that all subtypes of withdrawn behavior may lead to difficulties with peers in later childhood (Coplan et al., 2013).

The aim of Fredstrom et al. (2012) in their study was "to examine differences in friendship understanding between anxiously withdrawn preadolescents and their more typical classmates" (p. 452). A total of 827 children with a mean age of 10.33 years participated in the study. The participants were recruited from eight elementary schools in mid-Atlantic U.S.A. The participants nominated their two "best" friends (same-sex) in

their class. The data collection also included questionnaires for rating classmates' behavior, while laboratory interviews on the establishment of friendships and friendship closeness were also conducted. The findings from this study indicate that anxious withdrawn preadolescents and their peers have a similar understanding of how friendships are formed, and similar to their peers, withdrawn preadolescents have the knowledge and skills to form a friendship. The researchers find a correlation between withdrawn behavior and lack of understanding of closeness and intimacy in friendships, as well as lower understanding of why some friendships terminate. In this case, the researchers indicate that preadolescents with withdrawn behavior may not be the terminating party, and therefore lack knowledge about this. The researchers also point out that preadolescents with withdrawn behavior have an immature way of solving problems in their friendships (Fredstrom et al., 2012).

The study of Rubin, Wojslawowicz, Rose-Krasnor, Booth-LaForce and Burgess (2006) aimed "to compare the best friendships of withdrawn children with those of control children in terms of prevalence, best friends' characteristics, stability, and relationship quality" (p. 146). The study included 827 children (mean age 10.33 years) recruited from eight public elementary schools. The data collection was divided into two phases. Phase one took place at the beginning of the school year, while phase two took place near the end of the school year. Twenty-four participants dropped out of the study between the two data collection phases. Rubin et al. (2006) found in their study of friendships, stability, and quality that children interpret peers who are defined with withdrawn behavior as more withdrawn than other children. In this study it is found that children with withdrawn behavior are more excluded and victimized by peers than the control group. A positive finding in this study is that children with withdrawn behavior seem to be just as likely as other children to have a mutual best friend, and that these friendships seem to be quite stable across time. This study also indicates that the best friend of a child with shy/withdrawn behavior is more shy, victimized, and excluded than the best friend in the control group. When it comes to quality in friendships, this study identifies those friendships where one of the children shows withdrawn behavior as having lower quality and a lower score than friendships in the control group, especially when it comes to such variables as fun, help/guidance, and caring. The researchers find that the friendship might be protective, as mentioned above, and associate this with their finding that children with withdrawn behavior with



one mutual best friend are more popular, sociable, and less excluded than children with withdrawn behavior without a best friend. According to this study, friendships seem to be important for every child's development, adjustment, and social competence, and the study also indicates that friendship can be a protective factor when it comes to victimization from peers (Rubin et al., 2006).

Burgess, Wojslawowicz, Rubin, Rose-Krasnor and Booth-LaForce (2006) primary goal was to "examine the attributions, emotional reactions, and coping strategies of shy/withdrawn and aggressive girls and boys" (p. 371). Another aim of this study was to "examine whether such social cognitions differ within the relationship context of friendship" (p. 371). A total of 827 children participated, where 78 were defined as shy/withdrawn, 76 as aggressive, and 85 were in the control group. The participating children in this study were part of a larger study, and were recruited from eight public elementary schools and three middle schools. The data collection comprised sociometric friendship nominations and nomination of classmates according to behavior (e.g. shyness, aggression). Burgess et al. (2006) found that friendship has a protective function, and that it might adjust children's behavior. The researchers link this to the various strategies the children use in different situations, comparing situations with familiar and unfamiliar peers. The study also finds that children with withdrawn behavior feel more socially wary and anxious in situations with unfamiliar peers than in situations with familiar peers. Another finding is that children with withdrawn behavior are more likely to rely on avoidance coping strategies compared to their peers. Solving problems has been pointed out as an important factor according to quality in friendship, and children who endorse avoidance strategies might experience difficulties in peer interaction. According to this study, friendship can function as a moderator of children's adjustments. This study also highlights peer difficulties according to withdrawn behavior and the avoidance coping strategies as less attractive in friendships (Burgess et al., 2006).

#### *Summary of the Reviewed Studies*

Even if there are many studies on this topic, it would appear that there are some recurrent findings in all of them. One of these is that children with withdrawn behavior seem to be at a higher risk than other children of being excluded and victimized by their peers. In addition to this, it is also found that withdrawn behavior may lead to maladjustment which in turn may lead to difficulties in establishing friendships. On the

other hand, studies also reveal that children with withdrawn behavior understand how to establish friendships, and that they are just as likely as their peers to have a best friend.

The findings outlined in the reviewed studies provide some knowledge about how relationships between children with withdrawn behavior and peers can function. For teachers who deal with children with withdrawn behavior, it is relevant to have knowledge on how children with this behavior can be included in their peer group, and also to know what may support children with withdrawn behavior in forming and maintaining friendships. When it is claimed that friendships are significant for children's development, it is then important that teachers and the school facilitate for the establishment of friendships.

### ***Withdrawn Behavior in the Context of School***

Table 2.3: Withdrawn behavior in the context of school

Year, researchers/authors, country, title of the article	Participants, methodology	Aim of the study/article	Findings in the study (relating to children with withdrawn behavior and their relationship to their teacher)
2011 Coplan, R. J., Hughes, K., Bosacki, S., & Rose-Krasnor, L. Canada Title: Is Silence Golden? Elementary School Teachers' Strategies and Beliefs Regarding Hypothetical Shy/Quiet and Exuberant/Talkative Children	Participants: 275 elementary school teachers participated, 241 female and 34 male teachers Methodology: Questionnaires after vignettes describing hypothetical children (shy, exuberant, and average) Quantitative study	"The primary goal of the presented study was to examine elementary teachers' strategies, attitudes, and beliefs regarding hypothetical shy (i.e. quiet), exuberant (i.e. overly talkative), and average (i.e. typical) children" (p. 939)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teachers deem shy children as less intelligent</li> <li>- Shyness associated with poorer academic abilities</li> <li>- Teachers report most negative consequences for shy children</li> </ul>
2010 Arbeau, K. A., Coplan, R. J., & Weeks, M. Canada Title: Shyness, teacher-child relationships, and socio-emotional adjustment in grade 1	Participants: 169 children participated (1st grade) Methodology: Mothers' report (questionnaires), teachers' report (questionnaires, only female teachers), questionnaires/interviews with children Quantitative study	"The goal of the presented study was to explore the moderating role of teacher-child relationships in the relation between shyness and socio-emotional adjustment in early elementary school" (p. 259)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shy children tend to have a dependent relationship</li> <li>- Dependent relationship is linked to adjustment difficulties</li> <li>- Shyness associated with school avoidance</li> </ul>
2008 Lund, I. Norway Title: 'I just sit there': shyness as an emotional and behavioural problem in school	Participants: 10 girls with shyness in the school context Age 14-18 years old Methodology: Phenomenological research interviews, in-depth interviews Qualitative study	The focus in this study was on the girls' life-world meaning, and their experiences in relation to their teachers and classmates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A feeling of being invisible to others</li> <li>- Use of different coping strategies</li> <li>- Want to be challenged</li> </ul>

2006 Rudasill, K. M., Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., Justice, L. M., & Pence, K. USA Title: Temperament and Language Skills as Predictors of Teacher-Child Relationship Quality in Preschool	Participants: 99 children participated (from 4.7 to 5.6 years of age) 13 teachers (female) Methodology: Questionnaire for teachers Transcription of children's language skills Quantitative study	"The purpose of this study was to determine how children's temperament and language skills predict teacher-child relationship quality" (p. 271)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Association between shyness and dependent teacher relationship</li> <li>- Teacher effect stronger than child's characteristics</li> </ul>
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The aim of Coplan, Hughes, Bosacki and Rose-Krasnor's (2011) study was to "examine elementary school teachers' strategies, attitudes and beliefs regarding hypothetical shy (i.e., quiet), exuberant (i.e., overly talkative), and average (i.e., typical) children" (p. 939). Participants in this study were teachers in elementary school, and 275 teachers from 23 to 64 years of age took part. The participating teachers worked in schools across Canada. Data were collected through web-based questionnaires that included child behavior vignettes the teachers had to answer questions on. Furthermore, the questionnaires included questions about teaching strategies and beliefs, and the participating teachers also had to report their own shyness. According to the findings in this study, the teachers deem children with withdrawn/shy behavior as less intelligent than their classmates, and they also attribute poorer academic abilities to children with withdrawn behavior. It would appear that the teachers rank the average/typical child with higher academic abilities. Taking the teachers' shyness into consideration, it seems to influence how the teachers deem children with withdrawn behavior. Shy teachers seem to deem children with withdrawn behavior as more intelligent than their colleagues who are defined as not being shy. Another finding in this study is that teachers rate each behavior according to negative consequences for the children, rating shy behavior as the behavior with the most negative consequences for the child, compared to other types of behavior. When it comes to social-learning strategies, the study reveals that teachers are less likely to respond with high-powered strategies (e.g. direct intervention) for children with withdrawn behavior compared to other children (Coplan et al., 2011).

Arbeau, Coplan and Weeks's (2010) study aimed "to explore the moderating role of the teacher-child relationship in the relation between shyness and socio-emotional adjustment in early elementary school" (p. 259). A total of 169 children in first grade participated in the study. All participating children were pupils in one of 14 public schools in eastern Ontario, Canada, and all the participating teachers were female. The

data material was collected at three points in time over the school year: near the beginning of the school year, in the middle, and near the end. The participating children's mothers completed a questionnaire dealing with child shyness a few weeks after school started, while the participating teachers completed a questionnaire about teacher-pupil relationships in the middle of the school year. The third data collection session involved individual interviews with the children based on structured interviews that focused on child adjustment, school well-being, loneliness, and social dissatisfaction. The findings from this study present a link between shyness and a dependent relationship with the teacher. Anxiety and peer exclusion also appeared to be associated with a dependent child-teacher relationship. In the article the researchers defined a dependent relationship as one where the child clings to the teacher and seems to prefer interaction with the teacher rather than classmates. Furthermore, a dependent relationship may decrease the child's possibilities to explore her or his classroom and interact with peers, two factors that seem to be important for children's learning and development. Other findings from this study associated shyness with school avoidance, especially for children who have a dependent relationship with their teacher. All this notwithstanding, the study indicates that a close relationship between the teacher and children with withdrawn behavior has several positive outcomes for the child, such as less anxiety, less adjustment difficulties, less school avoidance, and less peer difficulties. The researchers find that a close teacher-child relationship is a protective factor for the child (Arbeau et al., 2010).

Lund (2008) focused on the participant's life-world meaning, and their relation to their teachers and classmates. Ten girls from 14 to 18 years of age participated in the study, all of them defined with shy behavior in the school context. The participants were recruited from six schools in the southern part of Norway. Data collection comprised qualitative interviews with each participant. One finding from this study is that all participants experienced themselves as invisible to others. They want to participate, be invited, feel that they belong in the group, have contact, and communicate, but they need help from others, especially the teacher, to manage this. The participating girls also describe their own shyness as active isolation, which is a description of rejection from peers. Another finding highlighted in the study is that the girls use different coping strategies, such as nodding, murmuring, and smiling instead of talking. They pretend to be occupied and that everything is all right, or they evade social situations to avoid being

rejected. The researcher claims that this can be connected to a protective self-presentation, and that shy behavior is a way to protect oneself from negative evaluation and rejection. The researcher also finds that all ten participants want to be challenged by their teachers. This finding is closely connected to the finding that these young people experience themselves as invisible to others, and points out that these girls want to be included, involved, and visible to others. Furthermore, they want to talk and participate in class and in group work, even though they are aware that their teachers and peers may interpret their behavior as rejecting them. Three of the participants blame themselves for their situation, whereas seven focus on the teacher's responsibility according to their situation at school. The self-blame may be connected to a negative self-image which is often present in persons with silent behavior, and the blaming of others seems to correspond with the finding 'invisible to others'. The participants blame their teachers for avoiding, repudiating, not taking responsibility, and for being unable to act (Lund, 2008).

The overarching goal of the research of Rudasill, Rimm-Kaufman, Justice and Pence (2006) was to "determine how children's temperament and language skills predict teacher-child relationship quality" (p. 271). Ninety-nine children, from 4.7 to 5.6 years of age participated in this study. The children that participated in the study were defined as at-risk for school failure (out of sociodemographic indicators). Thirteen teachers participated in the study. Data collection included questionnaires completed by the teachers that included items about children's behavior, and the child-teacher relationship. Language samples from play sessions between each participating child and a researcher also constituted part of the data material. The researchers found a correlation between shyness and a dependent relationship to the teacher, and this correlation became stronger with higher language complexity among the children. According to Rudasill et al. (2006), the teacher effect is more important in the relationship between teacher and child than the characteristics of the children. In other words, how the teacher handles each child's challenges, either language or shyness, has greater consequences for the quality of the relationship than how the child behaves and acts in the classroom. Furthermore, it appears that the individual differences between the teachers in this study may influence the negative aspects of the relationship with the children more than the positive aspects. For example, it appears that behavioral inhibition and language complexity rather predict negative aspects than positive aspects

of the teacher-child relationship, and that this predicts either a relation marked by conflict or by dependency, being addicted to the teacher effect. "It appears that teacher-child relationship quality is especially vulnerable to negative affect from teachers" (Rudasill et al., 2006, p. 288).

#### *Summary of the Reviewed Studies*

When summarizing the reviewed studies in this category it appears as though the teacher has an influential role when dealing with children with withdrawn behavior. Rudasill et al. (2006) found that the teacher has greater influence on the relationship than the characteristics of the child. Furthermore, the reviewed studies indicate that teachers who are not shy themselves deem children with withdrawn behavior as less intelligent than their classmates and have lower expectations for children with withdrawn behavior. The studies also indicate that children with withdrawn behavior tend to have a dependent relationship to their teacher, with all the consequences that may lead to (Arbeau et al., 2010; Rudasill et al., 2006). Lund (2008) found that children or young people with withdrawn behavior want to participate more in class and group work, but they need support from their teacher to take this step and manage it.

The reviewed research provides knowledge on children with withdrawn behavior and their relationships with the teacher. According to these studies, the teacher effect seems to have a stronger influence on the teacher-child relationship than the characteristics of the individual child. Although these studies provide some knowledge on teacher's dealings with children with withdrawn behavior in the context of school, an examination of what happens on the classroom level, the teachers' actions, practices, and reflection on their own practices in relation to children with withdrawn behavior, seems to be lacking.

#### **Final Comments**

In this review of 12 articles about children with withdrawn behavior, 11 of the studies use the quantitative research method, whereas one study has a qualitative approach. It appears as though few studies in this field use qualitative research methods. When speculating on why this is the case it might be useful to take a historical retrospective look at research on withdrawn behavior. This type of research has increased since the late 1980s. Nevertheless, it is still a relatively new and unexplored research field. The

initial phase of research on withdrawn behavior appears to involve a comparison of extroverted versus withdrawn behavior, and as extroverted behavior has been studied for a long time and from various perspectives, it appears that research on this topic has a predominance of quantitative studies. Research on withdrawn behavior might have been connected to these studies, and because of this a qualitative approach has not been used from the beginning. Moreover, it appears that a predominant amount of research within the field of withdrawn behavior has been conducted in North-America: Canada and the USA. Few studies found in my search were conducted in other countries, with the exception of three studies, two from Norway and one from New Zealand. This may be at least partly due to the fact that this is a relatively new research field.

When searching for studies on children with withdrawn behavior, some researchers seem to recur in this field, specifically Kenneth H. Rubin and Robert Coplan. Their work is also predominant in this review. Rubin is a pioneer and leader of research in this field as he started research on withdrawn behavior in the late 1960s. Because of his long experience in this research field, several other researchers refer to his work in their studies; hence, some of Rubin's articles are "key articles" in the field. Coplan is one of Rubin's former students, and also one of the leading researchers in this field. And, as mentioned above, research on withdrawn behavior has mostly been conducted in the USA and Canada, where Rubin and Coplan work.

Even though research on withdrawn behavior has increased over the last few decades, it still appears that teachers need more expertise in how to interact with children with withdrawn behavior and how to deal with this behavior in more beneficial ways. More research is needed if we are to develop this expertise, and especially research with a qualitative approach is needed, where teachers' thoughts and reflections can be illuminated. It is absolutely necessary to gain insight into and understanding of how the teacher can adjust her teaching, and interact with and manage the variety of children in the classroom. To obtain this insight it is necessary to observe this interaction where it happens, in the classroom. The results presented in the category "withdrawn behavior in the context of school" point out the importance of the teacher, how the teacher can influence the relationship to children with withdrawn behavior, and the expectations for these children's skills and potential. We need to study and observe teachers' actions in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior and interview the

teacher's to gain insight into and understanding of their reflections on their own practices if we are to learn about what can be done on the classroom level.





## Chapter 3

### Theoretical Framework

Over the last few decades, a number of theories and perspectives have been developed with the aim of explaining social interaction, learning, and development among humans. Vygotsky's (1978, 1986) theories on the formation of the human mind are valuable when trying to explain and understanding social processes, as well as individual learning and development. To better understand Alice's approach to dealing with children with withdrawn behavior (i.e., her actions and reflections), Vygotsky's theories, in particular his highlighting of the teacher as fundamental in children's learning and developmental processes, constitute valuable tools that can give us deeper insight.

Vygotsky's (1978, 1986) work and theories have inspired researchers from all over the world, and Daniels (2001) refers to four main approaches developed within Vygotsky's theories: *cultural-historical activity theory*, *situated learning*, *distributed cognition*, and *socio-cultural theory*. Cultural-historical activity theory focuses on social activity and the individual's development within that social activity (Engeström, 1999; Leontév, 1981). Situated learning focuses on situated activity in the learning process (Lave & Wenger, 1991), whereas distributed cognition focuses on shared activity and cognition (Cole & Engeström, 1993). The fourth approach, socio-cultural theory, maintains that the cultural and historical contexts are fundamental in learning and development. Moreover, *mediated action* is highlighted as a key part of an individual's learning and development (Wertsch, 1984, 1991, 2007). Mediated action means that humans do not interact with their surroundings directly, but rather the interaction is mediated or occurs by means of, for example, language (*semiotic* mediation) or signs (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978).

Socio-cultural<sup>8</sup> theory forms the overall theoretical framework of this study. While socio-cultural theory comprises several themes, I have chosen to concentrate on

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<sup>8</sup> I am aware that Vygotsky seldom, if ever, used the term "socio-cultural." According to Wertsch, del Río, and Alvarez (1995), in his original writings (in Russian), Vygotsky used the terms "socio-historical" and "cultural-historical," as he emphasized the historical dimension. However, it is argued that "socio-cultural" is a more appropriate term to use in the West (Wertsch et al., 1995).

three crucial themes that are relevant to this study. In the following I will explore the themes: “The relationship between the social context and the individual,” “The relationship between speech and thought,” and “The relationship between learning and development.” In this discussion I will primarily refer to Vygotsky and his work, although some of Wertsch’s development of Vygotsky’s work will also be introduced. Furthermore, others who have expanded on Vygotsky’s ideas will be considered. Before closing the chapter, I will add some comments on methodological issues associated with Vygotsky’s concerns about research.

## **Crucial Themes in Vygotsky’s Socio-Cultural Theory**

### ***The Relationship between the Social Context and the Individual***

According to Vygotsky (1978), the individual learns and develops through the social, cultural, and historical contexts that he or she participates in. These contexts are not static, but are constantly growing and changing; hence, individuals’ learning and development are also constantly growing. Who people are depends on their experiences in social contexts. To understand a person, it is therefore necessary to understand that person’s history and context. Vygotsky (1978) argued that the historical context will be passed from one generation to the next, and that the experiences of one generation will influence and be a part of the next generation’s experiences, behavior, and background. To emphasize this, he borrowed a notion from Blonsky (1884-1941): “behavior can be understood only as the history of behavior” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 8). In Vygotsky’s (1978) focus on human development, he claims that both the past and the present must be “seen in the light of history” (p. 64), and he states that to understand human mental functions, it is fundamental to understand where and how the individual grows. In his argument for a developmental approach, or a genetic analysis, he argues that the focus must be placed on the process that forms human beings:

(...) we need to concentrate not on the *product* of development but on the very *process* by which higher forms are established. *To study something historically means to study it in the process of change* (...). To encompass in research the process of a given thing’s development in all its phases and changes – from birth to death – fundamentally means to discover its nature, its essence, for “it is only in movement that a body shows what it is” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 64-65, emphasis original).

Vygotsky focused especially on what he called the *higher psychological functions*,<sup>9</sup> a term that is used to refer to such mental functions as memory, attention, conceptualization, reading, and writing. How these processes affect development is essential in Vygotsky's work, and he found that these functions are affected by social, cultural, and historical contexts (Vygotsky, 1978). Development, understanding of concepts, and abstract and logical thinking are key factors within all cultural and historical contexts. The higher psychological processes develop gradually, and due to the mutuality between the individual and his/her context, the development of higher mental processes cannot be understood without first understanding the social and cultural contexts that the individual is a part of; thus, Vygotsky maintained that learning happens twice:

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, *between* people (*interpsychological*), and then *inside* the child (*intrapsychological*). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57, emphasis original).

The *interpsychological function* refers to social interaction, while the *intrapsychological function* refers to the process whereby the child internalizes experiences. What the child experiences on the interpsychological level will become part of that child's intrapsychological function through the *internalization process*. Vygotsky (1978) stated:

*An operation that initially represents an external activity is reconstructed and begins to occur internally. (...) An interpersonal process is transformed into an intrapersonal one. (...) The transformation of an interpersonal process into an intrapersonal one is the result of a long series of developmental events* (p. 56-57, emphasis original).

The internalization process is the main process involved in the development of the higher psychological functions (Vygotsky, 1978). Learning and development require that an individual interacts with other individuals, and through this interaction, the individual can develop his/her higher mental functions. According to Vygotsky (1978), the internalization process is an active process, and it appears to involve concurrent social and individual processes. However, these processes are not identical. The child transforms and internalizes the social activities at the individual level, and the transformation and internalization processes develop higher mental functions (Vygotsky, 1978). Taking all this into account, it is necessary to point out that Vygotsky

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<sup>9</sup>The terms "higher psychological functions" and "higher mental functions" are used synonymously in Vygotsky's work, and in this thesis.

(1978) explained the internalization process as a transformation from external activity to internal activity, in effect, rejecting the idea that learning and development are only coping processes. The transformation process requires a relationship between the external activity and the internal activity, whereby the social or external experiences lay the foundation for the internal mental process. How an individual develops is influenced by the life he or she lives. This echoes back to Vygotsky's thoughts on learning and development being connected to social interaction, and is closely connected to how he considered development to be a spiral: "Development, as often happens, proceeds here not in a circle but in a spiral, passing through the same point at each new revolution while advancing to a higher level" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 56).

### ***The Relationship between Thought and Speech***

Vygotsky (1978) considered language to be essential for social interaction, learning, and development: "speech becomes an essential part of the child's cognitive development" (p. 32). Language is a tool for developing the higher mental functions, and Vygotsky (1978, 1986) considered language to be both a *psychological* and *cultural* tool. As a psychological tool, language helps the child to master his/her surroundings, to interact with his/her surroundings, and to complete tasks. In addition to claiming that there is inter-dependency between speech and practical and abstract intelligence, Vygotsky (1978, 1986) also found that children use speech to support themselves in mastering social relations and that speech is important for their problem solving. As a cultural tool, he says that language develops through social interactions and that through language human beings can share knowledge and thoughts with others. Similar to development in general, Vygotsky (1978, 1986) maintained the importance of social interactions in developing language, and that all development starts at the interpsychological level.

When Vygotsky (1978, 1986) focused on language, he claimed that it mediates communication between people; hence, language is a tool for communication. On the interpsychological level, language mediates communication, either orally or in written form. At this level, the individual can interact with others, as well as express feelings and thoughts. On the intrapsychological level, the individual structures and develops his/her thoughts; in other words, language mediates intrapsychological processes. A child can use language to explore his/her own thoughts, correct his/her behavior, and master his/her surroundings:

The specifically human capacity for language enables children to provide for auxiliary tools in the solution of difficult tasks, to overcome impulsive action, to plan a solution to a problem prior to its execution, and to master their own behavior. Signs and words serve children first and foremost as a means of social contact with other people (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 28).

In his research, Vygotsky (1978) found that even small children use speech to respond to others during social interactions, and that in their response to objects, language, both verbal and non-verbal, mediates action. To gain a deeper understanding of the connections between thought and language, Vygotsky's terms *social*, *egocentric*, and *inner* speech are useful.

Communication is considered to be a primary function to develop, and thus Vygotsky (1986) writes: "The earliest speech of the child is therefore essentially social" (p. 36). The development of speech starts in the social context. It is through social interactions that the child's language develops, and the language the child uses in interactions with others is what Vygotsky (1986) defined as social or external speech. After some time, the child also starts to talk with him/herself, which is what Vygotsky (1986) refers to as egocentric speech. In his investigation and analysis of egocentric speech, Vygotsky (1986) criticized theories that consider this type of speech to be "useless." On the contrary, Vygotsky (1986) maintained that egocentric speech "(...) does play a specific role in the child's activity" (p. 31), and that children use egocentric speech to support themselves when they are completing a task, trying to understand a situation, or when planning their activities. Thus, egocentric speech is a tool used in problem solving and planning: "They search verbally for a new plan, and their utterances reveal the close connection between egocentric and socialized speech" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 27). Egocentric speech is also fundamental for inner speech, and both types of speech have a common function: children use them as tools in their problem solving (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Egocentric speech acts as a bridge between social and inner speech. Inner speech involves, to a large extent, thinking in pure meanings.

Speech development is an internalization process, whereas "(...) language thus takes on an *intrapersonal function* in addition to its *interpersonal use*" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 27, emphasis original). The intra-personal function means that children use language to guide themselves, to solve a problem for example, while inter-personal use refers to use of language in communication with others. In addition, this internalization process is a process of socialization for the child, since the child uses language in social interactions with others (Vygotsky, 1978). Moreover, the development of thought is

determined by language; thus, the child's development of thought and language overlaps:

Schematically, we may imagine thought and speech as two intersecting circles. In their overlapping parts, thought and speech coincide to produce what is called verbal thought. Verbal thought, however, does not by any means include all forms of thought or all forms of speech. (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 94).

According to Vygotsky (1978), thought and language are woven together. Moreover, language is essential in all situations the child finds him/herself in, and so Vygotsky (1978) concludes that:

*the most significant moment in the course of intellectual development, which gives birth to the purely human forms of practical and abstract intelligence, occurs when speech and practical activity, two previously completely independent lines of development, converge* (p. 24, emphasis original).

The essence of all social interactions between people, and the starting point for social life, are found in language (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Without language, it would be hard to have a social life, to learn and develop, and to develop higher mental processes. "Verbal thought is not an innate, natural form of behavior, but is determined by a historical-cultural process and has specific properties and laws that cannot be found in the natural forms of thought and speech" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 101).

### ***The Relationship between Learning and Development***

Vygotsky (1978) argued that learning and development do not start when the child enters school, but are rather ongoing processes that start from birth: "Learning and development are interrelated from the child's very first day of life" (p. 84). He acknowledged the learning and development that occurs before the child starts school, despite stating that the learning at school "introduces something fundamentally new into the child's development" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 85). To discover the child's "actual relations of the developmental process to learning capabilities" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 85), he claimed that at least two developmental levels must be determined. He referred to the first level as *the actual developmental level* (Vygotsky, 1978). This points to what the child has already mastered, or what learning and skills the child has already internalized. Thus, tasks on this level will not lead to the development of higher psychological functions. However, Vygotsky (1978) also acknowledged the actual developmental level, which is the level the child has reached, or the "actual developmental level defines functions that have already matured" (p. 86). He also refers

to the actual developmental level, that there is a “(...) level of development of a child’s mental functions that has been established as a result of certain already *completed* developmental cycles” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 85, emphasis original). Nevertheless, he was critical of only focusing on the child’s current skills, as well as critical of testing approaches that only dealt with this, because a focus on the actual developmental level only explains what the child has actually mastered, not the child’s potential for further development.

In terms of learning and development, he argues that what is interesting is what the child will be able to manage, which Vygotsky (1978) introduced as *the level of potential development*. This level refers to what the child has the potential to master with support from a more competent other, such as a teacher. Vygotsky (1978) adds: “(...) what children can do with the assistance of others might be in some sense even more indicative of their mental development than what they can do alone” (p. 85). Support from the teacher can be considered as critical to the child’s ability to reach his/her potential level of learning and development. The level of potential development was one focus of Vygotsky’s work, and this led to the concept of *the zone of proximal development*, which he defined as:

*It is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers* (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86, emphasis original).

His interest in learning and development as a “social affair,” led him to maintain that the teacher and a good education were vital to the successful establishment of the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). This underlines his positive understanding of the function of both school and education. To achieve a higher mental level, the child needs tasks that lead him/her to reach his/her potential developmental level. Vygotsky (1978) claimed that with guidance from a more capable other, the child’s potential developmental level would become the child’s actual developmental level: “(...) what a child can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow” (p. 87).

The zone of proximal development is one of the most discussed concepts in Vygotsky’s work, and it is a frequently used term in education in the West. Yet, Vygotsky himself did not use the concept that much, nor did he describe in detail how the teacher can support in the child’s zone of proximal development. However, the term *scaffolding* (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) is often used in connection with the theory of the zone of



proximal development. Scaffolding points to the learning process and the teacher's<sup>10</sup> responsibility to adjust the teaching so that each child can use his/her knowledge, ability, and experiences to develop. The aim of the scaffolding process is not to simplify the tasks, but rather to support the child in his/her learning and development so that he/she can experience mastery and development within safe frames, and furthermore, to inspire and encourage the child. Wood et al. (1976) describe the process as follows:

(...) it involves a kind of "scaffolding" process that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts. This scaffolding consists essentially of the adult "controlling" those elements of the task that are initially beyond the learner's capacity (...) (p. 90).

One aim of the scaffolding process is to help the child achieve goals beyond his or her efforts alone. Wood et al. (1976) point out six features of the scaffolding process: *recruitment*, *reduction in degrees of freedom*, *direction maintenance*, *making critical features*, *frustration control*, and *demonstration or modelling*. Within the recruitment feature, the teacher's task is to inspire the child's interest, capture the child's attention, and get the child focused on the task or activity. The teacher recruits the child or a group of children and gets them interested in the activity, task, or solving a presented problem. In the second feature, reduction in degrees of freedom, the teacher adjusts her assistance according to the skills of the individual child or group of children. If the teacher's initial prompts fail, she must find another way to assist the child or children. As part of this feature, the teacher also gives the child corrective feedback to assist in the activity or to solve a problem or task. In the third feature, direction maintenance, the teacher's task is to guide the child in the right direction (i.e., the direction of the goal) by motivating and helping the child to focus and by maintaining his or her interest in solving the problem. The next feature, making critical features, requires that the teacher shows the child what is relevant for the task or activity. Moreover, the teacher can use various scaffolding devices to point this out to the child or the group of children. The teacher points out and explains essential information for the child. In terms of frustration control, Wood et al. (1976) note: "Problem solving should be less dangerous or stressful with a tutor than without" (p. 98). This belief notwithstanding, there is also a risk in the scaffolding process that the child will become dependent on the teacher. The

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<sup>10</sup> Wood et al. (1976) use the term "tutor" about the person who scaffolds the learner. As this is a study on the classroom level I prefer to use "teacher" instead of "tutor", except from in quotations.

key is to provide enough support to the child to enable him/her to make progress on his or her own. In this regard, Moen, Nilssen, and Weidemann (2007) write:

Because the optimal level of support is different for each pupil, teachers must be well acquainted with their pupils' needs and with the task or problem in question. Pupils vary in the amount of assistance they need and in how close or proximal the next skill level is for them (p. 278).

Wood et al. (1976) point out how the teacher must allow children to do as much as possible by themselves, but assist when they encounter difficulties or fail. The sixth and final feature, demonstration or modelling, deals with the teacher's demonstration or modelling of how the presented task can be completed: "(...) the tutor is "imitating" in idealized form an attempted solution tried (or assumed to be tried) by the tutee in the expectation that the learner will then "imitate" it back in a more appropriate form" (Wood et al., 1976, p. 98).

Through scaffolding, the teacher supports and assists the child in the learning and development processes. The main goal is that the child can manage the task or a similar task without teacher support at some later point. Even if the scaffolding process is described as having six steps, they are not distinct from each other, but rather they have overlapping transitions between them (Wood et al., 1976). This means that in some learning situations not all of the six steps are relevant (i.e., the child might only need assistance at one of the stages). Furthermore, to provide the essential and "correct" support and assistance, it is necessary that the teacher has knowledge about the child, as well as the subject, and also about the group of children. As Wood et al. (1976) claim, the teacher must be aware of when the child needs support and when he/she can manage the task on his or her own. It is the teacher's responsibility to withdraw when the child is safe and ready to complete the task independently. If the teacher does not withdraw and allow the child to manage the task or try on his/her own, the child can become too dependent on the teacher. As discussed in Chapter Two, children with withdrawn behavior may tend to be dependent on their teacher (Arbeau et al., 2010; Rudasill et al., 2006).

According to Wells (1999), the dialogical aspect in the zone of proximal development and scaffolding is crucial. Wells (1999) claims that in the supportive and scaffolding process it is crucial that the teacher listens to and has a dialog with the child, as he writes: "The zpd is not a context-independent attribute of an individual; rather it is constructed in the interaction between participants in the course of their joint

engagement in a particular activity” (p. 333). Moreover, he maintains that the teacher has to be responsive to the child’s current goals, and must assist the child in a way that makes it possible to achieve these goals and in a way that increases his or her further participation. The learning and developmental process will be most successful when it is mediated by interaction, an interaction characterized by mutual respect, trust, and concern (Wells, 1999).

### **Vygotsky’s Concerns about Research**

Vygotsky (1978) considered the individual and the context to be fundamentally connected, and his thoughts on the interaction between the individual and the social context also appear in his writings relating to research. He criticized research that focused on individuals isolated from their natural contexts and surroundings, and he emphasized that it is important to have knowledge of the individual’s social and cultural context if we are to understand his/her actions and reflections (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). He claimed that by studying the individual in isolation, the researcher would lose sight of the whole and, thus, would only study isolated components that act differently when alone than in the natural setting that they experience and grow in (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). In his warning about the danger of isolating the individual from his/her context, Vygotsky (1986) used an example from chemistry about the relationship between water and the elements in water (hydrogen and oxygen) when isolated from each other:

It may be compared to the chemical analysis of water into hydrogen and oxygen, neither of which possesses the properties of the whole and each of which possesses properties not present in the whole. The student applying this method in looking for the explanation of some property of water – why it extinguishes fire, for example – will find to his surprise that hydrogen burns and oxygen sustains fire. These discoveries will not help him much in solving the problem. Psychology winds up in the same kind of dead end when it analyzes verbal thought into its components, thought and word, and studies them in isolation from each other. In the course of analysis, the original properties of verbal thought have disappeared (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 4).

