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HOW ARE YOU? – THE NARRATIVE IN-BETWEEN SPACES IN YOUNG CHILDREN’S DAILY LIVES
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Abstract
This research focuses on spontaneously composed narrative in-between spaces in young children’s everyday life. The study was implemented in home and day care center contexts, and in cooperation between them. The study examines how children’s relations are shaped and reshaped in narrative in-between spaces.

The theoretical and methodological approach draws from artistic and narrative childhood research. The narrative ethnography intertwined with visual methods were employed in three different processes to generate the research material. The material was analyzed through a holistic narrative analysis. The study is in line with the recent discussion of childhood research that challenges the simple understandings of children’s participation and voice. The study considers how to construct knowledge together with children, both in educational research and practices, in a critical and diffractive way.

The main findings reveal that the spontaneously formed narrative in-between spaces enable children and adults to encounter the unplanned together; call for aesthetic sensitiveness toward others; enhance intergenerational co-agency; and create and maintain caring reciprocity and continuity. These aspects require and promote the confidence between children and adults as well as among adults. The study opens potential perspectives into research with young children through the concepts of narrative in-between space and the aesthetics of listening. The concepts challenge researchers to acknowledge the significance of being present for children and creating spaces for children to narrate in multiple ways.

The study points out that the spontaneous narration provides opportunities for children to use different modes of narration and consequently enables their multiple voices to be heard. The study encourages researchers and educators to acknowledge the potential involved in children’s spontaneous narration. The study shows that spontaneously formed narrative in-between spaces create valuable situations to share children’s home stories and other meaningful matters. Finally, the study supports the parents and professionals to strengthen the position of the child in the cooperation practices between day care and home and offers a concrete means of involving children in cooperation.

Keywords: aesthetics, childhood, daily life, multimodal narration, narrative in-between space, relational
Oulun yliopiston tutkijakoulu; Oulun yliopisto, Kasvatustieteiden tiedekunta
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Tiivistelmä

Tässä väitöskirjassa tutkitaan spontaanisti muotoutuneita kerronnan tiloja lasten koti- ja päiväkotiarjessa, sekä niiden välisessä yhteistyössä. Tutkimusaihetta lähestytään kysymällä, miten lasten suhteet taipuvat kerronnan tiloissa. Tutkimus liittyy kriittisellä ja luovalla otteella lapsuudentutkimuksen kentällä käytävään keskusteluun lapsen äänestä ja osallisuudesta.


Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että spontaanin kerronnan tiloissa lasten ja aikuisten on mahdollista yhtääntymistä ennalta säännöllisestä yhteistyöstä, lisätä sukupolvien välistä yhteyttä, lisätä sukupolvien välistä yhteyttä, lisätä sukupolvien välistä yhteyttä, lisätä sukupolvien välistä yhteyttä, lisätä sukupolvien välistä yhteyttä, lisätä sukupolvien välistä yhteyttä. Nämä osatekijät vaativat ja edistävät luottamuksen rakentamista niin lasten ja aikuisten välillä kuin sukupolvien kesken. Tutkimus avaa uudenlaikea tarkastelukulmia pienten lasten kanssa tehtävään tutkimukseen kerronnan tilan käsittelyyn avulla; pelkän tarinan sisällön tarkasteluun sijoittaa käsitystä kontekstiin ja suhteita erottamattoman osana kertomisen prosessia. Käsitys haittaa tutkijat huomioimaan kerronnallisen läsnäolon ja monenlaisen kerronnan merkityksen pienten lasten elämässä. Tutkimus osoittaa, että spontaani kerronnan tila tarjoaa mahdollisuuden lapsen toimijuteen; lapsi voi osallistaa aikuista yhteyteen kerrantaan itselleen luontevalla kertomisen tavoilla.

Tutkimus haastaa tutkijat ja kasvattajat huomioimaan lasten spontaaniin kerrantaan sisältyvän potentiaalin. Tutkimus havainnollistaa, että spontaani muotoutuneet kerronnan tilat luovat arvokkaita yhdessä olevia huomioita mahdollistavat lapselle tärkeiden asioiden jakamisen. Tutkimus kannustaa vanhempia ja ammattilaisia vahvistamaan lapsen toimijutta myös kodin ja päivähoidon välisissä yhteistyön käytänteissä. Tutkimus tarjoaa tähän konkreettisen esimerkin.

Asiasanat: arki, esteettinen, kerronnallinen tila, lapsuus, monimuotoinen kerronta, suhteisuus
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Kiitos vierellä kulkevamisesta!

Tyrnävällä 29.10.2015

Susanna Kinnunen
List of original publications

This doctoral thesis is based on the following original publications, which are referred to throughout the text by their Roman numerals:


IV Kinnunen S (Manuscript) Curiosity, care, comprehension and confidence: Parents’ and a teacher’s reflections on spontaneous narrative encounters with children as part of cooperation.

The original articles are reprinted with the kind permission of the publishers.
Pictures

Information of the pictures:

11. *Princess with a bag*. Pulmu, 2015 Pencil. This picture was drawn in the day care context.
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Picture 1. Ball of rays.
1 Introduction

“We need, in short, to tell and hear more stories, old and new” (Moss 2014: 75).

This study explores the spontaneous narration in young children’s everyday life contexts, at home and at the day care center, and in the area of cooperation between these contexts. In particular, the focus is on the narrative spaces that are formed spontaneously, mainly through the children’s initiative, in between the social and material relations. The study recognizes narration as a multimodal process of sharing and constructing the participants’ lives. Moreover, the narration is understood as a process of co-knowing; the stories are about what happens between people in time and space (Caine et al. 2013). I ask how these spontaneously formed narrative in-between spaces shape and re-shape children’s relations within and between daily contexts. The nature of the study is diffractive (Davies 2014); beyond just reflecting critically on the prevailing practices, it is already changing them. The study “contributes to enlarging spaces in which alternative possibilities are explored and different languages spoken” (Dahlberg et al. 2013: 3).

The research journey has contained calls to listen to and live alongside the children in their daily lives. I have been in situations in which my own life and that of others, childhoods and adulthoods, home and work, my roles as a researcher and a mother, art and research, senses, emotions, and thoughts have compounded – into rays crisscrossing in mist. Some of those rays have been wound into balls of shiny threads, which I have carefully put in my pocket, wondering what could be made with them. I have not found what makes for a more real or true childhood, but I have had the chance to engage in dialogue with people and discover important questions. For example, who are the interlocutors together in different situations and spaces or furthermore, who could they be?

