

# Walk-and-Talk Conversations: a Way to Elicit Children's Perspectives and Prominent Discourses in School-Age Educare

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**Abstract:** This article highlights the discourses of children and leisure-time pedagogues regarding ways the activity at two different Swedish school-age educare centres are mutually constructed. Two different topics are stressed: children's perspectives and school-age educare centres as a social and educational practice. Data was constructed through walk-and-talk conversations supported by photos from a digital camera. The results are described through narratives that depict the children's discourses in their school-age educare activity. The emerging discourses show that children's perspectives are met in several ways but also that their perspectives are, in some respects, ignored. These results have the potential to contribute by helping to make children's voices heard as a tool to change the social practices in school-age educare centres.

**Keywords:** Walk-and-talk conversations, school-age educare centres, children's perspectives, discourse, narrative

## 1 Introduction

In recent years, educational research has paid increased attention to children's opportunities and right to be heard. This has led some researchers to give children a more active role in the research process (Haudrup Christensen 2004). This transition of children's position in the research process is also in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child since the convention emphasizes children's rights to express their opinions concerning issues that affect them and highlights that these opinions should also be respected (Einarsdottir 2010). Haudrup Christensen stresses the importance of taking a reflexive and dialogical perspective to be able to make children's voices heard. This procedure makes it possible for the researcher to enter children's 'culture of communication'. To acquaint oneself with this culture means to be in a dialogue with children and within this dialogue create opportunities for children to communicate their perspectives. Researchers have to take their point of departure from children's own perspectives and this differs from taking the departure from a child perspective. When Halldén (2003) explains the difference between children's perspective and a child perspective she asserts that the researcher tries to

construct or "catch" a culture that emanates from the child in the former perspective. The latter perspective is a perspective that works for the good of children or studies a culture that is designed for children.

The aim of this study is to construct knowledge about children's perspectives on the activity in their school-age educare centre. The analysis intends to compare how children and leisure-time pedagogues<sup>1</sup> talk about their mutually constructed activity with the purpose of revealing the prominent discourses in the studied educare centres. One argument for this point of departure is to get some insights through children's narrative, whether they put the same emphasis on school-age educare centre activity and the steering documents that guides the activity as adults do. From that argument it follows that research supporting children's participation and voices could contribute to a deeper understanding of how social practice in, for example, school-age educare centres, is produced and reproduced and in that way develop the activity.

### *Previous Research*

Only a few studies in the past decade have emphasized the content of the activities in school-age educare centres and what children do in these centres after school (Ihrskog 2006; Klerfelt 2006; Saar/Löfdahl/Hjalmarsson 2012). According to The National Agency for Education, (2007) the prerequisites for children to consider their activity in the school-age educare centre to be meaningful are that the activities are secure, fun and stimulating, with much time being spent on play and creative activity. The recommendations could be discussed as a construction that originates from children's own perspectives since it, for example, emphasizes that children's interests and experiences are important conditions for meaningful leisure time (Haglund 2009). Klerfelt (2006) asserts that the school-age educare centre is a discursive meeting place where children have opportunities to construct and negotiate cooperatively created symbols. There is also some research directed toward how children act while performing these negotiations (Dahl 2011; Evaldsson 1993), but our knowledge of the activities in school-age educare centres and children's perspectives of their everyday life in these institutions is still relatively vague.

### *Theoretical Points of Departure*

From a social constructionist perspective, reality is constructed through the interactions of people (Berger/Luckmann, 1967; Fairclough 2010). This implies that the social practice at school-age educare centres is a consequence of human conceptions and attempts to structure and categorize the activity. The participants, in this case leisure-time pedagogues and children, produce and reproduce everyday social

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1 The profession name 'leisure-time pedagogue' was changed in 2011 into 'teacher towards work in leisure-time centres' due to changes in the teacher education. Besides leading the activity in the leisure-time centre the 'teacher towards work in leisure-time centre' is trained for working as a teacher in school for pupils in grade 4-6, in one of the practical/aesthetic subjects and as a home-economics teacher (see Klerfelt/Haglund 2014). Since the teachers participating in this study are well experienced and educated before the change in the education, they are called leisure-time pedagogues.