Vygotsky (1978, 1986) was concerned with the question of *units of analysis*. He maintained that an analysis must include all the parts that make the whole, both the individual and his/her surroundings. Furthermore, he was interested in breaking down the complex whole into structural elements, without losing sight of the context and connections. Thus, units of analysis must include both the individual’s actions and the context that each action occurs in. Wertsch (1984), among others, has developed Vygotsky’s ideas and included mediated actions as meaningful and useful units of

analysis when studying human beings. Bearing the socio-cultural approach in mind, units of analysis should involve human actions mediated by tools and signs (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). According to this view, language, action, and interaction all play a fundamental role in understanding and gaining insight into the research subject's<sup>11</sup> everyday life. Useful units of analysis must therefore capture the context and connection that an action occurred in (Guðmundsdóttir, 2001).

Based on Vygotsky's (1986) critique of research that breaks the complex whole into elements and his emphasizing of units of analysis, Zinchenko (1985) has sketched seven criteria according to Vygotsky's (1986) concept of unit of analysis. In the following, I will present three of these criteria that are particularly relevant for this study. According to Zinchenko (1985), one criterion is that a unit cannot be a diffuse whole of an element, something that is "combining everything with everything" (p. 97). Rather, it must have an integrated structure. The second criterion is that the unit must also be a living part of the whole; hence, it cannot be broken down any further and still remain as a living unit. The third criterion relevant to this study is that the units of analysis must document the investigation of the relationship between a process and human development. In terms of this criterion, Vygotsky's (1986) emphasizing of the individual's history is relevant, as he maintained that we cannot know a person without knowing his/her history. Additionally, Moen (2006) claims that narratives contain these criteria; narratives are not static or reductionist as they are not broken down into small elements, rather a narrative enables the researcher to study the research subject, its development and context. Thus, narratives are looked upon as living parts of the whole (e.g., Guðmundsdóttir, 2001; Moen, 2006). Moreover, research that takes a narrative approach offers the opportunity to define researchable units of analysis that incorporate the criteria outlined above (Guðmundsdóttir, 2001).

Within the framework of Vygotsky's (1986) theory it is argued that research utilizing a narrative approach is able to use narratives as units of analysis (Guðmundsdóttir, 2001; Moen, 2006). The stories that occur in a narrative research process are defined as mediated actions and involve the individual's cultural and social setting, the individual's voice, and other voices in the research context (Illingworth, 2009; Moen, 2006). According to Moen (2006), narratives make it possible to study

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<sup>11</sup> I have chosen to use "research subject" instead of the more traditional term "informant" because, within the narrative approach, the research subject has a collaborative role, rather than acting as only an informant. Another term that I could have used is "research participant."

teachers and their practices, as well as their social, cultural, and institutional settings. In this study of Alice and how she deals with children with withdrawn behavior in the classroom, it has proved important to identify appropriate units of analysis from the classroom that mediate the teacher's actions. In the collected data there are several narratives from the classroom. I have fixed some of them into texts which I presents as units of analysis according to the themes presented in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. According to Ricoeur (1971), fixing action and speech into written texts is interpretation. First of all, we interpret what we observe. Secondly, fixing the observations into written text is also an interpretation. And finally, those who read or hear the narratives or written stories interpret them as independent to the situation in which they occurred (Ricoeur, 1971). The narratives I have chosen to illustrate each theme have been selected from a number of possible narratives in the data that can illustrate the teacher's practices when it comes to the particular theme in focus. Even though each narrative is unique – it has happened and will never happen again in exactly the same way – it is also a general illustration of this teacher's practices. The units of analysis presented in Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight are narratives from the teacher's classroom that incorporate dealing both with children exhibiting withdrawn behavior and other children in the class, the latter being the socio-cultural setting where this takes place.

## Chapter 4

### Methodological Approach

The overall research question in this study is how the elementary school teacher deals with children with withdrawn behavior in ordinary classroom activities, and how she reflects upon her own practices. As the overall research question determines the research approach in a study, this particular study employs a qualitative research approach. A qualitative research approach may take different directions. Merriam (2009), for example, distinguishes between five approaches within the qualitative traditions: *phenomenology*, *ethnography*, *grounded theory*, *narrative analysis* and *critical research*. The aim in using phenomenology is to describe the experience of a phenomenon or a happening, whereas ethnography aims to obtain more know-how and understanding of social or cultural processes. Grounded theory aims to develop a theory based on empirical data or experiences (Merriam, 2009). In a narrative analysis, or a narrative study, the focus is on how an individual experiences the world, and the narrative researcher collects these experiences and writes narratives about them (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Guðmundsdóttir, 2001; Merriam, 2009; Moen, 2006; Reissman, 2008). All these approaches can be classified as interpretive (Merriam, 2009). Critical research aims to criticize and challenge, and seeks to critique, change, and understand society (Merriam, 2009). In addition to these three approaches *case studies* (e.g., Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995) are within the qualitative tradition. The aim of a case study is to describe and interpret a program or system that is bounded in time and space.

A common aim within qualitative inquiry is to accentuate the research subject's voice, the *emic perspective* (Erickson, 1986). To achieve insight into and understanding of the research subject's life, interpretations, understandings, intentions and surrounding world, the researcher has to understand the research subject's perspective (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Merriam, 2009). In the attempt to ensure an

emic perspective an *inductive* research approach is preferred (Merriam, 2009). As Merriam (2009, p. 15) puts it: “(...) researchers gather data to build concepts, hypotheses, or theories rather than deductively testing hypotheses (...)” Using the collected data material from her<sup>12</sup> work in the field, the researcher combines and systematizes the information to find what characterizes or what is typical for the phenomenon or setting in question. This systematization can take the form of themes, categories or concepts, and the findings are inductively derived from the data material (Merriam, 2009).

In qualitative research, a study has to be richly described (Merriam, 2009). To ensure rich descriptions data can be collected by means of several sources, such as interviews, observation notes, video recordings, artefacts, and documents. Geertz (1973) points out the importance of *thick descriptions* of the research subject and the research context as they allow the findings to be transferred to other likely settings. Moreover, through thick descriptions the gap between the researcher’s knowledge and “public” knowledge can be reduced (Geertz, 1973). Connected to the importance of giving rich descriptions of the research subject’s context is the importance of mentioning that the individual and the individual’s context are closely woven together and cannot be divided (Vygotsky, 1978).

In the previous chapter I presented socio-cultural theory based on Vygotsky works (1978, 1986), and with this overall theoretical framework in mind, I will define my study within narrative research. Stories or narratives are fundamental and significant in human lives. People use narratives to organize, systematize, and share their experiences and thoughts, and to make meaning of their social world (Bruner, 1986; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Hermansen, Løw & Petersen, 2013; Squire, Andrews & Tamboukou, 2008). To gain insight into and understanding of the teacher’s actions and reflections in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior I have collected her experiences of and reflections on the topic in question. In this chapter I will present an account of narrative research before I describe the research process of this study.

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<sup>12</sup> As I am female, I will refer to the researcher as she/her.

### **A Narrative Research Approach**

The narrative approach has increasingly been used in studies of educational practices and to grasp teachers' experiences and perspectives on their own practices. It is claimed that using narrative research makes it possible to capture both the individual and the contextual perspectives (e.g., Moen, 2006). Moreover, narrative research are studies of how human beings experience the world, and like other humans, teachers are storytellers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). According to Moen (2006), there are three basic claims about narrative research. The first is closely connected to language and the fact that people have always been storytellers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). According to Polkinghorne (1988), there is no such thing as people without narratives, and through people's stories, it is possible to interpret and understand their experiences, intentions and understanding of their lives and surroundings. In research this is known as a narrative approach (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Guðmundsdóttir, 2001; Moen, 2006; Riessman, 2008). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) argue that education is a construction and reconstruction of individual and social narratives, and teachers are storytellers and characters in their own and others' stories. Therefore, narrative research in studies of educational practice can be useful in exploring how teachers experience the world and how they reflect upon their experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005).

In addition to organizing and systematizing experiences, thoughts and meanings into narratives, the stories people tell depend on their past and present experiences, values, addressees, and when and where the stories are being told. This is the second basic claim about narrative research (Moen, 2006). A person's narratives change their form as the person gains new experiences and tells his/her stories in other settings and to other people (Moen, 2006). Collected narratives are, thus, a consequence of the time and place they were collected in (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Moreover, they are bound to the moment they occurred in, but when they are written as texts they become independent narratives (Ricoeur, 1971). Independent narratives can be interpreted and analyzed by multiple people, including those who read them or hear about them. Thus, the written narrative can be relevant in other contexts (Moen, 2006).

By extension of the interaction and mutuality between the individual and the context, it is claimed that a teacher's stories are personal, formed by her knowledge, values, feelings and the intentions of her teaching (Moen, 2006). On the other hand, a



teacher's stories are also collective and are formed by the school traditions and the social, cultural and historical contexts that the teacher is a part of (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002; Guðmundsdóttir, 1997/2011). By studying one teacher and listening to her stories, reflections and thoughts, the researcher also studies the school traditions and the social, cultural and historical context, and this is often referred to as being *polyphonic*, one voice has reflections from several other voices, values, histories, cultures, and experiences (e.g., Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002; Moen, 2006, 2011b). Thus, the research subject's stories, reflections and teaching are an interaction between her<sup>13</sup> past and present experiences and future voices (Moen, 2006, 2011b). This is the third basic claim about narrative research, narrative researchers use voices instead of voice, as the stories are also collective stories (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002; Moen, 2006). The three presented basic claims on narrative research are closely connected to the aspects presented in Chapter Three: the relationship between the social context and the individual, the relationship between thought and speech and the relationship between learning and development, in addition to Vygotsky's theories of intermental and intramental processes.

A person's narrative is important in interpreting and understanding his/her actions and intentions in the social world (Bruner, 1986). A narrative approach makes it possible to study the individual in his or her natural context without sacrificing the individual or the context (e.g., Moen, 2006). It also enables researchers to understand an individual's experiences, both past and present, and the world he/she lives in (Illingworth, 2009). With the narrative research approach as a tool, I can observe the teacher's actions in the specific socio-cultural context (Moen, 2011), and reveal the multidimensional layers of her practices to gain insight and understanding. As Squire et al. (2008) put it when they talk about a narrative research frame: "(...) we are able to see different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning, to bring them into useful dialogue with each other, and to understand more about individual and social change" (p. 1).

Even though one aim of this study and narrative studies in general is to have an emic perspective and highlight the research subject's voice, this study also reflects my voice - narrative research reflects the researcher's voice, which is based on her past and

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<sup>13</sup> As mentioned in the introduction I had no gender criteria. Since I ended up with a female research subject I will therefore refer to the research subject as "her/she" in the following.

present experiences, values, theories, and perspectives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Bearing this in mind, the narratives and findings in this study can be defined as a web of the voices of Alice and me. To strengthen the emic perspective and ensure that Alice's voice is the main voice in this study, the researcher's role has to be explained.

### ***The Researcher's Role in Narrative Research***

The researcher can have different roles or approaches to the field work. The researcher's role can range between the two extremes of a complete participant (insider) and a complete observer (outsider) (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 2009). An insider is described as a member of the group whose observing will not disturb the everyday activities, whereas an outsider does not take part in the activities and can hide behind a one-way mirror or be a "fly on the wall" (Merriam, 2009). A researcher is not required to be purely one of these or the other, she can switch between the insider and outsider roles (Creswell, 1998), or take on a role somewhere in the middle, what can be defined as a *participating observer* (Merriam, 2009). The participating observer observes the group's ordinary activities in its ordinary setting, and through her identified role she gains access to a wide range of information from the group.

The qualitative researcher is seen as the "*primary instrument for data collection and analysis*" (Merriam, 2009, p. 15, emphasis original) and, thus has a primary role in a qualitative study. Bearing this in mind, it is claimed that simply by her presence the research in the field influences the ordinary activities that she is studying. However, according to Frankenberg (1982, in Merriam, 2009), a researcher is not able to change established practices or actions in the field through her presence. Even though the social settings may change during the initial observation period, after a while they will return to normal (Merriam, 2009).

During the interview, observations, and video recordings, the researcher influences the research. By interviewing and later transcribing, the researcher participates in constructing the narrative data (Riessman, 2008). In the interviews the researcher asks the questions, listens to the research subject's stories, and, as described above, the research subject chooses her story based on who is listening and when and where the story-sharing takes place (Moen, 2006; Reissman, 2008). The researcher is, furthermore, the one who selects which narratives should be presented in the report, and this selection is also a part of an interpretive process (Reissman, 2008). I chose the narratives to illustrate Alice's practices according to the themes presented in Chapters

Six, Seven and Eight, and, as mentioned above, I selected these narratives from a large number of possible narratives, hence the selection of narratives was a process of interpretation (Moen, 2006).

During the data collection, I had the role of a participating observer; I closely observed and interacted with Alice and the children in the classroom without participating in their activities. My intention was to observe Alice's actions without disturbing or interfering with the activities in the classroom. When the children approached me, I talked to them and interacted with them, but I remained aware that I had a researcher role. I was concerned that if I interacted too much with the children I would lose the focus of my research and therefore be distracted from observing and following Alice's movements in the classroom.

### ***Reflexivity in Narrative Research***

The researcher knows why she interprets the way she does, but to build a bridge between herself, the research subject, and new knowledge she has to be *reflexive* in the research process (Etherington, 2006). Reflexivity in research "refers to the capacity of researchers to acknowledge how their own experiences and contexts (which are usually fluid and changing) inform the process and outcomes of inquiry" (Etherington, 2006, p. 81). Reflexivity can be defined as a space between subjectivity and objectivity, and it is a dynamic process between the researcher's self-awareness, the research subject, and the information that the researcher gives according to her research process (Etherington, 2006). A reflexive researcher describes her decisions, actions, and interpretations in all phases of the research process. By being reflexive, the researcher makes her research process transparent according to the values, experiences, and beliefs that may influence it and its findings (Etherington, 2006). According to Etherinton (2006):

Reflexive research encourages us to display in our writing the full interaction between ourselves and our participants and our relationship with the topic of inquiry and the data collected, so that our work can be understood, not only in terms of *what* we have discovered, but *how* we have discovered it (p. 82, emphasis original).

This points to the importance of rich and detailed descriptions of the research process to enable the readers to follow the researcher's interpretations and see how she carries out the research and interprets the findings (Merriam, 2009).

The researcher and the research field or research topic are often closely interwoven. Actually, the researcher and the research material are so interdependent that they cannot be separated from each other in qualitative research. As the researcher

is a human being, she only has access to an interpreted research field (Thornberg & Fejes, 2009). This means that the researcher interprets what she observes in the classroom and hears in the interviews and cannot give an uninterpreted description of the field. The researcher's background, understanding, interests and values will only give an interpretation of reality. As the researcher influences and "colors" the research in all phases, her reflection on the findings must include how they may be influenced by the researcher's role, subjectivity, and perspective. This is referred to as the researcher's reflexivity. By being reflexive and transparent in the research process, and the reporting, the researcher clarifies her interpretations and understanding and, in this way enables the reader to understand her interpretations (Merriam, 2009).

As the researcher conducting this study, I was the one collecting and interpreting the data. The aim was to enter the field with an open mind, not as an objective observer and objective interviewer, but as a sensitive, watchful and listening researcher (Merriam, 2009). To achieve this, I had to be aware of my previous experiences, values, and background, of what I observed and heard, of how I interpreted and understood the data material, and of how I described it in order to enable the reader to understand my interpretations. An autobiographical summary of me as the researcher can be found in Appendix I A, and my relation to the research subject is described in Appendix I B. A description of the research and analyzing processes now follows to enable the reader to understand *what* I have found in my data material and *how* I found it.

## **The Research Process**

### ***Selection Criterion***

To be selected as a research subject in this study, a potential subject had to fulfill the requirements of a criteria list. Because the focus of this study is how the teacher deals with children with withdrawn behavior, an obvious first criterion was that the research subject had to be a class teacher with at least one child with withdrawn behavior in her group or class. Secondly, she had to teach children between the ages of six and ten. I preferred this age group because earlier studies indicate that children with withdrawn behavior are accepted by their peers in the early school years but seem to be rejected later in life (e.g. Rubin et al., 2006). When children with withdrawn behavior are accepted by their peers in social relationships, teachers may interpret the behavior as

nothing to be concerned about. I wanted to study a teacher who was attentive to withdrawn behavior even if the child in question was socially accepted by the peers. Another reason for studying the topic in question in the lower grades is the fact that young children seldom have diagnoses of any kind. I wanted to focus on the topic in a class where the child with withdrawn behavior was not labelled with a diagnosis; I also preferred that the child should not be seen as having any special needs due to any individual decision that provided any extra resources.

The third criteria was that the research subject had to have at least 10 years of teaching experience since the process of learning to teach takes time (Carter, 1995) and I wanted to study someone who had some experiences of this process. The fourth criterion for participating in this study was that the participating teacher had to have earlier experience teaching children with withdrawn behavior and, furthermore, had to be interested in her work and in the topic of children with withdrawn behavior. The fifth criterion was that she had to be willing to let me, the researcher, enter her classroom for observations and video recordings for a long period of time. The sixth criteria on my list was that the research subject had to be willing to cooperate with me during the data collection by participating in interviews, and allowing me to record and transcribe the interviews, and after this period she had to be willing to discuss the data and my interpretations. Implicit in the above-mentioned criteria is that the research subject had to be a capable teacher on both the academic and social levels. She also had to enjoy her work, to be capable of reflecting on her own practices, to enjoy talking about her teaching and to be capable and willing to talk about her own experiences from her past and present teaching. The seventh criterion was that the children's parents had to allow me to make observations in the classroom.

### ***Gaining Access***

In my search for a research subject I presented my project to a special education teacher at a school where I had previously worked.<sup>14</sup> This teacher turned out to be a *gatekeeper* (Creswell, 1998) as she helped me to gain access to the research field. I met her at the school to present my project and, after listening to my project outline, she told me that three of the school's teacher's had children with withdrawn behavior in their classes. I told her that the teacher in the study should have at least 10 years' experience as a

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<sup>14</sup> After I completed my teacher training and master's degree in special education, I worked at three different schools for shorter and longer terms. This school was one of the schools at which I have worked.

teacher, and this eliminated one of the three teachers from consideration. One of the other two teachers was available at the moment, and the teacher who served as my gatekeeper, presented my study to her. This teacher showed interest in my project and wanted to hear more about it. I have decided to call this teacher "Alice", and she satisfied all the criteria presented above. Alice was class teacher on the second grade. Even though I had worked at this school some years earlier, I had never worked in a team with Alice, nor been in her classroom, or collaborated with her. We had not been friends, only colleagues, although I talked to her now and then during breaks, like I talked with my other colleagues. I remember the positive light in which she always talked about her pupils.

After my first meeting with Alice, I talked to the school's principal, informing her about the project and asked for her permission to interview Alice and collect data in her classroom. The principal allowed me to undertake the project (Appendix II A). In the second meeting with Alice, I told her more about my project and I also talked to the two other teachers on her team to inform them about my research. These teachers also gave me permission to conduct the project. In the third meeting, we discussed the information letter that would be sent to the children's parents, scheduled interviews between Alice and me, and discussed when it would be appropriate to start the field work. At this meeting Alice signed her consent form to participate (Appendix II B).

Alice had a conversation with the parents of one child in her class, a child with withdrawn behavior. I have decided to call this child "Sara." Alice told them about my research project and they wanted to have a meeting with Alice and me. At this meeting, I gave them oral and written information about my study (Appendix II C). I asked them to consider whether they would allow me to video record Sara and take observation notes focusing on Alice's interactions with Sara. I emphasized that my focus would be on Alice and how she dealt with children with withdrawn behavior. Moreover, I told them that I would interview Alice about her experiences of teaching children with withdrawn behavior. The parents found the study interesting and wanted to sign their consent form during our meeting (Appendix II C). The parents wanted a meeting with Alice and me after the data collection to hear what I observed and to hear my thoughts on my observations (met. 111612).

Before I entered Alice's classroom I informed the rest of the children's parents in an information letter, after which they could grant or refuse permission for their child to

be video recorded (Appendix II D). Furthermore, I obtained the approval of the Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD) (Appendix II E). During the data collection period I attended a parents evening where I met the parents and told them about the study. I answered questions from the parents during the meeting, during the break and after the meeting. I also thanked them for allowing me to conduct my study in their children's classroom. The other parents in the class did not know about my special focus on Alice's dealing with Sara; they were informed on a more general basis. Nor did the children know that I was focused on Alice's dealing with Sara.

### ***Entering Alice's Classroom***

When I entered Alice's classroom for the first time I noticed that the atmosphere was warm and friendly. I observed that she talked to the children with a calm voice and that she smiled at them and they smiled back at her. I observed that Alice and the children sang together, laughed together and discussed topics together. I saw that Alice's class was composed of various types of children, some whom were talkative and some of whom were more withdrawn. Some struggled with reading, while others struggled with their concentration. Alice dealt with the individual children in different ways, and it was interesting to see how she differed in her interactions with them. I intuitively felt that this classroom could be an interesting arena in which to conduct my study. I knew that I would need to be open to grasp what was happening, as it appeared that many interesting teaching practices were going on in this classroom. My first observations, in addition to the meetings that I had with Alice, gave me the feeling that she would have some important stories to tell about dealing with children with withdrawn behavior. Based on my observations and the meetings with Alice, I felt that her classroom would be an interesting place to observe and conduct the field work and that she would be easy to collaborate with. During our first meetings and the first observation a sense of equality was established between us; this sense was enhanced by the fact that we had previously been colleagues (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

In the beginning of the first observation I introduced myself to the children. I told them that I wanted to study how Alice works and that I would write notes about her actions and, later, video record what she did in the classroom. One of the children said, "So you're going to be a teacher?" (obs. 032712). I told them that I already was a teacher, but I wanted to study how Alice worked as she had been a teacher for many years and had valuable experience. After this, the children did not seem to pay me any attention or

to be distracted by my presence. A more detailed description of Alice's classroom and the research context is provided in Chapter Five.

### ***Collecting Data in Alice's Classroom***

The data collection took place from March 2012 until May of the same year.<sup>15</sup> In this period, I collected data by means of observations, interviews, video recordings, my research diary and documents as weekly plans for the class. Interviews with Alice (audio files and transcriptions), video recordings and observation notes from the classroom, transcribed conversations and a research diary constitute the data corpus. The combination of observations notes, video recordings, and interviews "allows for a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated" (Merriam, 2009, p. 136).

### ***Observations and Video Recordings<sup>16</sup>***

During the observation, I wrote 24 pages of observation notes by hand and conducted seven hours and 27 minutes of video recordings involving 42 sequences of recorded video material from Alice's classroom. The observations and video recordings were used to gain insight into Alice's actions according to the topic in question, and as a source from which to grasp her reflections about her own practices. The observation and video recordings in the classroom were conducted as *unstructured observations* (Gillham, 2008). Collecting data by means of unstructured observations meant that even though I knew that I was looking for what Alice did in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior, I could not predict what I would find. As one aim of my research was to capture Alice's reflections on her own practices in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior, the observation notes and video recordings were important because they helped me to obtain these reflections. Showing her the video recordings from her classroom made it possible to hear her thoughts on her own practices. It can be easier to reflect upon our own actions when we look at them on a screen rather than when we simply think about how we acted in a particular situation. With a common focus on the screen and the selected video recordings I could ensure that Alice and I saw the same situations and in this way prevent misunderstandings in terms of the situations I wanted to focus on in the interviews. Moreover, video recordings and observation notes can provide a wider framework for the research (Gillham, 2008). The observation notes and

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<sup>15</sup> I went back in September and November of the same year to participate in two formal meetings. The first one was between Alice and her colleagues (met. 090612). The second was a meeting between Alice, Sara's parents, and me (met. 111612).

<sup>16</sup> I used a Panasonic HDC-SD40 video-camera on a tripod.



video recordings from the classroom became important data, in addition to the interviews with Alice. The observation sources also framed some of the dialogs with Alice in that sequences from the video recordings were starting points for her reflection on her own practices.

In the first phase of the observation I only made observation notes as a tool for observation in the classroom. The observation notes from this phase include descriptions of the participants in the classroom, detailed descriptions of the classroom, direct quotations and my comments and immediate interpretations. In the second phase of the observations I primarily used the video-camera as a tool for observation. I also took observation notes in the second phase, but they were in a different form as they were characterized by my immediate interpretations. The focus of my observations and video recordings was Alice's interactions and dealing with Sara. During the classroom activities I could capture Alice, this particular child, and several of the other children with the video-camera. The video-camera was placed in a corner of the room to capture both the activity in Alice's group and Alice's actions. Thus, the camera was not in the way of the activities and it was possible to capture all of the children's and Alice's actions without turning it too much one way or the other. I placed myself beside the camera so that I could zoom in or turn it if I wanted to. With this position I could also intercept what she and the children talked about.<sup>17</sup> However, even though I captured the activities and Alice's actions according to her dealings with the child with withdrawn behavior, the presented story from her classroom is what my eyes and video-camera lens captured. In the cloakroom I mostly made observation notes as the parents of some of the children in the class had not given permission for their children to be video recorded.<sup>18</sup>

During the observations it was important that I did not participate in the activities in the classroom because then I might miss something important. I wanted to focus on Alice and her actions and interactions in the classroom. To keep this focus, I could not interact too much with the children. Moreover, interacting with Alice in the classroom could interrupt her work and distract me from my research focus. Nevertheless, I had to combine participation and observation to gain insight into and

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<sup>17</sup> The camera did not capture what was said between the children who were sitting together.

<sup>18</sup> I have one video recording from the cloakroom. It was conducted on a day that the children who could not be video-recorded were away from school.

understanding of the classroom context because I wanted to understand Alice's practices from her perspective. This is a dilemma for the qualitative researcher: as the primary instrument in the data collection, the researcher has to interact to gain understanding (Merriam, 2009). Furthermore, the presence of the researcher may lead to changes in the natural setting and, thus, the researcher interacts and participates in the activities whether she wishes to or not. It appears as if Alice behaved in the same way in her interactions with the children, even though she was attentive to the camera the first time. As described above, Alice was interested in my research project and invited me to conduct my research in her classroom. Having me around in the classroom was something she had decided to allow, entirely on her own volition; no one else had instructed her that I was to be there.

During the observations and video recordings I was the one who decided where the camera pointed and what would be written in the observation notes. Even with the camera I could not capture everything that happened in the classroom; I had to choose what to focus on. I cannot claim that I captured everything that happened between Alice, Sara or the other children, or all the signs that they exchanged. My concerns were reduced by the interviews with Alice. They were helpful in highlighting her voice and perspectives, even though I had chosen the video recordings for her to reflect upon and formulated some questions in advance. I was the one who made guidelines, but Alice was the one who chose the stories that she wanted to share with me and the one who reflected and shared thoughts during the interviews. An overview of the observations and video recordings is in Appendix III A and B.

#### *Interaction Outlines*

Based on the observations and video recordings from the classroom, I conducted five *interaction outlines*. The term interaction outlines in this study refers to the counting of a defined action within a chosen time period. The focus in these outlines was on Alice's interactions with different children in the classroom, and the counting was conducted to capture Alice's reflections on them in the following interview. The first interaction outline was conducted in the classroom, where I chose a random time period of five minutes and counted how often Alice made eye contact with Sara during that period (obs. 050412). The second interaction outline was also based on a time period of five minutes, but that time I counted how often Alice made eye contact with one restless child in the class (obs. 050412). The third outline was a count of how often Alice

dropped by each child's desk while the class was doing individual work. These three outlines were conducted because Alice said several times that she felt that restless children got more of her time than children with withdrawn behavior. These outlines supported her concern as the frequency of eye contact with the restless child was higher than that with the child with withdrawn behavior, and she dropped by the restless child's desk more frequently than for example by Sara's desk. Presenting these outlines to Alice led her to reflect on this. In the interview, she said that these observations were important and interesting, because they confirmed her concern. After I presented interaction outlines one, two and three, Alice invited me to present more of these observations in subsequent interviews. She said it was valuable information for her (e.g. int. 051412, p. 27).

I observed that several times she had given her attention to a restless child in her group by saying his name, turning to him to make him sit down, and giving him signals to pay attention to her or to the subject. These observations made me curious to find out how often she had to focus her attention on him in comparison to Sara and the other children. Moreover, this was a concern that Alice had talked about several times. The fourth and fifth interaction outlines were based on the same 25-minute period (vid. 052112) that was randomly chosen from a video recording. In the fourth interaction outline, the focus was on how often Alice said each child's name during this period. In the fifth outline, the focus was on how often she verbally communicated with each child without saying the child's name.

As mentioned above, the interaction outlines were conducted according to the interviews I had with Alice in order to stimulate her reflections on them and, moreover, she appeared to be concerned that how she shared her attention was unfair for children with withdrawn behavior. An overview of the interaction outlines can be found in Appendix III C.

#### *Interviews*

I had four interviews with Alice, where the focus was on her actions, thoughts and reflections when it comes to dealing with children with withdrawn behavior. I focused on Alice's practices, both previous and present, to gain insight into her experiences, thoughts, and reflections on dealing with withdrawn behavior in the classroom. The interviews with Alice can be defined as *in-depth* interviews (e.g. Gillham, 2000) as my aim was to gain insight into and understanding of Alice's actions and reflections on the

topic in question.

In the interviews I wanted to collect her reflections, experiences, and perspectives. I informed her that I did not have answers to the questions that I was asking; I was there to learn more about how she dealt with children with withdrawn behavior, and I told her that she had to explain her actions and reflections to me so I could understand them according to the research topic. The aim of this introduction was to make the interview situation more comfortable for her, to signal that she was the expert and I was a novice and to make the research process more harmless for her. Being interviewed and interpreted can be painful, and I wanted to make this process as painless as possible for her. She had, after all, given me access to her classroom and reflections and accepted being observed, interviewed and interpreted. I wanted to treat her with respect for this and for all of her experiences that she was willing to share with me.

The first interview (int. 041312) was designed as a background interview in which I would learn about her previous experiences as a pupil, student and teacher. This interview was *semi-structured* (Gillham, 2000; Merriam, 2009) as I had made, in advance, a list of questions and issues that I wanted to hear Alice's reflections on; thus I would collect her stories (Appendix IV A). Using a semi-structured interview style in the first interview was appropriate in that it allowed me to gain insight into and understanding of Alice's experiences, thoughts and reflections. According to Hermansen et al. (2013), by listening to a person's stories the listener also has access to the teller's experiences, values and feelings. As this was our first interview, we sat face to face because I did not want to invade Alice's personal space too closely. Moreover, sitting face to face made it easier to establish eye contact and to signal interest and be an active, careful listener to her reflections and stories (Gillham, 2000; Merriam, 2009). I considered eye contact and face-to-face interaction to be useful in encouraging Alice to continue talking and in making the talk more fluent and confident between us (Gillham, 2000). On the other hand, sitting face to face can be interpreted as having an authoritarian connotation (Gillham, 2000), but as I have meet Alice before and talked to her several times, I deemed us as equal. An overview of the discussed topics in this interview can be found in Appendix III D, and the interview guide is in Appendix IV A.

The second interview (int. 050412) was characterized by a combination of an *open interview* (Merriam, 2009) and a semi-structured interview. In the beginning of the

interview, Alice reflected on a video recording that I had made in the classroom. This part of the interview had an open approach. I did not have any predetermined set of questions; it was more like a conversation about what we saw on the screen. I choose this approach so I could collect Alice's thoughts and reflections on her own actions. Asking predetermined questions could have restricted her reflections and immediate thoughts about her own practices. An open approach also provided the opportunity to gain further insight into and understanding of the research subject, her thoughts and reflections and, thus, was valuable in formulating questions for the semi-structured part of the interview (Merriam, 2009). Even though the first part of the interview had an open approach, I had some thoughts on what I wanted her to reflect upon. Furthermore, I wanted to grasp her reflection on what she would do in the exact same way next time and what she would change. By providing these *prompts* (Gillham, 2000, p. 14) I could collect her reflection on the things she did not mention in her "open" reflections around the video recording. In the semi-structured part of the interview, the focus was on Alice's current practices. I also asked questions that had occurred to me during the open part of the interview. As we watched a video recording during the first part, we sat beside each other during this interview. This placing concerned me in the beginning because I thought it would be difficult to establish eye contact and that this might restrict the flow in the conversation.<sup>19</sup> These concerns turned out to be unfounded as we turned to face each other as we talked. According to Gillham (2000), sitting beside each other is less authoritarian and can lead to an effective social interaction between the researcher and the research subject. Moreover, I experienced that, with this placement we both felt more comfortable in the interview setting, she could see what I wrote down and, in this way we felt more like equals. Appendix III D provides an overview of the discussed topics in this interview, and in Appendix IV B you can find a description of the video recordings on which Alice reflected.

The third interview (int. 051412) was also divided into two parts, the first part of which had an open approach. In this open part Alice reflected on four video recordings from the classroom and three interaction outlines that I had conducted in the classroom.

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<sup>19</sup> I should emphasize that Alice did most of the talking in the interviews. It was her voice, her experiences and reflections that I wanted to grasp, so she did the talking while I tried to be an active and sensitive listener. According to Gillham (2000), researchers talk too much during interviews; I did not want to be a talking researcher, I wanted to be a listening researcher. I have two ears and one mouth, so I should listen at least twice as much as I talk.

As mentioned above, the first interaction outline involved counting of how many times Alice made eye contact with Sara, whereas the second outline was the frequency of eye contact with one of the restless children in the class. The third interaction outline counted of how often Alice dropped by each child's desk in a working unit.<sup>20</sup> I wanted to hear her reflections and thoughts on this and used an open approach so that I did not restrict her reflections and immediate thoughts. The last part of this interview was semi-structured focusing on both adapted education and Alice's current experience with children with withdrawn behavior. During this interview, Alice and I sat beside each other, mostly because we were watching video recordings but also because I had experienced this placement as appropriate for both of us. We turned to face each other when we were talking as eye contact and facial expressions can be useful in allowing the research subject to continue, to signal interest, and to signal that the researcher is an active listener (Gillham, 2000). A description of the video recordings Alice reflected on in this interview can be found in Appendix IV B. The interaction outlines that Alice reflected on can be found in Appendix III C. An overview of the topic discussed in this interview is presented in Appendix III D.