When doing research among young children I encountered other ways of narrating beyond just words, which caused me to question how I could retell what I experienced with the children (see Viljamaa et al. 2013). Similarly to Bardy and Känkänen’s (2005: 43) observations, I feel that it is not possible to go next to these encounters with factual information; a stream that reaches the emotions is needed. Therefore, this summary is constructed by intertwining the visual and the poetic with the textual interpretation (Leavy 2009, Sameshima 2008). Most of the
pictures\(^1\) were created in the finalizing phase of the research process in order to deepen – carve, engrave and stroke – my relationship with the topic. In nearly all of the drawing situations, my children were with me sharing the joy of doing.\(^2\) Applying the thoughts of Bahtin, this study is a dialogue of multiple texts and pictures; it is a dialogue between the writer, participants, and receivers within the past and recent culture (Kristeva 1993). In the discussions, that I have had in drawing situations with my children and whilst writing this summary, the purposes of the research aim have continued to evolve. I have also been asked direct questions, as shown by the following vignette from everyday life:

Anna (school-aged): “Mom, are you really interested in what you are doing?”
Me: “Well, yeah, I am.”
Anna: “But what are you doing really? Are you studying that drawing? What is the title?”
Me: “How are you? Spontaneously formed narrative in-between spaces in young children’s daily lives.”
Anna: “What does it mean?”
Me: “I’m trying to write about things that are actually natural, but you know, it often happens that the adult teaches the child and does not really listen to what the child says. I mean what would happen if we listened more to the child’s questions and thoughts and discussed them together?”
Anna: “Do you mean that a child could teach, too?”

1.1 Early childhood in Finnish homes and educational institutions

The study is a part of the larger ethnographic research project *Children tell of their well-being – who listens?*\(^3\) in which we investigated how children experienced and narrated well-being in their different daily life contexts: home, day care, and school.

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\(^1\) The pictures are not referred to in the text separately, except for in Chapter 3.3.3 where the role of the pictures in this study is explained. The detailed information for the pictures is in Chapter Pictures.

\(^2\) I have discussed with the children (Silmu, Palmu and Elli) that I will use the pictures that they drew and that we made together in this thesis.

\(^3\) The study began as a part of the Skidi-kids program’s research project “Children tell of their well-being – who listens?” (TellIs 2010–2013, project number 21892). A part of the research material of this study was collected in the sub-study “Children’s narrated daily life in a day care center context,” which was carried out in six day care groups in 2009–2011. The study was finalized within the project “From exclusion to belonging: developing narrative practices in day care centers and schools” (Belong 2013–2015, project number 264370), which was a continuation of the TelLis project. Both of these projects were funded by the Academy of Finland.
This study was implemented in home and day care contexts, which are the major arenas of everyday life for Finnish children. The continuity and social relations between and within these contexts are seen as important for children’s well-being (Lämsä et al. 2012: 469–470). Day care represents the institutional education system whereas the home context offers possibilities for informal and private life. However, these contexts are not fixed but are instead continuously negotiated, re-constructed, and re-organized (see Vuorisalo et al. 2015: 68). Furthermore, the interface between these two contexts is not stable (Kekkonen 2012: 32). The dichotomy of the private and institutional spheres of education is constantly and contextually debated in different levels of society (Kekkonen 2012, Metso 2004). In early childhood education, educational responsibility in particular leads to continuous discussions on cooperation between parents and professionals (Kekkonen 2012: 32).

In this study, the home context is thought of as a place for family life, parenthood, and childhood. Viljamaa (2012: 56) describes how the home, as a building and as a context for relationships, offers a place where children’s childhoods and adults’ adulthoods are uniquely lived. At present, daily life at home is described as changing and dynamic, which presents different challenges to families. Working life and the parental work schedule have an increasing influence on children’s lives and the changes in family structure alter the children’s home context (Kyrönlampi-Kylmänen & Määttä 2012). Nowadays, about 37% of Finnish children aged one to two and about 68% of children aged three to five go to public day care (Laaksonen & Lamberg 2014); furthermore, approximately 99% of six-year-old children go to preschool, which is mostly organized as part of day care (Alasuutari 2010). In this situation, exploring both the contexts and the nature of the relations in and between these contexts comes to the fore.

During this research process, the early childhood education system has become familiar to me as a mother and a researcher. I am not a professional early childhood educator, but the study challenged me to familiarize myself with the theories, documents, and history of early childhood education in Finland and beyond (Alila et al. 2014, Einarsdottir et al. 2015).

According to Niikko (2006: 138), the main purposes of Finnish daycare have always been to provide high-quality care and education and to assist families with their daily lives. The debate within early childhood education has been intertwined with both the ideologies of childhood and societal changes, the emphasis of which has shifted between care and education. The concept of early childhood education was raised as a subject of debate in the 1970s among Finnish kindergarten teacher
students. The concept soon became rooted in practice, but it was embraced slower among the educational sciences. Early childhood education started to develop as a branch of science in the mid-1990s when kindergarten teacher education was moved from colleges to universities. (Kinos & Palonen 2012: 229–230).

The basis of Finnish day care includes the combination of education, care, and teaching of children below school age (Kinos & Palonen 2012). Niikko (2006: 134) argues that Finnish early childhood education refers to the all-around support for children’s growth, development, and learning, which means that the main purpose of the individual and collective work by educators is to secure the child’s well-being and good life and includes the ethical dimensions of education. She maintains that the focus is more on care, upbringing, and general development than on specific learning outcomes (Niikko 2006). The underlying values in the Finnish national curriculum guidelines, which were established at the beginning of this millennium, derive from international agreements on children’s rights, national acts and decrees, and other local guidelines for early childhood education. These guidelines are formulated within the Early Childhood Education and Care Policy system and are directed by political decisions and laws to guarantee a particular upbringing and maintaining of order for the sake of society (see Einarsdottir et al. 2015).

In the recent national guidelines, the view of children as the builders of their own lives and experiences has increased; they have to be listened to and they have to be treated as equal persons (Niikko 2006, Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman perusteet 2005). Wagner (2006: 300) contends that the egalitarian and democratic relationships between children and adults, as well as the conviction that children’s rights must be respected, are deeply rooted in the Nordic childhood discourse. However, the process of taking children’s views and agency into account is not clearly visible in educational practices, for instance, when preparing children’s individual educational plans in Finland (Alasuutari 2010: 100). As Einarsdottir et al. (2015) explain, it appears that (at least) two discourses may be prominent in the curricula: one where children are viewed as subjects and rights holders here and now and another where children are viewed as objects for learning for the future.