practices through mutual negotiations. They learn to handle the activities that are included (cf. Lave 1993) and settle the meaning of these activities through their interactions. Social practice is also embedded in historical and cultural contexts that structure activities and make them meaningful (Wertsch 1998). Social practices are a product of social systems (cf. Giddens 1984) with inherent power relations that continuously produce and reproduce themselves. Social practice, can therefore be seen as a discursive event that is shaped by, but also shapes, situations, institutions and social structures, suggesting that there exists a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situations, institutions and social structures which frame it (Fairclough/Wodak 1997, p. 258).

Besides social practice, practice also involves discursive practice. This aspect of practice shapes the way, or the ways, children and staff speak about the school-age educare centre and its content. Discursive practice is based on how staff interprets their responsibilities and the policy documents that describe the intentions for school-age educare centres. This discursive practice is also based on how the staff and the children understand their own positions as a leisure-time pedagogue or a child who participates in school-age educare centre activities (cf. Fairclough 1992; Fairclough/Wodak 1997). People in different social positions are often associated with differing discourses. This also indicates that subjects have different power relations.

In this study, prominent discourses concerning the activity in two school-age educare centres are analysed from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Fairclough (1992; 2010) claims that critical discourse analysis (CDA) "... looks to establish connections between properties of texts, features of discourse practice (text production, consumption and distribution), and wider sociocultural practice" (2010, pp.88-89). CDA also asserts that social order is historically situated. A prevailing social order is seen as socially constructed and is also sustained less by the will of individuals than by discursive constructions of reality (Locke 2004). A discourse could be seen as a particular way of representing a part of the world and it is important to theorize conventions that are underlying the various ways of representations (Fairclough 2010). These conventions could be described as the order of discourse, for instance the variety of ways different subject positions as leisure-time pedagogues and children speak of the school-age educare center. The order of discourse can be defined as the totality of the different discursive practices and the relationships between them. Since there are often different ways of representing the world there are also alternative discourses that often are competing (Fairclough 2003). The relationships between and within orders of discourse therefore involve different social conflicts and struggles since "some ways of making meaning are dominant or mainstream in a particular order of discourse." (Fairclough 2010, p 265). Knowledge gained from research concerning leisure-time pedagogues and children's construction of their everyday lives in school-age educare centres could contribute by initiating change and development of the social practices within these institutions (Fairclough 2010) to ensure good decision are made in the best interests of children.

## 2 Walk-and-Talk Conversations

We have chosen to talk with children to understand how the social practice in school-age educare centres is constructed. We have used a narrative method (cf. Haudrup Christensen 2004) to enable us to get close to the participants' perspectives. Through narrative conversations we tried to establish a dialogue about a mutually constructed object (Linell 1998). In a, so-called, walk-and-talk conversation (Haudrup Christensen 2004) the participant leads the researcher to different places and gives their account of them. This is a way to allocate, for example, a child's power to control the content of the conversation based on a posed question. This study takes this scenario one step further by abandoning conventional open-ended and none emotionally charged questions. This choice was made with reference to dialogical theory that suggests that agreement pertaining to interpreted objects is created in the interaction between the persons taking part in a conversation (Linell 2009). This means that in our work, children, leisure-time pedagogues and researchers were free to use emotionally charged adjectives and expressions. Our intention with this approach was to use emotion-based questions with the purpose of provoking the perspectives of both the children and the adults by creating space for them to define the situation. To be able to make these differences in perspectives visible the questions to the teachers were formulated with the purpose of addressing them in their position as teachers acting with responsibility. The questions to the children were formulated with the purpose of trying to enter children's 'culture of communication' (Haudrup Christensen 2004) to be able to listen to their voices and 'catch' their culture (Halldén 2003). This way of conducting the conversations was complemented by the use of a digital camera that the interviewee used to take pictures during the sessions.