The fourth and final interview (int. 052912) with Alice also began with an open approach to collect Alice's thoughts and reflections on five video recordings and two interaction outlines from the classroom. The last part of this interview was semi-structured, and the focus was on Alice's collaboration partners in general, such as parents, the special education teacher at the school and the Educational and Psychological Counselling Service (in Norwegian: *PP-tjenesten*). During this interview, Alice and I sat at a 90-degree angle to each other, due to the size of the room, which was too small for us to sit beside each other. This position made it easy to watch the screen, to establish eye contact and to give non-verbal signs to encourage Alice to keep talking. A description of the video recordings is presented in Appendix IV B, and the interaction outlines are in Appendix III C. The topics discussed in this interview are presented in the overview in Appendix III D.

The interviews were recorded digitally and supplemented with notes. I listened to each interview recording several times and transcribed each of them on the first day after they were conducted. I chose to transcribe the interviews myself in order to become familiar with the data (Merriam, 2009; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The

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<sup>20</sup>A working unit is when the children sit at their desks/tables and work individually or in pair/groups.

transcriptions are detailed, indicating pauses, laughing and hesitations. How necessary such a detailed transcription was can be debated, but I considered it an important part of becoming familiar with the data material. The interviews have not been transcribed into Alice's dialect. I chose to transcribe them into *bokmål*, which is one of the two official written Norwegian languages. I made this choice for three reasons. First of all, to anonymize Alice, and secondly, since Alice and I have different dialects, I found it fairer to the data to use bokmål rather than try to write in her dialect. Thirdly, I also found it fairer to the data to use bokmål because I knew I would have to translate the interviews into English later in the process. At any rate, when transcribing, I interpret, and when I translate, I interpret once again. Something might be missed during these processes, even though it appears that the meaning has been maintained. As can be seen in Appendix III D and in Table 4.1 below, the interviews with Alice comprise four hours and 25 minutes of audio-recordings, and amount to 164 pages in Microsoft Word A4 format, size 11 pt., Calibri font with 1.0 line spacing. I left wide margins to provide room for analysis.

I wanted to use the interviews to grasp and understand Alice's perspectives. To achieve a common understanding of the topics we discussed, the interviews were characterized by meaning-making processes in which common understanding or intersubjectivity were achieved in a mutual relation between the research subject and the researcher (Merriam, 2009; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This means that the aim was not to collect the "truth" about dealing with children with withdrawn behavior but to grasp Alice's thoughts and reflections on the topic in question at the particular time of the interviews (Merriam, 2009). In addition to the interviews with Alice I participated in two formal meetings.

#### *Formal Meetings*

In addition to the four described interviews with Alice, I observed and recorded one meeting between Alice and the two other teachers on her team (met. 090612) and one meeting between Alice, Sara's parents and me (met. 111612). I prefer to describe these two meetings as formal meetings because I had the opportunity to ask questions and could participate in the conversations in both. For this reason, the meetings could easily be considered either as observation interviews or formal conversations. The formal meeting between Alice and her colleagues (met. 090612) focused on the organization of the class and teaching, and the main focus was on children with special education needs

and how the class teachers could adapt their teaching and organize their class and groups to capture all of the children's needs in the most appropriate way. This meeting gave me general insight into the background of the team's organization, as well as the context in which Alice works. The focus of this meeting was decided by Alice and her colleagues and, as I had requested permission to participate in a meeting with this theme during the field work, they invited me to attend.

The formal meeting between Alice, Sara's parents, and me (met. 111612) was held primarily at the request of the parents at the beginning of this research. They wanted information about what I had observed in the classroom. As their consent gave me the opportunity to conduct my project, I felt that I should comply with their request for a meeting after the data collection. Moreover, it was interesting for me to discuss my observations with them, to hear their points of view, and to participate in the conversation between the parents and Alice. As this meeting took place almost six months after I completed the observations and video recordings in the classroom, it served as a way to follow up the research and field work. This formal meeting was characterized by an open approach, with room for all participants to ask questions, explore issues and share meanings. Even though it was open the focus was on the particular child, her development and further teaching, organizing, and adaptation to sustain her learning and development.

These two formal meetings were also transcribed into bokmål, for the same reasons as stated above. The audio-recording from the team meeting lasted one hour and 33 minutes and amounts to 36 pages of transcriptions. The audio-recording from the meeting with the parents lasted 33 minutes and comprises 11 pages of transcriptions (see Table 4.1). These two transcriptions were also rendered in Microsoft Word A4 format, but with size 9 pt., Times New Roman font and 1.0 line spacing. These transcriptions also included broad spaces for notes in the margins. An overview of the formal meetings can be found in Appendix III E.

As described above, the data in this study were collected in different ways and at different times. To gain insight into and understanding of Alice's reflections, thoughts and actions, it was imperative to collect data from different angles and with different lenses. The following table provides an overview of the data corpus from the field work:



Table 4.1: Data corpus

Data source	Extent
Handwritten observation notes	24 pages
Video recordings	Seven hours and 27 minutes
Interaction outlines	4 pages
Audio-recordings and transcribed interviews with Alice	Four hours and 25 minutes, 164 pages
Transcribed dialog btw Alice and colleagues	36 pages
Transcribed dialog btw Alice and parents	11 pages
Handwritten research diary/electronic research diary	10 pages/20 pages
Interview with the special education teacher	20 minutes, not transcribed

As described above, and as it appears in Table 4.1, observation notes, video recordings, audio-recordings, and transcribed interviews with Alice emerged as the most important data sources in the study. The dialog between Alice and her colleagues was primarily used as background information. Also the dialog between Alice, the parents, and me was an important source of background information. The pages from the handwritten and electronic research diary cover my thoughts, interpretations, and reflections on the field and the analytical process. In the analysis process, this source was important as it made me more aware of my own background, values, and immediate interpretations. In other words, it was a way to reflect upon my influence on the study. I used the interview with the special education teacher at Alice’s school for background information about this particular school’s general practices in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior (Appendix III F).

## **Analysis of the Data Material**

### ***The Analytical Process***

The analytical and interpretation process was an ongoing and parallel process in this research that was used to find Alice’s perspective on dealing with children with withdrawn behavior. In the analytical process it turned out to be important for me to organize, systematize, and provide structure to the collected data and to use various analytical approaches, such as searching for similarities, things that fit together, regularity, patterns, repetitions, recurring traits, and common features (Guðmundsdóttir, 1992/2011). Moreover, I searched for irregularities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The analytical process turned out to be a meaning-making process between the

data, me, and theory, as the data and theories comprised the basis for understanding and interpreting the themes that occurred in the empirical data.

The aim of the analysis was to identify what Fetterman (1998) refers to as patterns of thoughts and behavior and by this, to answer the research question (Merriam, 2009). In the analysis, I was concerned about upholding the connection between the context in which the data was collected and Alice; I also wanted to sustain this connection as I searched for patterns, recurring traits, and similarities to identify Alice’s thoughts and behavior in the classroom. To identify these I read through and analyzed the transcribed interviews. In undertaking this step which Creswell (1998) refers to as “an initial sorting-out process” (p. 140), I noted overarching themes. To systematize the recurring traits from the interviews, I used an analytical matrix. An example of how I used the matrix is given below:

Table 4.2: Analytical matrix<sup>21</sup>

Quotation from the interview (What)	Context/relationship of the quotation (Where, When)	How do I interpret this? (How, Why)	Descriptive word(s), headword, possible code (Theme/Category)
“...you have to wait so everyone can think...”	Alice was reflecting over a video-recorded sequence, in which she was patient: she asked a question to a child with withdrawn behavior and waited about 10 seconds so that child could think before answering	I interpret this as Alice being concerned about giving children time to think. This concern might be because she wants every child to learn and develop, or to adapt for mastery	Slowness in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior

The basis for my analytical matrix is Scott’s (2004) “Conditional Relationship Guide (CRG)” developed for research within grounded theory. My analytical matrix is based on my understanding and interpretation of Scott’s (2004) CRG and is also adapted to my study and data material. To systematize the analysis, I found it necessary to pick out utterances/sentences from the interviews to find recurring traits in what Alice said and to search for patterns in her thoughts and reflections (Fetterman, 1998). Furthermore, the matrix included my reflections and interpretations, and a description of the context from which the utterances/sentences were picked, and a possible theme.

At the same time I undertook this procedure of searching in the transcribed interviews, I also searched for recurring traits in Alice’s actions and behavior in the classroom; I looked for these in the observation notes and video recordings, and I

<sup>21</sup> The matrix was presented at a conference in 2013 (Sæteren, 2013).

compared and crosschecked what she said with her actions in the classroom, looking for recurring traits in her thoughts and actions (Fetterman, 1998). In addition to searching for repeated traits and patterns in this data material, I also searched for irregular data (e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In searching for irregular data, my aim was to see if Alice sometimes did things that fell outside of her regular practices, and if so, how the children responded. I did this not to “control” her practices but to capture how incorporated the patterns were into what I deemed to be her practices. (An example of this can be found in the analysis of the story in Chapter Seven).

The analytical process resulted in three themes that characterize Alice’s practices in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior. These three themes are all clearly apparent in all of the transcribed interviews with Alice and in the observation notes and the video recordings from the classroom. Parallel to the analysis process, which aimed to categorize Alice’s practices into themes, I undertook an ongoing search for relevant theory that could be helpful in gaining a deeper understanding and interpretation of the data material. A brief description of the matrix can be found in Appendix V A.

*Recurring Traits in the Data Material Converted to Themes*

The analytical process resulted in three themes that described Alice’s practice in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior. The first theme that arose from the data material was Alice’s concern with seeing every child in her class and, especially, how she emphasized seeing children with withdrawn behavior. This concern appeared in a concrete way as Alice emphasized seeing each individual child. Her concern about making eye contact with children with withdrawn behavior in particular and her desire for each child to feel seen were present in all the interviews I had with her. Through investigation of the observation notes and video recordings Alice’s emphasis on seeing children with withdrawn behavior and establishing eye contact was confirmed. This emphasis also appeared in the observation notes and video recordings which showed that she dropped by each child several times during the school day. The following table gives three examples of the recurring traits in addition to seeing children with withdrawn behavior. The examples are from two of my interviews with Alice.

Table 4.3: Seeing children with withdrawn behavior

Quotation from the interview (What)	Context/relationship of the quotation (Where, When)	How do I interpret this? (How, Why)	Descriptive word(s), headword, possible code (Theme/Category)
“(…) I mean eye contact is very important” (int. 041312)	When Alice talked about children with withdrawn behavior and earlier experiences with children with withdrawn behavior	Alice is concerned about seeing and paying attention to each individual child – perhaps because she can learn about them by establishing eye contact?	Seeing children with withdrawn behavior
“The goal is to see everyone” (int. 041312)	When Alice talked about her concern about seeing everyone, especially children with withdrawn behavior	She wants every child to feel seen by her – perhaps to make them feel better or to feel better about herself?	Seeing children with withdrawn behavior
“(…) I have to show them that I see them” (int. 052912)	When Alice talks about what is most important in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior	She appears to deem the importance of “seeing” each individual child as a premise for their learning and development. Does she use “seeing” as a way to scaffold the children?	Seeing children with withdrawn behavior

The second theme deduced through the analysis process was Alice’s concern about giving children with withdrawn behavior enough time to gather the courage to participate in classroom activities. Her concern for giving time to think and her willingness to be patient and wait appeared in all of the interviews I had with her. During the investigation of the observation notes and video recordings I could see that giving time and waiting were patterns and recurring traits in Alice’s actions when dealing with children, especially children with withdrawn behavior. Her concern about slowing down and giving the children time also appeared when she talked about children with withdrawn behavior, and when she reflected upon how she, as the teacher, can give them a good start as pupils and that they might need more time to feel confident at school and in new settings. The following table involves three examples of recurring traits in connection with Alice’s concern about giving time to children with withdrawn behavior. The examples are from two of the interviews with Alice.

Table 4.4: Slowness in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior

Quotation from the interview (What)	Context/relationship of the quotation (Where, When)	How do I interpret this? (How, Why)	Descriptive word(s), headword, possible code (Theme/Category)
“(…) you have to wait so everyone can think…” (int. 050412)	Alice was reflecting over a video-recorded sequence in which she was patient: she asked a question to a child with withdrawn behavior and waited about 10 seconds so that child could think before answering	I interpret this as Alice being concerned about giving children time to think. This concern might be because she wants every child to learn and develop or to adapt for mastery	Slowness in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior
“I want them to experience that they can be as they are, and then it is important to give them time” (int. 050412)	Alice says this when she talks about how important it is that she is patient with children with withdrawn behavior, not only in the classroom activities but in general	It appears that Alice takes time and slows down the speed of her teaching to adjust for participation and to show children with withdrawn behavior that they are good enough as they are	Slowness in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior
“(…) have to give them time to think before they answer; that is very important” (int. 052912)	Alice talks about children with withdrawn behavior and how she can scaffold and support them	Alice appears to deem time to think as an important aspect of participation in oral activities	Slowness in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior

The last theme that illustrates Alice’s practices in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior arises based on Alice’s concern about challenging the children. In the interviews this concern appeared for example when she talked about how learning and development can take place. This theme also appears in the observation notes and video recordings as a pattern and a recurring trait in Alice’s practices, especially in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior. Even though Alice is concerned about challenging children with withdrawn behavior, she seems to challenge each individual child with the child’s permission instead of trying to make them something they are not. The table below shows examples of three recurring traits according to Alice’s concern for challenging children with withdrawn behavior. The examples are from two of the interviews with her.

Table 4.5: Challenging children with withdrawn behavior

Quotation from the interview (What)	Context/relationship of the quotation (Where, When)	How do I interpret this? (How, Why)	Descriptive word(s), headword, possible code (Theme/Category)
“If I don’t challenge theme, there will not be an academic improvement” (int. 041312)	When Alice talks about how children in general learn and develop	It appears that Alice thinks of challenging as necessary for learning and development	Challenging children with withdrawn behavior
“you must be allowed to be withdrawn if that is what you are!” (int. 041312)	When Alice talks about children with withdrawn behavior and how important it is to accept them as they are	It appears that Alice is concerned about challenging the children within their ZPD	Challenging children with withdrawn behavior
“(…) they are often challenged against their own nature” (int. 050412)	When Alice talks about children with withdrawn behavior and how they often can be challenged at school	Alice seems to be concerned about challenging children with withdrawn behavior, but doing it within their individual parameters and not trying to make them into something they are not	Challenging children with withdrawn behavior

*What is It All About?*

During the analysis there appeared to be similarities in Alice’s words and actions, what she said in the interviews was what she did in the classroom. But what were they actually about, these words and actions? How could I explain her actions, reflections, and what characterizes her practices in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior by means of theory? To figure this out I had to read more theory to dig behind Alice’s words and actions, which also is a characteristic of narrative research. To gain deeper understanding and insight into something, it has to be understood by means of theory (e.g., Moen, 2006). Through use of theoretical concepts I have interpreted Alice’s actions and reflections, and I rely on these concepts when I discuss and elaborate on the themes in Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight.

Alice’s beliefs in the importance of eye contact and her concern about seeing children with withdrawn behavior in particular and all children in general appeared constantly in the data material. I turned my attention to Noddings’ (1984, 1986, 2001, 2005) concept of *caring*. This helped me to understand and interpret Alice’s thoughts and actions in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior. Alice’s concern about making eye contact and seeing the children is explored and explained in Chapter Six, entitled “Seeing children with withdrawn behavior.” To interpret the theme of Alice’s

concern about giving time to children with withdrawn behavior I used the theory of *pauses* in conversation (e.g. Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974) and research on *wait-time* by Rowe (1972, 1974a, 1974b, 1986, 1996). The theory of pauses and research on wait-time helped me to analyze, understand, and interpret this trait of Alice’s practices. The theme of giving time is further explored and discussed in Chapter Seven, entitled “Slowness in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior.” To understand and interpret Alice’s concern about challenging children with withdrawn behavior, and to interpret her reflections and actions on this theme, I used Wertsch’s (1984) concept of *intersubjectivity* and Schibbye’s (2009) concept of *acknowledgement*. I argue that Alice challenges the children within their zone of proximal development, and thus that an intersubjective or common understanding between the teacher and the learning children is a premises for challenging and scaffolding the children. This theme is further explored and discussed in Chapter Eight, entitled “Challenging children with withdrawn behavior.” The table below provides a summary of themes, theories and the heading of the particular chapter that explores and interprets each of the findings of this study.

Table 4.6: Overview of recurring traits, themes, theories and relevant chapters

<b>Recurring traits</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Theory</b>	<b>Relevant Chapter</b>
Eye contact Seeing the children	Seeing children with withdrawn behavior	Caring (Noddings, 1984, 1986, 2001, 2005)	Chapter 6 – Seeing children with withdrawn behavior
Give the children time to think Is patient	Gives time to children with withdrawn behavior	Pauses in conversations (Sacks et al., 1974) Research on wait-time (Rowe, 1972, 1974a, 1974b, 1986, 1996)	Chapter 7 – Slowness in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior
Challenge the children Let them be as they are	Challenging children with withdrawn behavior	Intersubjectivity (Wertsch, 1984) Acknowledgement (Schibbye, 2009)	Chapter 8 – Challenging children with withdrawn behavior

In my analysis and interpretation of the data I have identified themes that characterize Alice’s practice in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior. In the relevant chapter, where the various themes are explored and discussed, I present a narrative to illustrate Alice’s general practices according to the particular theme.

### **Quality in the Study**

A central question when discussing the quality of qualitative research is if it is “believable, accurate, and ‘right’?” (Creswell, 1998, p. 193). When Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Merriam (2009) discuss quality in qualitative research, they point to *credibility*, *consistency*, and *transferability* as useful concepts to describe the quality of the study. Credibility refers to how trustworthy the research is, whereas consistency points out how consistent or dependable the collected data material and the findings from it are (Merriam, 2009). Transferability refers to the similarity between the research context and other similar contexts where the findings may be applicable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Giving detailed or thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) is also a strategy for enhancing the quality of qualitative research (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 2009; Poplin, 2011). Thick descriptions of the research process, the researcher, the research subject and the analytical process ensure credibility and transparency as well as transferability because the descriptions enable the reader to gain insight into the process and the researcher’s interpretations. To enhance this study’s credibility and its transparency, and to make it transferable, I have endeavored to give detailed, thick descriptions of the research process, of myself as the researcher, of Alice, and of the analytical process. Hopefully, this will reveal my interpretations for the reader, or at least how I got there.

*Triangulation* can be carried out using different methods (known as *method triangulation*), and by using *multiple data sources* for data collection (e.g., Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). Using method triangulation I obtained a rich data corpus that was sufficient for finding patterns and repeating traits in Alice’s practices when dealing with children with withdrawn behavior, thus it is appropriate to develop themes and a theory that can describe her practices. My intention in using multiple data sources, such as interviews, observation notes, video recordings and a research diary, was to capture the interactions between Alice and the child with withdrawn behavior through different lenses and from different angles. To obtain consistent data, I stayed in Alice’s classroom for three months and went back to the field to collect more data and with the aim of understanding Alice and her actions and intentions when dealing with children with withdrawn behavior. By using method triangulation and multiple data sources, I have captured a wide range of Alice’s actions and reflections according to the topic in focus, which was necessary to create narratives



of her practices. Triangulation was used to improve the findings and interpretation in this study and to improve the credibility of my research.

To enhance the credibility of this study I presented my findings and interpretations relating to Alice's practices to her in order to receive her feedback and reactions. This strategy is known as *member checking* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My aim was to ensure that Alice found that my interpretations were true to her: as Merriam (2009) writes: "participants should be able to recognize their experience in your interpretation or suggest some fine-tuning to better capture their perspectives" (p. 217). I frequently used member checking in the interviews to ensure that my interpretations and understanding were in accordance with what Alice thought and understood. In this way, my immediate interpretations could be clarified. I presented my themes and interpretations to Alice after I had finished writing the theme chapters. When I talked to Alice about the finding that I call "seeing the children with withdrawn behavior" and told her that I used a theory about caring to analyze the finding, Alice said: "This really makes sense to me. And I am concerned about seeing the children, it is important to me" (M.C. 111315).<sup>22</sup> With regard the finding called "slowness in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior," Alice said: "My intention is to give the children time, so it is good to hear that you have seen that" (M.C. 111315). When I presented my last finding, "challenging children with withdrawn behavior", the first thing Alice said was: "yes, it's important to let them be who they are, but the goal is to help them to master new settings. I see myself and my practice in this" (M.C. 111315). When we summed up my findings and her practices, Alice said: "This makes sense to me, I see myself in your interpretations" (M.C. 111315). Member checking was important for ensuring that Alice's voice and perspective were in focus as one aim with qualitative research is to highlight the emic perspective. As she felt my interpretations were true to her practices, I believe that the trustworthiness in this study is strong. Alice's thoughts about the findings have been further explained in her reflection note (Appendix VI A).

By using *various analysis approaches* the researcher can ensure that the results are consistent with the collected data (Merriam, 2009). As previously mentioned, I approached the data in search of recurring traits, thoroughgoing themes and irregular

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<sup>22</sup> M.C. is short for member checking. 111215 is the date when the meeting/member checking was carried out. The meeting lasted for 46 minutes, 32 of these minutes were recorded as an audio file. The member checking meeting has not been transcribed as it is not used in analysis, only as quality assurance of the already completed analysis.

data (e.g, Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To vary the analytical approach, I cross-checked different data sources and compared them with each other. This use of various analytical approaches and views, enabled me to experience the data material through different lenses and I obtained interpretations and findings that appear consistent and dependable. The analysis process led to three themes that are characteristic of Alice's practices according to the topic in focus.

In our everyday lives, we learn in particular situations or by special experiences and transfer this learning to other similar situations. According to Merriam (2009) "This is, in fact, how most people cope with everyday life" (p. 225). A teacher who reads about how Alice deals with children with withdrawn behavior can decide if the findings in this study can be applied to her own practices in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior. The narratives or units of analysis that are presented in this thesis are constructed out of the specific context within which the study was conducted. However, they are now independent and not bound to the context in which they occurred because I have rendered them as written text (Ricoeur, 1971). Bearing this in mind, I claim that the themes from my study can be useful in other likely contexts, though I cannot claim that the themes characterize all other teachers' practices in dealing with withdrawn behavior. At any rate, the themes in this study can be useful in all classrooms, thus, they have transferability.

This study provides a description of Alice's actions and reflections on the topic in question and my understanding and interpretations of it. Moreover, my interpretations are analyzed in light of relevant theory. In the process I have tried to be as faithful as possible to what Alice said, but even so, I have made several choices in terms of how to analyze the data, which elements to focus on, and which elements to omit. As I have chosen to focus and highlight some elements, other elements have, at the same time, not been prioritized. I have attempted to be critical in the research process to gain insight and understanding into my role as a researcher. According to Hermansen et al. (2013), a critical and reflexive researcher is a necessary feature of the research process. This chapter and the appendices aim to give a systematic overview of my reflections, choices and interpretations during the research process. A brief clarification of my understanding and interpretations has been provided in this chapter. A richer description of me as the researcher is provided in Appendix I A.

## **Ethical Issues**

This study was approved by NSD, and complies with the ethical guidelines described by the National Committees for Research Ethics in Norway (NESH, 2006), the guidelines for research ethics in the social sciences, law, and the humanities. These guidelines emphasize the importance of ensuring the research subject's(s') respect, integrity, and freedom. The researcher is responsible for ensuring the privacy of the research subjects in the study and for protecting them from harm and risk (NESH, 2006).

The ethical principle of informed consent was followed and formalized through an information letter which Alice signed (see Appendix II B). The school's principal, Sara's parents and the other children's parents also signed an informed consent form (see Appendix II A, C, and D). Even if the ethical principle of informed consent was followed, the study may have some ethical considerations. One concern that I had after sending the informed consent form to the parents of the children in the class was that they might feel obligated to give their consent because Alice and I had already agreed to introduce the research project. Some of the parents abstained from signing the informed consent. I interpreted this to mean that they felt free to participate or not, and thus those who signed the consent did so voluntarily. As mentioned above, I attended a parents' evening to meet the parents and give them more information about my study and work. At this meeting the parents had the opportunity to ask me questions, and if they wanted to shield their child from being video-recorded, they could inform me of this wish. None of the parents made such a request.

Another issue that should be discussed is the ethical considerations involved in entering a classroom and focusing on the teacher and her dealing with one of the children. As stated above, the parents and the children did not know that I was mainly focusing on Alice's interactions with Sara. The information given to the parents and children was that I would follow Alice in the classroom and study how she deals with the various children, but "especially with children who are silent and withdrawn" (Appendix II D). As the research was conducted in year two in the elementary school, several of the children were a bit shy, withdrawn, or silent in various situations. During the parents' evening in which I participated, they did not appear to be thinking of one child that particularly fit the focus of my study, and I argued that many children are withdrawn in different settings or situations at this age. Nor were the children aware that I was focusing on Alice's interactions with one of them; and during the video recordings in the

classroom the camera always captured the entire group of children that Alice was the class teacher for. If any of them walked by to look at the screen, they would see all of the children in Alice's group and Alice herself. I am not sure if Sara knew that I was focusing on Alice's interactions with her. Sara's parents said that they did not want to tell her about it until only after I had completed the field work because they wanted her to act naturally when I was in the classroom. When I went back to the field and attended the formal meeting with Alice and Sara's parents, Sara knew that I was a participant in the meeting. It is important to underline that the focus of the study was on Alice and how she interacted with children with withdrawn behavior. The focus was not on Sara or the other children, and this leads me to believe that Sara and the other children were not exposed to any harm or disrespect.

All the names of children, teachers and places are pseudonyms. Nonetheless, I am concerned that someone might identify either the people involved or the school. I stayed in the field for a long time, and many of Alice's colleagues were aware of me and knew that I was observing Alice in her classroom and interviewing her. Furthermore, many children at the school knew that I was conducting some research there, mainly because I was carrying my video-camera with me everywhere I went, but also because some of them saw me in "action" in the classroom. However, I do not believe that this study caused harm or risk to anyone (NESH, 2006).

I was concerned that my research could be a burden concerning Alice's workload. Even though she accepted my need to interview her, I sometimes felt that I was occupying an uncomfortable amount of her time. I let her decide the times that we met, but I could not shake the feeling that my fieldwork was making her working life more difficult. Furthermore, being observed and interpreted can be a strain. Having an open dialog with Alice was important during the field work so that she could tell what she felt about the project and whether there was anything I should do differently. An open dialog with her was also important when we discussed my interpretations of her practice.

A final ethical dilemma I want to discuss before closing this chapter is the anonymizing of Alice. I found Alice to be an experienced, capable, and insightful teacher with understanding, insight, and interest in the topic of this study. This fact notwithstanding, I cannot reveal her real name. The protection of the children she teaches outweighs any benefit there might be in revealing her name. On the other hand,

Alice knows my findings and how impressed I am with her practice, insight, and understanding, and she is aware of the fact, and has accepted, that she cannot have public acknowledgement for this - only acknowledgement from me.

## Chapter 5

### The Context of the Study

As described in the previous chapter, one characteristic of qualitative research is thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973). Thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of the context in which a study has been carried out allow readers to understand the interpretations and decide if the findings are believable and transferable to other settings. While this issue has already been addressed several times in this text, the intention of this chapter is to present the context Alice works in, her surroundings, and the activities and processes that she is involved in during her everyday life as a teacher. The chapter is a presentation of outstanding contextual features that will enable readers to understand my findings and interpretations of how Alice deals with children with withdrawn behavior in ordinary classroom activities. It will also help readers to understand my interpretations of her reflections on her own practices. Hence, the presented information is not a complete reproduction of the entire field and everything Alice deals with in her teacher role, but it is instead selected information based on the focus of this study. Moreover, as a researcher I only have access to an interpreted field (e.g., Thornberg & Fejes, 2009). Bearing this in mind, the presentation of Alice, her colleagues, and the children is based on my interpretations and experiences with them during three months of fieldwork.

Alice started her career as a teacher in 1978 and has worked in a school setting ever since. Within this period the Norwegian school system and society have undergone dramatic changes, from the practice of segregated education in special schools and regular schools to today's aim of inclusive education. Hence, this chapter starts with a presentation of today's aim of a school for all. After the presentation of the overall aspects that influence Alice's current context, I will turn my attention to Alice's first experience with children with withdrawn behavior. Within a socio-cultural framework I find it important to see Alice's reflections and actions in light of her present experiences. As Vygotsky (1978) claims, in order to understand a person's current actions, we must

have insight into his or her previous experiences. I will then present the school and class in general before I close the chapter with some comments on Alice's current context and class.

### **Inclusive Education and a School for All**

During the 1990s Norwegian society and education policy underwent a paradigm shift from placing the responsibility for difficulties and special needs on the individual (the individual perspective) to seeing all young citizens as an integral part of society and the school system (the social relation perspective). This led to the introduction of the principle of an inclusive society and an inclusive school for all.<sup>23</sup> To support the concept of inclusive education, a new curriculum came into force in 1997: C-97 (Ministry of Education and Research, 1996). C-97 states that schools are responsible for adapting education to include all children, regardless of their needs, difficulties, or disabilities. This is in accordance with UNESCO's (2001) guidelines for inclusive education which maintain that inclusive education is not only concerned with children with disabilities, but with all children. Inclusive education, which is now statutory in Norway, gives all children, regardless their functional level, the right to attend school within their catchment area (Ministry of Education and Research, 1998, §8-1). The aim of Norwegian education is to have an inclusive school where all children, regardless of their needs, abilities, or expectations, have the right to be part of the school community, have education adapted to their individual needs, and feel accepted and valued in their class or groups. Furthermore, inclusive education aims to remove barriers to learning and participation and enable all children to participate in their classes (Pijl, Frostad, & Flem, 2008). The aim of inclusive education, first and foremost, builds on the premise that all children are unique, and it also relates to the community as a whole, as the community has to adapt for each individual so everyone can live a dignified life (e.g., Flem, 2000; Flem & Keller, 2000). The aim of an inclusive education and society in Norway is deeply rooted in the belief that each individual is valuable and unique and has an equal right to education, learning, and development.

In the school for all, each child should feel that he or she is a part of the social,

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<sup>23</sup> The vision of an inclusive education is not only a Norwegian phenomenon. It is stated in *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* that all children should learn together, regardless of any difficulties or differences (UNESCO, 1994).

academic, and cultural community and should experience an education that is adapted to his or her level, strengths, interests, and positive qualities. An overarching aim of the inclusive school is that all children should work together and participate in and experience enrichment from being part of the classroom's diversity (Meijer, Pijl, & Hegarty, 1997; Strømstad, Nes & Skogen, 2004). Even though inclusive education is mandated in the Act and curricula, the realization of a truly inclusive education primarily depends on the school and its abilities. In this regard, the teacher is found to be the critical factor in achieving inclusive education (Flem & Keller, 2000; Haug, 2010; Moen, 2007; Pijl & Meijer, 1997; Thomazet, 2009). Moreover, it seems that the regular classroom is the most important arena for fulfilling the requirements of inclusive education (Moen, 2007), and five general factors are seen to be particularly important: "membership, mastery, togetherness, involvement and learning" (Moen, 2007, p. 17). These characteristics are closely interwoven and interdependent, and they also depend very much on the teacher and her abilities. Similarly, the aim of inclusion extends to society in general, and this concept expresses the diversity of the population. To have a successfully inclusive society, Meijer et al. (1997) claim that education must also be inclusive.

When C-97 was introduced, the school starting age was also lowered. Instead of starting school at seven years of age and attending elementary school for nine years, C-97 moved the school start to six years of age, with compulsory schooling lasting for 10 years. In addition, special schools were closed and the children from these schools were included in their local schools. All this resulted in the need for new school buildings. In addition to increasing the number of children at a given school, the policy of inclusive education led to pedagogy that required more flexible solutions with open-plan areas instead of traditional classrooms. School buildings built at this time often have these flexible solutions and are often called "open schools." The inclusive school policy has led to the rebuilding of several traditional schools to provide a more flexible teaching environment (e.g., Kjølle, Hansen & Ulleberg, 2011).

A new curriculum, C-06, was launched in Norway in 2006 (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006). C-06 continues the efforts to create schools for all by requiring teaching and instruction to be adapted to each child's needs and expectations. The overriding aspects of these school curriculums influence Alice's current context as a teacher. As I argue that her previous experiences also influence the current context and



who she is today, a presentation of her first experience with withdrawn behavior is necessary.

### **A Brief Retrospective Look at Alice's First Experience with Withdrawn Behavior**

After working as a teacher for five years, Alice's awareness of children with withdrawn behavior increased (int. 041312). At this time she was the class teacher for 20 fifth graders, and she had been teaching this class for about six months when one of her colleagues asked if she could video record in Alice's classroom. This was for a continuing-education course this colleague was attending for which she had to record action from a classroom. If Alice allowed her colleague to video record in her classroom, she would also have the opportunity to watch the recordings and benefit from the project as well. Alice found this project interesting and obtained permission from the parents of the children in her class to participate. When she watched the video recordings from her classroom, her attention was drawn to one of the girls in her class who was withdrawn and passive during the classroom activities. Alice discovered that she hardly ever established eye contact with this girl. Observing that she virtually ignored this girl gave her a "completely terrible" feeling (int. 041312, p. 13). After this observation Alice changed her practice and gave this girl more attention and made more eye contact with her every school day. According to Alice, her increased attention and eye contact with this girl led to a behavioral change - she became less withdrawn in class, and she participated more in ordinary classroom activities. Alice felt that the positive change was due to her increased attention and eye contact. With this retrospective look on Alice's first experience with withdrawn behavior it is time to examine her current context.

## **Alice's' Current Context**

### ***The School***

The school Alice works at is an elementary school with years one to seven (they will be called grades in the following). A total of 300 children, all from the catchment area, are divided across the seven grades. The school is an open-plan school, meaning traditional classrooms<sup>24</sup> have been replaced with bigger rooms and more open spaces. The school has few doors but several open spaces. Between 40 and 60 children attend the various grades, and depending on the number of children, three or four teachers work at each grade level. In addition to the teachers, one teacher assistant is assigned to each class. The children in the same grade are in the same classroom, but for some activities they are divided into various rooms and two, three, or four class circles.<sup>25</sup>

### ***The Class***

The second grade has three class teachers: Alice, Peter, and Mary. Together these three teachers cover all subjects: Norwegian, mathematics, English, arts and crafts, music, physical education, religion, and social studies. In addition to these three class teachers, a special education teacher is in the classroom for one lesson each week, and a teacher assistant supports the classes for one lesson each day. The second grade consists of 43 children: 22 boys and 21 girls. Alice is the class teacher for 14 of them, seven boys and seven girls, while Peter and Mary respectively have 14 and 15 children in their groups. Similar to Alice, Peter and Mary have been working as teachers for many years - Peter for 15 years and Mary for about 35 years - when I started the data collection.