At present, Paju (2013) sees that the growing trends are the professionalization of Finnish early childhood education and the emphasis on individuality in pedagogy, which follows the prevailing orientations of the other Western countries. The recent Finnish early childhood education report (Alila et al. 2014: 143) shows that the ongoing discussion of the economy is also dominant in early childhood education. Early childhood education is seen as an investment that must produce outcomes
effectively and economically (Alila et al. 2014: 143). As Paju (2013) argues, in these trends children are seen as learners and the economic resources of society (see also Moss 2014: 18). Moss (2014: 17) identifies two trends that he argues are largely dominant in contemporary early childhood education: the story of quality and high returns and the story of markets. He notes that these stories relate to a third story, neoliberalism, in which the world is built on relationships of competition, contracts, and calculation and is inhabited by people who are autonomous and flexible utilitarians (Moss 2014: 17). The regime of neoliberalism, as Moss and Dahlberg (2014: viii) describe, is enacted by a prescribed subject: homo economicus. Emilson and Johansson (In press) argue that the neoliberal view connected with autonomy and individual freedom has recently been both discussed and questioned as an instrumental way of defining democracy. This has been followed by a new tendency to relate democracy to shared life with others.

In this study, I take a critical stance toward the notion of prescribed (developmental and learning skill) goals (see Moss 2014: 22) as a practice that leads young children’s daily lives. I contemplate the assessment of children’s learning skills that takes place increasingly early in their education (see Boldt & McArdle 2013: 12). For example, art teaching might be a highly directive procedure followed in assembly-line fashion where educators dictate the process and children end up working on someone else’s project (Thompson 1995: 90). Ring (2010: 2), who draws attention to children’s spontaneous drawing, presents how the drawing seemed to become an intermittent activity. She explains it as a part of a cycle of teacher-directed art practice where there seems to be little opportunity for children to use any skills introduced to them make the meanings.

In this study, I will discuss how the relationships in children’s daily lives, in and between the home and day care center contexts, should be addressed more (Bae 2009). I highlight the importance of being with children, seeing what is happening as they are creating, learning, and being (Boldt & McArdle 2013: 12). I concentrate on the paradox in everyday life mentioned by Qvortrup (1994) in which adults understand and value spontaneity yet children’s lives are more and more organized.

1.2 The reasoning underlying the research question

In this study, the intention is to focus on the relational viewpoint in and between children’s daily life contexts of home and day care by exploring the following question:
How are children’s relations shaped and reshaped in narrative in-between spaces?

In the articles I have approached the research aim from different angles, including the contents, nature, and forms of children’s narration and the adults’ reflections on the children’s narration. In this compilation, the intention is to explore the narration as a relational phenomenon: how children’s narration is related to their social and material contexts. For studying children’s daily life from a relational viewpoint, I employ the concept of narrative in-between space (Caine et al. 2013). This concept is applicable in a study that highlights relations in and between children’s daily contexts and emphasizes the processes that happen between the interlocutors within their material surroundings.

The study is in line with the recent discussion on childhood research that challenges the simple understandings of children’s participation and voice. The study critically considers how to construct knowledge together with children, both in educational practice and in research. Previous studies concerning children’s spontaneous narration in home and day care contexts are rare (Holloway & Valentine 2000, Puroila et al. 2012, Viljamaa 2012). The home context as a research field is well known in family studies (Jokinen & Kuronen 2011). However, most research with children in early childhood education is carried out in public institutions and thus excludes children’s lives within the home context (Holloway & Valentine 2000). The interest in children’s narration as a process has shifted the focus of the studies toward the importance of the contexts where the narratives are told (Anning & Ring 2004, Stephenson 2009, Striano 2012). Putting the emphasis on the process intertwines the narration as a part of the actors and interaction with the social and cultural environment (Striano, 2012) and the temporal dimension (Caine et al. 2013). Much of this research has been conducted in order to enhance the participation and voice of children (e.g. Clark 2005, Darbyshire et al. 2005, Guillemin & Drew 2010) and is based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, see also Hart 1992: 4).

Whereas contemporary research with children takes children’s thoughts and views seriously and values their competence, their participation in research continues to present challenges (Broström 2006, Einarsdottir 2007, Hohi 2015, Johansson 2011, Kjörholt 2008, Komulainen 2007, Spyrou 2011, Wyness 2012). There is a need to critically reflect on what it means to do research with children and on whose behalf the researchers are working. According to Mannion (2007), rights-based views require critical debate. He argues that research on children’s
participation in research needs to move toward a model where the tensions of the agendas and the cultural problems associated with the rights-based approach are more reflexively addressed. (Mannion 2007: 408). He says that discussing the participation alone through children’s own spaces and listening to children’s voices will not help us to understand these processes that are as much about adults as they are about children – we cannot understand one without understanding the other. This moves the inquiry from the modernist notions of the rational self toward a theory of becoming and intergenerational becoming. (Mannion 2007: 414–416).

The relations in early education have often been studied from the viewpoints of the developmental aspect or learning skills (Waller & Bitou 2011) and when exploring the transition from day care to preschool (Einarsdottir 2007). Recent studies on Finnish early childhood education have investigated the meanings of daycare and preschool from the viewpoints of professionals and children. There are studies about the social relationships between teachers and young children (Holkeri-Rinkinen 2009, Hännikäinen 2015, Kalliala 2011, Rainio 2010) and about relations among child groups, for instance, peer relations and bullying (Kirves & Sajaniemi 2012, Kronqvist 2004, Lehtinen 2009). Moreover, the relations in children’s daily lives have been approached through socio-spatial practices in order to focus on the practitioner’s role in structuring, defining, and implementing the spatial practices (Rutanen 2012, Vuorisalo et al. 2015). According to Vuorisalo et al. (2015: 67), while the concept of space is widely discussed in childhood geography in the context of older children and youth participation, in early childhood education research the concept of space as relational is rarely addressed.

The cooperation between home and day care – or the “parent-professional partnership” as it has recently been called – is researched through the individual educational plans (Alasuutari & Kelle 2015, Alasuutari et al. 2014), through the discussions between professionals and parents (Karila & Alasuutari 2012), and in the professional’s parlances (Kekkonen 2012). In the field of cooperation, relationally oriented studies that take into account the child’s role in cooperation are rare. In this study, this rarely researched area is viewed from a relational viewpoint. The study addresses the spontaneously formed narrative in-between spaces where children’s agency relates to the intergenerational becoming (see Mannion 2007: 416). These spaces challenge researchers to ask how they can shift the orientation toward children to listen and see their invitations (see Lanas 2013). That is, how can we/they be “built” together?
Picture 2. “Did you see? Look, I turn around quickly like this. And then the other way round.” The small, round toes are part of the flying, fluttering experience. It goes into the core of aesthetics and narration.
2 Theoretical and methodological positioning: 
Artistic, narrative, and childhood research

The theoretical and methodological basis of the study draws from three main sources: the artistic, narrative, and childhood research fields (Eaves 2014, Davies et al. 2009, Spector-Mersel 2010). The artistic, narrative, and childhood intersect the whole research journey (see Black 2011), varying from the children’s first calls to listen to their “song of drawing” (Kinnunen 2008), and this summary process. The research orientation has been interdisciplinary throughout the entire research process; the sources have not overridden each other, but instead have composed an intertwined and translucent mesh of layers. Symbolically, I describe the artistic–narrative–childhood combination as setting the meshes on the top of another. Although the construct of the mesh thickens, all of the layers are important and still visible.