Several researchers advocate qualitative methods for gaining insight into children's perspectives and we will present two early studies from Sweden performed by Rasmusson (1998) and Torstensson-Ed (1997), to give our own study a cultural and contextual background and to illustrate what kind of knowledge these methods can provide. Rasmusson (1998) asserts that using several different methods is predominantly positive for obtaining reliable knowledge through children. With the aim of describing adults' attempts to create good conditions for growing up in an urban environment she carried out a case study using compositions, diaries, drawings, photographs taken by the children, individual interviews, walks through the area together with children, and group interviews. 28 children aged 9–10 participated. Rasmusson found that there is agreement between the "perspectives thought out for the children" and the children's own perspectives with regard to the planning of the area with regard to the children's needs for service, health and safety, and opportunities for play. Also Torstensson-Ed (1997) is using a kind of walk-and-talk-conversation, when taking 23 youths on a round tour to their former day care centre and primary school and then interviewing them about their memories. The results of this study were combined with theory into a model for development and learning in context. It emphasizes the importance of quality relationships both to persons and to content in educational settings. Different patterns of relationships among small children change over time to a better quality in relation to peers than to teachers. Individual ways of handling changes and disturbances in relations, like bullying, are described. They result in relationships and values of different quality, showing that development can

go in different directions and must be put in relation to values in society. In line with Rasmusson and Torstensson-Ed, our ambition is to come close to children's relations and opinions about their everyday activities and we direct this knowledge to leisure-time pedagogues/teachers towards work in school-age educare centres and teacher students.

### *Design*

Ten children aged from seven to eight, and three leisure-time pedagogues at two school-age educare centres, called The Silver Spring and The Metropolis, participated in this study. When choosing educare centres we looked for centres that could be labeled as ordinary centres, which from our perspective means group sizes of about 25 children/group, university educated teachers and well equipped locations. We asked the teachers to choose children that wanted to take part, could express themselves in Swedish and gave their own permission as well as we had their parents permission for their participation. The children were asked questions such as "What is the funniest/most boring/most beautiful/most dangerous place at the school-age educare centre?" The questions served as a basis to provoke vigorous discussions and thereby uncover the children's understanding of the activity. They received a digital camera and were encouraged to choose places and led the researchers to these places and then show and take pictures of the chosen place, or places they related to in response to the questions. The children and the researchers conversed during their walks and after the children had finished photographing. These conversations gave the researchers opportunities to acquaint themselves with parts of the children's everyday lives through the narratives that emerged. All walk-and-talk conversations started indoors but three of the children at the Silver Spring centre brought us outdoors. Five children from each school-age educare centre participated, but the data from two of the children from Silver Spring have been excluded since their walk-and-talk conversations indicated that they had considerable problems communicating in Swedish.

The same style of conversations and digital camera use was repeated with the leisure-time pedagogues. In these sessions, however, the questions were somewhat different since they were intended to direct them to describe their position as teachers who have the main responsibility for the design of the school-age educare centre activities. Questions asked were "Where are you the best/the most boring/the strictest/the most creative pedagogue?"

The two researchers were both present during the interviews but participated in different ways. Researcher 1 was responsible for introducing the child, or the leisure-time pedagogue, to the interview procedure and led the conversations. Researcher 2 made notes concerning the content of the conversation and complemented with follow up questions and additional pictures with a second digital camera. In total, the nine 'walk-and-talk'-conversations resulted in nine audio-recorded conversations and more than 200 photos.

### *Analysis of the Walk-and-Talk Conversations*

The analyse procedure started by listening to the sound files. This part of the data was to some extent transcribed into two logbooks in order to get a general view of the material. All photos were numbered in relation to the interviews with the intention of coordinating all photos with the sound file content. All conversations and all photos were analyzed both question-by-question and informer-by-informer. The conversations and the photos from each of the school-age educare centres were analysed separately and were later studied together. The point of departure for directing the analysis was to find narratives that emerged from the walk-and-talk conversations and from the photos that were created to develop a picture of everyday life at the school-age educare centers. The analysis implied that the transcribed material was repeatedly read and discussed by the authors. The reading and discussions aimed at getting close to the participants perspectives, present these perspectives as narratives concerning the everyday practice and to find and discuss, what Fairclough (2010) labels as problems or wrongs.