### ***The Classroom***

When entering the classroom from the cloakroom you have to walk through a common open area, which the second grade and another class share. This room is furnished with a long table with benches on both sides, a table with four computers, and blackboards and group circles in two corners. This room also has some large green plants and a good

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<sup>24</sup> In an open-plan school, the area where the teaching occurs is often called the *base* or *area*. In this thesis I call the base "classroom" since this term is more familiar.

<sup>25</sup> A class circle is a semi-circle where all children face the teacher and the blackboard. In Norwegian schools a class circle is often used when the teacher teaches new material, or wants to discuss something with the children. It is also the place where the class assembles every morning and at the end of the school day. The 2<sup>nd</sup> grade uses the class circles when they are divided into two groups (Neptune and Jupiter). Sometimes I refer to the *group circle*. A group circle is a smaller semi-circle compared to the class circle. The 2<sup>nd</sup> grade uses group circles when the class is divided into three groups, the groups of the class teachers. When Alice is in the group circle with her group, 14 children are in the circle, while in a class circle there are 21 or 22 children with the teacher.

amount of light that shines through a large window, which makes the room light and airy. The feeling of a light and airy room follows you when you enter into the second grade's classroom, which is rectangular. Daylight radiates through several large windows on one of the long walls. Some of the windows are decorated with children's work in transparent color paper, and light shining through these decorations creates a lovely play of colors on the floor and some of the desks. There are also some paper flowers and Norwegian flags on the windows. Decorations made by the children hang down from the ceiling, and there are paintings, posters, and drawings made by the children on both short walls.

Both the right and left corner of the classroom have class circles. Both class circles have benches placed in a circle so the children can see the teacher and the blackboard from where they are seated. Some large cupboards are placed around the class circles to make each of them a sheltered area in the classroom. When the class is divided into two groups, the Neptune group gathers together in the right corner, while the Jupiter class circle is in the left corner. In addition to the benches in each class circle, there is a teacher's chair, desk, and blackboard. Children's paintings, a clock, a wall-mounted board with rulers, and posters showing the colors in English and the Norwegian alphabet decorate the walls in each circle.

In the middle of the room there is a big table with several baskets with colored pencils, scissors, pencils, rulers, and erasers. There are also boxes where the teacher puts extra copies of task sheets and weekly plans. A green plant and a candle are also placed on this table. The teachers often use to place their books and other things they bring with them for the lessons on this table. The rest of the classroom has desks arranged in groups. These are children's work spaces, where they sit for individual work activities and when doing group work in working units. There are 12 groups of desks, with three or four desks in each group. In the groups with three children, two children sit side-by-side, while the third sits facing them. In the groups with four children, two each sit side-by-side and then the two pairs face each other. In addition, four groups are placed along the wall with windows, and the rest of the groups are placed in the floor area between the big table in the middle of the room and the groups along the wall with windows. The children in Alice's group are organized into four desk groups in the classroom near the Neptune class circle. Two groups have three children, and the other two groups have four children sitting together. Peter's group is organized in the same

way but is situated in the middle of the room. Mary's group is organized with one group where three children sit together and three groups with four children, and they are near the Jupiter class circle.

#### *Daily Routines and the School Day*

The school day starts at 8:15 in the morning and ends at 2:15 in the afternoon, except for Fridays when the class only has two lessons and the school day ends after lunch at 12:15. The children and the teachers meet in the cloakroom when the school bell rings each morning. The children then hang up their coats and sit down. Alice's group has its places along the south wall, Mary's group is along the north wall, and Peter's group is situated along the west wall. Alice, Mary, and Peter are always waiting in the cloakroom to meet the children when the school bell rings in the morning. When the children have settled down in their seats, the whole class sings a good morning song before the teachers provide information about the day and the upcoming lesson: for example, which books the children will have to take with them to the class circle. After this, one teacher leads the children to the classroom, one teacher is located in the middle of the row of children, and the third teacher follows at the end of the line. After the children have put their schoolbags by their desks, they join the teacher in the class circle. In the morning the class is often divided into two class circles: Jupiter and Neptune.<sup>26</sup> Alice, Peter, and Mary also greet the children in the cloakroom after each break during the school day.

In the class circle they sing another good morning song before they talk about what day, month, and year it is and what the weather is like (all done in English). After these routines the teacher starts by providing information about the subject they will be working on, which could involve a review from yesterday or consist of asking the children how the work went the last time. The teacher also begins a conversation in which the children and the teacher can ask questions. After such a sequence in the class circle, it is time for the children to do some individual or group work at their desks, which I refer to as a working unit. How the children work and what they are working on depends on the subject and theme. During the working units the teachers walk around the classroom and help those who need assistance, talk with the children, look at their work, and tone down loud conversations in the groups. Before the break, the groups

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<sup>26</sup> When the second grade class is divided into three sections, they are named after their class teacher: Alice's group, Mary's group, or Peter's group.

come together in the class circle again to summarize the lesson. Each lesson starts and ends in the class or group circle. After the break, everyone meets in the cloakroom again, and the routines described above are repeated. When the Jupiter or Neptune groups have lessons in music, physical education, and arts and crafts, they meet in the cloakroom, but instead of going to the class circle, they follow the teacher to the special rooms for these activities. After finishing in the special rooms, the teacher follows the group to the class circle.

The second grade's school day is organized into three teaching units: two before and one after lunch. The teaching units are separated from each other by two breaks of 30 minutes each. During the breaks the children play outside. They eat their lunch in the classroom at their desks. Two of the teachers are always in the classroom during lunch. In the same way as with each teaching unit, the school day ends with a meeting in the class circle for a final assembly. The following figure shows the organization of the school day for second grade.

<p><u>First lesson:</u>            Information in the cloakroom            Class circle or group circle            Working unit            Class circle or group circle</p>
<p>Fruit snack and break</p>
<p><u>Second lesson:</u>            Information in the cloakroom            Class circle or group circle            Working unit            Class circle or group circle</p>
<p>Lunch and break</p>
<p><u>Third lesson:</u>            Information in the cloakroom            Class circle or group circle            Working unit            Class circle</p>

Figure 5.1: Organization of the school day

Twice a week the class has lessons that involve station teaching. These two lessons also start with information in the cloakroom and a brief sequence in the class circle before the children start working at their assigned stations. In this work the children are divided into groups of three to four children, but the composition of these

groups is different from the regular groups the children sit in at their desks. The station groups are divided across class teacher and class circle groups. They consist of 12 stations: two stations with individual work in books made especially for these teaching lessons, two stations with board games in which the groups play the games together, three stations in which the three teachers train the group (e.g., reading training, mathematics discussions, training in oral English, or conversations on a specific theme for the week), one station with laptops where the children use writing or counting training programs, two stations with practical tasks (i.e., in mathematics), one station with silent reading, and, finally, one station in which the children draw or color. The children work at each station for seven minutes, then one of the teachers rings a bell and all the children have to finish and prepare to swap stations. Within one lesson the class does not manage to work in all 12 stations, so the station work continues after the break.

#### *Alice's Group*

Alice's group comprises 14 children with various needs, abilities, expectations, and qualities. The variation in Alice's group mirrors that of the whole class. Two boys in Alice's group display extroverted behavior, and one of them often disturbs the class and class circle with his talking. In this thesis I have called this boy "Eric." Eric also struggles to sit calmly in his place and appears to require a lot of Alice's attention. The other boy is more focused on the work but needs correction, help, and much attention from Alice during activities, especially during the working units. Another boy has a difficult temperament, and because of this he often ends up in conflicts with his peers and teachers. In addition, one of the girls in this group has problems concentrating and often needs Alice to help "get her focused" on the work and teaching. Two of the children work independently and are doing well in every subject, and three are verbally active and love to take part in oral activities, especially in the class circle. Furthermore, two of the children do not speak Norwegian as their first language and attend lessons twice a week to improve their first language and Norwegian as a second language. As already described, Sara has withdrawn behavior.

When I met the class for the first time, they were in the cloakroom. Sara is one of the children I did not notice in this situation because Eric was so interested in who I was and what I was doing there that almost all of my attention was focused on him and his questions. Nevertheless, when the class moved to the class circle and I observed them in this setting, Sara became visible to me. She sat in her place, hardly ever looked up, did

not raise her hand, did not participate in the conversation, and it seemed to me as if she were daydreaming. Later on when the children were working at their desks, I observed that Sara was the only child who did not speak to her peers in her group. She sat with three other children who talked and laughed with one another, just as the children at the other desks did. The girl who sat beside Sara sometimes talked to her and showed her work to Sara. Sara sometimes nodded to her and sometimes responded, but only with a single word. I observed that Sara took many breaks during the work units, and during these she often stared out into the room, picked her fingers, twisted her hair, and apparently daydreamed.

### **Comments on Alice's Current Context and Class**

Within the framework of socio-cultural theory I cannot study and understand Alice's interactions with children with withdrawn behavior or her reflections on the topic without considering the context of which she is a part. In the discussion of her current context and class, I have therefore focused on some aspects I consider relevant to understanding and gaining further insight into her practice. As Vygotsky (1978) claimed that an individual's experiences in the past and present, and in social contexts, are significant to his or her development, I presented Alice's first experience with withdrawn behavior. In the following I will explore some of these issues.

It appears that Alice's first experience with children exhibiting withdrawn behavior in the classroom has changed her practice. It appears that she is now aware of paying attention to and establishing eye contact with all children in the class, as she argued that "eye contact is very important" (int. 041312, p. 14). This is in accordance with Vygotsky's (1978) theories on development, where he considers the past to be significant in human development. As presented in the previous chapter, eye contact and paying attention to the children were recurring themes in the data analysis.

According to Pijl et al. (2008), within the context of inclusive education, part of a teacher's job is to enable all children to participate in their class and remove barriers to learning. Dealing with children with withdrawn behavior, on the one hand, and children with extroverted behavior, on the other hand, such as Alice does on a daily basis, can be a complex task. Nevertheless, the curriculum that frames the overall aims of inclusive education requires that Alice and other teachers deal with this complexity and adapt

their teaching to the individual needs of children - a type of teaching that makes the children feel accepted and valued in their classes. In the following chapters I will present how Alice deals with children with withdrawn behavior in ordinary classroom activities and how she reflects on her own practices. As her everyday life is influenced by the overall aims of inclusive education, a complex group of children, and her previous experiences, the analysis cannot be solely focused on dealing with withdrawn behavior. Rather, it is a living part of the whole classroom experience (Zinchenko, 1985).





**Part Two:**  
**Findings and Discussion**



## Chapter 6

### Seeing Children with Withdrawn Behavior

In the data analysis I found that Alice's emphasis on seeing the individual child in general and children with withdrawn behavior in particular were a recurring trait. In the interviews she said, for example: "I want everyone to have a genuine experience of being seen by me" (int. 052912, p. 23). And in the observations and video recordings I found that she made eye contact with the children several times during the school day and that the children returned her eye contact. The recurring trait of seeing the child appeared in a concrete way through establishing eye contact with individual children in general and in particular with children with withdrawn behavior. The concept of *caring* (Noddings, 1984) is useful for providing insight into this aspect of Alice's practice. This chapter starts with a presentation of the theoretical framework. Then I will present empirical data on the topic in question. An analysis of the empirical data follows before the chapter closes with a summary and discussion.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

The analysis in this chapter is rooted in socio-cultural theory which says that relation and interactions between individuals are fundamental to learning and development (Vygotsky, 1978). Caring is a relational concept as it involves interaction between the caregiver and the receiver of the care. Noddings' (1984, 1986, 2001, 2005) caring concept is closely connected to and based on socio-cultural theory. Furthermore, Noddings' work is what has influenced the field of education most on theories of caring in teaching and education (Goldstein, 1999). The concept of caring developed by Noddings helped to explain my data and provided insight into and improved my understanding of it. In the following I will rely on her concept of caring as well as research based on her work.

### ***The Concept of Caring***

According to Noddings (1984, 2005) being cared for and giving care to others is a human need. In every interaction there is an opportunity to enter into a caring relation (Goldstein, 1999). Noddings (1984, 2001, 2005) used the concept of caring to describe the mutual relationship between the caregiver/*one-caring* and the one who receives the care, the *cared-for*. In this use of the caring concept it is not a limited behavior or attitude, nor is it a personal trait of the one-caring, as Nodding (2005) states: "Caring is a way of being in relation, not a set of specific behaviors" (p. 17). Hence, caring is not who a person is, but something the person is engrossed in, as Goldstein (1999) put it: "something you engage in, something you do" (p. 656). As a caring relationship is mutual, caring refers to how the one-caring encounters the cared-for, and how the cared-for responds to the caring encounter and the one-caring. Furthermore, caring refers to the quality of the relationship between the teacher and the children, or as Kim and Schallert (2011) put it: "caring is a quality of the relationship that develops between a student and a teacher" (p. 1060). The caring relation is furthermore a moral relation because the one-caring has a choice but also an obligation to care. The responsibility and moral dimension in caring is influenced by the one-caring's affect and desire (Goldstein, 1999). According to Noddings (1984), the concept of caring, or the caring relationship between teachers and children, is composed of *engrossment*, *motivational displacement*, and *reciprocity*.

### ***Engrossment***

The concept of engrossment can be replaced by attention, and Noddings (2005) explains this by saying: "When I care, I really hear, see, or feel what the other tries to convey" (p. 16). This means that the teacher has to be attentive to the child's need, and, furthermore, this term refers to how the teacher feels about and receives the child (Kim & Schallert, 2011). Although engrossment is related to how the teacher sees the child's needs, it is not synonymous with empathy (Goldstein, 1999). In a caring encounter, the teacher does not have to empathize with the child or generalize or analyze how she would feel in the same or a similar situation. On the contrary, engrossment is the way the teacher receives the child and how the teacher manages to see and feel with the child: "I receive the other into myself, and I see and feel with the other. I become a duality" (Noddings, 1984, p. 30). This requires attention from the teacher towards the child. A caring teacher meets a child with full attention to feel what the child feels, accepts the child as a self,

and does not try to analyze or place her own interpretation on the child's situation. Such full attention to the other can generate strong responsibility, and in this way, engrossment initiates the caring encounter (Goldstein, 1999). Furthermore, engrossment refers to the receptive attention the teacher gives the child (Kim & Schallert, 2011). This is essential and must be a component of all caring (Noddings, 1984). Nevertheless, engrossment does not have to be repeated in every encounter with the same child. This means that a teacher who knows the children well does not have to repeat this in every encounter with each individual child, or, at least, it only needs to last for a short moment (Noddings, 2005). However, it has to take place. Additional components of a caring encounter are attention and receptivity to the other's signs, both verbal and non-verbal (Noddings, 2001). Engrossment or attention can be identified in a teacher-child caring relation according to how and if the teacher hears, sees, or tries to feel what the child is communicating (e.g., Noddings, 2005).

In the context of a classroom, engrossment can be observed, for example, when a child raises his/her hand and asks the teacher a question. The teacher has to pay attention to the child, listen attentively, and respond in a way that is beneficial to the child. For example, the teacher has to listen attentively to the child's feelings: is the child frustrated by the task, is the child curious about the task and seeking more information, or does the child need feedback on his/her work? A frustrated child will need a different response than the curious child or the child who needs feedback. The attentive teacher will be aware of the child's need. Research indicates that children with withdrawn behavior rarely take the initiative to seek help in the classroom (e.g., Gazelle & Rubin, 2010). With such children, engrossment may be when the teacher checks in with a child with withdrawn behavior several times during the school day to see if everything is alright, if the child needs help, or just to show the child that she sees him/her and wants to know how things are.

#### *Motivational Displacement*

Motivational displacement characterizes the teacher's role in the caring relationship as "the willingness to give primacy, even momentarily, to the goals and needs of the cared-for" (Goldstein, 1999, p. 656). Motivational displacement occurs when the teacher's attention or engrossment is on the child, not on the teacher herself. In other words, motivational displacement "(...) involves stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference into the other's" (Noddings, 1984, p. 24). Furthermore, the teacher's response

to the child is based on the child's needs and goals, not the teacher's, and thus, "motivational displacement is a direct outcome of receptivity" (Goldstein, 1999, p. 656). The teacher assumes the child's goals and motives as her own, causing the teacher to act on behalf of the child as if it were on her own behalf. The teacher wishes to do what is best for the child; she wants to please the child (Noddings, 1984). Motivational displacement in the classroom setting can also be described as a teacher's desire to share a child's joy or solve a child's problem (Noddings, 2001). In this situation, the teacher must find a way to interact with the child so he or she will receive the caring encounter (Noddings, 2001). Engrossment and motivational displacement characterize the teacher's consciousness while caring; in these two "stages," the teacher tries to find out what she can do to help the child and then she does so (Noddings, 2005).

Motivational displacement in the classroom indicates that the teacher has to respond to the child in a beneficial way and, as mentioned above, find a way that the individual child will accept (Noddings, 2001). The teacher responds to the child who masters the task by sharing her joy and satisfaction, but when a child is frustrated, the teacher has to do something to help the child with his/her frustrating situation. How the teacher encounters and responds to the various types of children and their different needs and different situations in the classroom can be interpreted as motivational displacement. Children with withdrawn behavior are not talkative in social settings (e.g., Gazelle & Rubin, 2010), and the teacher may not get a long story but rather a short sentence when she asks, for example, about their weekend. In interacting with children with withdrawn behavior, the teacher can, for example, adjust her questions to closed questions so the children can answer by nodding or shaking their heads. Furthermore, motivational displacement can be observed in how or if the teacher shares children's joy when they complete exercises or reach goals, in addition to how the teacher adjusts her approach to each specific child.

#### *Reciprocity*

Reciprocity refers to the duality in the relationship, more specifically, how the child responds to the teacher's caring encounter. If the child does not acknowledge or accept the caring encounter, no caring has "taken place" (Noddings, 1984, 2001). Therefore, reciprocity has a powerful role in the caring interaction. The action, or what the teacher does in relation to the child, can be acknowledged or rejected by the child. As Noddings (1984) says: "Whatever the one-caring actually does is enhanced or diminished, made

meaningful or meaningless, in the attitude conveyed to the cared-for” (p. 61). How the child responds to the teachers’ reward will depend on their relationship and their interactions, but the response will also influence the continuance of the caring. The child’s response to what the teacher does is what sustains the caring relationship. Even when a positive teacher-child relationship is established, the teacher may be rejected by the child in some encounters, but she knows she will succeed the next time (Noddings, 2001). The child’s rejection does not threaten their relationship or caring encounters.

According to Goldstein (1999), a smile or saying thank you are forms of reciprocity. Nodding and eye contact are other forms. All these forms of reciprocity are observable. Another observable form of reciprocity is when a child allows the teacher to help. Children with withdrawn behavior are seldom talkative (e.g., Gazelle & Rubin, 2010), and the only response a teacher may get from them might be a nod, a smile, or eye contact. Sometimes these children respond in almost invisible ways, and people who do not know them well can interpret this as rejection. If the teacher interprets the child as rejecting her, she might conclude that the caring encounter was meaningless to the child or not appropriate to the child’s specific situation (Goldstein, 1999).

### ***Research on Caring in Education***

Previous research on caring in education seems to focus on two aspects of caring. The first is the teacher’s caring approach, while the second is how children can benefit from having a caring teacher. Research on caring in education indicates that a caring teacher establishes meaningful relationships with the children, sustains these relationships, and responds to the children with sensitivity and flexibility (Goldstein & Lake, 2000). The caring teacher encourages dialogs with individual children and the class in general, and she is sensitive to the needs and interests of both individual children and the class as a whole (Rogers & Webb, 1991). According to studies, a caring teacher provides engagement, adjusts for meaningful activities, and uses various pedagogical strategies in her teaching (Goldstein & Lake, 2000; Rogers & Webb, 1991). Being in a caring relationship with the teacher also seems to help children to better understand themselves, and thus can have a positive influence on the children’s engagement in learning (Kim & Schallert, 2011). Furthermore, a caring relationship between the teacher and the children seems to have positive outcomes for the children’s development of self-esteem and their development of personal and social accountability, such as caring for others and empathy (Gano-Overway, 2013). These positive outcomes



are closely connected to the classroom environment the caring teacher builds, which studies indicates is characterized by trust and empowers the children to take risks (Goldstein & Lake, 2000).

According to Boyd and Kobak (1997) and Lown et al. (2007), children who have a caring teacher model the teacher and become caring themselves, and being a caring person has a positive influence on their personal growth. A study by Gano-Overway (2013) supports these findings and also indicates that children who experience a caring relationship with their teacher become more caring towards others, understand others' feelings and emotions better, and engage in caring relationships. This study also indicated a reduction in antisocial behavior and bullying in classrooms where the teacher is caring, in contrast to classrooms without caring teachers (Gano-Overway, 2013). The decrease in antisocial behavior and bullying in caring classrooms is explained as a consequence of the children's understanding of others' feelings, which may lead to more prosocial behavior (Gano-Overway, 2013).

Studies on caring in education also point out positive outcomes for the caring teacher (e.g., Goldstein & Lake, 2000; Hargreaves, 1994). Teachers in a caring relationship with their class and the individual children in their class seem to become more involved in the children's learning and development, and they engage the children's learning and development in a more pleasant way (Hargreaves, 1994). Furthermore, the caring relationship leads to more pleasure for both parties from shared learning activities, shared work, and their relationship (Noddings, 1984). A teacher who is in a caring relationship with the class and individual children seems to have a lower risk of burning out than colleagues who do not establish caring relations (e.g., Hargreaves, 1994; Noddings, 2001). The lower risk can be connected to the mutuality in the caring relationship: the teacher gives, but also gets much back from the children. Nias (1989) expresses this mutuality and how both parties in the caring relation give and receive in this quotation from one teacher: "Don't think I'm the one who's doing all the giving...I know that by the end of the day several people will have shown that they love me" (p. 87).

### **Alice's Practice of Seeing Children with Withdrawn Behavior**

During the school day, there are several opportunities for the teacher to see the child. Alice seems to focus on this during the whole school day and in daily activities in the classroom. In her dealings with children with withdrawn behavior, Alice purposefully interacts with them several times during the school day. According to her interviews, she is concerned about this and is afraid that she neglects them or that they do not feel seen by her (e.g., int. 041312, 050412, 052912). In the class and group circle she adjusts her expectations when it comes to the participation of the children with withdrawn behavior. An example of this is how she encourages Sara in the class circle. Sara seldom raises her hand to answer, but when the children are asked to write a word (handwriting exercise) on the blackboard, Sara always sits on the edge of her seat. Alice then asks Sara if she wants to write on the board, and Sara does, with a smile on her face. Even if Sara does not raise her hand, Alice seems to be attentive to her wishes (e.g., vid. 051412, 052912). My observations revealed this time and time again (e.g., obs. 032712, 041012, 052912; vid. 050312, 051412, 052112). Furthermore, Alice often encounters Sara in the working units, and interacts with her through dialogs, smiles, and positive thumbs-up signs. Sara often responds with a smile, nod, or eye contact.

I also observed Alice's general focus on seeing the children. It appeared in the morning ritual in the cloakroom, during which time Alice went from child to child and talked with each of them before the lesson started (e.g., obs. 032712). Furthermore, I observed this in the class circle where Alice wanted the children to tell something and share their experiences with the rest of the class. When she asked them, some of the children always wanted to talk, and Alice engaged in dialogs with them (e.g., vid. 052912). I could also observe her emphasis on seeing the children during the class/group circle, where she wanted to and did adjust for participation from the children. She wanted them to engage in conversations about the topic in question. Furthermore, when Alice and the children met in the class/group circle, Alice took the time to look from child to child and smile at them. In the working units, while the children worked individually or in pairs or groups, Alice also made herself accessible to the children by walking around between the desks, assisting and supporting the children in their work. In my analysis of the data, I find no exceptions to this practice (e.g., vid. 050512, 051412). Alice never leaves the classroom or sits down with her own work. In the interviews I had with Alice, she often talked about how important it is that she sees,

has dialogs, and interacts with each individual child and that she looks at their work during every working unit.

***Alice's Reflections on Seeing Children with Withdrawn Behavior***

As shown above, the observations provided rich examples of Alice's concern about seeing the children during the whole school day. When Alice talked about children with withdrawn behavior she claimed: "eye contact is very important" (int. 041312, p. 14). Furthermore, when Alice talks about her concern about seeing and giving of her time to each individual child within the framework of the class, she often says things like, "The goal is to see everyone" (int. 041312, p.16). When she talks about children with withdrawn behavior, she says that she is concerned about eye contact and points out that this is very important. She also described an earlier experience:

A girl with withdrawn behavior I had in another class changed her behavior after I started to establish more eye contact with her and give her more attention in the classroom. In an unconscious way, I think she felt more seen, and she began to participate more in the classroom. So, I mean eye contact is very important. As a teacher, you have to make eye contact with all children in every teaching unit, especially the children who do not talk or who take little initiative themselves. I think it is important that Sara experience that I see her and that we establish eye contact (int. 041312, p. 12-13).

Her concern about the importance of seeing the individual child and giving all of them the feeling of being seen by her each day has led her to develop strategies for the cloakroom, the working units, and the class or group circle. Her reason for these strategies is to remind herself to make eye contact and pay attention to the children who do not ask for it and to give all children the feeling of being seen by her. She says that these strategies also make her more aware of seeing the individual child and of making sure that all the children get her attention. About the strategy for the cloakroom, Alice says:

In the beginning, with this class, I sometime had to stop and wonder if I had talked to Sara that day. With this in mind, I have developed some strategies to help myself ensure that I interact with her and the other children every day. Every morning in the cloakroom, I walk down the row, say hello, and establish eye contact with each individual child (int. 041312, p. 23).

And when she talks about her strategy in the working units she says:

I think children with withdrawn behavior demand too little of me and my time, so I have to remember to pop by them, even if they don't raise their hand or ask me to come. I have to plan to stop by every child and give them my time. I will go to each child during the working unit, clap them on the shoulder, talk with them, and look at their work. I'm very aware about that, and I do it during a working unit. Children with withdrawn behavior are at risk of being neglected, and I'm afraid to do that; they compete with so many children for my attention and my time (int. 050412,

p. 10-11). As a teacher, you have limited time in the classroom, and how you distribute it is not always fair (int. 050412, p. 15).

Her strategy round during the working units always starts with Sara. If she is interrupted during her strategy round, for example if someone raises their hand for help, she helps them and continues her round afterwards. Her goal with these activities is to ensure that she has checked on each individual child, as she says: "...so that I know that during each working unit I have popped by each child" (int. 050412, p. 24). When she talks about the class or group circle, she talks about how she places children with withdrawn behavior to make it easier to establish eye contact with them, and adds:

It's important that I'm attentive and see if Sara is thinking about raising her hand to answer or if she wants to say something. It's more natural to look at a child who sits right in front of you in the class circle than one who sits on one of the sides [vertical to the teacher]. So I have to place children who are withdrawn right in front of me, to remind myself, and to make it easier to establish eye contact with them (int. 041312, p 13-14). You have to create some supporting strategies for yourself to ensure that you see everyone (int. 050412, p. 27).

When Alice sums up what she consider to be the most important thing to be aware of when dealing with children with withdrawn behavior in the context of the ordinary classroom, she again highlights the importance of seeing the children and establishing eye contact with them:

If I could choose only one word it would be *seeing*. I have to show them that I see them and that I acknowledge them with eye contact - that is important. I could also say that strengthening their self-confidence and experience of mastery is important (...) but I want everyone to have a genuine experience of being seen by me, that I want what is best for them and, that I want everyone to develop and learn, to see that I support them. And I need some strategies to support myself to ensure that I see all the children and establish eye contact with them (int. 052912, p. 22-23).

Below I will present a story that illustrates Alice's practice of seeing the children. The story is based upon observation notes (obs. 032712) from the cloakroom one morning in March, and it is therefore called the "morning ritual" story. After observing the morning ritual it was written as a story. The story is unique; it will never happen again in the exact same way, but it is also a typical story of Alice's practice on seeing the individual child.

### ***The "Morning Ritual" Story***

It is Tuesday morning. Alice is in the cloakroom when the children enter. She says, "Hello!" to each of them as they come in. The children go to their places in the cloakroom, where they hang up their coats and sit down. Alice helps one boy change his

wet socks. When she has finished that, she goes to the end of the row where the children from her group sit, and she starts with Eric.

- (1) Alice: *Good morning, Eric! How was your game last night?* (Alice looks at him and smiles.)
- (2) Eric: (Eric smiles back at her.) *It was good, we won!*
- (3) Alice: (Still looks at Eric and smiles): *You did! Congratulations!* (Alice gives him a thumbs-up. Eric smiles back. Then she moves to Sara, who sits next to Eric.)
- (4) Alice: (Alice looks at Sara (Sara looks down) and smiles when she says): *Good morning, Sara!*
- (5) Sara: (Looks down while picking on her fingers.)
- (6) Alice: (Lays a hand gently on Sara's shoulder) *Was the birthday party fine last night?*
- (7) Sara: (Looks at Alice, meets her eyes, and nods.)
- (8) Alice: *Lots of cakes?*
- (9) Sara: (Looks at Alice and nods again.)
- (10) Alice: *Sounds lovely!* (Alice looks at Sara and smiles. Alice moves towards Kate.)
- (11) Alice: *Good morning, Kate!*
- (12) Kate: *Hi, I walked to school all by myself today!* (Kate smiles with pride at Alice.)
- (13) Alice: *You did?* (Said in a surprising and confirming tone.) *Was it okay?*
- (14) Kate: *Yes, but a bit boring. And I got my feet wet.*
- (15) Alice: *Then you should put on some dry socks.* (Alice still pays attention to and looks at Kate.)
- (16) Kate: *I've already done that.* (Alice smiles at Kate and gives her a thumbs-up, and she moves to the next child in the row, Sophie. Alice smiles at Sophie and meets her eyes.)
- (17) Alice: *Good morning, Sophie!*
- (18) Sophie: (Smiles at Alice, and starts to look for something on the floor.)

Alice moves towards Philip, who sits next to Sophie.

- (19) Alice: *Good morning, Philip!* (Alice puts her hand on Philip's shoulder and smiles at him.)
- (20) Philip: *Good morning.* (Philip smiles at Alice.)
- (21) Alice: (Alice has moved to Miley's place.) *Good morning, Miley!* (Alice smiles at her and meet her eyes.)
- (22) Miley: *Hi, Alice.* (Miley smiles back.)
- (23) Alice: *Good morning, George! Nice to see you are back.* (Alice smiles at George, he smiles back.) *Are you well now?*
- (24) George: *Yes, I'm better. I have a note from my mum for you.*

- (25) Alice: *Good! Take it with you to the class circle.*
- (26) George: *Okay.*
- (27) Alice: *Good morning, Anna!* (Alice smiles at Anna.)
- (28) Anna: (Smiles back while she meets Alice's eyes.)
- (29) Alice: *Good morning, John!*
- (30) John: *Hi!* (Alice and John smile at each other.)
- (31) Alice: *Good morning, Jennifer!* (Alice smiles at her.)
- (32) Jennifer: *Hi, Alice!* (Jennifer smiles back.)

Alice moves to Sam's seat. He is taking off his coat and stands with his back to Alice. She lays a hand on his shoulder, and then he turns around.

- (33) Alice: *Good morning, Sam!* (Alice smiles at him.)
- (34) Sam: *Good morning!* (Sam smiles back, and then finishes taking off his coat.)
- (35) Alice: *Good morning, Robert!* (Alice smiles at him.)
- (36) Robert: *Hi! I almost didn't make it.* (He smiles at Alice and starts to take off his coat.)
- (37) Alice: *You made it on time.* (Alice smiles at him.)

Alice then moves to one of the corners in the cloakroom. From the corner, all the children see her, and she can see all the children. Alice claps her hands to get the whole class's attention.

- (38) Alice: *Good morning, children!*
- (39) The children: *Good morning, teacher!*

Alice starts to sing a good-morning song, and the children join in. After the song, Alice tells the children what they have to bring with them into the class circle. She then tells them the order in which they should walk into the classroom (obs. 032712). (Simon and Amy were not at school that day.)

### **Analysis of the "Morning Ritual" Story**

The "Morning Ritual" story is the unit of analysis used to gain deeper insight into and understanding of Alice's practice of seeing children with withdrawn behavior. The analysis below is mainly about the interaction between Alice and Sara in the story, but Alice's encounter with the class in general will also be examined.

### ***Paying Attention to the Children***

Alice had been the children's teacher for one and a half years when the morning ritual story took place, and it seems as though she knew the children in the class well. Because of this, engrossment or attention to the individual child's needs does not have to be repeated in every encounter Alice has with the children (Noddings, 2005). However, engrossment can be observed as she pays attention to individual children, as seen in (1, 4, 11, 17, 19, 21, 23, 27, 29, 31, 33, 35). She pays attention to some of them by asking questions (1, 6, 8, 13, 23) and to others by listening to their stories (12, 24, 36). Alice's "morning ritual" can also be interpreted as engrossment, as she has developed this habit and uses it every morning due to of her concern about seeing each individual child and her desire for the children to feel seen by her (e.g., int. 041312, p. 23).

### ***Open and Closed Questions***

As we have seen, motivational displacement refers to the teacher's response to the child. The first place where motivational displacement is observed in the morning ritual story is in Alice's initial utterance (1). In her encounter with Eric, Alice asks about the game last night. She encounters him with a smile and establishes eye contact with him. Alice gives Eric attention, and she also asks about something she knows is of interest to him and important for him to talk about: the game last night. Moreover, she asks an open question, which invites him to tell something about the game, and he is invited to tell what was important for him about the game. With a closed question, such as "Was the game okay last night?" Alice would have restricted Eric's ability to answer and talk about what he found interesting and what he wanted to say about the game. The way Alice encounters Eric (2), with a smile and an open question, lets Eric tell her that the game was good and that his team won.

Another example of motivational displacement in the story is when Alice pays attention to Sara (4, 6). Alice encounters Sara with a smile and a greeting (4). Sara looks down and picks at her fingers (5). Then, Alice puts a hand gently on Sara's shoulder and asks about yesterday's birthday party (6). This can be interpreted as Alice changing her motivational displacement. She initially tries to establish eye contact (4), which Sara does not repay, so then Alice lays one of her hands gently on Sara's shoulder (6). Alice then asks Sara about the birthday party the previous night (6). In contrast to the question Alice asked Eric (1), she asks Sara a closed question that can be answered with yes or no or by nodding or shaking her head. Alice knows that she cannot approach Sara

with an open question when she wants to have a conversation with her. She knows that Sara will answer by nodding or shaking her head, and because of this, Alice has to ask her closed questions. If Alice had asked Sara an open question, Sara probably would not have responded, and Sara may have had the feeling that she did not succeed in the dialog. According to the concept of motivational displacement, Alice adjusts and asks closed questions for Sara's sake as if it were for her own sake: Alice interacts with Sara in such a way that she knows Sara can successfully respond to her.