Why have I wandered into these research fields? Why have they become important to this research? The question is actually relational: How do I encounter children and how do I tell others about the children’s lives? It is important to be aware and reflect on where the thoughts and modes of working with children come from (Mannion 2007, Strandell 2010). I follow Lather (1993: 675) who writes that it is not a matter of looking harder or more closely, but rather of seeing what frames our seeing.

Within these three research fields, I have been inspired by the theories that emphasize relationality as an onto-epistemological starting point. The study applies recent childhood theories that draw, for example, from the French philosopher Deleuze and the Reggio Emilia pedagogy (Davies 2014, Lenz Taguchi 2010, Moss 2014), intertwining the material and discursive reality of our lives (Lenz Taguchi 2010: 3, see also Mannion 2007). Being interested in children’s spontaneous daily narration, the meaning of aesthetics led me to explore experiencing in the light of Dewey’s (1934) and Merleau-Ponty’s (2001/2010) theories. The other important sources of inspiration include the ideas about the everyday and relational aesthetics (Kester 2004, Koh 2010, Leddy 2012). Regarding the narrative approach, I follow Caine, Estefan, and Clandinin’s (2013: 578) statement that “stories are not just a

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4 I also quote the frequently used art-based research literature because there are many inspiring thoughts on the meaning of “artistic.” However, I use the concept “artistic” instead of “art-based” since the study is not “based” on creating artworks; rather, the drawings and pictures are seen as a natural part of the children’s and my own narration processes. I might define the study as art-oriented because art has not been used only as a method.
medium of learning, development, or transformation, but also life.” This is a view that also has roots in Dewey’s philosophy. In this study, narrativity has been seen as an essential part of living, re-living, telling, and re-telling the lifeworld experiences in relational spaces (Huber et al. 2013). The experiences are continuously interactive, resulting in changes in both people and the contexts in which they interact, which is in line with how Caine et al. (2013: 576) apply Dewey’s thoughts to narrative ontology. Accordingly, the research is not seen as a direct process of transferring information from participants to the researchers; rather, knowledge is understood to be co-constructed in the narrative in-between space (Caine & Steeves 2009, Caine et al. 2013).

Focusing on children’s relational spaces challenges a narrative inquirer to shift attention from the telling or representation of stories to understanding that relationship is the key to what narrative inquirers do (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, Caine et al. 2013: 577). The relational viewpoint also sheds critical light on the research and pedagogy that focus on fulfilling the developmental goals on an individual basis (see Fulkova & Tipton 2011: 134). Furthermore, this viewpoint directs one to critically examine the debate regarding children’s voice and participation (Spyrou 2011, Wyness 2012). For example, the relational approach challenges the traditional oppositional positioning of children and adults through the new social studies of childhood and ensuing recognition of children as relational agents (see Jupp Kina 2008).

I have been greatly inspired by the a/r/tographic (artist–researcher–teacher) research that focuses not on the creation of artistic products as representations of research, but is rather concerned with the mode of searching, questing, and probing by and through the arts (Springgay 2008: 37). The recent studies in the field of art education that emphasize the visual ethnography and dialogical processes in picture-making processes also resonate with my views (e.g. Erkkilä 2012, Kankkunen 2013, Oikarinen-Jabai 2014, Kallio-Tavin 2013). Klein (2010) suggests in her article “What is Artistic Research?” that the research is artistic when it deals with the mode of artistic experience. In this study, the artistic strives for the felt knowledge in which emotional and sensory perception cannot be separated (Klein 2010: 6). Sava (1998: 110) writes that emphasizing the senses and emotions in the knowing process does not mean that rational thinking should be thrown aside; rather, senses, emotions, and thinking are twisted together. Although I do not think of the arts as a single and right way to be and know the world, I value its meaning as an important part of young children’s lives (Boldt & McArdle 2013: 7). I understand the artistic as an interstitial space that is hesitant and vulnerable, where
meanings and understandings are questioned and ruptured (Springgay 2008). Indeed, the artistic as conceived here lies both in what is usually thought of as art and also in the art of becoming; that is, of being vulnerable and open to the unknown and to the other (Davies 2009: 1). Similarly to how Hiltunen (2009: 209) describes community art, in this study, artistic is based on interaction and being together with others, and can be seen as a place for encounters (see Pääjoki 2002).

The relational approach led me to explore early childhood with lived experience and narrative in-between spaces intertwined with everyday democracy. As Moss (2014: 122) describes, “in particular, democracy can be understood as a lived experience, a practice of everyday life, a mode of being in the world.” The everyday democratic culture is a fruitful field for narrative spaces because it calls for dialogue and listening, respect for diversity and other perspectives, a readiness to contest and to negotiate, and recognition of one’s own partial knowledge (Moss 2014). Davies (2009: 4) writes that thinking outside the neoliberal framework has increased in early childhood education among several researchers, thereby enabling the framework for relationality and responsibility to self and others; it seeks to open up a new kind of flexibility, one that is not externally driven, but instead is responsive, relational, artistic, and life-giving.

I found within the fields of art, narrative, and childhood research room that allowed intertwining the emotions, dreaming, and the imagination side of thinking in being, knowing, and lingering in the messiness (see Heimonen 2012, Oikarinen-Jabai 2012, Rautio 2013). Within the mesh of artistic and narrative layers, I have wandered to the paths where children have called me to try and experience together and where informal discussions with the parents and teachers have been possible. I have learned to understand the theory and practice as decomposed or dissolved into what can be understood as interdependent powerful flows of mutual constitutive forces in constant intra-action with each other, and which are thus equally valued and necessary (Lenz Taguchi 2010: 23–24). Being a part of children’s daily relations and moving in and between the three intertwined research fields shaped the theoretical concepts toward the following theoretical starting points: shared aesthetic experience, narration as multimodal process, narrative in-between space, and aesthetics of listening. I will explore these four starting points in the next subchapters (see Figure 1).
Fig. 1. Three intertwined research fields form the base for theoretical concepts.

2.1 Shared aesthetic experience

Narrativity can be treated as the study of experience (Clandinin 2007), which has artistic and aesthetic dimensions (Clandinin & Huber 2002: 162). In this study, the meaning of aesthetics as a theoretical starting point was emphasized when carrying out research among the children; many lived situations in daily life with children opened the viewpoints for understanding aesthetics as an important source of narration processes.