Wrongs include injustices and inequalities which people experience, but which are not necessary wrongs in the sense that, given certain social conditions, they could be righted or at least mitigated. This might be, for instance, matter of inequalities in access to material resources, lack of potential rights, inequalities before law or on the basis of differences in ethnic or cultural identity (Fairclough, 2010, p. 226).

Each photo functioned as a reminder of the appearance of the discussed place. They also facilitated the interpretation of the transcribed material since the photos, taken and highlighted by the informants, made parts of the emphasized places discussed visible. The resulting narratives portray parts of the social practice at the centres and simultaneously describe the order of discourse, i.e. the variety of ways the leisure-time pedagogues and the children spoke of the school-age educare centre and its content (cf. Fairclough, 2010). The results will primarily deal with the discourses that emerged in the conversations with the children since it is above all the children's perspectives that are the focus of this study. The results of the conversations with the staff will be treated in a more synoptic way.

## **3 Results of the Walk-and-Talk Conversations in The Silver Spring and The Metropolis**

First, we will present the places the children find fun, then the boring places, the beautiful places, and lastly those places they identified as dangerous. Both the names of the centres and the participants have been changed.

### **Fun Places**

The children at The Silver Spring find it fun to spend time in the same places they find beautiful: the main room, the painting room and the drama room. But the children also took us outdoors. The school with its schoolyard and snow-covered lawns is connected to a small wooded area but is situated in the middle of a densely popu-



lated suburb. Nasrin and Irene declared that the most fun place is outdoors up on the hill. You can rock on the seesaw there or chase each other, girls and boys from the same class. You can go sliding there when there is snow. Another fun place outdoors is at the fence outside the pre-school. The pre-school is situated amongst the other school buildings and the fenced pre-school yard invites play. The pre-school children swing, have tricycles, play in a sandbox, chase each other or stand at the fence watching the older school children.

- Researcher 1: Why do you take a photo here?  
 Nasrin: ... it is fun to look at the children when they are playing.  
 Researcher 1: Yeah ... is it fun to look at the smaller children when they are playing over there?  
 Nasrin: ... Yeah ...  
 Researcher 1: Why is that fun?  
 Nasrin: Because I used to look at my little brother when he is playing.  
 Researcher 1: Yes?  
 Nasrin: We can chat with each other.  
 Researcher 1: Who do you think considers this to be most fun? You or him?  
 Nasrin: My little brother ... thinks that it is a lot of fun!

It is a great joy that a little brother exists in the everyday life of the school-age educare centre. Being together is important.

One place the children at The Metropolis found fun was in the main room where they performed activities together. Einar says that when you use clay, as with other materials, you do that together with other children and, besides making funny figures, it is the interaction with the others that makes this activity fun. Some other children described the hallway as fun because they played a table football game there. Tina spoke about this place:

- Researcher 1: Yes, and what is fun here at the table football game?  
 Tina: Ehh, it is our play, we have balls and such things as we used to, we used to play with a lot of balls at the game and then we used to play matches against each other.

The idea of the game is that the figures that represent football players should hit the ball. By turning a rod back and forth the “football players” turn and are supposed to hit the ball into the opponent’s goal. When Tina describes how they play it is evident that they design new rules. Usually they use only one ball when they play but it is also possible to reshape the rules by using many balls and in that way update the system of regulations. The limitations of the game are studied – what is possible and what one cannot do and how the rules can be adjusted to create a better and more amusing game. When the children define the social practice it appears as if, when they use the game, they get many opportunities to interact. The children use many different rules and possibilities to involve their peers since many children often want to play at the same time.

### Boring Places

The children emphasized the importance of playing with other children. This also meant that the children avoided places they considered to be boring. Nasrin and

Irene showed us such a place and told us that “there are not many children who play here”. Few children visited this space although there were tools to play with. These tools, however, were not considered to be fun to play with and this meant that very few children used this particular area for play.