### ***Smiling and Establishing Eye Contact***

The way Alice responds to each individual child, by smiling and establishing eye contact with each of them, can also be understood as motivational displacement. Responding to the children with a smile and eye contact may be an appropriate way to handle the first meeting in the morning. As a result, all of the children have had some interaction with Alice when the school day starts, and they feel seen by her. Furthermore, her response to Eric (3) involves sharing his joy over winning the game. Her response to Sara (10) also includes sharing satisfaction about a nice birthday party, and when Kate proudly tells Alice that she has walked to school alone this day, Alice shares her sense of pride (13) in her response. Motivational displacement is also seen in the way Alice greets Philip by putting her hand on his shoulder (19).

We have seen that reciprocity, the way the children respond to the teacher, appears in different forms in the morning ritual story. Reciprocity by smiling appears in almost every encounter Alice has in the cloakroom (2, 12, 18, 20, 22, 23, 28, 30, 32, 34 and 36). For example, in her encounter with Eric (2), he responds to Alice with a smile (3). Through his response or reciprocity to Alice's question, they both contribute to the relationship, and according to the theory of the concept of caring, Alice succeeded in establishing a caring relationship with Eric. According to Goldstein (1999), smiling back at the teacher is one way the children can acknowledge her encounter and actions, and when the children accept her caring encounter, the caring relationship, which is mutual, has been established. Establishing eye contact with the one-caring can be another form of reciprocity. We can see that this happens in at least five of the encounters in the story (7, 9, 16, 21 and 28). In these examples, the establishment of eye contact occurs in addition to the children smiling back, except in (7, 9). Sara (7, 9) does not smile back at Alice, but she confirms Alice's caring through eye contact and nodding (7, 9). From Sara's reciprocity to Alice's caring encounter, we can assume that a caring relationship



between them has been established. Entering a dialog with Alice may also be interpreted as reciprocity, and we can see this in several utterances (2, 12, 24 and 36). In one way or another, all the children accept Alice's caring encounter in the morning ritual story.

When Alice encounters Sara in the story (4), she tries to establish eye contact with her by smiling, looking at her, and saying good morning. Sara rejects Alice's encounter (5); she looks down and picks at her fingers. Alice then changes her motivational displacement (6); she puts a hand gently on Sara's shoulder and asks about the birthday party last night. Sara (7) accepts this encounter by responding to Alice's caring through eye contact and nodding. Sara's rejection of the first caring encounter can be understood to indicate that Alice's motivational displacement was meaningless to Sara. Alice's second motivational displacement, when she gently put her hand on Sara's shoulder, seems to be meaningful to Sara, because she validated it. Another interpretation of this interaction may be that Sara did indeed validate the first overture of caring from Alice, but Sara's response to Alice was not noticeable to me. According to earlier research on children with withdrawn behavior, these children can appear to reject others (e.g., Gazelle & Rubin, 2010), and since I do not know Sara as well as Alice does, I might interpret her response as rejection, even if she did give a response that was noticeable to Alice. On the subject of reciprocity, I have very few examples in my data of Alice being rejected by the children; they mainly accept and acknowledge her caring encounter. Even if she sometimes experiences rejection, she does not stop encountering or interacting with the rejecting child, but rather adjusts her motivational displacement.

### **Summary and Discussion**

This chapter has focused on how Alice emphasizes seeing children with withdrawn behavior and the class in general. When analyzing Alice's emphasis on seeing the individual child in light of theory on caring, I found that engrossment was evident in the interviews, the observation notes, and video recordings. In the interview transcriptions I found statements like: "I want everyone to have a genuine experience of being seen by me" (int. 052912, p. 23). In examining the morning ritual story, I found examples of engrossment in how Alice is attentive to the individual children (1, 4, 11, 17, 19, 21, 23, 27, 29, 31, 33, 35). I also found motivational displacement in the transcribed interviews, in the observations and the video recordings. In the interviews, she said, among other things, "(...) I have to show them that I see them and that I acknowledge them with eye

contact; that is important (int. 052912, p. 22). In the morning ritual story, examples of motivational displacement appeared several times; for example, in her initial statement (1) and in the following statements (2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 13, 19). I also found reciprocity in the analysis. This appeared in the morning ritual story in the different ways the children validated Alice's encounters, such as by smiling, establishing eye contact, nodding, or engaging in dialogs (2, 7, 9, 12, 18, 21, 28, 34, 36). In order to care and establish a caring relationship, all three elements, engrossment, motivational displacement, and reciprocity, must be present. These elements overlap and cannot be separated from each other, as the lines between them are slipping and the elements are interwoven. If only one or two of the elements are observed, no caring has taken place. Based on the analysis and the conclusion that Alice's practice involves all three elements, I claim that Alice's practice is a caring practice.

Alice's practice of caring and seeing the children is a practice of *awareness*, *reflection* and *action*. We can see her awareness in how deeply she is concerned about Sara and the children in general, as well as in her concern about seeing the individual child and giving each of them a genuine experience of being seen by her. Her reflection on seeing children with withdrawn behavior started many years ago when she experienced the importance of eye contact. Her goal is to see all the children during each working unit. Her caring practice also involves action. In Alice's classroom this can be observed in many ways: the greetings in the morning, the way she places the children in the class and group circle, and the way in which she makes her strategy round during the working units. The goal of her action is to make it possible to see the individual children and to remind herself to do this every day in the different activities in the classroom. Her actions (the strategy round and the organization of the class circle) are a way to scaffold and support herself. Furthermore, her caring action involves direct contact, eye contact, and the way she asks different children questions. Her caring practice can be described as *interaction sensitivity*.

Bearing in mind the asymmetry of the teacher-child relationship, the teacher has an obligation to care in a professional way (e.g., Noddings, 1984, 2001). A professional way of caring means that the teacher has to establish a caring relationship built on trust and duality. This way of caring allows for the relationship to be close enough to scaffold the child's learning and development. The relationship also has to be close enough that the child validates the teacher's caring encounter, otherwise a caring relationship cannot

occur. On the other hand, the relationship has to be professional enough that the child does not become dependent on the teacher and the teacher does not suffer burn-out (Noddings, 2001). If the relationship becomes too close, the child may feel obligated to validate the teacher's caring encounter, and in this way the caring relationship will not positively support the child's learning and development as it is not built on trust.

It is interesting to note that the findings presented in this chapter do not agree with the findings presented in the review chapter in this thesis. Previous research on caring maintains that a caring teacher has several positive outcomes for the children, such as more engagement in their learning (Kim & Schallert, 2011), positive development of their self-esteem (Gano-Overway, 2013), and empowering them to take risks (Goldstein & Lake, 2000). As we saw in Chapter Two, children with withdrawn behavior tend to have lower self-worth and lower well-being than their peers (Findaly et al., 2009). Moreover, they tend to be more excluded than their classmates (Rubin et al., 2006), do not participate in social or oral activities, and appear to be inhibited in verbal situations (e.g. Gazelle & Rubin, 2010). In spite of the knowledge on how children can benefit from a caring teacher it appears that previous research has not considered theory on caring when examining children with withdrawn behavior in the context of school.

When looking at these findings in the light of research on withdrawn behavior, there is one topic I want to focus on. In the second chapter, we saw that earlier research indicates that withdrawn children tend to have a dependent relationship with their teacher (e.g., Arbeau et al., 2010). In dealing with such children, this could lead to a dilemma for the teacher trying to find a balance between closeness and distance. The closeness-distance dilemma can arise if the teacher adjusts for distance from the child by not challenging or dealing with him/her in an appropriate way. By keeping the child with withdrawn behavior at a distance, the teacher does not get to know him or her, and then it is difficult to challenge the child to promote learning and development. Research has found that children with withdrawn behavior want to be challenged, but their teachers seem to prefer to leave them alone (Lund, 2004, 2008). This can create distance between the teacher and the child, which means that the child does not experience being seen or that the teacher has expectations of the child which can lead to negative outcomes. Another example of the closeness-distance dilemma is when the teacher and the child with withdrawn behavior become too close in such a way that the child

becomes dependent on the teacher. A dependent relationship between the child and the teacher will restrict the child's learning and exploration in the classroom (Arbeau et al., 2010; Rudasill et al., 2006), and, furthermore, it can hinder the child in establishing friendships with classmates.

In dealing with children with withdrawn behavior, and children in general, the teacher must pay attention to when she should scaffold and support the child, when she should challenge him/her, and when she should try to establish a caring relationship. On the other hand, the teacher must be aware of when she should step aside so the child can manage on his/her own and when it is meaningless to try to establish a caring encounter. This dilemma of closeness and distance requires that the teacher knows the child well, is attentive to the child, and can interpret the child's signs and non-verbal communication. It is also beneficial if the teacher is interaction sensitive.



## Chapter 7

### Slowness in Dealing with Children with Withdrawn Behavior

In my analysis of the data, I found that Alice's emphasis on giving the children time to think was a recurring theme. In the interviews she said, among other things, "I have to wait so everyone has time to think" (int. 050412, p. 3). When she talked about Sara in particular and children with withdrawn behavior in general, she said things like, "In situations where I'm waiting, I have seen that she answers" (int. 051412, p. 19) and, "It is important to give them time" (int. 050412, p. 18). In the observations and video recordings of the classroom, I could observe that she gave the children time to think. Alice said things like: "Now you all can start to think about one thing you want to tell" (e.g., vid. 052112). Theory on pauses (e.g., Maroni, 2011) and research on *wait-time*<sup>27</sup> (Rowe, 1972) were useful for understanding and gaining further insight into this aspect of Alice's practice. This chapter will start by describing the theoretical framework and previous research, followed by a description of the empirical data on the topic. An analysis of the empirical data follows, and the chapter closes with a summary and discussion.

#### Theoretical Framework

A person's social interaction with others is crucial to their learning and development, according to socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978). Social interaction can involve a range of activities, such as talking or playing. Furthermore, silence<sup>28</sup> is an element of social interaction between individuals. In studies of silence, pauses, and reducing

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<sup>27</sup> Robert J. Stahl (1994) uses think-time when he talks about this. His term is, in a way, more specific, because it underlines that something is going on during the pause: thinking. However, I use the term wait-time since I rely on Mary Budd Rowe's research on this topic. She is also the one who is most referred to in research on this topic.

<sup>28</sup> Silence and pauses are used synonymously in this thesis.

teaching speed, Maroni (2011) and Ingram and Elliott (2013), among others, have described three kinds of silence, based on the definition of silence in conversation analysis given by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974). Furthermore, Rowe (1972, 1974a, 1974b, 1986, 1996) developed the concept of wait-time to explain and identify pauses in interactions between teachers and children. To explore and understand my data, theory on pauses and research on wait-time proved to be useful and relevant.

### ***Pauses in Teaching***

Pauses can be widely defined as the space between action and reaction (Guilmartin, 2009). Furthermore, pauses can have different meanings, depending on the context in which they occur (Guilmartin, 2009; Ingram & Elliott, 2014). Regardless of the context, a pause is necessary to listen, to think, and to digest the surrounding world. According to Guilmartin (2009), a pause “gives you a chance to affirm your original thoughts” (p. 22). She also claims that pausing allows humans time to think, to decide, and to make good choices, which in turn makes them more effective and prevents misunderstandings. Therefore, the effect of a pause is two-sided. First of all, by pausing, the person is able to think for him/herself. Second, pauses allow the person to make better decisions, listen more carefully to what the other person is communicating, and think before taking action. This is why Guilmartin (2009) claims that pauses are powerful.

Pauses can express a wide range of meanings: fear or sympathy, agreement or disagreement, fairness or kindness, empathy or an invitation to participate (Maroni, 2011). Since the meaning of a pause can vary, its context, as mentioned above, is important. Because of the variety of interpretations and the wide range of information a pause can give, it is a valuable tool (Penna, Mocci & Sechi, 2009). Gurevitch (1998) points out two ways to interpret a pause in communication. On the one hand, a pause or silence in communication can be a crisis or what Gurevitch (1998) calls a “*breakdown of communication and relations*” (p. 25, emphasis mine). On the other hand, a pause is necessary to digest information, sift impressions, and think through an answer or response, rather than responding impulsively (Guilmartin, 2009; Rowe, 1986). In this case, a pause can be a “*communicative breakthrough* – breaking the ice of strangeness, an emergence of understanding, a burst of laughter” (Gurevitch, 1998, p. 25, emphasis mine).

According to Potter (2007), a pause can be intense in communication, because during a pause, the speaker and the listener can come closer to each other, and the

listener can be more attentive to what is being communicated. Furthermore, Maroni, Gnisci and Pontecorvo (2008) deem pauses to be a fundamental part of communication, as they can serve as gentle transitions from one thing to another. This is supported by Gurevitch (1998) who believes that pauses in communication create rhythm, slow things down, and adjust for changes. Moreover, during pauses the listener seems to focus on the speaker's eyes and not on the mouth, as is the case when the speaker is speaking (e.g., Gurevitch, 1998).

Dewey (1910) also maintains the importance of pauses, and he relates them to human thought and the process of thinking. He claims that "[d]ifficulty or obstruction in the way of reaching a belief brings us, however, to a pause" (p. 11). To solve a problem, dilemma, or task, or to answer a question, Dewey (1910) claims that pauses are necessary. Dewey (1910) claims that hesitation is an essential component of thinking, and adds that thinking is not a spontaneous process but rather a process that requires time. In accordance with Dewey's (1910) ideas on human thought, O'Connell and Kowal (1980) claim that pauses and hesitation are a temporal dimension of human speech. They also believe that higher mental processes correlate with pauses and hesitations in communication.

As mentioned above, Maroni (2011) and Ingram and Elliott (2013), among others, have used Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson's (1974) identifications of silence in conversation analysis as a starting point when analyzing and understanding pauses in teaching and in the context of education. Sacks et al. (1974) described three types of conversational silence: *pauses*, *lapses*, and *gaps*. Jaworski (1993) uses the same categories of silence, but he refers to them as *significant silences*, *lapses*, and *gaps* (p. 17). His terms will be used in this thesis. However, the definitions of these three kinds of silences or pauses overlap, so it is important to identify and classify them according to the context in which they occur (Maroni, 2011).

Significant silence is the silence that occurs after the current speaker stops speaking and before the next speaker starts (Maroni, 2011). After significant silence, there is a change in who is speaking, and the next speaker is pointed out by the current speaker or a chairperson. The silence that occurs before the nominated speaker starts to speak is then defined as significant silence. Maroni (2011) calls significant silence a "within-turn" (p. 2082). In classrooms, significant silence can occur when the teacher asks a question, waits while the children raise their hands, and then asks one of the



children to answer. The silence that occurs after the teacher's nomination of a particular child and before that child starts to speak is significant silence. After this, there is a change in who has the floor or the right to speak. In classrooms, significant silence often occurs when the teacher asks a question, for example, "What day is it today?" After this question, there may be significant silence before the teacher nominates a child to answer or if there is silence between the nomination and before the nominated child answers.

A lapse occurs after the current speaker stops speaking and before one of the listeners starts to speak, if the listeners interpret the silence that occurs as an opening to speak (e.g., Maroni et al., 2008). In a lapse, the second speaker starts to speak on his/her own initiative (e.g., Maroni, 2011). As with significant silence, a lapse is followed by a change in who is speaking. An example of a lapse is when there is a natural change of speaker in a conversation, sometimes involving an overlap of speakers. In some situations, the teacher initiates class conversations during which the children do not have to raise their hands to speak, and in these situations, pauses defined as lapses can occur. In other situations, children start to talk or comment in pauses, and this can also be interpreted as a lapse. When a child talks or comments while the teacher or another child is talking, it is a conversational overlap.

A gap occurs when the current speaker stops speaking without nominating the next speaker. In a gap, the current speaker is the only one who has the right to continue speaking; no one else has this right (e.g., Maroni, 2011). An example of a gap is in a courtroom when the judge is reading the judgement. Even if the judge pauses, no other has the right to speak; only the judge has the right to continue speaking after the silence. In school, gaps may occur when the teacher pauses in a lecture or an explanation and then continues speaking. After a gap, there is no change of speaker, but there can be a change in the subject, theme, or focus of the teacher's speech.

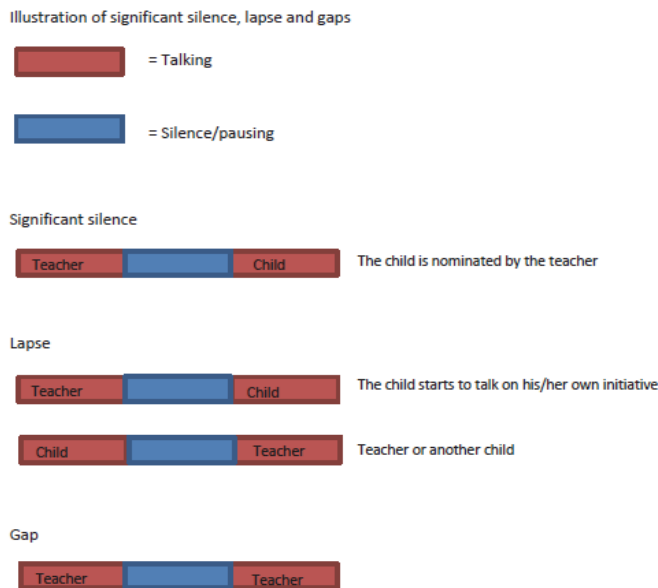


Figure 7.1 Illustration of significant silence, lapses, and gaps

Figure 7.1 illustrates talking and silence in significant silences, lapses, and gaps. When significant silence occurs, the teacher has the floor and nominates a child to answer or to talk. The silence that occurs between the teacher's speech and the child's is colored blue; this illustrates the significant silence. A lapse occurs when there is a silence followed by a change of speaker; as illustrated, it can change from the teacher to a child, from a child to the teacher, or from a child to another child. The next speaker starts to talk on his/her own initiative. A gap is the silence that occurs when the speaker pauses; after a gap there is no change of speaker.

**Research on Wait-Time**

In a longitudinal study, Rowe (1972) explored the use of wait-time in teaching. Recent studies on this topic support her findings, and I will mainly refer to Rowe and her studies in the following. Rowe (1972) found that teachers, on average, wait one second from the time they ask a question until they require an answer, answer the question themselves, or ask a new question. In her study, she introduced the concept of *wait-time*, which she further divided into *wait-time 1* and *wait-time 2*. Wait-time 1 refers to the time after the teacher has asked a question and before she requires a response from the children. Wait-time 1 can also be the time after the teacher has stopped talking and

before she starts to talk again because no children have responded (Rowe, 1974a). If the children do not respond within one second, Rowe (1972) found that the teacher repeats the question, answers the question him/herself, asks a different question, or addresses the question to others. Wait-time 2 is the time between the child's response and the teacher's response to the child's answer or initiative. Wait-time 2 can also be the time when a child pauses after talking and before starting to talk again. In her study, Rowe (1972) found an average wait-time 2 of 0.9 seconds.

Rowe (1972, 1974b, 1986, 1996) found that increased wait-time, meaning wait-time of three seconds or more, has several positive effects. The interaction between the teacher and the children seems to be more positive, and they interact with each other more as wait-time increases. Furthermore, she found that longer wait-time allows for more interaction between the children and more questions and involvement from the children, which has a positive effect on the children's learning and development (Bianchini, 2008; Rowe, 1986, 1996). As the teacher gives more time for thinking, the children seem to compete less for the teacher's attention and listen more to other children's responses and initiatives (Rowe, 1986). Another positive effect of increased wait-time is that the quality of the children's responses increases (e.g., Rowe, 1986). With more time to think, they give more thoughtful answers. When wait-time increases, the children appear to participate more in discussions and dialogs in the classroom, and all of the children are more likely to participate, instead of just a few. When the teacher uses pauses and increases wait-time, children who are usually quiet volunteer to speak, and they "have exciting ideas" (Rowe, 1996, p. 36). Teachers who have increased wait-time report that children they previously described as quiet and not taking part in discussions become more verbally active with more time to think (Rowe, 1986, 1996).

As an extension of this research, Rowe (1974a, 1986, 1996) also found that longer wait-time changes the teacher's expectations of the children and what they can manage. Instead of expecting most from the "top students" and less from the "poor students" (as Rowe refers to them), the difference in teacher expectations of these two groups seems to be reduced when wait-time increases. It seems that teachers who use wait-time longer than three seconds have more positive expectations for all the children (Rowe, 1986, 1996). These teachers also appear to give all the children more time to think and reflect. This is in contrast to what Rowe (1986) found in classrooms in which the teacher does not use wait-time. In these classrooms, the teachers give their "top

students” more time to think than the children they deem “poor students.” Rowe (1986, 1996) connects this to the teachers’ expectations for the children; the ones from whom they expect more have more time to think than the children from whom they expect less.

Another positive outcome of longer wait-time mentioned by Rowe (1972, 1974a, 1986, 1996) is the reduction of “I don’t know” answers. She explains this by pointing out that thinking and evaluating take more than one second, so short wait-time leads to short responses. On the other hand, longer wait-time appears to result in deeper thoughts and longer responses from the children (Bianchini, 2008; Rowe, 1986). Short wait-time constricts the development of deep thoughts and can also influence the quality of the children’s answers (Gambrell, 1983). This corresponds with Vygotsky’s (1979) ideas about higher mental processes and Dewey’s (1910) description of the essential elements of thought, both of which claim that time and hesitation are important. Children need time to think through the question and the answer (Gambrell, 1983), and some children need as much time to prepare to speak in class as to reflect on the question. Furthermore, increased wait-time gives the children more space for speculative thinking, allowing them to form arguments based on evidence and previous experiences (Rowe, 1996). Rowe (1996) claims that short wait-time can make the children feel insecure in the classroom and lead to low confidence, whereas longer wait-time can make the children feel more confident in their learning situation. Rowe (1986) also found that behavioral and discipline problems in the classroom were reduced with increased wait-time. It appears that the children became more attentive and less restless with extended wait-time, and this is linked to motivation for learning: “Protracted wait-time appears to influence motivation, and that in turn may be a factor in attention and cooperation” (Rowe, 1986, p. 44).

With increased wait-time, the teacher also gives herself time to think before she responds and asks new questions. According to Rowe (1974b, 1986, 1996), this makes the teacher more flexible in her responses to the children. Furthermore, the teacher’s responses seem to be more relevant to the children’s learning and development in classrooms where the teacher allows more time to think (Bianchini, 2008; Rowe, 1974a, 1986). Another outcome of increased wait-time is a change in how the teacher asks questions. Instead of asking straight recall questions, teachers who allow more wait-time seem to ask more questions that give children the opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions (Rowe, 1996). Teachers also vary their questions more when

they increase wait-time. They ask fewer questions, and the questions they ask appear to be more relevant to the topic under discussion (Rowe, 1986). Increased wait-time also gives the teacher the opportunity to listen to the children's answers; instead of waiting for the "right" answer, these teachers seem to accept a wider range of responses from the children. Classroom discussions, when teachers allow more time to think, are no longer a "guess-what-the-teacher-thinks" quiz but rather a dialog around a theme in which initiatives from the children are valued.

### **Alice's Practice of Slowness in Dealing with Children with Withdrawn Behavior**

In dealing with Sara in particular and the class in general, Alice seems to focus on giving the children time to think during dialogues in the class circle, working units, and stationary work. I observed this time and time again in my observations (e.g., obs. 041012, vid. 052112) and in the interviews I had with her (e.g., int. 050412, int. 051412). One example is when Alice and the class are in the class or group circle and she asks a question. After asking a question, she waits and looks from child to child before she asks one of them to answer. In my observations, I witnessed that she did not allow anyone to answer until many children had raised their hands. Instead of letting the first one who raises a hand answer, she looks from child to child, repeats the question, and waits. Another way she gives the children time is the way she acts when working with them. When they are in the class/group circle, she sits on her seat, speaks in a calm way, listens to the children, thinks through their input, and does not rush from one activity to the next. Even if she sometimes says that they must use the time effectively because they have a lot to do in the specific unit, she is calm. Furthermore, when the children ask questions, Alice appears to think them through before she comments or answers, and sometimes before she answers she says things like, "I have to think about that" (vid. 052912) or "I have to find out more about that" (vid. 052112). During the working units, she walks slowly between the children's work tables; she does not rush from one place to another. Furthermore, she takes her time when helping an individual child or a group of children, even if other children raise their hands or ask for her attention. She calmly asks them to wait, she finishes with the child she is helping, and then she moves on to the next (vid. 050512). Moreover, during stationary work, when each group of children has seven minutes at a station, Alice appeared to offer the children time at "her" station.

Here, I observed that, when she asked questions she waited patiently before requiring answers (vid. 050312). In one example, she waited ten seconds after asking Sara a question before Sara answered (vid. 050312).

***Alice's Reflections on Slowness in Dealing with Children with Withdrawn Behavior***

When Alice reflects upon dealing with children with withdrawn behavior, her concern about giving these children time to think appears. When she talks about Sara in particular and how she can invite her to participate in the class circle activities, Alice maintains that, "I have to give her time" (int. 041312, p. 30). She also talks about the importance of giving time to children with withdrawn behavior in general:

If you as a teacher want children who are withdrawn or inactive to participate, you have to give them time. I don't manage it all the time, but I have decided to not always ask the children who put their hands up first (int. 050412, p. 4).

When Alice talks about giving time, she also points out that it is important that she is a patient teacher, not only during classroom activities, but when giving children with withdrawn behavior time in general. When Alice reflects on giving these children time, it is clear that she uses time and slows down her teaching to allow them to participate and also to let them be as they are. For instance, she says:

I want them to experience that they can be as they are, and then it is important to give them time. They need time to think it through when they are asked something. And I think the challenge is to give them the time they need and not to give up too fast or give them the feeling of failing. I think it is important to calm down and give them time and accept that you have to take more time (int. 050412, p. 18-19).

She furthermore says:

I think that children with withdrawn behavior are children who often need more time to feel safe and confident at school (...) they are children who often need more time to get into the role as a pupil and to "get started" at school (int. 050412, p. 9/11). For example, on some tests, we are only allowed to give the children two minutes to read three pages, and then they have to combine words and pictures, and that is not enough time for children who are withdrawn; they need more time with their work (int. 051412, p. 20).

Furthermore, her reason for slowing down seems to be based on the variety of children she deals with. When Alice talks about children with withdrawn behavior and how she as the teacher can scaffold and support them, her focus on time and time to think appears again:

As a teacher, you must have positive expectations for them, and you have to give them time to think before they answer; that is very important. I have seen children who know the answer but need time to get it out, or they need time to think about whether they want to answer or not (int. 052912, p. 40).

Alice also reflects on a video recording of the stationary work during which, at the reading station, she asked Sara a question and then waited 10 seconds until Sara answered (and during this pause, one of the other children raised her hand and almost waved it in Alice's face). About that lesson, Alice says:

Sometimes it is a kind of intuition, maybe; I sometimes feel that she can manage to answer...I had "ice in my veins" and managed to wait; I could see that she had the answer on her lips, and I was so happy when I managed to wait and she gave the answer. It was so wonderful, and she was satisfied as well (int. 050412, p. 3-6). In situations where I'm waiting and have "ice in my veins," I have seen that she answers (int. 051412, p. 19).

When Alice spoke with Sara's parents, she again focused on giving Sara time to think, and she has experienced that it is easier for children in general and Sara in particular to participate when her teaching is slowed down. On this occasion, Alice told Sara's parents that:

We have had some good experiences recently; she answers in the group circle when we give her time to think and slow down. As adults we must dare to wait, because we have seen that when we give time, more children want to answer and then the answer comes (...) it's important to give her time (met. 111612, p. 3-4).

As stated above, Alice focuses on giving the children time to think when they are in the class/group circle and in other teaching situations. She also states her concern about giving the children time to think when she reflects upon her own practice, and this appears when she talks about the class in general:

As a teacher, you have to wait so everyone can think, because the children are so varied. Some children can answer straight away and it's so easy to see the ones who are eager to answer, and then you let them answer before the others have the chance. There are many children who need some more time, either to gather their courage to answer or to think...I know I tend to ask the ones who are eager to answer, and then you prioritize them...When you give the children time to think before they answer, you show them that you have high expectations for them, that you want them to think it through, and that you want them to try to answer (int. 050412, p. 4-5).

The story below illustrates Alice's practice of slowing down when teaching. The story was videotaped (vid. 052112) during the group circle one morning in May, and later it was written into the narrative below. The story is unique, but it represents Alice's general practice of slowing down her teaching and offering the children time to think. The story is called the "when can we start to think" story since one of the boys demanded time to think when Alice forgot to give the children time to think.

### ***The "When Can We Start to Think" Story***

It is Monday morning. Alice and her group are in the group circle. They have finished singing the morning song and have started to talk about the goals for this working unit, which Alice has written on the board in advance. Alice sits on her seat and turn to look at the goals on the board.

(1) Alice: *What is the goal for this working unit? Or I have to say goals, because there are two goals for this unit.*

There is a pause of 23 seconds. During the pause, Alice looks from child to child in the group circle. Three of the children raise their hands.

(2) Alice: *All of you must have time to read the goals before I ask about them.*

Another pause occurs, this time for 20 seconds. Alice looks from child to child, and at the goals on the board. Some more children raise their hands.

(3) Alice: *Since I wrote these goals in cursive handwriting, I will give you more time to read them.*

Pause for nine seconds. More children raise their hand.

(4) Alice: *What is the first goal for this working unit?*

Another pause occurs, this time for eight seconds. During this pause Alice looks at some of the children, and during the last three seconds of the pause, she establishes eye contact with George.

(5) Alice: (Looks at George): *What is the first goal, George?*

George answers, and Alice explains the goal to the children. They talk about both goals and some of the children have comments or questions about them. Alice listens to the comments and answers the children's questions. They continue to talk about the day and the date, which Alice writes on the board after one of the girls has answered. Alice then turns to the topic of today's weather:

(6) Alice: *How is the weather today? (One-second pause) How is the weather today?*

A pause of 10 seconds occurs, while Alice looks from child to child and establishes eye contact with some of them. Some of the children look out the window, while some of them look at Alice or the floor.



(7) Alice: *How is the weather today?* (Alice establishes eye contact with Sara when she asks this question)

There is a three-second pause. During this pause, Alice looks at Sara; Sara looks at Alice now and then during the pause.

(8) Alice: *Is it raining today, Sara?*

(9) Sara: (One-second pause, then Sara shakes her head)

(10) Alice: *No. How is it?* (Still looks at Sara)

(11) Sara: *Sunny* (says it very quietly)

(12) Alice: (Pause for two seconds) *Yes* (nods while she says it). *It is sunny. Good.*

Alice writes "sunny" on the blackboard. Then she sits down again.

(13) Alice: *I know many of you have a lot of things from the weekend that you want to talk about. I have decided that you can only tell one (shows one finger) thing from the weekend. So now all of you have to think about one (shows one finger again) thing you want to share with the rest of us, and plan one sentence you want to say. It can be a sentence like, "This weekend I was at home," or "This weekend we had a visitor," or "This weekend I ate ice cream." Now I'll give you about one minute to think about one sentence you want to say.*

(14) Kate: *Can we talk about two things?*

(15) Alice: *No, today you can only tell about one thing from the weekend.*

(16) Kate: *Oh, but I have two things I want to tell.*

(17) Eric: (Whispers): *When can we start to think?*

(18) Alice: *Then you have to choose one of those to share with us. Okay?* (Alice smiles at Kate and Kate smiles back)

(19) Kate: (nods) *Okay!*

(20) Alice: *Okay! Let's start with you, Sam. What did you do this weekend?*

(21) Eric: *Hey, we didn't get time to think!*

(22) Alice: *Sorry, now you all can start to think about the one thing you want to tell. We have to be quiet for about one minute so everyone can think.*

The group is quiet for 50 seconds.

(23) Alice: *It seems like everybody has been thinking through what they want to tell about from the weekend. It was very quiet here and good for thinking; good job! Now I'll ask in random order about the weekend, so you don't have to raise your hands. And remember, only one sentence about the weekend. Okay?*

For five seconds, Alice looks from child to child, and the children nod.

(24) Alice: *I asked Sam earlier, so I'll continue with you. Sam, what did you do this weekend?*

Sam tells the group something from his weekend, and then Alice continues the round and asks all the children what they have done this weekend. Some of them need a bit

more time to think, and then she waits until they answer. Others need help to shorten their story, while others share one word, like “played,” or short sentences like “was home,” or “I played football” (vid. 052112, 08:42).

### **Analysis of the “When Can We Start to Think” Story**

The above story offers further insight into and understanding of Alice’s practice of slowing down the speed in her teaching. The focus in the analysis is on the interaction between Alice and Sara, but Alice’s interactions with some of the other children in the story will also be examined, and I will identify different strategies Alice has used in her teaching to slow down the speed. Figure 7.2 illustrates talking time and silence in the story.

#### *A Visualization of the “When Can We Start to Think” Story*



Figure 7.2 Visualization of talking and pausing in the “When Can We Start to Think” story

This figure shows talking time (red) and pauses (blue) from the first 7 minutes and 16 seconds of the “When can we start to think” story. The length of the pauses ranges from one second to 50 seconds. The total pause time during these 7.16 minutes is 129 seconds, with an average of 12.9 seconds for each pause. The length of the talking time in these 7.16 minutes ranges from one second to 183 seconds, and the total talking time is 301 seconds. On average, each talking time lasts for 30.1 seconds. In total, talking time is 70 percent and pauses 30 percent of the first 7 minutes and 16 seconds of the story. A larger version of the figure is provided in Appendix V B.

#### ***Invitations to Participate***

In the “When can we start to think” story, Alice (8) asks Sara to answer, but instead of actually speaking, Sara (9) shakes her head as a way of answering. Even though Sara does not talk, the silence between Alice’s (8) utterance and Sara’s (9) headshake can be considered significant silence, as Alice has nominated Sara to respond. Sara’s headshake is a form of communication and non-verbal language. Thus, Sara is the next speaker even

if she uses non-verbal language to communicate. Between Alice's question and Sara's headshake, significant silence of one second occurs, but according to Rowe (1972, 1986, 1996) one second is not a long pause. If Sara had not answered after this second, what would have happened? Alice could have turned to another child, but she does not. She takes her time to let Sara answer, even if this means that she has to ask the question in another way and take more time. A lot of children are eager to answer this question and some are waving their hands, but Alice is calm and turns to Sara, taking time for her and wishing to hear her answer. The pause that occurs between Sara's (9) headshake and Alice's (10) response might also be understood as a breakthrough. This pause can be interpreted in this way because Sara (11) answers verbally in the next part of the dialog. Alice's question in (10) is, in contrast to question (8), an open question. Her change from a closed to an open question can also be interpreted as a breakthrough, because the change in the question shows that she expects that Sara can answer verbally. The silence that occurs between utterances (10) and (11) can be considered significant silence. Alice (10) does not directly nominate Sara as the next speaker by saying Sara's name, but she uses eye contact to indirectly nominate Sara as the next speaker. It appears that she answers because Alice (10) talks directly to her and has established eye contact with her, and this is how Alice shows that she wants to hear Sara's answer to the question about the weather.