Kankkunen (1999: 125) writes that many teachers and scholars argue that aesthetics in educational settings is often seen as the way to evaluate the skills of the students or to measure development. In this study, according to the origin of the word, the senses (aesthesis) are highlighted as a preliminary part of a holistic knowing process from the beginning of life (von Bonsdorff 2009, Naukkariinen 2011: 240). The aesthetic experiences happen in the daily activities, interactions, and narrations where both children and adults become learners (Kinnunen et al. In press). Following von Bonsdorff (2009), the view of aesthetics is perceived as one way of being in relation and knowing the world, containing the variations of embodiment, senses, thinking, language, and imagination. This refers to Merleau-
Ponty’s (2001/2010) thoughts regarding how our observations and understanding are built from unity: we experience the world comprehensively using our many senses.

Clough (2002) argues that an aesthetic attending is the way of being in the world. Similarly Dewey (1934) argues that aesthetics belongs to our daily life and is an inseparable component of the human experience. Aesthetics is not, according to Clough (2002), a special or a marginal case peculiar to artists, but rather is common for all human beings throughout our lives since we encounter the world through the senses (see also Dewey 1934, Kankkunen 1999, Koivunen 1998). Thus, Nutbrown (2011) explains, the youngest of human beings engage with the world first through an innate aesthetic attending through their senses: they seek the oral satisfaction of the breast, the physical comfort of touch, their mother’s voice, her smile, her smell. We are open to sensory exploration of everything we encounter (Nutbrown 2011). Everyday aesthetic experience is not only about the fine arts but also about daily life in the home and other contexts. However, the aesthetics of art and everyday aesthetics are not separated from each other; rather, art is based on, or inspired by, everyday aesthetic experience and vice versa (see Leddy 2005: 3–4).

This study focuses on aesthetics based on relational viewpoints: experiences are narrated in relation to the human and non-human world. The aesthetic experience is emphasized to be moving between active and passive experiencing (Dewey 1934, Merleau-Ponty 2001/2010), containing both personal and social aspects (Dewey 1934). Concerning the active and passive experiencing, Sava (1998: 111) reminds us that experiencing by doing is as important as sensuous and emotional perceiving. As Dewey (1934: 19) explains, the experience “signifies active and alert commerce with the world.” Dewey (1934) theorizes the key terms “personal,” “social,” “temporal,” and “situational” to describe characteristics of experience based on his principles of interaction and continuity. Dewey (1934: 117) argues that personal growth can only occur in the context of shared experience, and best of all in the democratic community: “People are individuals and need to be understood as such, but they cannot be understood only as individuals. They are always in relation, always in a social context.”

Springgay (2008: 156) interprets Merleau-Ponty’s (1968) theory that locates the body as an expressive space through which the world is experienced. In Merleau-Ponty’s theories of intersubjectivity, each body/subject participates with other body/subjects, commingling and interpenetrating each other. Rather than understanding self and other as oppositional, intersubjectivity appears to be
reciprocal. One is always already both self and other at the same time. Being with constitutes the fabric of everyday life and the ethical encounter. Through bodied encounters, body/subjects create lived experiences together and nurture one another’s ethical relationality. (Springgay 2008: 156).

Vecchi (2010) writes about how aesthetics can affect relational ethics; aesthetics is caring and acknowledging the attention to the things we do. She summarizes the importance of acknowledging aesthetics from a relational viewpoint by arguing that aesthetics is searching the meanings, curiosity, and wondering; it is the opposite of neglect, of a demand of congruence, and of unparticipating (Vecchi 2010: 5). The view of aesthetics as a basis for being and experiencing supports the knowledge that is not based solely on informative and categorized knowledge. Exploring the relational lives and narration would be different if ignoring aesthetics; in this case the embodied, the imagination, and the senses would be ignored. The nature of aesthetic experience challenges researchers to go beyond pure linguistic modes of narration toward multimodality.

2.2 Narration as a multimodal process

Similarly, just as the arts are a part of our everyday life, narrativity is just like “life itself” (Barthes 1982: 79). This study prefers the view that we are born and live in a story-shaped world, in which our challenge is to make sense of ourselves and the world around us (e.g. Puroila 2013). Bruner (1987: 11) refers to the meaning of narratives as “life making.” In this study, the little daily narration moments emerged as important anchors that have sparked many unexpected insights in the midst of exploration. The recent orientation in narrative research values these little daily narrative moments as important for understanding and structuring life (Puroila 2013, Puroila et al. 2012) in time, space, and culture (see Clandinin & Huber In press). The emphasis of the relations, context, and process of narration (Gubrium & Holstein 2008) demands examining how the narrations affect the interlocutors’ life. Although the narration in relationships can be understood as an integrative process (see Article III) the other interlocutors can also be overridden through the narratives. The narration can be a strengthening source but it can also hurt and complicate the others’ lives (Abbot 2002: 11). Therefore, what kinds of narration spaces are created and what these spaces do is not insignificant.

In the beginning, under children’s spontaneous drawing processes, I pondered the following: How should I understand the nature of narration? How would the children’s multimodal stories be situated in the narrative research field? The
children’s narratives were not just fluent visual products or nicely told fairy tales; rather, they included a lot of different ways of narration, containing colors, dots, lines, moving, singing, whispering, and silent reflection. Later, similar questions were asked as the children took photographs. The children’s visual narratives did not follow the logical patterns of having a beginning and an end; instead, the narratives included happy jumps from one issue to another. During photography, there was no single teller who decided the plot of the story; instead, there were many tellers going in many directions. Therefore, in this study the narratives are considered as “moments lived together” (Viljamaa et al. 2013: 86) where the narratives grow between the interlocutors (Caine et al. 2013). Children’s narration is understood as a multimodal process intertwining words, play, action, body language, gestures, and visual language (Puroila et al. 2012).

The multimodal narration equals the arts. It is like artistic narration (Sava & Bardy 2002: 5) interrupting the linear verbal narrative and inviting the narrator into a hyphenated space (see Pratt 2009). The children’s holistic involvement in life and their multimodal narratives encouraged me to broaden the study toward the artistic field. I strongly felt I was in the middle of arts when the children asked me to follow the play of little dots accompanied with singing, to wonder at the “flash bombs” when taking a photograph while facing a mirror, or to read their vivid story booklets with them. This showed me how the arts and narratives are naturally intertwined in children’s knowledge process.