Ossian had difficulties finding a boring place, but after some consideration he said that you could be bored all over the place, especially if you are waiting to go home to attend other activities.

When Emma is asked to show us the most boring place at the school-age educare centre she brings us to the kitchen. The kitchen is sometimes used as a place for children and teachers to sit down and talk in peace and quiet to sort out problems and conflicts between the children. Even though Emma thinks it could be useful to discuss things that have occurred she longs for her friends and would actually rather be with them.

- Emma: If ... I perhaps ... have done something or they perhaps have done something nasty to me. And then the one that has done something nasty to me sits at, at one side of the table and the other ... the one that has not done anything bad at the other side of the table. Then the other one has to say like “I am sorry”. /.../
- Researcher 1: Yes. Ehh ... does it ... does one usually talk about the things that have happened then, what really happened? Is it the truth?
- Emma: Sometimes, those who have sort of done something, they perhaps don't always tell the truth because they think that you get like tons of scolding. But then I used to, or the one that sits there across from me asks, or then, or we say that it was that, this and that. What the truth is sort of. But sometimes it can happen that they tell the truth. /.../
- Researcher 1: But you mean that it is possible, more often than not, to untwist the things that have happened? Or do you try to shuffle-off just to get about?
- Emma: You usu... usually want it to elapse quickly because you sort of want to do something else instead of just sitting there and talk.

### Beautiful Places

Noah brings us outdoors to a fence and it is not obvious what makes this place beautiful. His explanation is required.

- Researcher 1: Hey... is there a place here at school, at the school-age educare centre that you find beautiful?
- Noah: At first it was because there were a lot of flowers. I cannot take pictures of that!
- Researcher 1: But we can visualize if you shoot a picture!

Noah takes a picture.

- Researcher 1: Where were the flowers?
- Noah: At all the buds, the bushes!
- Researcher 1: (With a low amazed voice) At all the buds? The bushes! Yeah!

We understood during the conversation that it was a lilac hedge he was referring to. However, on this cold winter day it extended its black, leafless branches to the sky. A child's perspective is not always obvious for grown-ups and you must, as an adult,



realize that you don't know their perspective and therefore you have to ask them to achieve their explanations.

The children at The Metropolis had no problem showing us several places they found beautiful even though the school-age educare centre was housed in a rather old and dilapidated building. It was, however, not the locality as such they emphasized as beautiful. Instead, they photographed paintings they had made and they took photos of several of the flowers on the windowsills of the centre. There were also artificial flowers made by the children attached to one window. When Ossian described what he considers to be beautiful, he could see beauty both in the genuine flowers and in the flowers the children had made by hand.

### Dangerous Places

The children, for different reasons, avoid some places at the school-age educare centre. One reason is that some places are too rowdy. The football ground at The Silver Spring is one such place.

- Noah: Because always when it is football if one falls or if someone scores a goal they used to just start fighting.
- Researcher 1: Then they used to just start fighting.
- Noah: If something has occurred with this team or that team they fight.
- Researcher 1: What do the children do then?
- Noah: No, so there is just a child who fetches an adult ... or teacher. I don't know.
- Researcher 1: And what happens when an adult appears?
- Noah: That person says that they have to stop.
- /.../
- Researcher 1: Do the adults usually participate in the game?
- Noah: No. There was a teacher who worked here and he used to participate but he moved to another school.

The interaction at the football ground often seems to be aggressive. Nasrin and Noah said that they usually take up and discuss troubles when they come to their classroom or their school-age educare centre and the children who have been aggressive have to say "I'm sorry" to each other. Such situations seem to take place during schooldays but in this case it does not look like the children discriminate between schooldays and time in the school-age educare centre. The children are given possibilities to raise issues that have emerged, but at the same time they describe that adults rarely participate in their football games. The teachers that might be outdoors when the children have playtime seem to be at other places at the big schoolyard.