In the dialog between Alice and Sara, Alice (7) repeats her question and establishes eye contact with her during the next pause of three seconds. This can be understood as wait-time, and moreover it is an indirect offering of wait-time for Sara, since Alice, by looking at her, communicates that "I want to ask you about this" or "I want you to answer this question." By establishing eye contact with Sara, Alice allows her to start to prepare to answer. Instead of repeating the question, Alice (8) then asks a closed question "Is it raining today, Sara?" Alice knows that answering in the group circle is demanding for Sara, so she adjusts the question from an open to a closed question to encourage Sara to participate in the dialog about the weather. Alice offers Sara time, which lets Sara consider whether she wants to answer with a verbal "no" or if she wants to shake her head to answer. The offered wait-time can be time for thinking as well as time for considering how to answer. In other words, as Dewey (1910) says, it is time for hesitation.

Rowe (1972, 1974a, 1986) defines the time after a child stops talking and before

the teacher responds to the child as wait-time 2. In the story, I found two examples of wait-time 2. During the conversation about the weather, Sara (9) shakes her head when Alice (8) asks her if it is raining. After Sara (9) answers with this headshake, a silence of one second occurs before Alice (9) responds. Sara (11) answers that it is “sunny” this particular day, and it takes another two seconds before Alice (12) responds to Sara’s answer. According to Rowe’s studies and others based on her concept of wait-time, this time from Sara’s answer to Alice’s response is wait-time 2, even if the wait-time in this particular interaction is shorter than research on the topic recommended. According to my data, Alice waits patiently for the children to answer; this was observed over and over again (e.g., 5-6, 24-25). The way Alice slows down her teaching makes it possible and safe for the children to participate. Bearing this in mind, silence in Alice’s classroom can be interpreted as an invitation to participate.

#### ***Repeating Questions and Having a Calm Rhythm***

Alice often pauses or is silent while she is speaking (gaps) (2, 3, 4, 4-5, 6, 6-7, 22-23) or repeats her questions. This silence and repetition in speech can be understood as a method of slowing down her teaching. When she stops, looks at the children, repeats questions, and listens to the children, she offers the children time to think by slowing down. Indeed, after her initial question (1), a pause of 23 seconds takes place before utterance (2). This silence can be interpreted as wait-time 1, as it is a time of silence after Alice (1) asks a question and before she starts to talk again (2). Utterances (2) to (5) are also examples of wait-time 1 because there are silences between utterances (2) and (3), between (3) and (4), and between (4) and (5), and these pauses occur after Alice says something and before she starts to talk again. Furthermore, between statements (1) and (5), Alice offers the children wait-time for a total of 60 seconds. In utterance (6), a pause of one second occurs between the two sentences, and this and the following silence of ten seconds can be considered wait-time 1. The story has several long pauses which last from eight to 50 seconds. During these pauses, Alice sits in her seat, looks from child to child, at the board, writes the children’s answers on the board (12-13), and repeats her question instead of rushing from question to question and only asking the children who raised their hands first. She also says, (3): “I’ll give you more time to read them” and (22): “We have to be quiet for about one minute so everyone can think.” During the pauses, several of the children raise their hands and communicate that they want to answer. Alice waits, appearing to be calm, confident, and relaxed

during the pauses. The children also seem to be calm, confident, and relaxed, even though the pauses are long. The pauses are not embarrassing or uncomfortable for either Alice or the children. The silence, time to think, repetition of questions, and listening to the children's answers give Alice's teaching a calm rhythm.

### ***Giving Time to Think***

Alice also offers the children wait-time directly by announcing that they can start to think (22). Her offering of wait-time comes after Eric (21) reminds her about it. Based on his statement, it appears that the class is used to having time to think things through. If this were not normal, Eric probably would not have asked for time to think. Rather, he would have interpreted the time Alice was talking with Kate (14-16 and 18-20) as the time to prepare to tell everyone about his one thing from the weekend. This indicates that the class is used to having time to think, and that the thinking pauses are quiet; nobody talks when they are thinking. Another example of wait-time 1 in the story is after Alice's utterance (23), when there is a silence of five seconds. Wait-time 1 (when Alice pauses before continuing to speak) is similar to a gap, because the time she waits can be used to think or to gather courage to speak, and it is a way to slow down her teaching.

In the description of pause theory, we saw that lapses are the silence between one speaker and the next when the second speaker starts to speak on her/his own initiative. In the story, I observed lapses in the dialog between Alice and Kate in (14-16) and also from (18) to (20). In this part of the story there is a natural change of speaker and a natural silence or lapse between the change in speakers. Kate asks questions and Alice answers them with a short lapse between them; there is no need for Alice to nominate the next speaker, and the dialog has a natural flow. Eric's utterance (17) can be interpreted as an overlap. When he whispers during a lapse, "When can we start to think?", he takes the floor on his own initiative. This can also be seen in utterance (21). Alice (20) has asked Sam to be the next speaker, but Eric uses the lapse that occurs to remind Alice that they have not had any time to think about what they want to say about their weekend. Eric's reminder about time to think indicates that this is standard practice in the class. Moreover, the lapse that occurs after Alice (20) has nominated Sam as the next speaker can be interpreted as a breakthrough because Eric appears to interpret the silence that occurs as an opportunity to take the floor and remind Alice about the importance of time to think.

## **Summary and Discussion**

This chapter has focused on how Alice emphasizes giving children with withdrawn behavior and the class in general time to think during the teaching activities. To analyze her concern about giving the children time to think, I have turned to theory on pauses and research on wait-time. In my analysis I found examples of significant silence in the story (between utterances 8 and 9 and between 10 and 11). In my investigation of the “When can we start to think” story, I also found examples of lapses and overlap (14, 15, 16, 17, 20). I found gaps in the story as well. Finally, I found that Alice uses wait-time in her teaching, and that she gives a considerable amount of time for thinking, as several pauses last from eight to 50 seconds (1-2, 2-3, 3-4, 4-5). And, as mentioned above, Alice emphasized several times in the interviews I had with her that it is important to give the children time. For example, when she talks about children with withdrawn behavior, she says: “I think it’s important to calm down and give them time” (int. 050412, p. 18-19), and: “I have to wait so everyone has time to think” (int. 050412, p. 3). And in her conversation with Sara’s parents, Alice says: “We have seen that when we give time, more children want to answer and then the answer comes” (met. 111612, p. 3-4). As mentioned in the theoretical discussion in this chapter, significant silences, lapses, and gaps can overlap, and in the analysis, I have shown that they can also overlap with wait-time. Based on the analysis, in which I found that Alice uses all three kinds of silence and wait-time, I can claim that Alice’s practice is characterized by a calm pace. Furthermore, she gives the children reasons for taking time to think and slowing down in her meta-communication with them (e.g., 1, 2, 3). The children are then used to having time to think, and, as we can see Eric (17, 21) even demands this time for thinking. Furthermore, it appears to be standard for both the children and Alice not to answer or respond immediately (9, 12).

I will describe her teaching as being characterized by slowness, and I claim that slowness in teaching can be a way to adjust teaching, not only for children with withdrawn behavior, but for all children in school. First of all, slowness means more time for thinking, and, as we have seen, this may lead to deeper thoughts and more thoughtful answers (e.g., Rowe, 1986). Secondly, as Alice claims, children with withdrawn behavior need time to gather their courage to speak in class, and both theoretical and empirical data indicate that increased time to think can help these children participate more. Thirdly, Dewey (1910), Vygotsky (1976), and O’Connell and

Kowal (1980) connect thinking to our higher psychological processes and also to hesitation and pauses. To get the brain “started,” it is important to allow time for hesitation (Dewey, 1910). Vygotsky (1976) emphasizes the zone of proximal development and Wood et al. (1976) describe the importance of scaffolding for children’s learning and development. In both of these concepts, the verbal interaction between the child and the teacher is important (e.g., Wells, 1999). Based on theory on pauses, research on wait-time, and the empirical data, it appears that pauses, silence, and time to think are ways to scaffold children in their learning and development. Silence is scaffolding. Rowe (1986) entitled one of her articles “Slowing Down May Be a Way of Speeding Up,” and I am encouraged by her research and that of others who have written about pauses when I claim that there is *a potential in the silence*. There is potential to think (Dewey, 1910; Rowe, 1972, 1974a, 1986, 1996), a potential to participate (Rowe, 1972, 1986, 1996), a potential for the teacher and children to come closer to each other (Potter, 2007), and a potential to establish eye contact (Gurevitch, 1998); in other words, the potential in the silence can lead to a breakthrough (Gurevitch, 1998). An important factor in maximizing the potential of silence leading to a breakthrough when using pauses is that the pauses or silence must be comfortable for both the children and teacher, and the pauses and silence must be warm and pleasant to experience.

The findings presented in this chapter are not in accordance with previous research on withdrawn behavior, as presented in Chapter Two. Even though research on wait-time indicates that using it in teaching is one way to engage more children in the teaching, and also that children deemed as silent are encouraged to participate more when the speed is slowed down (e.g., Rowe, 1986, 1996). Wait-time and pauses in teaching have not been connected to dealing with children with withdrawn behavior before. This might be because most research on the topic has been conducted with quantitative approaches, not by studying what happens in the classrooms.

When looking at these findings in the light of research on withdrawn behavior, there is one topic I want to especially focus on. According to the studies on withdrawn behavior described in the second chapter, teachers appear to consider these children to be less intelligent and to have poorer academic abilities than their classmates (Copland et al., 2011). In her studies, Rowe (1972, 1974a, 1986, 1996) found that increased wait-time and longer pauses in teaching also increased the participation of children who were

previously verbally inactive, and this led to higher expectations from the teacher. Teachers found that children they had believed were less intelligent actually had exciting ideas and many interesting things to offer when all the children had more time to think. However, slowing down a lesson using pauses, silence, and time to think can lead to another dilemma for the teacher.

One everyday challenge for teachers is often the issue of having enough time. Teachers have a curriculum requiring that they cover specific material in class, which requires a certain amount of progress in each working unit and each week. Taking pauses or slowing down the speed can be frustrating for the teacher as the threatening creature called time limit is always lurking in the background: there is so much to do and so little time available. This does not make pausing and slowness in teaching tempting measures. On the other hand, theories on thinking and pausing and research on wait-time in education, as presented in this chapter, show that slowing down and taking time to think can be a rich investment in time. This is because pauses invite participation: more children seem to participate, and children with withdrawn behavior also appear to benefit from it by daring to participate. Furthermore, pauses and slowness in teaching adjust for learning and development. The story presented in this chapter also shows that pausing and slowness do not take too much time. Slowness in teaching can be a double-edged sword, but used as a pedagogical tool, it is a way to scaffold and support a variety of children in the classroom.

Moreover, in the pauses and in the silence there is activity, like thinking, and an invitation to participate. The children and the teacher are not passive or inactive during the pauses. Teachers who dare to use pauses and a calm speed in their teaching must be aware of this: pausing is not a lazy time; it is a time of potential for the children's learning and development, a time for establishing and strengthening a positive relationship between the teacher and the children and among the children in the group. In a world where effectiveness and activity is valued, it is important to see that slowing down the tempo in teaching may be a way of speeding up (Rowe, 1986) the children's learning and development and to raising the quality of the teacher's feedback.

Slowness in teaching is not, as far as I can see, a focus in current research. According to communication theory, pauses and silence can be a breakthrough (Gurevitch, 1998). Using pauses, silence, and slowness in teaching may lead to a breakthrough in teaching, especially in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior.



To participate in learning activities, children must feel confident, safe, and good enough. Slowness in teaching, used with conviction, is one way to scaffold children with withdrawn behavior as well as to respond to the variety of individual needs in a class. This chapter has sown the seed of slowness in teaching, but to increase teacher awareness, more research on the topic is needed.

## Chapter 8

### Challenging Children with Withdrawn Behavior

In my analysis of the data, I found that Alice's emphasis on challenging children with withdrawn behavior was a recurring theme. In the interviews, she often said things like: "I have to respect how each child is and challenge each of them in an appropriate way" (int. 041312, p. 17) and "I have to challenge them and push them; they can't just do what they want" (int. 050412, p. 16). In my observations and video recordings of the classroom, I found that she challenged different children in different ways. The concept of *intersubjectivity* (Matusov, 2001; Trevarthen, 1979; Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001; Wertsch, 1984) was useful in explaining and gaining a deeper understanding of Alice's concern about challenging children with withdrawn behavior. This chapter will start with a presentation of the theoretical framework. An analysis of the empirical data follows, before closing with a summary and discussion.

#### Theoretical Framework

According to socio-cultural theory, learning and development occurs when a child moves from its actual developmental level and towards its potential developmental level, defined as the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). As the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) was explained in Chapter 3 I will not repeat the explanation here. Wertsch (1984) claims that three theoretical concepts are essential to understanding the mechanics of the zone of proximal development: *situation definition*, *intersubjectivity*, and *semiotic mediation*<sup>29</sup> (Wertsch, 1984, p. 8). Wertsch also says that these three concepts are tightly linked to one another. Furthermore, Schibbye (2009) claims that *acknowledging* is closely connected to intersubjectivity.

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<sup>29</sup> Säljö (2001) explains mediation by referring to the fact that individuals do not have direct, immediate, or uninterpreted contact with their surroundings, but interact with their surroundings by using certain physical and mental tools. Speech is considered to be one of the most important mediation tools.

### ***The Concept of Intersubjectivity***

Intersubjectivity is a common understanding of a common situation or activity, and Wertsch (1984) writes that intersubjectivity “exists between two interlocutors in a task setting when they share the same situation definition and they *know* that they share the same situation definition” (p. 12, emphasis mine). Intersubjectivity is deemed crucial in communication and fundamental to understanding of others and the self. It is also important for giving one access to another individual’s emotions, attention, and intention (Zlatev, Racine, Sinha, & Itkonen, 2008). According to Trevarthen and Aitken (2001), intersubjectivity is a fundamental part of social interaction and human mental development. Intersubjectivity has been called “the most important outcome of participation” (O’Donnell, Tharp, & Wilson, 1993, p. 506), as it involves relationships between people (Trevarthen, 1979), and is therefore a relational concept. Moreover, intersubjectivity is closely connected to what Vygotsky (1979) called inter-psychological functioning. Intersubjectivity does not occur by itself; it has to be achieved by sharing feelings, thoughts, and understandings of a situation or activity, or, in school, a task. It is not automatically present between a teacher and a child; the teacher has to invite the child to share feelings, thoughts, or understandings, or the child can invite the teacher. A common situation definition is one premise (Wertsch, 1984) mentions for achieving intersubjectivity.

Situation definition is the way the participating individuals understand and define the particular situation or context. Wertsch (1984) claims that a situation definition is needed to gain insight into and understanding of the concept of the zone of proximal development, as “collaboration in this zone typically involves the adult’s representing objects and events in one way and the child’s representing them in another” (p. 8). Furthermore, a common situation definition is necessary to support the child in its learning and development (Wertsch, 1984), and, as mentioned above, is crucial to achieving intersubjectivity. In the classroom, the teacher and the children may have different situation definitions. The children can be attentive to what is going on outside the classroom and look out the window, while the teacher wants them to pay attention to the subject and the instructions she gives. The teacher interprets the situation in one way, while the children have another understanding of it. In other words, they have different situation definitions (Wertsch, 1984) of the same situation. To achieve intersubjectivity, the involved persons need to share the same understanding

or definition of the shared situation, thus, intersubjectivity depends on a common situation definition (Wertsch, 1984). To support the child in its zone of proximal development, the teacher and the child must have a common intersubjective understanding of the task or situation: intersubjectivity must be achieved. This in turn highlights the inter-psychological aspect, which is important in the zone of proximal development (Wertsch, 1984). Furthermore, Wertsch (1984) claims that the child and the teacher can negotiate a common situation definition, but only if the teacher is willing to accept the child's definition and understanding. In the classroom, the teacher can achieve intersubjectivity with the child by establishing eye contact, showing a friendly smile, or by placing a hand kindly on the child's shoulder. When the teacher listens to what the child is saying and is attentive to the child's feelings and perspective, a common intersubjective understanding can be reached.

In situations or activities where the teacher and the children have different situation definitions, they have to negotiate to achieve a common understanding. In these situations, language may play a key role. This leads to Wertsch's (1984) third concept in understanding the zone: semiotic mediation. To achieve intersubjectivity, members of a class, for instance, have to communicate and use language as "intersubjectivity is often created through the use of language" (Wertsch, 1984, p. 13). Language, both verbal and non-verbal, is essential to our learning and development, in addition to making it possible for us to communicate with each other (Säljö, 2001). Language enables us to mediate our surrounding world for ourselves and others, create meaning, and understand our experiences. Culture, social interaction, and each individual's thoughts can be interwoven by means of language. Even though language is often seen as verbal communication, it can also involve signs, symbols, and non-verbal expressions. Vygotsky (1978, 1986) indeed maintained that oral language is the most important language. This is true firstly because humans organize and systematize social interaction through language. Secondly, verbal language is important because it helps children to adjust their behavior. Language plays a fundamental part in a child's learning and development as well as the support he or she receives from the more capable other (Wertsch, 1984).

According to Wertsch (1984), intersubjectivity can occur on different levels. Studies of the interactions between infants and their mother<sup>30</sup> have defined three levels

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<sup>30</sup> In the following I write mother or mothers, since the studies I have read mostly refer to the mother.

of intersubjectivity: *primary intersubjectivity* (Trevarthen, 1979), *secondary intersubjectivity* (Trevarthen & Hubley, 1978 in Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001), and *tertiary intersubjectivity* (Matusov, 2001). These studies indicate that intersubjectivity changes according to the infant's age and developmental level. When eye contact is first established and the mother and infant have a face-to-face interaction, this is called primary intersubjectivity (Trevarthen, 1979). This shared attention is a form of communication. The infants' skills in regulating their own actions and focusing their attention on the other's face are essential elements of primary intersubjectivity. In the classroom, an example of primary intersubjectivity is when the teacher establishes eye contact with a child, and this eye contact helps the child to follow the rules or know what to do in a specific situation.

As the infant develops and becomes older, he/she develops skills to achieve new levels of intersubjectivity. Even though the child masters new levels of intersubjectivity, the previous levels are still essential in social interactions. In addition to being aware of the mother, at this level, infants can focus their attention on an object. This cooperative intersubjectivity is called secondary intersubjectivity (Trevarthen & Hubley, 1978 in Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001). An example of secondary intersubjectivity in the classroom is when the teacher directs the child's attention to the goal she has written on the blackboard, or when teacher and child are both looking at the child's work. When a child directs the teacher's attention to his/her work, this is another example of secondary intersubjectivity.

When two individuals have a common understanding about a situation or activity and this common understanding is created by means of words or language, it is called tertiary intersubjectivity (Matusov, 2001). By sharing thoughts, experiences, and expectations the participants in a situation can reach a common understanding. This level of intersubjectivity requires common activities as well as shared communication. In the classroom, tertiary intersubjectivity can occur when the teacher and a child talk about a task and together find a way to solve it. Furthermore, language makes it possible to negotiate a common situation definition or a common intersubjective understanding. Wertsch (1984) calls the negotiation of a common situation definition a *situation re-definition* (p. 11). In the classroom, the teacher has to invite the children to these negotiations, and a common definition of the situation can be created in this dialog and

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However, the father can also interact and achieve intersubjectivity with the infant.

interaction between the teacher and the child. When the teacher and the children assemble in the class circle, the teacher may want them to pay attention to the subject and discuss the topic. If some of the children use this opportunity to make small talk with each other, the teacher has to invite these children to negotiate a common situation definition by re-defining it.

Matusov (2001) also points out three principles that must be considered if one is to achieve tertiary intersubjectivity in the classroom. First of all, the learning activity must have a shared focus and a shared goal. In a classroom, the children and the teacher might not necessarily have a common goal for the learning activity. The teacher's goal may be to make the children familiar with subtraction, while the goal for the child can be to finish the exercises and go out for a break. Therefore, it is important for the teacher to focus on the children's goals in addition to her own goals for the learning activity. Secondly, there has to be shared communication. To achieve this, the teacher must communicate her expectations of the situation and for the children. Furthermore, she has to be aware, open, and interested in the children's contributions. Thirdly, the teacher and the children must have shared involvement in the learning activity. The teacher has to be engaged in the learning activity and aware of the children's reactions (emotional, moral, and intellectual reactions) and interests. Moreover, the teacher must focus on the children's learning and their sense of wonder, even when they also have to focus on the curricula (Matusov, 2001). When all these principles are in place, Matusov (2001) defines intersubjectivity as "having something in common" (p. 384). This definition describes the intersubjectivity that can occur when the teacher and children focus on the same activity (Matusov, 2001). Matusov (2001) finds that one challenge for the teacher is to adjust for a common focus in the classroom for all participants. The teacher has to be aware of the children and at the same time maintain the children's attention and motivation for the learning activity.

Matusov (2001) also found that, to obtain intersubjectivity, the learning activities must be common. This means that it is important to acknowledge all of the participants in the class and their opinions. He defines this as "a coordination of participants' contributions" (Matusov, 2001, p. 384). Furthermore, he points out that caring is an essential factor in achieving intersubjectivity in the learning and developmental process. He refers to "intersubjectivity as human agency" (Matusov, 2001, p. 384) and maintains that caring about the other group members' well-being may create a sense of ownership

for the whole group, which in turn may have positive outcomes for each child's learning and development (Matusov, 2001). Matusov's (2001) findings, which he calls the definition of intersubjectivity, can be tools for ascertaining if intersubjectivity exists in a classroom or not. According to Matusov (2001), these three definitions "can be useful in providing both reflective and guiding power for the teacher" (p. 400).

### ***Acknowledging***

According to Schibbye (2009), the concept of acknowledging reflects intersubjectivity, and these two concepts are closely connected to each other. She defines acknowledgement as a mutual interaction in which the participants focus on each other and on each other's experience and endeavor to understand the other's perspective (Schibbye, 2009). This definition of acknowledgement involves appreciating, acknowledging, and respecting the other's perspective, situation, or way of interpreting his/her surroundings (Schibbye, 2009). Furthermore, acknowledging means "grasping the other's consciousness and acknowledging it according to your own consciousness" (Schibbye, 2009, p. 259, translation mine). In her description, Schibbye (2009) distinguishes between *external* and *internal* acknowledgement. External acknowledgement is based on how an individual sees and appreciates what the other is doing—their activities or performance. External acknowledgement can be given by means of praise or reward. Internal acknowledgement points to how an individual sees and appreciates the other as a human being. Schibbye (2009) has operationalized internal acknowledgment with five ingredients: *listening*, *understanding*, *acceptance*, *tolerance*, and *confirming*.

Listening comprises listening to more than the spoken words; it is about listening to what is behind the words (Schibbye, 2009). By doing this, the teacher is really listening to the child and allows room for the child's feelings, experiences, and situation. This requires teachers who are receptive, active, focused, and emotionally open (Schibbye, 2009). The ingredient of understanding refers to an inner understanding, which means that the teacher is able to feel the feelings the child communicates (Schibbye, 2009). To understand means that the teacher must see, listen, and understand how the child feels, acts, and communicates from the child's perspective. Inner understanding is when the teacher shares the child's experiences and feelings. According to Schibbye (2009), this ingredient in acknowledgment has several parallels to intersubjectivity as it has been described above: a common focus and a common

understanding of the situation, feelings, or experiences. When Schibbye (2009) describes acceptance and tolerance as ingredients in acknowledgement, she maintains that it is important not to judge or criticize the other's experience, feelings, or situation. Implicit in this is an acceptance and tolerance of the other as a human being, and of the other's feelings, experiences, and behavior (Schibbye, 2009). The last ingredient, confirming, is similar to acknowledgment and the other four ingredients in acknowledgment (Schibbye, 2009). Confirming is seen in *how* the teacher listens, *how* she understands, and *how* she accepts and tolerates the children. This means that confirming occurs verbally and non-verbally, as the child's feelings, experiences, or answers can be confirmed verbally by the teacher's words and non-verbally through eye contact or a smile. The parallel to intersubjectivity is implicit in this ingredient and in acknowledgement in general (Schibbye, 2009).

### **Alice's Practice of Challenging Children with Withdrawn Behavior**

In her dealings with Sara in particular and the class in general, Alice appears to be concerned about giving each individual child appropriate challenges. I observed this time and time again in my observations (e.g., obs. 032712, vid. 052112) and in the interviews I had with her (e.g., int. 041312, 050412, 052912). I saw examples of this in the cloakroom when Alice challenged Sara to participate in dialogs with her, but instead of asking open-ended questions, Alice adjusted her questions into closed questions so Sara could participate on her own terms (obs. 032712, obs. 052112). Furthermore, I observed this in the class and group circle where she challenged Sara and other children to participate on their own terms. Examples of this are inviting Sara to write on the blackboard (obs. 032712) or to show her drawings to the rest of the class (vid. 050412) and scaffolding Sara to talk in the group circle (obs. 041012, vid. 052112). Furthermore, when she asks Sara a question and Sara nods or shakes her head to answer, Alice confirms the answer and then invites Sara to answer orally: "Yes! Say it then, Sara." And then Sara replied, "Yes" or "No" (e.g., vid. 052112).

Every Monday morning, the children tell the rest of the group circle one thing about their weekend. This could be a sentence such as "I was at home this weekend" or a word like "playing." Alice seems to be concerned about challenging Sara to say something about her weekend too. To make it feel safer, Alice and Sara made an agreement about this. Sara's homework is to practice saying one thing about her



weekend in the group circle each Monday morning. In my observations and video recordings, I observed Sara telling the group about her weekend (e.g., vid. 052112). This homework was also a topic in the conversation Alice had with Sara's parents (met. 111612).

In my observations and video recordings of the classroom I also observed how Alice's emphasis on making the children participate in the class circle and how she then challenged, invited, and guided them to dare to participate. To challenge Sara and other children to participate in the class circle, Alice often told them that she sometimes asks them who do not raise their hands to answer (obs. 050412, vid. 052112). On these occasions, Alice underlined that it is okay to not know the answer or not want to answer (obs. 050312, vid. 052912). Alice challenged Sara to answer questions she knew that Sara could manage, and she said: "I want her to dare to answer in the group circle, dare to give something of herself, and this will give her the feeling of mastering" (int. 052912).

***Alice's Reflections on Her Practice of Challenging Children with Withdrawn Behavior***

When Alice talks about children with withdrawn behavior, she appears to be concerned about challenging them. This concern appears in several ways. First of all, she talks directly about it: "I have to challenge them and push them" (int. 050412, p. 16), and: "I want to challenge them to participate" (int. 041312, p. 19). Furthermore, it appears when she talks about how children learn and develop, and on this occasion, she seems to think of challenging as a necessity for development: "If I don't challenge them, there will not be academic improvement (int. 041312, p. 20), and, "If I don't challenge children with withdrawn behavior, I'm afraid that the passive attitude will grow stronger" (int. 052912, p. 18). Thirdly, Alice's concern about challenging children with withdrawn behavior appears when she talks about how easy it can be to neglect these children: "It is easy to be too kind to these children, to be afraid to challenge them" (int. 052912, p. 3). Her concern about challenging these children also appears when she talks about how important it is to accept them as they are: "It must be acceptable to be withdrawn if that is what you are" (int. 041312, p. 16). She seems to be concerned about challenging the children on their own terms:

I have to create some situations where they can show the rest of the class what they are good at. When we come to a theme or topic I know they know something about or where they perform well, I use to let them answer a lot (int. 051412, p. 16). I want everyone to develop and learn more (int. 052912, p. 23).

The belief in challenging the children where they are also appears when she, among other things, says:

It must be acceptable to be a withdrawn child if that is what you are and that is what is natural for you. You must be respected for who you are. I can't change them, I have to make allowances for them to be as they are, so I don't make them feel bad. We're not going to make everyone into chatterboxes if that isn't natural for them (int. 041312, p. 16-17).

On this occasion she also says:

But I feel sorry for them [children with withdrawn behavior], because they are often challenged against their own nature. We have to admit that some children think it's okay to listen to others and don't need to talk so much (int. 050412, p. 23).

Furthermore, she adds:

It's my job as a teacher to calm down children who are extroverted in the classroom, and it's my job to try to get children who don't participate to participate. Regardless of how the children are, it's my job to let them develop past their individual starting point (int. 050412, p. 12). I have to strengthen their self-confidence and give them the feeling of mastering. I have to challenge them and push them; they can't just do what they want. But I have to do it on their terms and in a safe way for them (int. 050412, p. 16). Then they can experience that things that have been scary can turn out to be okay (int. 050412, p. 32).

Alice's concern about challenging the individual child on his/her own terms also appears when she talks about Sara in particular:

She [Sara] has trouble talking in the group circle, and then I can't focus too much on that, but rather on things she is really good at. Then she can show her strengths. I think it's important that I allow her and the other children to cultivate what they are good at and to find an area they are good at. I have to build their self-confidence and give them the feeling of mastering (int. 050412, p. 28-32).

Alice's concern about challenging children with withdrawn behavior appears again when she talks about the importance of individual goals for the children. In her dealings with Sara in particular, one goal is that Sara will talk in the group circle. This is a goal Alice, Sara, and Sara's parents have agreed on. Even though Alice appears to be concerned about challenging children to ensure their learning and development, it seems that she is also concerned about preparing the children and making agreements with the individual child: "I have told her [Sara] that I will challenge her" (int. 052912, p. 18). Even if it is demanding for Sara to talk in the group circle, Alice challenges her to take the floor and say something. She explains that for a child who does not like to talk, it is comfortable to never be challenged to take the floor. Alice seems to respect this, but also claims that if she just let Sara and other children with withdrawn behavior sit there with no expectations being placed on them, no development would take place. Alice is

afraid that this can give the children trouble later in life, both with speaking and with their self-confidence. On this matter, she adds:

It's important to have goals that are realistic for them and goals that respect who they are and what is natural for them. When I challenge them, I make some concrete goals together with them, for example, "*When we're in the class circle, I want you to think about one thing you want to say,*" or "*When I ask about something I know you know, I will sometimes ask you to answer in the group circle.*" I give them some exercises that I know they can manage, that don't push them too much (int. 041312, p.17, 18, 20).

And finally, Alice's concern about challenging children with withdrawn behavior appears when she talks about the importance of including all the children in the class and making them feel like a fundamental part of the group: "I think it's important that they feel that I count on them, and it's also important that the other children can see that I count on them and expect something from them" (int. 050412, p. 7).

Below follows a story from the group circle one day in May. The story is called the "teller chair" story. It was videotaped and observed and later fixed it into the narrative. The story illustrates how Alice challenges Sara in the group circle. Although the story is unique, it is a typical story from Alice's classroom of how she challenges Sara and other children with withdrawn behavior in her teaching.

### ***The "Teller Chair" Story***

Alice and the class assemble in the group circle after the children have worked with the theme "Humanistic Ethical Federation" (HEF). Alice summarizes what they talked about at the beginning of the lesson and the coloring work the children have done.

- (1) Alice: *Is there something you want to say about the drawings you have been coloring now? (She looks at the children, and some of them raise their hands, others look at the floor. Alice turns to Robert, who has his hand up). Robert?*
- (2) Robert: *The symbol was easy to color, 'cause it was only black (he smiles at Alice).*
- (3) Alice: *(Smiles back at him) Yeah, that is right, the symbol is black. But on the other drawings you could use a lot of colors. When I walked around in the classroom, I saw that many of you made nice pictures. (A pause occurs while Alice looks from child to child in the circle. She smiles at them, and some children smile back). Well, now I want to use the teller chair. To sit in the teller chair, you have to tell something about the Humanistic Ethical Federation. Anyone who has something they want to say can raise their hands, but you know that I sometimes also ask you even if you don't raise your hand. Okay?*

The children nod. Alice puts her chair in the middle of the circle; this is the teller chair.

(4) Alice: *Think about one thing you know about the Humanistic Ethical Federation, and then you can raise your hand. I will pick only three of you to tell something today.*

Several of the children raise their hands. Alice picks three children (Sam, Miley, and George) respectively, to say something from the teller chair. All three of them raise their hands before she chooses them. When the children tell facts about the HEF they get feedback from Alice like, "Yes, that's right," "Oh, did you remember that; that's not easy to remember!" and "That's important information about the Humanistic Ethical Federation."

(5) Alice: *Now we have heard some interesting facts about the Humanistic Ethical Federation. Since we have been coloring and I saw so much nice work when I walked around the classroom, I want some of you to show your coloring to the rest of the class. (A pause occurs while Alice looks from child to child). You do not have to talk about your coloring; it is okay to only show it. And the rest of us who are looking at the work must think of one positive thing to say about it. It's not enough to say that "it's nice;" we also have to say why it's nice. Like: "It's nice because the colors fit together," for example. Okay?*

Alice looks from child to child, and the children nod.

(6) Alice: *Good. I know many of you want to show your coloring. Sam, Miley, and George have already been in the teller chair, so now it is someone else's turn. (Alice looks from child to child in the circle. Sara sits on the edge of her seat and looks at Alice from time to time. Some children have raised their hands. Sara does not raise her hand, but is sitting on the edge of her seat. Alice and Sara establish eye contact and Alice smiles at her). Sara, can you show your coloring?*

(7) Jennifer: *Sara didn't put up her hand!*

(8) Alice: *I know that, but you know that I don't only ask children who raise their hands.*

(9) Jennifer: (nods)

(10) Alice: *Will you show your coloring, Sara? (Alice and Sara establish eye contact and Alice smiles at Sara).*

(11) Sara: (nods and goes to the teller chair, where she holds up her coloring)

(12) Alice: *What can we say about Sara's coloring? (Several children put up their hands; one of them is Eric. Alice looks at Eric): Eric?*

(13) Eric: *It's very nice.*

(14) Alice: *I agree with Eric. (Several children nod). But what makes Sara's coloring so nice? (Alice looks from child to child. John has his hand up. Alice looks at him): John, what do you think?*

(15) John: *Sara never colors outside the lines.*

A smile curls on Sara's lips while she looks down to the floor. When Alice starts to talk, Sara looks at her.

(16) Alice: *That's true. (Alice and Sara establish eye contact and smile at each other). Other things that make the coloring nice? (Alice looks at the children, and she establishes eye contact with Miley, who has raised her hand). Miley?*

(17) Miley: *She has used very strong colors. That's nice.*

Sara smiles again, and she looks at Alice. They establish eye contact.