The narrative research with children is a quite new phenomenon and has mainly emphasized linguistic orientation because of its roots. The focus has been on children’s oral or written narratives and thus other ways of narrating are often ignored. (Puroila et al. 2012). Further, the emphasis has been on children’s linguistic skills and developmental aspects (Engel & Li 2008, Morrow 2008, Worth 2008). Some researchers supposed that young children cannot produce logical verbal narratives before the age of three or four (see Stadler & Ward 2005). Also, in visual studies, exploring the drawings or photographs as narratives was long underestimated (Anning & Ring 2004: 5). However, as many researchers state nowadays, narration occurs not only through verbal or written words, but also through visual and embodied means (Faulkner & Coates 2011, Pimlott-Wilson 2012). Children’s being includes a lot of expressions that are not primarily verbal; they play and do, draw and craft, and are on the move a lot (Viljamaa et al. 2013: 88). Prosser and Burke (2008) suggest that words can be the domain of adult researchers and are therefore disempowering to young children. Instead, they argue that images and the mode of image production are central to children’s culture from
a very early age and therefore provide an empowering means of conducting research with children (Prosser & Burke 2008). Still, how to listen to young children in research presents challenges (Johansson 2011) and needs to be debated in terms of the practices which maintain silencing or policies that override children’s lives (Jones 2009: 6). Faulkner and Coates (2011: 7) write that narratives can strengthen the collaboration if the communication is extended far beyond the verbal to include visual and non-verbal expression.

In this study, visual narrations, the drawing activity, and photography played a significant role as a part of children’s multimodal narration. During the research, it became important to pay attention to the multimodality because the participants were young and also because some of them were not native Finnish speakers.

Traditionally, pictures and drawings have been used as a method to collect knowledge in line with the researcher’s aims (see Thompson 1999: 158). Recently, the researcher’s attention has been shifting away from the product toward the context and to the processes of meaning-making (Anning & Ring 2004, MacDonald 2009, Setälä 2012, Wright 2011). Although the role of the process is highlighted, the meaning of the picture or drawing is also valued. When understanding the pictures narratively, the picture is not a representation of the world, but rather a visible part of experiencing, living, and constructing processes (see Bruner 1990, Merleau-Ponty 2001/2010). According to Von Bonsdorff’s (2009: 10) interpretation of Merleau-Ponty, the adult is in front of the picture, but the child lives in the picture. Photography and drawing bring a unique and relatively permanent character into the narration, and hence into the narrative in-between spaces (see Papandreou 2014: 92), which allows children to re-tell, re-live, and re-construct their narratives.

Exploring the narration from the process point of view opens up the importance of multimodality and thus reveals, for example, that a drawing or a photograph can be a multisensory journey (Pyyry 2012, see also Article I, Article II). Because the aesthetic experience involves many senses, it cannot always be narrated verbally (see Engel 2006). Hakkola and Virsu (2000) write how music, movements, and pictures entertain the personality and form non-verbal thinking when the verbal narration is yet to come. They argue that children challenge us to communicate in areas where their sensitivity is supreme in relation to adults.
2.3 Narrative in-between space < – > aesthetics of listening

Jupp (2008) argues that it is important to remember the value of everyday, relational interactions and feelings as constitutive of spaces of participation. This is supported by Kraftl and Horton’s (2007) suggestion that participation is a sense or feeling that can emerge out of relatively ordinary situations. These views encourage educators to think of children’s participation as something that needs to happen in meaningful relational spaces rather than in separately organized projects. In this study, the view that the basis for democratic participation is constructed in daily life, where the knowledge is recognized as inevitably relational, partial, and co-constructed, is valued (Haraway 1991). Referring to Bae (2009: 349), I agree that the participation is delineated based on how children’s modes of communication are recognized and how children are allowed freedom of expression in spontaneous everyday processes.

In this study, the narrative in-between space and the aesthetics of listening are the most crucial to conceptualize children’s relations (Caine et al. 2013, Koh 2010, Kester 2004). Caine’s (2007) conception of in-between space refers to a situation in which narration provides a space that lies in between the researchers and participants and where lives are unfolding in relation to each other (see also Caine et al. 2013). It is through relationships that it becomes possible for both researchers and participants to co-compose new lives (Huber et al. 2013: 220). It is something that Davies (2014) calls intra-actively becoming a subject where the self is re-conceptualized as an emergent, relational being.

Through attending to the narrative in-between spaces, possibilities arise for both profound change and for discovering new ways of knowing and understanding. In the narrative in-between spaces people ask one another who we are and not what we are. These in-between spaces are filled with uncertainty and indeterminacy. They are places of liminality, the betwixts and betweens, which Caine et al. (2013: 580) argue require attention in terms of context(s), relationship(s), and time to explore narratively.

Although this study highlights the social dimensions of the narrative in-between space, the significance of the physical and material environment is not ignored. In this study, particularly the papers and pens, the cameras, and the story booklets as well as the buildings, walls, furniture, decorations, and the material items formed an active and inseparable part of the experience and narration process (see Kuntz, 2010). This means that the discourse is immanent to the material and the material is immanent to the discursive, including the discourses, things, matter, and organisms, since they are always in a relationship of intra-action and
interconnection and are mutually constitutive. Materials and artefacts are to be understood as materialized ideas of knowledge and learning as well as active performative agents in a simultaneously ongoing process of change in societal notions and discourses. (Lenz Taguchi 2010: 22, 29–30).

The narrative in-between space is not only for narrating but is closely intertwined to listening. In this study, I apply the artist Koh’s (2010) thoughts on the aesthetics of listening. The aesthetic listening recalls emergent listening, which means being open to being affected by the other’s narration and the uniqueness of each narration situation (Bronwyn 2014: 21, 32, Rinaldi 2006: 114). According to Koh, listening always starts with an open space; there must be a period of openness, of non-action, of learning, and of listening. He argues that the art practice must begin with an attempt to understand as thoroughly as possible the specific conditions and nuances of a given site. (Kester 2004: 106). Connecting Koh’s thoughts with the concept of narrative in-between space, the listening cannot be spurious receiving; rather, it must involve giving time to the other person and being interested in the other’s life and the context where the stories are told (see Koh 2010).

Koh (2010) criticizes the dominance of the logocentric culture that prioritizes articulation and suppresses the role of listening. Quoting Fiumara (1990), he argues that without allowing listening to become an integral component of dialogical knowledge, speaking may have the tendency to acquire a despotic nature (Koh 2010). Fiumara, however, refuses to surrender the concept of dialogue entirely; instead, she argues that we must begin to acknowledge the long-suppressed role of listening as a creative practice. For Koh (2010: 3), listening is more than being receptive to the articulation and content; rather, it also extends to being sensitive to body language, i.e. “the posture of the body and micro expressions that embody non-verbal communication, emotional signs that can denote discomfort, irritation and suppression of certain feelings.”
Picture 3. Thoughts. Can you help but stop? Stop by her side and share thoughts of life. Together seek for something as yet incomprehensible.
Picture 4. Seekers.
Picture 5. In between.
3 Research process – Travelling between home and day care