The windowsills were places which the children at The Metropolis avoided. Some children said that it is dangerous to crawl, sit or play there. If you do, you risk crashing through the window and falling down to the asphalt schoolyard several floors down.

- Ellinore: It is the windows. Our teachers have told us not to sit in the windowsills because ... even if the windows are closed you could sort of ... -...eh, because even if the window is closed you could, it can break and ... or something (slurred). It is dangerous.

- Researcher 1: Yes, you could cut yourself and fall out, yes? That's the way the adults think, yes? Because it is they who tell you that or is it you that...
- Ellinore: It is they who tell us.

Ellinore seems to be somewhat uncertain why the windowsills are dangerous but the staff has told the children that they are dangerous and she knows that you are not allowed to sit on them. The children have confidence in the staff and respect their wishes.

## 4 Analyses

The presentation of our analysis starts with a discussion of the narratives that emerged from the walk-and-talk conversations with the children. Then, we briefly discuss the narratives that were elicited during the walk-and-talk conversations with the leisure-time pedagogues. Finally, we compare these results with the intention to describe the order of discourse and in that way define the construction of the social practices.

### *Walk-and-Talk Conversations with the Children: Main Narratives*

Some issues appeared as more interesting for the children than others which also meant that some narratives were prioritized in the analysis. The main narratives that appeared from the walk-and-talk conversations were: *Being together*, *Waiting is boring*, *Beautiful nature* and *Avoiding places*.

In the conversations the children gave priority to the possibility of forming friendships with each other during activities. This means that the first narrative, *Being together*, characterizes much of what the children expressed. Good-fellowship and the opportunity to be together with other children also affords prospects for sharing experiences and being acknowledged, while also offering opportunities to work with their social relations with other children in the same way as is described by Ihrskog (2006). The school-age educare centre, and the ongoing relation-work that takes place in this social practice, could, in that way, be an important arena for the children's constructions of identity. The children seem to negotiate and cooperate in a way that resembles findings in studies by Dahl (2011) and Evaldsson (1993). Parts of the school-age educare centres social practice are produced and reproduced through the creation of new rules for playing and therefore different opportunities for establishing friendship/fellowship and participation in different processes of learning are also possible.

The second narrative, *Waiting is boring*, refers to certain periods of time that include activities the children find meaningless or at least framed in a context they give lower priority to. This means that they have to wait before they can take part in something they would rather do and this waiting is considered to be a boring state. However, the reasons for why the children are waiting could significantly differ. It could, for example, be waiting to go home. It is important that children experience that there exists 'interspaces' in our existence (Qvarsell 2003). These interspaces are perceived as positive and an optional, not prescribed, span of time. The interspace

that Ossian describes is, however, perceived as negative mainly because of the fact that the content or more precisely the lack of content, in this period of time is not something he wants to engage in. He has not chosen to have nothing to do and therefore it is boring. Instead, he would have wanted to fill the interspace with fun content. These moments could perhaps, from the perspective of the staff, be seen as moments that have to exist in order to clear away board games, clay and other material, and to prepare the children to finish their activities before they have to leave. Waiting could also refer to having to participate in a staff-initiated discussion like Emma did. She wanted the discussion to end and just waited for permission to go out and play with her friends.

In the third narrative, *Beautiful nature*, the children informed us about objects, or items they produced themselves and items that in different ways they associate with nature in their descriptions of the most beautiful places at the school-age educare centre. There might be a relation between the things the children want to create, like the beautiful flower decorations at the windows in The Metropolis and nature. Children see the aesthetics of nature and want to reproduce it. Perhaps this is a clue for leisure-time pedagogues in their efforts to understand what children perceive as pointless activity and what they view as ingenious meaningful creation (Klerfelt/Qvarsell 2012).