(18) Alice: *Yes, I agree.*

(19) Eric: *And she has many nice colors in her coloring.*

(20) Alice: *Yes. As you hear, Sara, there are many nice things about your coloring. Is there something you want to say? (Looks at Sara and smiles at her).*

(21) Sara: (shakes her head)

(22) Alice: *That's okay. Thank you, Sara, for showing us your coloring. Now we can have a look at someone else's coloring. (Alice looks from child to child; some of them have raised their hands. Kate is one of them. Alice looks at Kate and smiles at her): Kate, can you show yours?*

Kate goes to the teller chair and shows her coloring. She also gets positive feedback from her classmates, like, "She uses colors that go together." After Kate has been in the teller chair, Alice asks Eric, who has not raised his hand, if he wants to show his coloring. While he sits in the teller chair, his classmates say things like, "He uses clear colors." (vid. 050412/obs. 050412).

### **Analysis of the “Teller Chair” Story**

The “teller chair” story helps us analyze and gain a deeper understanding of Alice’s practice of challenging the children with withdrawn behavior. The interaction between Alice and Sara is the main focus in the analysis below, but also the interactions between Alice and the class as a whole will be considered.

#### ***A Common Understanding of the Activity Genre***

Alice and the children gather in the class and group circle several times each day (see Chapter 5). Every day starts and ends in one of the circles and each working unit also starts and ends in the circle. The “teller chair”-story is from the end of a working unit, and it starts when Alice and the children meet in the circle to sum up the lesson. The children are familiar with how to behave in the circle; they know and manage the *activity genre* (Moen, 2005). The activity genre in the circle involves sitting in their seats, which are permanent and decided by the teacher. Furthermore, in this genre it is implicit that the children and the teacher all focus on the topic in question, that the children raise their hands if they want to say something, and that the teacher is the chairperson. It appears that Sara and the other children manage this activity genre and that Alice and the children have a common understanding of how to behave in the circle. In other words, they have an intersubjective understanding about being in the class circle.

The common agreement or understanding of the activity genre is also clear when Sara (11) sits in the teller chair. It appears that this activity genre is internalized, as Sara sits on the chair, shows her coloring, and waits for feedback from her classmates. The teller chair might not be used that much, as Alice (5) explains her expectations to the rest of the group when colorings are shown from the teller chair. Her statement (5) can be understood as an invitation to negotiate a common situation definition (Wertsch, 1984) as she explains the activity and prepares the children for how they should behave when sitting in the teller chair and talking about the coloring. This negotiation of a common understanding of the situation can also be interpreted as Alice’s preparation for Sara before challenging her to show her coloring from the teller chair. It can be interpreted this way since Alice (5) explains and renders the activity harmless by emphasizing that children who show their coloring do not have to talk. Alice then invites Sara to sit in the chair (6). This invitation is characterized by primary intersubjectivity (Trevarthen, 1979), as Alice establishes eye contact and smiles at Sara before she invites

her. Through eye contact, Alice can obtain important information about Sara, such as: Is Sara ready to do this? Is it appropriate to challenge Sara now? Furthermore, Alice's smile may be a way to communicate to Sara, "You can do this," "This is safe," and "I believe you can do this." It appears that Sara gives a sign to Alice, probably by sitting on the edge of her seat (6), that she is willing to enter the teller chair and show the coloring. In terms of primary intersubjectivity, Alice challenges Sara in a way that is appropriate for Sara. Furthermore, by using primary intersubjectivity (eye contact and smile), Alice challenges and scaffolds Sara to move from her actual developmental level towards her potential developmental level: to be in focus in this particular setting.

When Sara shows her coloring, Alice and the other children in the class appear to focus on it (12-20). When Alice (12) asks what can be said about Sara's coloring, several children raise their hands and indicate that they want to say something about it. Furthermore, the feedback the children give is positive, as Alice (5) has instructed it should be. This indicates that Alice and the children have a common understanding of how to behave in this setting, when the teller chair is used, and they have achieved it by means of language. In other words, they have obtained intersubjectivity on the tertiary level (Matusov, 2001). Eric (13) is the first to comment on Sara's coloring. He says that the coloring is nice, but does not explain why he thinks that. Alice (14) asks what makes it nice, or she re-defines the situation definition (Wertsch, 1984) to clarify a common understanding. If Alice had not re-defined the situation definition at this point, the teller chair story could have turned out another way. If she had not explained once more what kind of feedback to give, the other children might have only given more feedback similar to Eric's (13). From Sara's perspective, it was important that Alice and the other children had a common understanding of this situation: the feedback must be positive and explicit. Since Sara seldom steps forward to be the focus of the class, it can be presumed that, in a situation like this, it is important to support her and make her dare to take on challenges like this again.

### ***Softening the Challenge***

An interesting aspect of the story (6-22) is that when Sara is in the teller chair, her classmates do not talk to her about what is nice about her coloring. Everyone who comments on her coloring communicates with Alice. This is not clear when reading the story as it is written above, but I could observe this when all the children sat in the teller chair. Those who told facts about the HEF addressed their conversation to Alice, and

when someone, including Sara, showed their coloring from the teller chair, the children who commented also addressed their comments to Alice. It appears that this was a common understanding about the teller chair activity, and it can be interpreted as a way to soften the challenge of stepping forward, sitting alone in the teller chair, and receiving the focus of the rest of the class. When the children address their comments to Alice, the focus and main attention turns a bit away from the child on the chair, which can be experienced as safer and not too challenging. The way Alice arranges the teller chair activity, therefore, is an appropriate way to challenge children with withdrawn behavior, such as Sara. In the teller chair, Sara can experience being seen by her classmates and Alice (eye contact, smiles), which indicates primary intersubjectivity. Furthermore, the class's common focus is on Sara's work, meaning they have also obtained secondary intersubjectivity. She experiences positive feedback on her work, but does not have to talk. The smile on her face (15-16, 17-18) suggests that Sara finds this challenge appropriate and that it might be a positive experience for her. She establishes eye contact with Alice (6, 10, 15-16, 17-18, 20), and this eye contact sometimes involves a smile (6, 10, 20), indicating primary intersubjectivity. Moreover, this can be interpreted as showing a sense of togetherness between Alice and Sara.

When Alice invited Sara to sit in the teller chair with eye contact and a smile, this contributed to a common understanding of the situation and each other and helped them both to feel that they were doing something important together. With an encouraging smile and eye contact, Sara might feel that she is not sitting in the teller chair alone; Alice is there to support and scaffold her. Together with Alice, Sara manages to participate and to confront things that might be scary and unachievable alone. If Alice had not been able to achieve intersubjectivity with Sara in this situation, the story probably would have turned out in a different way. Alice would probably not have noticed that Sara was sitting on the edge (6) of her seat. Presumably, Alice would not have challenged Sara to sit in the teller chair. Sara might then have felt neglected or invisible, which was a concern Alice expressed several times in the interviews. A child who experiences feeling neglected and invisible in the classroom will perhaps leave school with a feeling of not belonging or not being good enough.

### ***Interaction Sensitivity and Scaffolding***

Before I close this section, I will take a closer look at what happens when Alice (6) invites Sara to sit in the teller chair. First of all, as mentioned above, it seems that Alice



and Sara have a common understanding about sitting there. By sitting on the edge of the seat, Sara communicates to Alice, "I want to take on the challenge; I'll show my coloring." The eye contact and the inviting smile from Alice can be interpreted as a confirmation of the challenge. It can also be interpreted as indicating that Alice is listening to what Sara is communicating. Sara does not say anything; she does not even raise her hand to signal that she wants to show her coloring. But Alice seems to be focused on Sara and attentive to her, and she interprets her action, sitting on the edge of the seat, as a sign: Sara is ready to participate and sit in the teller chair. Alice also understands what Sara means and wants, using what Schibbye (2009) refers to as inner understanding. Furthermore, Alice tolerates and accepts Sara and accepts Sara's move to the edge of her seat as a response to the invitation about the teller chair. In other words, Alice listens, understands, tolerates, and accepts Sara, and by doing this she affirms her, verbally and non-verbally. Alice confirms Sara verbally by inviting her to sit in the teller chair and non-verbally by establishing eye contact and showing an inviting smile. By inviting Sara to sit in the teller chair, Alice seems to succeed in acknowledging Sara. She responds to Sara with understanding, sees her perspective, and accepts her, but, even more interestingly, she appears to make the other children acknowledge Sara as well. Under Alice's guidance, the other children acknowledge Sara externally by giving positive feedback on her coloring and internally by focusing on her work. Since Sara smiled, it appears that she felt that her classmates and Alice were seeing and responding to her. Alice seems to know how important it is that the other children see Sara, and she therefore challenges Sara to take the challenge and sit in the teller chair. This allows Alice to strengthen Sara's role in the class, make her more visible to others, and also make these kinds of situations more comfortable and less scary for Sara.

If Alice had neglected Sara and asked someone else to sit in the chair, Sara could have leaned back into her invisible role in the circle. Sitting in the circle is an everyday activity, so it is not challenging for Sara. What is challenging for her is stepping out of her seat, and Alice helps her to do just that in an appropriate way by listening, accepting, tolerating, understanding, and confirming Sara, and also by letting Sara experience acknowledgement from the rest of the class. I assume that being challenged within a framework of common understanding and acknowledgement, from the teacher as well as the classmates, is challenging within safe frames. This is a form of challenge that leads to learning and development, as Sara is scaffolded within her zone of proximal

development, and because Alice is interaction sensitive. Alice scaffolds Sara “by means of” intersubjectivity and acknowledgement.

### **Summary and Discussion**

This chapter has focused on how Alice challenges children with withdrawn behavior. When analyzing Alice’s practice of challenging the children, and Sara in particular, in light of the theory of intersubjectivity, I found that this theory provides a way to challenge children within their zone of proximal development. Examining the teller chair story, I found examples of primary intersubjectivity in Alice’s dealings with Sara (6, 10, 16, 20). I also found examples of secondary intersubjectivity. This appeared when Alice and the children had a common focus, such as Sara’s coloring (12-20). On the primary and secondary level, Alice listens to, understands, accepts, tolerates, and confirms Sara. Furthermore, it appears that Alice guides the other children to acknowledge Sara, externally and internally. Finally, tertiary intersubjectivity also appeared in the data and in the story. In the transcribed interviews, statements like, “When I challenge them, I make some concrete goals together with them” (int. 041312, p. 17) indicate tertiary intersubjectivity. In the story, tertiary intersubjectivity appeared when Alice explained her expectations for the teller chair activity (5, 14). Based on this analysis, I claim that Alice’s practice of challenging the children is characterized by intersubjectivity and acknowledgement of the children.

The findings in this chapter are not in accordance with the presented findings in the review chapter. In Chapter Two we saw that teachers appear to deem children with withdrawn behavior as less intelligent than their peers (Coplan et al., 2011), and that children with withdrawn behavior like school less than their peers (Coplan & Weeks, 2010). Moreover, Lund (2008) found that children with withdrawn behavior feel invisible to others. I have found that Alice challenges Sara, that she has expectations for her, and that Alice does not give up. Instead of leaving Sara alone, she challenges her, and at the same time acknowledges her as the person Sara is. Vygotsky (1978) claimed that to learn and develop, the challenge has to be beyond the actual level. Bearing this in mind, it is interesting to note that previous research on withdrawn behavior does not indicate that challenging these children and a teacher who does not give up on the child are crucial for children with withdrawn behavior, their learning and development at

school.

When looking at the findings in this chapter in the light of research on withdrawn behavior, there is one topic I want to shed light on. According to the studies discussed in Chapter 2, research indicates that children with withdrawn behavior are seldom challenged by their teachers (e.g., Lund, 2008). Moreover, it appears that teachers prefer to leave them alone rather than expect something from them or challenge them. According to Lund (2008), not being challenged by the teacher gives children with withdrawn behavior the feeling of being excluded and invisible to others, and this may also lead to a negative self-image. Lund (2008) also found that children with withdrawn behavior *want* to be challenged and want to participate, but they need help from the teacher to do it. A teacher who gives up or does not encounter or acknowledge these children as they are is not dealing optimally with them. They need a teacher who does not give up, who acknowledges them, who listens to them, understands them, confirms them, accepts them, tolerates them, and who challenges and scaffolds them within their zone of proximal development. Such a teacher knows the difference between changing children and challenging children.

By using eye contact to achieve primary intersubjectivity with Sara, Alice gains important information about when it is okay for Sara to be challenged in the class circle. Furthermore, using primary intersubjectivity, Alice challenges Sara but also acknowledges her. Even though Sara does not say anything, Alice can listen to the unspoken words and understand Sara's situation, intention, and feelings. When Sara sits on the edge of her seat, Alice interprets this as Sara's sign that she wants to participate. Because she has achieved primary intersubjectivity with Alice, Sara dares to enter the teller chair. In the zone of proximal development it seems that intersubjectivity and acknowledgment are scaffoldings initiatives for Sara in particular and the other children in general. By making agreements with Sara, Alice prepares Sara to be challenged and prepares herself to challenge Sara in an appropriate way, characterized by acknowledgement. In this respect, two questions and dilemmas arise: If Alice had not acknowledged Sara, would she have challenged her? And if Alice had not challenged Sara, would she have acknowledged her? If a teacher never challenges, demands, or expects something from the child, I claim that she does not acknowledge the child. Without challenging or expecting something from the child, he or she may feel neglected or not good enough. As described in the analysis and the discussion above, there is a

close connection between challenging the child, on the one hand, and acknowledging him/her on the other. Bearing this in mind, I claim that acknowledging and challenging go hand in hand. To acknowledge a child on the internal level, the teacher has to challenge him/her, and to challenge the child, the teacher has to acknowledge him/her on the internal level. These two factors have to operate together, or the challenge might be given for the wrong reasons. If that is the case, positive learning and development may not be the outcome. The dilemma, then, is to determine when it is appropriate to challenge children with withdrawn behavior and when it is appropriate to leave them alone. For the teacher, this can be a double-edged sword. Children who are challenged too much may feel that they are not good enough as they are, and they might have the feeling of not mastering things in school. They might never relax and be satisfied with what they have actually accomplished. Too much challenge may make the school day into a stressful experience for the child. On the other hand, if the child is never challenged, learning and development will probably not take place. And, as mentioned above, this can lead to a feeling of being neglected and being unimportant to the class. I maintain that a caring and interaction sensitive teacher will challenge and scaffold each child using a foundation of acknowledgement.



## Chapter 9

### Summary and Final Reflections

This study set out to explore how an elementary school teacher deals with children with withdrawn behavior in ordinary classroom activities, and how she reflects on her own practices according to this topic. To explore this I have observed Alice in the classroom to see how she deals with Sara and the other children in her class, and taken observation notes on and made video recordings of the classroom activities. I interviewed her to obtain understanding of her reflections on her practices and on children with withdrawn behavior. Throughout this text we have seen that experiences from the past forms a person's present and future actions, thoughts and reflections (Vygotsky, 1978). As Vygotsky (1978) argue, if we are to understand a person we also have to understand his or her history and social context. Moreover, he argues that the study of a phenomenon must include the processes of change and movement (Vygotsky, 1978). In other words, a study of Alice's practices when she is dealing with children with withdrawn behavior has to be conducted with a given historical, cultural and social context. In this study I have described and analyzed Alice's practices, thoughts and reflections. Furthermore, I maintain that with a narrative research approach we are able to see her historical experiences and how her practices in relation to this topic has developed over time. Bearing this in mind, I maintain that Alice's previous practices and reflections are reflected in her current practices and reflections. Additionally, her current practice can form her future practices. Nevertheless, in the analysis of the data material I identified three themes that characterize Alice's current practices according to the topic in question.

In the data analysis I identified the following prevalent characteristics: establishing eye contact with Sara in particular and the other children in general, give Sara and the other children the feeling of *being seen*, making adjustment for seeing Sara in particular and the other children in different settings and being attentive to each

child's needs. To illustrate these characteristics of her practice I presented relevant synopses from the observations and video recordings and relevant utterances from Alice. The "morning ritual" story was the unit of analysis for these characteristics of Alice's practices. The story was further analyzed in light of the concept of caring. With the empirical data from the field and theory on caring as the point of departure, the concept of "interaction sensitivity" was developed and introduced in this chapter to describe what characterizes Alice's practice. Interaction sensitivity refers to Alice's awareness, reflection, and action according to children with withdrawn behavior. The development of the concept interaction sensitivity can be looked upon as one of the main findings, as this concept can be understood as a platform on which the two other characteristics of Alice's practice that I identified in the analysis are based.

Another thorough characteristic in Alice's practice was *slowness in her teaching*, offering the children, particularly Sara, time to think, and the calm rhythm in the teaching. To illustrate this characteristic I presented relevant synopses from the observations and video recordings from the classroom, and relevant utterances from Alice. The "when can we start to think" story was the unit of analysis according to these characteristics of Alice's practices. This story was further analyzed in light of theory on pauses in conversation analysis and research on wait-time. Slowing down the speed in teaching, using pauses, and giving room to think and reflecting appears as a way to scaffold and support children with withdrawn behavior in particular to dare to answer and participate in the classroom activities. I maintain that a potential lies within silence, and called this "the potential of silence". Even though there is a potential in silence and many reasons for slowing down the speed in teaching, this tool alone cannot solve every problem or challenges in the classroom. Using silence and slowness in teaching will not be a good fit in every situation and settings. As pointed out in the theory section in Chapter Seven, silence can also represent a breakdown (Gurevitch, 1998). The teacher has to evaluate when and where silence is a potential, and when and where it can be a breakdown. If a teacher is to explore silence as a potential for thinking, participating, coming closer to each other and giving children with withdrawn behavior the feeling of being seen, I maintain that the teacher needs to be interaction sensitive.

The third theme I found that characterizes Alice's practice was *challenging Sara*, expecting participation from Sara and different forms of scaffolding Sara in her learning and development. To illustrate this aspect of Alice's practice I presented relevant

synopses from the observations and video recordings and relevant utterances from the interviews with Alice. The “teller chair” story was the unit of analysis for this theme. This story was analyzed in light of the concept of intersubjectivity and theory on acknowledging and scaffolding. I found that Alice seems to challenge Sara in a way that works for Sara and is within her zone of proximal development. Alice’s dealing with Sara seems to be characterized by interaction sensitivity. Moreover, the fundamental relation between them appears to be positive, which can be deemed as a premise for challenging Sara the way Alice does. With an interaction sensitive practice it seems as though Alice has established a foundation from which it is possible to challenge Sara, and where this challenging is rooted in Sara’s potential development. In achieving intersubjectivity in the interactions with Sara it appears as though Alice has acquired deep knowledge about Sara and the ways that she can support, challenge, and scaffold her so she can experience learning and development on her own terms. Furthermore, I found that Alice scaffolds Sara and the other children in different ways, depending on the individual child or the particular situation, and that she challenges them with the aim of facilitating their learning and development, instead of imposing restrictions by trying to change the child or the way the child is.

When looking into Alice’s practices and the findings in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, a common, general characteristic of her practice is reflected in the term *interaction sensitivity*. Interaction sensitivity involves awareness, reflection and action. Alice’s *awareness* is expressed in how she is attentive to the individual child’s sign, and in her concern about seeing Sara in particular and the other children in general. For example in the “teller chair” story we can see Alice’s awareness when she invites Sara to sit in the teller chair. In contrast to the other children, Sara does not raise her hand when she wants to participate; she rather sits on the edge of her seat. Alice is attentive to this, she is aware of the signs Sara gives. Awareness in interaction sensitivity can be understood in the light of Noddings’ (1984) concept of engrossment, as it is about being aware of and attentive to the child’s needs and how the teacher encounters the individual child. *Reflection* is evident in Alice’s considerations on the of topic withdrawn behavior, and also in her own practices according to children with withdrawn behavior. She is concerned about giving Sara and also the other children the feeling of being seen by her, moreover, she is concerned about giving the children time to think and giving them challenges that are appropriate to the individual child. Her reflections on



withdrawn behavior started several years ago when she viewed video recordings from her own classroom and became aware that she was ignoring a child with withdrawn behavior in her class. Alice appears to carefully weigh what is the appropriate action for children with withdrawn behavior in different situations and seems to have meticulously considered why she should do what she does. Moreover, she reflects on what is best for the child with withdrawn behavior in the various settings. Alice is not only aware of and reflects on the topic, she also strives establish a teaching practice that is in accordance with her awareness and reflection. This constitutes the *action* aspect in interaction sensitivity. Alice's actions are revealed, for example, in her strategies in the cloakroom and in the working units, and also particularly in how she places Sara in the class circle and in the work places. Furthermore, how Alice encounters Sara in different situations, how she slows down the speed in her teaching and how she challenges Sara shows her actions in this area.

In this way awareness, reflections, and action are closely interconnected descriptions of interaction sensitivity. It is not sufficient if the teacher is aware of a child with withdrawn behavior, the teacher also has to reflect on the topic and her own practices, and do something about it. Being aware a child with withdrawn behavior in the classroom is a good start, but it is not sufficient alone. Moreover, the help given to these children (the action) must be provided in the light of awareness and reflections, or the action may be "instrumental". An example of an action without awareness and reflections is the teachers who greets each child with a handshake every morning and thinks that the handshake itself is the important action. If the teacher does not pay attention to the individual child in this encounter and give the children the feeling of being seen, the action will not have the intended effect. Awareness, reflection, and action are thus, mutually dependent. Tools such as a morning ritual with greetings to all the children or slowness must be used according to the teacher's awareness and reflection. Otherwise it might only be an empty gesture, one more item on a checklist. If the teacher does not truly believe in these tools, she should rather do something else.

I argue that being an interaction sensitive teacher is basis for using such pedagogical tools as pauses and slowness, and for challenging children with withdrawn behavior in appropriate ways. If the teacher is not attentive to children with withdrawn behavior and does not act on behalf of the child it would be difficult, or perhaps impossible, to adjust one's practice for seeing the individual child, deem when silence is

a potential and whether the individual child can be challenged or not. I also add that being interaction sensitive, seeing the children, slow down the speed and challenging in appropriate ways and situations can also be seen as tools for scaffolding children with withdrawn behavior - both academically and in social situations. Moreover, I maintain that being an interaction sensitive teacher is the cornerstone in children's learning and development at school.

The reasons for using socio-cultural theory as framework for this study are Vygotsky's focus on the teacher and the teacher's role in the children's learning and development, and his positive view on education. Moreover, he focuses on the individual child's potential rather than restrictions. This approach could in turn lead to findings that would be deemed as only positive, which can be a critical objection, according to my research. Nevertheless, I point out that by telling an experienced teacher's story about her classroom practices and her dealings with children with withdrawn behavior additional knowledge can be contributed to the field. The presentation of the story of Alice's practice in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior could have been told as a story of success. Alice is a teacher who seems to master the task of involving children with withdrawn behavior in classroom activities without trying to make them into something they are not. She has both "good" and "accurate" reflections on how to deal with children with withdrawn behavior in the classroom. Furthermore, she acts in accordance with her own reflections and ideas. Even though I have argued that when it comes to the topic of withdrawn behavior Alice has an appropriate practice, her practice may also raise some dilemmas - problems that do not have a clear solution and she appears to have to choose between solutions which may all be unpleasant. Therefore, I will not provide solutions to the presented dilemmas; if I had, they could not be understood as dilemmas.

The first dilemma I want to explore is the *closeness-distance dilemma*, presented in Chapter Six. As shown in the review chapter, children with withdrawn behavior tend to have a dependency relationship with their teacher, a relationship that restricts the children in their learning, development and establishment of relationships with their peers (Arbeau et al., 2010; Rudasill et al., 2006). There is a chance that teacher's establish too close relationships with children with withdrawn behavior as these children appear to be vulnerable, lonely, and uncomfortable within the school context. Especially in the early years these characteristic of children may lead the teacher to act

more as a welfare worker than a teacher. Of course the teacher must care and show the child that she cares, but as Noddings (1984, 2001) states the teacher has the obligation to care in a professional way. This means in a way that does not restrict the child's academic and social learning and development. On the other hand, researchers have found that teachers appear to neglect children with withdrawn behavior (e.g., Lund, 2004, 2008). This points to the distance aspect in the closeness-distance dilemma. Neglecting or creating a distance to children with withdrawn behavior is not a way to scaffolding children in their learning and development. In a class with many children with different needs it may be easy for the teacher to ignore children with withdrawn behavior alone, as they do not demand the teacher's attention in the same way as many other children may do.

Another dilemma closely connected to the closeness-distance dilemma is therefore the *time dilemma*, which I introduced in Chapter Seven. This dilemma can manifest itself in at least two ways. First of all, this refers to how much attention the teacher gives to each children. Secondly, it can arise in the teaching practice. Focusing on the time dilemma in giving one's attention to each child, it is apparent that the teacher has restricted time during a teaching unit; there are several tasks to accomplish, many children to pay attention to, and as we have seen in this text, some children require more attention than others. Children exhibiting noisy behavior disturb the teacher and their peers, and the teacher has to spend time on calming them down. If too much time is expended on this type of behavior, the teacher might not have time for the other children in class, in other words the children who are not noisy. How to proportion a fair amount of attention to all children in a class can be a challenge for the teacher who has a group of children characterized by heterogeneity and diversity, where some children "require" attention, whereas children with withdrawn behavior may be in danger of being neglected by the teacher (e.g., Lund, 2008). Moreover, the time dilemma can also arise in the teaching practice. As discussed in Chapter Seven, giving the children time to think and slowing down the speed in the teaching can be a way of scaffolding and inviting children with withdrawn behavior in particular and the diversity of children in general to participate in classroom activities. As the teacher has limited time to teach various themes and work through exercises she may find trying to slowing down, take pauses and creating a calm rhythm in the teaching to be a challenge. On the other hand, slowness in teaching is a way of opening for participation, and I have argued that

slowness in teaching is a pedagogical tool for including children with withdrawn behavior and getting them to participate, and also a way of scaffolding children in their learning and development. Hence, having a slow tempo is a valuable approach when teaching according to the diversity and heterogeneity of the children.

The third and final dilemma I will explore is the *challenge dilemma*. In Chapter Eight the focus was on challenging children, and we witnessed that Sara was challenged to sit in the “teller-chair” to show her coloring. In other words, Sara was invited to sit in the “teller-chair” but she did not have to tell anything. Alice’s group has a diversity of children, and the dilemma is whether the teacher should challenge children with withdrawn behavior or leave them to their own devices. Moreover, the challenge dilemma is about when it is appropriate to challenge children with withdrawn behavior and when it is not. The “teller chair” story illustrates the flexibility in Alice’s practice; a child is allowed to sit in the “teller chair” without actually having to tell anything. For some children, like Sara, the challenge is to step forward and be in focus, whereas some children need other challenges. According to Vygotsky (1978), completing a task you already master will not lead to further development or learning, but if you have to complete a task outside your actual level of development, learning and development can take place. The challenge dilemma also involves when and how the teacher can scaffold children with withdrawn behavior and give each child challenges that provide something to reach for within the child’s zone of proximal development. This requires a teacher who knows each child and their actual and potential level for learning and development, in addition to being aware of and reflected about why the child is challenged. The aim is to help children to learn and develop, not to change the way they are.

As described in the introduction, the teacher role is complex and intense, and dealing with dilemmas is part of the teaching practice. How the different dilemmas are solved will vary from one teacher to the next, and from situation to situation, hence, dilemmas are something that have to be experienced and dealt with in the everyday practice, and the solutions depends on the context – such as the teacher, the group of children and the situation the dilemma occurs in. The crucial aspect is that the individual teacher deems the dilemmas as such, rather than searching for the “one and only answer” or the “correct solution” to them.

As a researcher examining the topic in question and as a former teacher I have

some ideas when it comes to how the different narratives in this thesis can initiate further reflections. The “morning ritual” story in Chapter Six can initiate further reflections on *how teachers can scaffold themselves* to proportion attention to all the children each morning. As witnessed in this story, the handshake or the greeting is not the crucial act, it is in fact establishing eye contact and giving each child the feeling of being seen and responded to that is important. And, giving each child this feeling is not a question of time either. Moreover, I maintain that the concept of interaction sensitivity is useful for reflection on one’s practices and initiating new ways of thinking about one’s own actions and practice in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior in particular, and all children in general. Is the individual teacher aware of how she encounter’s and respond to the individual child? Has the teacher developed strategies to ensure that she interacts with each child when they sit in the class circle, or during each working unit? Does the teacher give children with withdrawn behavior the feeling of being seen several times a day? Does the teacher differentiate the questions according to each child? And does the teacher reflect on her own practices bearing children with withdrawn behavior in mind? Viewing one’s own practices in light of the interaction sensitivity concept may provide new ways of reflecting on one’s own actions and teaching practices. Moreover, it might be useful knowledge to be included in teacher education.

The “when can we start to think” story in Chapter Seven, may be the impetus for reflections on *the speed in one’s own teaching*. In a world where speed and quick response appears to be valued, dwelling on a topic, pauses, and valuing deep thoughts and reflections may open the teacher’s eyes to the value of slowness in teaching. As seen in the story, slowing down, pausing, and offering time to think does not take much time, but it can lead to participation from children who are inactive when the tempo is too fast. Moreover, slowing down the speed in teaching can lead to a positive and supportive closeness between the teacher and children with withdrawn behavior and in fact all the children in the class. Considering silence and slowness as a potential in teaching can be useful for further reflection and initiate new ways of thinking. Is the teacher aware of the potential in silence? How long does the teacher wait from asking a question and then expecting an answer? What would happen if the teacher increased the time for thinking in the classroom? Reflecting upon one’s own practice in light of the idea of slowness in teaching can be a fruitful way to view one’s own practice.

I can imagine that the “teller chair” story in Chapter Eight may initiate reflection on the issue of *challenging and acknowledging children with withdrawn behavior* the way they are. Moreover, it can initiate reflections on the interaction between the teacher and children with withdrawn behavior, how to encourage the various children to participate, and how to deal with children with withdrawn behavior in particular and the diversity of children in general. Is the teacher aware of how she challenges each child? Are only children who are eager to answer the only ones who are invited to do so by the teacher? Do some of the children give other signals than raising their hand if they want to participate? How do the different children react when they are challenged in the class circle, for example? How can the teacher scaffold the individual child when the child is being challenged? How can the teacher acknowledge the individual child several times during the school day? Teachers who read or hear about the “teller chair” story can ask themselves several questions according to their own practices, especially when it comes to dealing with children with withdrawn behavior. All the three presented stories points out that crucial ingredients in a positive teacher-pupil relationship are: seeing the individual child, paying attention to the children, smiling, asking open/closed questions, inviting them to participate in ongoing activities, slowness in teaching, having a common understanding of the situation, challenging, acknowledging, and scaffolding the children. In all these aspects the teacher needs to be interaction sensitive.

The intention with the narrative of Alice’s dealing with children with withdrawn behavior in ordinary classroom activities was not to present the “correct” answer or “right” solution to dealing with this issue. With socio-cultural theory as the overall theoretical framework in this study, such an intention would be inconsistent. The intention has rather been to create a thinking tool for teachers and present ideas relating to how they can scaffold themselves and children with withdrawn behavior in their everyday practices. This was touched on in the introduction and in the methodological chapter where I argued that how this narrative and thinking tool is used depends on the one who reads or hears about it. This means that this text can be interpreted in several ways and be used as a thinking tool in different ways. Thus, how each teacher uses this study or the findings from of this study depends on them and their experiences, and the social, cultural and institutional setting.

My aim with the data collection was capture Alice’s actions and reflections on the topic in question, and in the analysis of the data I have shed light on and explored her

practices with the aim and intention of gaining further insight into and understanding of the topic withdrawn behavior. Notwithstanding I have followed Alice for several months and made observation notes, conducted video recordings and interviews, I cannot claim that I have captured her whole story when it comes to dealing with withdrawn behavior in the classroom. As I spend three months in this particular classroom it is a risk that my presentation is narrow, because such long stay can make the field familiar and ordinary, actually some action could have been invisible to me. However, by using theory, I have tried to unpack the multiple layers of meaning in the actions and reflections in the data material (Harwood, 1985).

When it comes to developing new research questions and pointing ahead to further research in the field of withdrawn behavior, another approach for capturing withdrawn behavior in the classroom is to listen to the voices of the children with withdrawn behavior and their parents. Furthermore, I will turn one last time to the findings from this study. They emerged from an inductive research process. An interesting and fruitful approach for further research in this field might be to use these findings as a starting point, but with a deductive research approach at various levels in the education system. Such research can shed light on practices on different levels, from the first grade in elementary school and up to the final year of high school. I suggest that research on the classroom level that is related to this field of interest can highlight its importance and give a more overall picture of dilemmas and challenges the teachers have to deal with on different levels when it comes to children and youngsters with withdrawn behavior. The concept interaction sensitivity that has been developed in this thesis could also be the impetus for further research as it is not yet a completed concept. It may be interesting to explore if the concept has more properties than awareness, reflection and action.

Moreover, further research should focus on how teachers and school can help children with withdrawn behavior to experience less loneliness, social anxiety, depression, and negative affect. As withdrawn behavior is so closely connected to negative outcomes, prevention is preferable. As children spend the best part of their daily lives at school, together with their teacher and classmates, research that highlights the teacher's perspective seems to be a needed supplement to the research that already exists. Additionally, I maintain that we need to bring the teacher's voices and narratives into the open to have more insight into and understanding of their practices and the

dilemmas they encounter in their everyday work according to the topic that has been examined in this thesis. Retelling the teacher's stories and making their invisible practices visible, and in this way inspiring their colleagues to reflect upon and develop their own practices is crucial for the teacher and their practices, and to make the school day better for children with withdrawn behavior.





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## **Appendix overview**

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## **Appendix I: The Researcher**

### **A. Autobiographical Summary**

After graduating from high school I worked two years as a teaching assistant and one year as a supply teacher at the elementary school in my local community. These three years gave me experiences of children who had reading and writing difficulties and children who had difficulties in the pupil role. Some of these pupils had behavioral problems, for example AD/HD, while others did not have a diagnosis at the time, but were diagnosed later in their lives. I enjoyed working with these children, read a lot about AD/HD and actually I do not think I paid much attention to other pupils than the pupils with behavioral problems. Three of the boys I was teaching made the greatest impression on me. Two of them were pupils in the sixth grade, while the third was in the fourth grade. The two boys in the sixth grade could not read or write when I first met them. In addition to their reading and writing difficulties, they also had problems concentration on their schoolwork. The boy in the fourth grad was a capable reader, and had well academically skills, but he struggled with his temperament and attention. In the fourth grade there was also a girl with withdrawn behavior. I did not pay much attention to her besides talking to her when helping her with the tasks. I was catch and fascinated by the extrovert, externalized behavior.

After four years at the teacher's college I wanted to study special education further, and started at the Master Degree program. I was still fascinated of the externalized behavior, and the experiences with this topic I had from my job as a teaching assistant was one of the reasons why I wanted to be a teacher in the first place, and also why I wanted to study special education. This study made me familiar with theories like inclusive education, social-cultural theory, classroom management, and other theories in connected to adapted education and special education. In the subject "social and emotional problems" one of the lecturer mentioned withdrawn behavior, mostly in a subordinate clause. I thought the subject focus too much on the externalized behavior, and decided to find some literature about withdrawn behavior on my own. One task in this subject was to write a short "dissertation" about a self-elected theme. I chose to write about withdrawn behavior.