The study was conducted with children, parents, and day care staff in the two settings of home and day care as well as between them (see Figure 2). Both of these contexts have been places for generating the material, but also present important issues regarding young children’s spontaneous narrations. The research started from the home context in 2006 when I became enchanted by my children’s drawing processes, which happened to also be the same time when I was looking for the topic for my Master’s thesis in educational sciences. I intertwined these two issues; following the drawing situations as a mother in a home context deepened and enlarged it into a subject of study. In 2009, my research interest moved from a home context to a Finnish day care center context in order to do a narrative ethnography (Gubrium & Holstein 2008) and photography project among the day care children as a part of the TelLis project. Both contexts of children’s daily life have been more or less present in the whole study process; at home I heard a lot of stories from day care from my children and in day care centers I received plenty of glimpses into the homes of the children. Based on these processes in home and day care contexts, I carried out a story booklet project in the spring of 2011 that was placed in both home and day care centers, primarily concerning the cooperation practice between these contexts. Throughout the study, I followed the idea that children bear their whole life history with them everywhere (Lämsä et al. 2012).
3.1 Participants – Chorus of voices

As previously mentioned, seeking children’s voices is emphasized in the contemporary childhood research. The voice has been lifted up as authentically as possible in order to reveal what children want to say about certain things. This has
been partly a good thing as it constitutes an important and genuine attempt to include children in the knowledge production processes where previously their experiences have been marginalized or absent (Lomax 2012: 106). However, on the other hand, several researchers have criticized that the trend of including only children and their voices has meant isolating children from their contexts and relations (Lomax 2012, Mannion 2007, Spyrou 2011, Wyness 2012). The meaning of children’s participation is not that they alone would be the decision-makers; rather, an interactional relationship between children and adults is needed (see Hart 1997: 40). According to Hart (1997), children would like to work in their projects side by side with adults. He argues that this should be the aim of every educational community (Hart 1997: 42, 111). In recent narrative research, the importance of understanding the context and relations where the stories are told is emphasized (Striano 2012).

The children’s narration processes beat at the heart of this study. I feel lucky to have been able to encounter all these children who have taught me many things about researching and being in life. At the same time, this study highlights that children have not narrated alone but in relation to many different voices and spaces. In addition, the children were not a group of children who narrated via one language of childhood; rather, they were like a polyphonic choir with many kinds of nuances and tones. The narratives were produced by multiple disunified subjectivities rather than singular agentic storytellers and hearers (Squire et al. 2008: 3 quoted in Gannon 2009: 76). Similarly, Lomax (2012: 115) challenges the view of a singular “children’s voice” and suggests that creative research with children generates multiple voices and experiences that are negotiated in and through the research process and which researchers must be attentive to. Consequently, I have regarded listening to the voices around children as significant. There is an important place for adults in children’s daily life (see Boldt & McArdle 2013: 13). I think that it is also necessary for those who live with children to reflect on how it feels when pausing to listen to and narrate with children (see Article IV). According to Mannion (2007: 417), “we need to understand how our research places and spaces for children’s lives are co-constructed by the actions of key adults because child-adult relations and spatial practices are so central in deciding which children’s voices get heard, what they can legitimately speak about and what difference it makes to who we are as adults and children.”

In this study, acknowledging the relational viewpoint of children’s narration processes means the following things. First, in addition to the children’s voices, the study includes the voices that form the children’s daily life in a concrete way,
including parents’, siblings’, grandparents’, teachers’, and nurses’ voices, as well as my voice as a mother and a researcher. Second, the children’s voices resonate with the multiple voices around them. Every child’s voice, like every other interlocutor’s voice in the study, echoes their social and cultural contexts in addition to their personal life history (Clandinin & Huber 2002: 161).

In the beginning of my research process, I wrote how I wanted my children’s stories to be very much their “own stories” until I realized I was listening through them to their peers and teachers, the cashier of our corner store, and not least, the mother-researcher’s voice. When the older child started to carry out her own research next to me, the manner in which relationships are intertwined to our narration became concrete (see Ring 2006). I have also been there in the other research materials, interacting with children and other interlocutors. Every narrative is understood as always already shaped by the available social stories and discursive possibilities in the particular time, place, and social context within which a story is told or written (Squire et al. 2008). All this considering the meaning of different voices leads me to ask again: How do we listen to the different voices in research? Do we pause to listen to how the individuals are heard? Do we concentrate on how the cultural and social aspects could return in the narratives? Or do we ask what is happening simultaneously to us?

Maria and Anna\footnote{All names of children and child groups are pseudonyms.}

In the first research material (see Article I), the co-narrators were my own children, Maria (1.5 years) and Anna (3 years). When I started the study, we lived in a small rented apartment in a Finnish city. The children’s life underwent a couple of big changes during the research process. First, the children started day care because I went to school and my husband worked. Second, they got a little sister in the middle of the material collection process. The children narrated about these changes a lot in their drawing processes. They drew a lot together. Their favorite places for narrating were on the floor of the living room or around the kitchen table. During the drawing situations, the whole family was largely at home. Naturally, the situations were not limited only to drawing but included cutting, painting, and playing with the materials.
Raindrops and Violets

In the second phase of this study, the participants were two child groups, the Raindrops and the Violets. The groups were located in two different Finnish day care centers. The groups included 43 children from 3 to 7 years of age. In both groups, the daily schedule was structured by educator-initiated activities that were common for all the children (see Puroila et al. 2012, Venninen et al. 2014). For instance, all the children were expected to participate in meals, nap time, adult-directed group activities, and outdoor activities together. There were differences in the pedagogical culture of the two groups. While most of the children’s activities were organized on a whole group basis in one of the groups, there was more space for child-initiated activities, such as free play, in the other group.

Primulas with their teacher and parents

Primulas, a Finnish pre-school group with 12 children, their teacher, and parents were the participants in the third phase of my study, the story booklet project. During the project, there were also a couple of trainers in the group. In the fourth article (IV), I pictured the project through the case of concentrating closely on Venla’s (6 years), her mother’s, her father’s, and the teacher’s narratives. The teacher was very eager to start the project with the children. She described how she had thought of the need to look at the cooperation between home and the day care center from a different point of view beyond just the individual preschool plans. The preschool group was located in the day care environment⁶. The children’s day consisted of circle times, free play situations, lunch time, a gym session, and outdoor activities. The cooperation between home and day care was based on the parent-teacher meetings. Also, the children had a notebook in their bags in order to transfer the information papers from day care to home.

3.2 Material generation processes

The study consists of three different material generation processes in three different contexts: 1) the context of drawing stories at home; 2) the context of a narrative

⁶ In Finland, the term “preschool” as an administrative and pedagogical term refers to programs serving only 6-year-olds during the year preceding their entry into compulsory education (Niikko 2006, 134). Preschools can be located in day care or public school facilities.
ethnographic study in day care, including drawing situations and a photography project; and 3) a story booklet project in a pre-school group.