The last narrative that emerged, *avoiding places*, shows in the children's narratives through their reproduction of adult voices. It is dangerous to sit or play on the windowsills at The Metropolis. The participating children were recipients of the perspectives and advice of the staff concerning possible dangers. But some children at The Silver Spring also avoided the football ground. Regarding this issue, it is possible to connect to the National Agency for Education and their criticism of the activities available at school-age educare centres. The National Agency for Education asserts that there might be risks with handing over the main responsibility for the administration of play and games to the children. The National Agency for Education (2000) has seen patterns that, for instance, indicate a stereotyped gender behavior and that some children become prominent while others become subordinated when the adult is absent.

### *Walk-and-Talk Conversations with the Leisure-Time Pedagogues: Main Narratives*

Main narratives in the walk-and-talk conversations with the leisure-time pedagogues were: *Creating a fellowship within the group*, *Conflict resolution* and *Introduction of creative activities directed to arts, physical education and play*.

Social processes are focused on both school-age educare centres and this is also the reason for the first narrative *Creating a fellowship within the group*. The leisure-time pedagogues described how they sought to create friendships within the group and in what ways they wanted to support their children's interactions. They also want their children to develop social competences. It seems as if children's perspectives are attended to but some aspects of the narratives about *Avoiding places* indicate otherwise. In the children's narratives concerning places they avoid, the voices of the staff are echoed. It is dangerous to sit in the windowsills. The staff tries to work in

the children's best interests and the children are sensitive to the adult's perspectives and warnings. It is, however, not only the places identified by staff that the children avoid. As mentioned before, they also avoid certain places within the school surroundings, the football ground at The Silver Spring, where trouble often arises in the absence of adults. In this case the adults ignore or are unaware of the children's perspectives. The leisure-time pedagogues, and other involved staff like school teachers, are not there. They are somewhere else.

In the second narrative, *Conflict resolution*, the leisure-time pedagogues stressed the importance of supporting children and trying to sort out any conflicts that have occurred (cf. Haglund 2004). Conflict resolution involves, besides trying to get the engaged children to be friends again, finding out what has happened before someone started to cry or became angry. The leisure-time pedagogues at both school-age educare centres considered conflict resolution to be interesting, but also necessary and meaningful. If they have an opportunity and find it justifiable, they sit down in privacy with the involved children.

The leisure-time pedagogues' last narrative, *Introduction of creative activities directed to arts, physical education and play*, was emphasized as a way to support children's social development. These activities are emphasized by the National Agency for Education (2007) and in this context are mostly used as tools to give children opportunities to take responsibility such as sitting down doing things together, and talking and having fun at the same time.

## 5 Discussion

The discourses that emerged from the walk-and-talk conversations with the children correspond in many ways with the discourses that emerged from the walk-and-talk conversations with the leisure-time pedagogues. The latter discourses are, however, at least in part, grounded in a perspective oriented at the child, i.e. a standpoint that matches Halldén's (2003) definition of a perspective that emphasizes an ambition to work for the good of children and in line with Rasmussen's (1998) formulation "perspectives thought out for the children". However, one question that arises is whether or not the leisure-time pedagogues' ambition to develop the children's competences, in certain situations, counteracts striving for a good fellowship within the group or if these components are possible to unify. In other words; is there a conflict between the child's perspective and the perspective that emphasizes the good of children?

The participating children seem to enjoy their school-age educare activities although the study also shows that from their perspective parts of their everyday life could be designed in a more beneficial way. The *Conflict resolution* narrative implies that the leisure-time pedagogues emphasize the importance of sorting out conflicts that have occurred and it corresponds with how Emma described the "kitchen conversations" at The Metropolis. Emma's narrative provides a description of a polite discussion. She can take the other person's perspective, to sit and be afraid of being scolded, but that is not what happens. The children meet up and are considered to be able to take responsibility for their actions, listen, and to sort out situations that have taken place. This way of treating children and conflicts is seen as the only opportu-