I started to work as a class teacher and special teacher after finished the master degree in special education. In this job my eyes for withdrawn behavior really opened up! One of the girls I was class teacher to was very quiet, withdrawn, anxious, and

passive in the class. (According to her mother she behaved in the same way at home). I was awake several nights thinking of what I could do as the teacher to help this girl in a positive and meaningful way. I also had some awful experiences as a teacher. Some days after the children had finished the school day I started to think about each child and if I had talked to them this day. I often used the class list to check if I have talked to everybody during the day. And many days when I came to this girl's name I could not remember if she was at school or not. When asking the other teacher in my teacher team they could not remember it either. So I had to go back to the classroom and check the school registers. Several days I found that she has been at school. The feeling of neglecting her was awful, no children should experience that the teacher's does not pay attention to them during a whole school day. I felt miserable both as a teacher and an adult. After working in this class for one and a half year I gave birth to my son. When I came back from the maternity leave "my" class had started at the middle school. Through my colleagues I was informed that one of the other girls from "my old" class (she was also a withdrawn girl, but one of my colleagues was her class teacher) had started to cut herself with knife. She and her family were admitted to a mental institution. This girl was later diagnosed with ADD (AD/HD-I). Her story made a huge impression on me, and I ascribe this story and the awful experiences I mentioned above the reasons why I wanted to start this study.

### **B. My Relation to the Participating Teacher**

I have been working as a teacher at the same school where Alice works. We never worked together in a team, and we have never been in each other's classroom or had close collaboration. We talked to each other now and then during lunch breaks, in the same way we talked to our other colleagues. We were never friends, just colleagues, and talked about our pupils and reflected on pupils and teaching. Alice was a friendly colleague, and I remember that I liked the way she talked about her pupils and her job. She appeared to be a teacher who had good control of her classes, enjoyed her work and was dedicated to each pupil. Furthermore, she was focused on mastering and believed that all her pupils should experience mastering during the school day. She also appeared to be a capable and experienced teacher. When I started this study Alice never came to

mind when I considered potential participants. Ending up with Alice as the participant of this study was not part of a plan rather many coincidences led me to her.

## Appendix II: Gaining Access

### A. Letter to the Principal at the Current School



Faculty of Social Sciences and Technology Management  
Department of Education

I appreciate our conversation about my research project and the interest you showed in my doctoral degree work. In the conversation you gave me positive feedback and we made some oral agreements according to my research at [REDACTED] School. This is a formal agreement.

During the data collection I will observe the teacher in action in the classroom, and in the interviews I will hear her reflections upon her own practices and actions, special in her dealing with children with withdrawn behavior. In the interviews I will also hear about her earlier experiences and reflections according to children with withdrawn behavior. Even if the main focus is the teacher and her action, also children will be observed in my field work.

The research implies a qualitative research method, which means that I will stay at the school and in the classroom for a long period. First of all I will be known for the children, so they can get used to having me around. In the classroom I will observe by means of observing notes and video recording. The interviews with the teacher will be recorded as sound files, and later be transcribed and used in the study.

All collected data will be treated in accordance with guidelines developed by the National Committee of Ethical Research in Norway. This means that all names will be changed, and that readers of the study will not be able to identify teacher, children or the school. All recordings (video and sound) will be erased when the study is finished in 2015.

During the data collection period I will like to attend parent's evening at 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, to introduce myself and the study for the parents/guardians. I also need the parents to allow me accomplish the observations in the classroom. Information letter and consent from the parents/guardians will be developed in cooperation between me and the teacher. To start the data collection I need your permission as you are the principal. When you formalize the agreement, I will gather consent from the parents/guardians in the class.

I am looking forward to our cooperation, and will again thank you for allowing one of your experienced teachers' to participate in this study.

My supervisor is Professor Torill Moen at Department of Education.

Yours sincerely

Anne Lise Sæteren



Allowing data collection at [REDACTED] school – principal consent

By this I allow Anne Lise Sæteren to accomplish data collection by means of observations and interviews in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. I am informed about the observations, and know that they imply participating observation and video recordings in the classroom. I am also familiar with the interviews and that they will be recorded as sound files. I allow that collected data will be transcribed and used as empirical data in the research report.

I am informed about the treatment of the data, and know they will be treated in accordance with ethical guidelines. This means that all names will be anonymous, and that readers of the report cannot identify the teacher, children or school.

Date, place	Principals signature
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## **B. The Teacher's Consent to Participate**



Faculty of Social Sciences and Technology Management  
Department of Education

### **Consent to the participating teacher in the research project**

I have agreed to collaborate with Anne-Lise Sæteren in her doctoral-degree study.

I know that this involves her observing my teaching and classroom activities, and that she will make video recordings in the classroom, and that the two of us will talk about her video recordings and observations in the interviews. I agree that the interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed.

I am also aware that parts of the collected data material (interviews, video recordings, observations) will be used as empirical data in the research report.

I am informed that all data collected by Anne-Lise will be treated according to guidelines worked out by the National Committees for Research Ethics in Norway. This means that all names in the study will be anonymous, so it is impossible for readers of the study to identify me, the pupils and the school.

I know that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw if I want to.

Date	Place	Teacher/participators signature

### C. Letter to Sara's Parents



Faculty of Social Sciences and Technology Management  
Department of Education

I am a PhD-candidate at NTNU. As a part of my research education I will work with classroom studies by observing in the classroom and interview the teacher in the class. The main focus in my observations and the interviews with the teacher is on how she organizes and adjusts the education and training at the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. I want to see how Alice in a complex classroom situation manages to meet all the children and their various needs.

The main focus in my research is the teacher and how she educates the children, especially children who are quiet and withdrawn in the classroom situation. My interests lie in finding out how she meets these children. The teacher has earlier experiences with children with quiet and withdrawn behavior in the classroom; these experiences will be focus in some of the interviews with her.

In addition to the interviews I will accomplish several observations in the classroom, in about three to four months. The observations will be done by means of video camera and notes. The video recordings are important so the teacher and I together can view how she accomplishes her teaching, and furthermore so she can reflect upon her own role as a teacher on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

A research report, a doctoral thesis, will be written in accordance with the research I accomplish in the class. In the research report the teacher's action and practice, her reflections and her dealing with children with withdrawn behavior will be described. Some of the teacher's utterances and reflections from the interviews will be used. Also some of the children will be described, most of all the withdrawn children, to get insight into the education in its entirety. All data, such as the children's name, special characteristics, the name of the teacher, the school, will be anonymous so no one can be identified in the report. When the research report is finished, in 2015, all video recordings will be erased.

To accomplish this research I need your permission. If you agree to let me enter the classroom in order to collect data, I will be accessible for you in form of regular meetings where you can be informed about my observations and findings. You are also welcome to get in touch with me regarding the research project whenever you want to, by mail: [anne.l.sateren@ntnu.no](mailto:anne.l.sateren@ntnu.no) or phone: [REDACTED].

Kind regards from

Anne Lise Sæteren

Consent to Allow Data Collection in the Class

Teacher:

Doctoral-degree student: Anne Lise Sæteren

Purpose of the research: See the enclosed information letter

I/we consent to the collection of data in my/our child's class. I/we know that the data will be collected by means of observations, video recordings and conversations with the teacher.

I/we consent to the data being used as described in the information letter.

I/we know that the participation in the project is voluntary.

Name of the child: \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Place	Parents'/guardians' signature

## D. Information Letter to Parents of the Class



Faculty of Social Sciences and Technology Management  
Department of Education

Information letter to the parents/guardians in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade

I am a doctoral-degree student from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim. The overall focus in my research is how the teacher teaches; how the teacher adjusts the education for the children and how the teacher explains and reflects upon her own practices. This means *classroom research*. Alice at the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade is willing to be my research participant and cooperate with me in this project. The principal, [REDACTED], has also permitted me to accomplish a study at the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

In every class there are children who are active, engaged and interested. Some of the children are restless, while some can be silent and withdrawn. In my classroom study I am especially concerned about how the teacher deals with children who are silent and withdrawn.

The main focus in this project is the teacher, and her educational practice in the classroom. I will observe Alice in the classroom for a period of three to four months. In this period I will collect data by means of observations, video recordings and interviews with her. The video recordings and observations from the classroom will be basis in the interviews.

The collected data will be handled as laid down as the guidelines developed by the National Committees for Research Ethics in Norway. This means that all names will be anonymous, so readers of the study will not be able to identify the teacher, children or the school. All recordings will be erased when the study is completed in 2015.

The purpose with the study is to reveal knowledge and insight in how an experienced and capable teacher deals with having children with withdrawn behavior in her class. From earlier research we know that this is needed knowledge. The aim of the study is to contribute to develop knowhow that children with withdrawn behavior and their teachers can benefit from.

If you agree to let me enter Alice's classroom for observations and video recordings, please fill in the consent form and return to Alice.

Professor Torill Moen at Department of Education is my supervisor.

Please contact me at [anne.l.sateren@ntnu.no](mailto:anne.l.sateren@ntnu.no) if you have any questions or require more information about the project.

Yours sincerely

Anne Lise Sæteren

Consent to Allow Data Collection in the Class

Teacher:

Doctoral-degree student: Anne Lise Sæteren

Purpose of the research: See the enclosed information letter

I/we have got information about the study and the purpose with it.

I/we agree that data collection by means of observations, video recordings can be accomplished in the classroom.

I/we consent to the data being used as described in the information letter.

I/we know that the participation in the project is voluntary.

Name of the child: \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Place	Parents'/guardians' signature

## E. Feedback from NSD

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS  
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NTNU  
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Vår dato: 13.04.2012

Vår ref:30081 / 3 / IB

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

### TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 05.03.2012. All nødvendig informasjon om prosjektet forelå i sin helhet 11.04.2012. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

30081 *Silent in class - en lærers praksis og refleksjoner omkring innadventet elevatferd*  
Behandlingsansvarlig *NTNU, ved institusjonens øverste leder*  
Daglig ansvarlig *Anne-Lise Sæteren Songedal*

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, eventuelle kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, [http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/forsk\\_stud/skjema.html](http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/forsk_stud/skjema.html). Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/prosjektoversikt.jsp>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 30.06.2015, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

  
Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim

  
Inga Brautaset

Inga Brautaset tlf: 55 58 26 35  
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

## Appendix III: Overview of the Collected Data Material

Abbreviations:

Obs: observation notes. Vid: video recordings. Int: interview. Met: formal meetings. Doc: documents. The numbers indicate the date, for example obs. 032712 means observation, March 27, 2012.

### A. Observation Notes

Obs. 032712 First teaching unit. Start of the school day in the cloakroom. General morning rituals (say good morning). Oral information. Transition to the class circle. "Good morning"-song. Theme for the lesson: Stone Age. Talking about the Stone Age. Transition to work unit. Individual work on the theme. Alice has reading training with some children in a room close to the class room. Transition to class circle and conversation about the Stone Age before break.

Obs. 032712 Second teaching unit. Teachers meets children in the cloakroom. Oral information about group dividing. Transition to each teacher's group circle. Theme for the lesson: English, the weather. Conversation about the weather. Transition to work unit. Individual work on the theme. Transition to group circle before lunch and break.

Obs. 041012 First teaching unit. Start of the school day in the cloakroom. General "good morning"-rituals. Oral information. Transition to the group circles. "Good morning"-song. Theme for the lesson: Easter. Conversation about the Easter holiday. Transition to work unit and individual writing about the Easter holiday. Gathering in the group circles before break.

Obs. 041312 Second teaching unit. Teachers meet children in the cloakroom. Oral information. Transition to the class circle. Theme for the lesson: Hinduism. Conversation about Hinduism. Transition to work unit and individual work. Gathering in the class circle before lunch and break.

Obs. 050312 First teaching unit. Start of the school day in the cloakroom. General "good morning"-ritual. Oral information. Transition to class circle. "Good morning"-song. Theme for the lesson: Stationary work. Talking about the stations the children will meet on stationary work. Transition to the stations (four children works together at each station). Changing stations. Gathering in the class circle before break.



- Obs. 050312 Second teaching unit. Teachers meet children in the cloakroom. Oral information. Transition to the class circle. Theme for the lesson: Stationary work. Conversations about the stations. Transition to stations. Change of stations. Gathering in the class circle before lunch and break.
- Obs. 050412 Second teaching unit. Teachers meet children in the cloakroom. Oral information. Transition to the group circle. Theme for the lesson: Humanistic Ethical Federation. Conversation around the theme. Transition to work unit. Individual and pair work. Gathering in the class circle before lunch and end of school day.
- Obs. 050912 First teaching unit. Start of the school day in the cloakroom. General “good morning”-ritual. Oral information. Transition to class circle. “Good morning”-song. Theme for the lesson: Stone Age, and reading. Transition to smaller room beside the classroom (reading), and to work unit in the classroom. Pair and group work in the classroom. Reading with Alice in the small room. Transition from the small room to the classroom, working with Stone Age. Gathering in the class circle before break.
- Obs. 050912 Second teaching unit. Teachers meet children in the cloakroom. Transition to music room. Theme for the lesson: Music. General singing (two songs). Singing and dancing. Dancing competition. Transition to class circle. Lunch and break.
- Obs. 051412 First teaching unit. Start of the school day in the cloakroom. General “good morning”-ritual. Oral information. Transition to group circles. “Good morning”-song. Conversation about the day, weather, and weekend. Theme for the lesson: handwriting, with focus on “l” and connected letters. Transition to work unit, where the children work individually with handwriting. Gathering in the group circle, conversation about handwriting. New theme: reading and retelling a story. Individual reading, general retelling in the circle. Transition to break.
- Obs. 051412 Second teaching unit. Teachers meet children in cloakroom. Transition to class circle. Theme for the lesson: stationary work. Conversations about the stations. Transition to the stations. Changing of stations. Gathering in the class circle before lunch and break.

Obs. 052112 First teaching unit. Start of the day in the cloakroom. General “good morning”-ritual. Oral information. Transition to group circles. “Good morning”-song. Theme for the lesson: the weekend (the national day), retelling, and writing. Conversation about the weekend and the national day in the previous weekend. Individual reading, retelling the story in pair. Gathering in the group circle. Transition to work period, individual work with handwriting. Gathering in the class circle before break.

Obs. 052912 First teaching unit. Start of the day in cloakroom. General “good morning”-ritual. Oral information. Transition to group circles. “Good morning”-song. Theme for the lesson: handwriting. Conversation about the weather. Teaching on the blackboard about different letters in the alphabet. Transition to work period, individual work with handwriting. Gathering in the group circle before break.

Obs. 052912 Second teaching unit. Teachers meet children in cloakroom. Oral information. Transition to the library at school. Gathering in the library before transition to class circle (in classroom). Theme for the lesson: Mathematics. Repetition and conversation about numbers up to 100. Transition to work period, individual work with mathematic tasks. Gathering in the class circle before lunch and break.

(Total: 24 handwritten pages)

## **B. Video Recordings**

Vid. 050312 First teaching unit. Class circle. “Good morning”-song. Talking about the weather. Conversation about the day. Conversation about the station work, with focus on one station with antonymous. Station work: reading station (children read for Alice, two groups). Gathering in the class circle after station work/before break. Transition to break.

Vid. 050312 Second teaching unit. Station work: reading station, two groups. Gathering in the class circle after station work/before break.

Vid. 050412 Second teaching unit. Group circle. Conversation about the theme (Humanistic Ethical Federation). Work unit.

Vid. 050912 First teaching unit. From the small room: reading training with the children, individual training with three children.

Vid. 050912 Second teaching unit. From the music room: general song – two songs. Singing and dancing on the floor. Dancing competition.

Vid. 051412 First teaching unit. Group circle. “Good morning”-song. Conversation about the day, weather, and weekend. Repetition of handwriting, focus on the letter “l” and connected letters. Transition to work unit. Individual work

with handwriting. Alice guiding individual children. Group circle. Gathering in the circle after the work period. Theme for the lesson: reading and retelling a story. Individual reading, retelling in the circle (general retelling). Transition to break.

Vid. 051412 Second teaching unit. Class circle. Conversation about the stations. Mathematic station, theme: geometrical forms (one group). Gathering in the class circle, conversation about the station work.

Vid. 052112 First teaching unit. Group circle. "Good morning"-song. Conversation about the day, weather. Conversation about the rules in the circle. Theme for the lesson: Handwriting. Retelling from the weekend and national day. "When can we start to think?"-story. Conversation about handwriting, with focus on the letters *c*, *d*, *i*, *n*, and *a*. New theme: Reading and retelling a story. Retelling the story in the group circle.

Vid. 052912 First teaching unit. Morning routines in the cloakroom. Group circle. "Good-morning"-song. Conversation about the day, weather, and a possible strike in the teacher staff. Retelling from the weekend. Theme for the lesson: Handwriting. Repetition and teaching about connected letters, *l*, *a*, *e*, *d*, *s*, and *i*. All children on the group writes connected letters on the blackboard. Work unit: individual work with handwriting. Alice guiding individual children. Gathering in the group circle. New theme: reading and retelling. Individual reading of the story. Retelling the story in pair. Gathering in the group circle, and general retelling in the circle.

Vid. 052912 Second teaching unit. Book borrow in the school library. Group circle. Theme for the lesson: Mathematics numbers up to 100. Tasks on the blackboard, conversation about numbers, loans, plus, and tens. Transition to work unit. Work unit: individual work with mathematic tasks. Alice guiding individual children.

(Total: 42 video recording sequences. 7 hours 27 minutes and five seconds).

### **C. Interaction Outlines**

Obs. 050412 Interaction outline 1: how often Alice has eye contact with Sara in a period of 5 minutes (random sample) – 3 times

Interaction outline 2: how often Alice has eye contact with one of the restless child in a period of 5 minutes (random sample) – 8 times

Interaction outline 3: how often Alice drops by each child in a working unit for about 20 minutes (random sample)

(Interaction outlines 1-3 was presented in the third interview, int. 051412)

Vid. 052112 Interaction outline 3: how many times Alice says each child's name (in a period of 25 minutes, random sample)

Interaction outline 4: how often Alice communicate with each child, without telling the child's name (same 25 minutes period as interaction outline 3)

(Interaction outlines 4-5 was presented in the fourth interview, int. 052912)

## D. Interviews

Int. 032712 Short interview with Alice during a break. Focus on Alice's experiences with collaborating with parents in general and parents of children with withdrawn behavior in particular.  
(1 page)

Int. 041312 A look at Alice's life up till today. Focus on Alice as child, pupil, and teacher.  
About her:

Mentioned as the first interview in the method chapter

- Career choice
- First year as teacher
- Rough years as teacher at one school
- Experiences connected to her past practice on other schools
- Experiences with children with withdrawn behavior
- Current practice at the school she works at today

(42 pages)

Int. 050412 About her class and group. About Alice's current practice. Conversations around video recording from the stationary work, where Alice had a reading station with the children. Reflection around this recording, how Alice handled a long pause she gave Sara. Conversations about research result on the topic withdrawn behavior. About children with withdrawn behavior, and Alice's values in her practice. About collaboration partners. About how Alice organize her teaching.

The second interview

(32 pages)

Int. 051412 Video interview connected to recording from:

The third interview

- Reading training with Sara
- General singing in the music room (the children)
- Singing and dancing in the music room (the children)
- Dancing contest in the music room (the children)

Alice's reflections around the presented recordings, with focus on Alice's practice, argument for her practice, the activities, and the class. Furthermore, focus on adapted education, both academically and socially. What Alice does in her practice and why. Interaction outlines from Alice's

classroom about eye contact and how often Alice dropped by Sara's desk in a working unit compared with the other children in her class. Alice's reflections around these outlines. Conversation about present experience with children with withdrawn behavior.

(37 pages)

Int. 052912 Video interview connected to recording from:

The fourth  
interview

- Individual work in a working period, focus on Sara
- Individual work in a working period, focus on Sophie
- The retelling sequence in the group circle
- Stationary work, the mathematic station where one of the other teachers has a conversation with the children. Focus on Sara
- Conversation about the weather in the group circle

Alice's thoughts and reflections around the presented recordings, with focus on her own practice, and Sara. Alice's how, what, why, and could things have been changed, if so: how, what and why. About Alice in the cloakroom. About the collaboration between Alice and the two other teachers in the class, their common organization, and structure in the class. About the collaboration with the special educational teacher at the school. About support according to challenges, collaborating with parents. Discussing a case "a newly qualified teacher starts to work with you in your class. What would you emphasize to tell your new colleague about her meeting with the pupils with withdrawn behavior in your class?" About children's self-confidence, the teacher role. Interaction outline from Alice's classroom: how often each child's name are mention in the group circle, and how often Alice communicate with each child in the group circle. Alice reflection's and thought's around these interaction outlines.

(52 pages)

(Total: 164 pages interview with Alice. Audio-recordings: 4 hours and 25 minutes)

### **E. Formal Meetings**

Met. 090612 Formal meeting and observation during the teamwork between Alice and the other two teachers in the class. Focus on organization in the class, mainly in connection to children with special education needs or other forms of adapting.

(36 pages)

Met. 111612 Formal meeting between Alice, Sara's parents and me. I tell about my observations, but I am first of all a listening part, mainly to observe and listen to Alice when she collaborates with the parents. Focus on Sara, her

development, both academically and socially in the class.  
(11 pages)

(Total: 47 pages)

### **F. Other interview**

Int. 052112 Interview/conversation with the special educational teacher at the school.  
Focus on organization, collaboration partners, measures according to children with withdrawn behavior in school.  
(Not transcribed, 20 minutes interview)

### **G. Transcribed video recording sequences**

Vid. 050312 Stationary teaching, reading station controlled by Alice – four minutes and 54 seconds

Vid. 050512 Working period in the classroom, individual work – three minutes and 29 seconds

Vid. 051412 Dialogue between Alice and Sara – eight second dialogue

Vid. 051412 Description of a video recording from the classroom, working unit – ten minutes are described

Vid. 052112 Dialogue between Alice and Sara – 38 second dialogue

Vid. 052112 Dialogue in the group circle – five minutes and nine second dialogue

Vid. 052912 Class circle, Alice's group – nine minutes and 16 seconds

### **H. Documents**

Doc 1 The class weekly plans for the data collection period

Doc 2 The class plan for the school year

Doc 3 Invitation letter to the parent's evening

## Appendix IV: Data Collection

### A. Interview Guide from the First Interview

Interview guide for interview 041312

#### Theme: Alice's background

- How were you as a pupil?
  - o Silent
  - o Extrovert
  - o Engaged
  - o Conscientious
- Did you have any commission, such as honorary post? At which level?
- What made you choose to be a teacher?
- When did you start at the teacher's college? Where?
- Which year did you complete the teacher's college?
- Tell me about your first job as a teacher
  - o Where, when
  - o How many pupils
  - o Were you a class teacher or subject teacher
  - o How did you like your job
  - o Other things you want to tell about from your first time as a teacher?
- Is there anything from your background I haven't intercepted by these questions that you want to tell about?

#### Theme: Meetings with children with withdrawn behavior

- Can you tell me about your experiences with children with withdrawn behavior in school?
  - o How do you experience being a teacher for children with withdrawn behavior?
- At one meeting we had about this project you told me about a pupil with withdrawn behavior you have been teacher for early in your career. You said that you still remember this child very well. Can you tell me more about this? (What make you remember this pupil so well? As the teacher for this pupil was you ever concerned about him? What concerns?)
- When you think about your experiences with children with withdrawn behavior, what has been most challenging according to be a teacher for these children?
- How do you experience your relation to children with withdrawn behavior?
- Can you tell about your experiences of yourself as teacher in relation to children with withdrawn behavior?
- If you should describe a child with withdrawn behavior, how would you describe this child?
- Tell me about your experiences of how children with withdrawn behavior masters the different activities and settings at school
  - o In the class or group circle
  - o When it is individual work

- Working in pair or groups
- In a face-to-face situation with you/one-to-one situation
- In the breaks
- You have been teacher for several children with withdrawn behavior. How do you think they have experienced you as their teacher?
- Can you tell about your first meeting with a child with withdrawn behavior?

Theme: Placing in the classroom

The placing of Sara in the classroom: You once told me that you have placed Sara in the class circle so it was easy to establish eye contact with her:

- Why is it important for you to look right at her and have eye contact with her?
- The first time I observed in the classroom, Sara was placed beside Eric in the working units. What were your thoughts about this placing?
- Now Sara is placed beside her best friend. Why did you change their placing?

Theme: Children with withdrawn behavior

I will now ask you some questions about children with withdrawn behavior and how you think they experience the school days:

- When you think about the children with withdrawn behavior you have been teacher for during your career, what do you think they have experienced as most challenging in school?
- What do you mean is most important for the child in its meeting with the school?
- Based on all your experiences with withdrawn behavior, how do you think these children experience:
  - Their situation at school
  - Themselves as withdrawn, silent
  - The school day
  - You as their teacher

Theme: Collaboration

- How will you describe that the school meets children with withdrawn behavior? (Previous or current experiences)
- Which experiences have you done in teaching children with withdrawn behavior in collaborating with
  - The children's parents
  - The Educational-Psychological Service (EPS)
  - The Child and Youth Psychological Service (BUP)
- How is the collaboration between the school and EPS when it comes to children with withdrawn behavior?
- How do you feel that the EPS guides and assists in addition to challenges with withdrawn behavior?



- How is the collaboration in the teacher team when it comes to withdrawn behavior?

Theme: the teaching role and children's needs

- Have you ever actuated any special action according to children with withdrawn behavior?
- If so, which action did you felt was successful?
- Ingrid Lund is a Norwegian researcher that has studied children and youths with withdrawn behavior. She has found that these children want attention from their teacher and class mates. What do you think about that?
- What do you experience as important in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior in school?
- Do you have any experiences you want to tell about?
- What do you consider as the most important you can do during the school day (in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior):
  - o Academically
  - o Social
  - o Relation
  - o Collaboration
  - o Etc.

Is there anything you want to tell about or stories you want to share with me you deem as important when we talk about children with withdrawn behavior?

Do you want to listen through the recording?

Is there anything we have been talking about that you want me to erase from the recording?

Any questions you found unpleasant?

Is there anything you want to ask about?

Thank you so much for your time!

## B. Description of Presented Video Recordings in Interviews

*Group circle* refers to when Alice and the children she is class teacher to gathers in a circle, whereas *class circle* refers to when the whole class is divided into two groups and gathers in a bigger circle, Neptune or Jupiter.

Interview	Video recording	Description of video recording and reasons for selecting it
Int. 050412/ the second interview	Vid. 050312	<p>The video recording shown in this interview was a sequence from stationary work in the class. The focus was on the station Alice controlled where reading and discussing a story was the exercise for the children. I had picked out five minutes from the recording. In this five minutes Sara and two other children were at this station with Alice. The children read from the text one by one, and afterwards Alice and the children talked about the story they have been reading. Alice asked some questions to the children, and one of these questions she addressed to Sara. Sara did not answer at once, and Alice waited for ten seconds before the answer from Sara came. During the pause for ten second one of the other children waved her hand close to Alice's face, to signalize that she knew the answer.</p> <p>I chose to show Alice this sequence because I wanted her reflection about this, how she managed to wait so long, because the patient she showed in this situation impressed me and made me curious of why she waited so long for an answer when one of the other children signaled so clearly that she could answer.</p>
Int. 051412/ the third interview	<p>Vid. 050912</p> <p>Vid. 050912</p>	<p>During this interview I showed four video recordings. Video recording 2, 3 and 4 was conducted in the music room, and will be described together:</p> <p>1) Reading training with Sara (vid. 050912) – Alice had individual reading training with three children this day. All of them were recorded, but to the interview I picked out the recording from the training with Sara. The recording is from a smaller room, and Alice and Sara sits beside each other. Sara reads from a book, and afterwards Alice and Sara talks about the story. The interaction between Alice and Sara is characterized by eye contact, even though they sit beside each other. Moreover, they smile at each other and for me as the observer the atmosphere was interpreted as warm and gentle between them.</p> <p>I wanted to hear Alice's reflection about this, to find out if my interpretations were similar to her interpretations of the situation.</p> <p>2, 3 and 4) Singing and dancing in the music room Alice and a group of children are in the music room. On the first video recording from the music room all children sits on chairs and sing together. On the second sequence the children are out on the floor, dancing and singing to music which streams out of the speakers. The children dance and smiles. The last video recording is also from dancing on the floor, but this time it is a contest, where the children have to stop moving when the music is switched off.</p> <p>All the recordings from the music room show the children and Alice in another setting than inside the classroom. I wanted to collect Alice's reflections according to this setting and especially since children who did not participate that much in the classroom activities turned out as engaged, participating and dancing queens/kings on the floor. Moreover, I thought it might be interesting to hear Alice's reflections and thoughts about this "change" in the children, particular they who usually were withdrawn, silent and not participating in the classroom.</p>

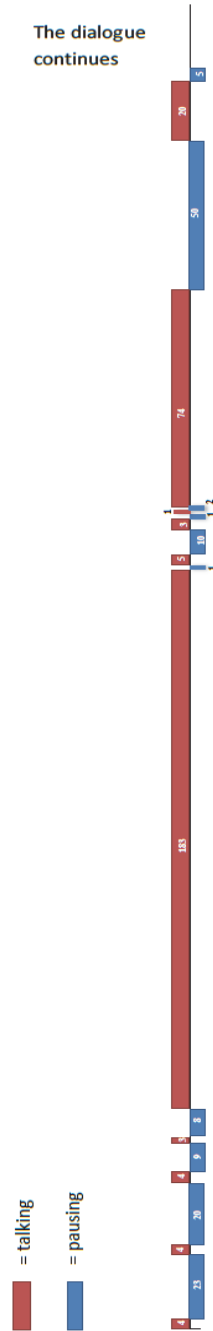
Int. 052912/ the fourth interview		Five video recording sequences were showed in this interview. Recording 1 and 2 will be described together, as they have a similar focus and were chosen for the same reasons:
	Vid. 051412	1 and 2) These two video recordings are from individual work in the same working unit. The first recording focuses on the interaction between Alice and Sara, whereas the second focus on the interaction between Alice and one of the other children in the classroom. The two children worked individual, and Alice dropped by their places now and then, pointed on their work and talked with them in various ways. It was interesting to see how Alice adjusted her interaction and dialogues with them, how she differed her comments, questions and dialogues between the two different children. These recordings were picked out to get insight and understanding of Alice's practice, and to hear her reflection about this. As she appeared to difference her action in her dealing with different children, it was necessary to grasp her reflections around it, to achieve understanding of her experiences.
	Vid. 052912	3) A retelling sequence in the group circle, Alice's group. The children read a story individually, before they work in pair with retelling the story to each other. Alice guides the individual children and the pair. After the children have read and retold the story, the whole group gathers in the class circle. This recorded sequence was picked out to grasp Alice's reflection around it, as it appeared to me as she first of all divided the children into pair where the children who do not talk that much could work with their best friend. Moreover, I wanted to hear her reflection around oral activity with focus on children who shows withdrawn behavior and what experiences she has with it.
	Vid. 051412	4) Stationary work, the mathematic station controlled by one of the other teachers who has a conversation with the children about geometrical forms. The video recording was chosen to grasp Alice's reflection about stationary work and to let her see which children participates when she does not control the station. She wanted to see a recording when the children had to interact with one of the other teacher's to reflect upon their organization of the teaching and also to focus on the children and not her practice. The recording was first and foremost chosen to comply with her request, but also to conduct her reflection about the children who did not participate in the discussion, and to hear what she thought the team could do in a different way.
	Vid. 052112	5) This video recording shows a conversation about the weather in the group circle. Alice asks "how is the weather today?" several times with pauses between her questions. She also looks at Sara when she asks the question and in the pauses. Alice then invites Sara to answer even if she has not put up her hand. I wanted to hear Alice's opinion on this, and therefor this recording sequence was chosen. This sequence was also something I found characterizing Alice's practice; calm speed, repeating question, establish eye contact with Sara, and invite Sara to answer.

## **Appendix V: The Analyzing Process**

### **A. Explanation of the Analytical Matrix**

The analytical matrix includes utterances from the interviews, while notes from my observations and sequences from the video recording can also be included. Furthermore, when and where the utterance or action appears is shown in the matrix. The third column provides my interpretation of the utterance or action, as well as why I found this interesting. This might be the column where my subjectivity is most visible: why I found the selected text interesting, and how I interpret it. The last column includes potential codes, categories or themes for the selected utterance or action to systematize my analysis and interpretations so I could assemble them later. For example, I selected an utterance from one of the interviews I had with Alice. "...you have to wait so everyone can think", which is something she said when I showed her a video-recorded sequence where she was patient and waited ten seconds for Sara's answer. One of the reasons why I chose this utterance was that waiting, giving time and being patient was a recurring trait in the interviews as well as in Alice's actions in the classroom. In the matrix I wrote that I interpreted this utterance, and also the action from the classroom Alice was reflecting over, as her concern about giving time to and respecting each child according to the child's premises for learning and participation in the classroom. In this example I had two descriptive words/phases "give time" and "respect". In the further analysis "giving time" turned out to constitute one theme, but with another name. First this theme was entitled "Scaffolding by means of thinking-time", but finally the theme was entitled "Slowness in dealing with children with withdrawn behavior".

## B. Figure 7.2



## **Appendix VI: The Participant**

### **A. Alice's Reflections on the Research Process**

#### *The beginning of the study*

I have always been concerned about children who are silent or have a withdrawn behavior. This might be the reason why I was positive to participate in this research project. At this time I had one child in my class who was very silent and withdrawn, and who I considered as interesting according to the research project. When I realized that the focus would be on me and my role as the teacher, I have to admit that I got "cold feet's" about participating in the project. But I thought that as a teacher I should reflect more on my own practices, and I decided to agree to participate in the research, because I hoped to learn more about myself and last, but not least, to learn more about my practices in teaching children with withdrawn behavior.

#### *Being observed in the classroom*

Having an observation in the classroom for a long time was scarier when I thought about it in advance, than it turned out in practice. It is strange how sudden one forgets the video-camera and concentrate on the children and the teaching. I believe that also the children forgot the video-camera and acted normally.

#### *Being interviewed*

This part of the research process was very educational. It was exciting and interesting to see all the video recording sequences from the classroom. I learned more about the children and especially about myself during the interviews. The questions that were asked were relevant and enabled me to reflect on my own actions and practices. The conversations we had made me conscious on myself according to class management and teaching.

#### *The presentation of the findings/themes*

It was exciting and interesting to hear about the findings/themes in the study, and I did recognize myself and my practices in it. If I can point out some themes that are important for me in my own practice as a teacher, it must be:

- Establishing relationships to the children, see and acknowledge all children and show them that I care about them
- Be enthusiastic and recall the children's willingness to learn more
- Give the children time to reflect on their own learning and communicate what they have learned