nity to give children potential to grow as humans (Jul./Jul. 2009). Emma described the importance of being together with her friends and this also corresponds with the leisure-time pedagogues' ambition to create a fellowship in the group. From the perspective of the staff, it is important that all children in the group are friends and can get along. This is included in the discourse that underlines *Creating a fellowship within the group* and if they feel that the friendships between some of the children is at risk they use the *Conflict resolution* discourse that, at The Metropolis, means that the children involved have to follow a leisure-time pedagogue to the kitchen and resolve their problems. These conversations are, from the leisure-time pedagogue's perspectives, important, but could, from the children's perspective, sometimes be seen as unnecessary. It seems as if when the two perspectives meet the adult perspective is the more powerful one. In other words, in the order of discourse (cf. Fairclough 2010), the *Conflict resolution* discourse is more powerful than the *Waiting is boring* and *Being together* discourses since the children accommodate their behaviour to the former discourse. They sometimes sit down sorting out problems though they would rather be playing with their friends. This is a relation that seems to be unnoticed by the leisure-time pedagogues. The *Conflict resolution* discourse is powerful and seems to be of great importance concerning how the leisure-time pedagogues interpret their mission and this discourse is therefore also important for how the everyday practice is constructed (cf. Fairclough 1992; Fairclough/Wodak 1997). The discourses initiated by the adults are superior to the discourses initiated by the children. Or to borrow the words of Anna Holzscheiter (2011) when she was discussing reconstructions of global childhood norms with considerations to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, power of discourse or discourse of the powerful. Following the tradition of CDA, she stresses the value of incorporating the 'social environment' into discourse analysis, since it allows the identification of specific sets of socially shared semantics within an institutional setting as well as accounts for specific interpersonal dynamics and exclusionary practices that expand and transform these semantics.

An issue that is more pronounced is found in the narratives concerning the football ground at The Silver Spring. Adults are important for children's education and in connection with other pedagogical activities regardless of whether or not they are teachers, leisure-time pedagogues or staff working in a dining hall. If adults are present, this indicates, from an adult perspective, that the activity is important and that they will strive for social control in the activities that take place. Since adults do not take part in the children's games at the football ground this activity could therefore be seen to be unimportant. In this way, the football ground becomes a space in this social system where the children are left on their own and to take responsibility for regulations and negotiations during games. Adults cannot always attend every activity but, concerning the football ground, the children explain that teachers and leisure-time pedagogues rarely attend this area. The consequence is that the rules and resources that structure the activities at the football ground produce a place that for some children could be a sanctuary since they are unsupervised while for other children it is a place to avoid since they feel unsafe. A reasonable way to mitigate the problem with children who feel unsafe should be to reconsider the adult abandonment of the football ground and start to see this space as an important area for constructions of fellowship, learning in the form of constructions of identity and being together. That adults regard their discourse as superior to the children's might

here have serious consequences and it is questionable whether the adults should not be at the football ground for the sake of the children rather than a taken for granted view of relating of relating to what counts as important in educational activity. Research that emphasizes children's perspectives have the opportunities to reveal new perspectives concerning the activity, perspectives that might differ from a more powerful and well established adult perspective. Describing and discussing children's perspectives could therefore reveal existing power relations and, on the basis of these findings, mitigate the outcomes of these relations and in that way contribute to change and develop the everyday practice.

Finally, we want to discuss some methodological and theoretical considerations. Our point of departure was to give children opportunities to express themselves through a combination of two complementary devices; talk and photos. The purpose of using these devices was to be able to create a closer relation to the children and to deepen our mutual understandings. The photos complemented, focused and supported the conversations and constituted a source for asking additional questions when we had difficulties in understanding verbal explanations. The children seemed to consider our instructions somewhat surprising, thrilling and fun, and we believe that we have fulfilled our methodological intentions concerning giving the children space to define the situation and make their voices heard. At the same time, however, we have to take into consideration that we, as adults, created the questions. We have, through the narrative approach, also been able to enter into, and describe parts of children's 'culture of communication' (Haudrup Christensen 2004). Designing methods intended to give children power in researching their own lives is of great importance, but is also very complex.

Van Blerk and Barker (2008) hold that participation is a form of power and argue that it is essential to acknowledge and work with the power relations that characterize young people's everyday lives and that this also affects the creation of mutual participatory arenas with them.

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