In this chapter, I describe the study design through the material generation processes; i.e. how the next step was inspired by and intertwined with the previous one. What is common to all of these materials is that they contain stories from home and day care contexts with an emphasis on situations that were formed spontaneously from the child’s initiative. In all materials, children’s narration is understood as a multimodal process, although some narrations included more visual elements than others. In most processes, the consent for the study has been asked from the children, parents, day care staff, and the director of early childhood education at the municipal level, except the study at home with my own children where the consent was not formal.

As highlighted in childhood studies, all the sub-studies contained continuous sensitivity in listening to children’s willingness to participate, which meant valuing the children’s best interest and well-being in every situation. I was an ethnographer in the drawing story situations and during the generation of photography (see Gubrium & Holstain 2008). In the story booklet project, the teacher and the parents collected the narrations and my role was to visit the child group three times and to engage in discussion with the parents and the teacher after the project.

The first material generation process concerning the spontaneous drawing situations was conducted at home with my children Anna and Maria. The children asked me to come and look at their important issues while they were drawing, which created a starting point for this study. I began to hang around their spontaneous drawing situations, which inspired the children and thus increased the amount of drawing situations. I saved/recorded the stories and children’s utterances and embodiment mainly in my research diary. I wrote down the happenings from the time the children asked me to come and look at their drawings until their drawing situation was finished. The notes in the research diary contain the dialogue as well as my comments and notions about the feelings and doings of the life before, within, and after the situation. In addition, 12 situations were partly video-recorded and photographed. Throughout the course of one year (2006–2007), around 42 documented drawing situations were accumulated, of which 49 transcribed narrations are separated and renamed according to the key content for further analysis.

The study continued when I was asked to participate in a research project (TelLis). This material generation process was carried out in two child groups in a day care center context. During the autumn of 2009, I collected the material with
three other researchers from our group, Anna-Maija Puroila, Eila Estola, and Leena Syrjälä. We collected the material with tape recorders and research diaries. My intention, inspired by the drawing stories, was to be with the children in their spontaneous narration situations, especially when they were drawing. When possible, I participated in the children’s free drawing situations. Sometimes, I asked if I could go and look at what they were doing, but mostly they came to show me their pictures, asked me to look at their work, or asked me to join in to draw something with them. In these situations I had only the research diary with me. To my surprise, during that time I spent in day care as an ethnographer, there were no adults in any of the free drawing situations. I was in 11 situations where the children drew 19 pictures.

In the beginning of spring 2010, the study continued in the same child groups by carrying out a photography project with Anna-Maija. In this project, the children were able to take pictures of their daily life in day care. The children took photographs in pairs. Through this process, they were able to “cross the borders” with the researchers; they could skip nap time and go into places where they usually had no permission to go. The photography processes were tape-recorded. The number of images was not limited since digital cameras were used. During the photography process, our participation and role as researchers varied between listener and co-narrator. We went with the children to different places in the day care center and talked with them about and around pictures. The children taught us to look, wonder, and explore their daily lives. They asked us to join in their narration. Immediately after the photography, we discussed the pictures with the children when they had an opportunity to look, narrate, and choose their favorite pictures. After the project, some of the children also discussed the pictures at home with their parents and an exhibition of their favorite pictures was arranged in day care. At the end of the project, the documented research material had increased with 2,398 images, transcribed audio recordings of photography processes, picture-viewing situations (393 pages), and research diaries.

At the same time as the ethnographic study, my interest was focused on the child’s position in the cooperation between home and day care. However, I hesitated to plan a project because of the public discussion around hurry and stress in recent day care practices (Karila & Kupila 2010). Luckily, in the spring of 2011 a preschool teacher who I had told about my plans was curious about the study. She organized the study in practice and gave a booklet to every child for stories to be collected at home. She carried two booklets with her: one booklet for the spontaneous situations and the other for the group situations in which the children
had space for free talk together. Once a week, the teacher collected the children’s own booklets and copied and pasted the stories from her booklets to the children’s booklets.

I visited the child group three times over a period of four months. I got to know the children in the group by hanging around in their daily life; I participated in a gym session, went to lunch with them, participated in a fairy-tale situation and outdoor play, chatted with them during free play time, and read their story booklets with them. Six parents of 12 children participated actively in the project by storing the narratives at home. At the end of the project, I discussed the project with the teacher and four parents of three children in free-form situations. The research material consists of the children’s spontaneous stories (72 pages). The children’s narrations were mainly written by adults, but there were also some children’s drawings (6 pieces). In addition, the material includes three discussions about transcribed situations with parents and the teacher (55 pages) and the researcher’s diary. The nature of this project was not a reflection of the prevailing practices, but rather can be described as a diffractive approach (Davies 2014); the teacher, the parents, and the children changed their cooperation practices by using the story booklets and co-constructing the knowledge together.

After these three material generation processes, the material can be described as a variegated set of narration processes consisting of a countable amount of documented narrations, including children’s spontaneous drawing stories, drawings, photographs, recorded photography processes and picture-viewing situations, story booklets, the research diaries, and recorded discussions with the parents and teacher (see Figure 2). Yet, the research material seems to be “much more than a containable and controllable object of research” (Koro-Ljunberg & MacLure 2013: 220). In addition to this documented material, I see that all the lived spontaneous narration situations in every encounter with children, colleagues, and other adults during the whole research process are like uncountable research material that has affected the design and interpretations of the research. Furthermore, the different experiences and encounters in many partnerships with our children’s early childhood educators are part of my research material and have especially affected the reading processes. Indeed, these have all led me to think of the material as living stuff that may “manifest as an event in which data, theories, writing, thinking, research, researchers, participants, past, future, present, and body-mind-material are entangled and inseparable” (Koro-Ljunberg et al. In press).
3.3 Searching presence as an analytical metaphor

The living nature of the research material, combined with concretely living and growing with the material, has also affected and changed the way I think about the analysis process (see Koro-Ljungberg & MacLure 2013, Lieblich 2014). The ontological commitment of a narrative inquirer shapes each stage of the study (Caine et al. 2013) when being in the midst of the stories also refers to the analysis. In this study, the analysis was intertwined with all phases of the research process and understood simultaneously as being in, reading, and doing the research. The common, supporting, and cross-sectional point for these processes has been the implementation of the metaphor *searching presence* (see Olkkonen & Turpeinen, 2010: 74), which has also been the leading ethical atmosphere for carrying out the caring ethics with young children. In the following subchapters, I will describe how the searching presence was seen in order to be in, read, and do the study.

3.3.1 Being in

How did I become a researcher in the different phases of being in the research process? What kind of process has this research been? During each material generation process, I have had no completely clear plans regarding what was going to happen. In every phase, I went along with the participants and started to wonder what I would encounter. My position has been questioned and defined in different social and contextual relations; I have been alternately far from and very near to the participants’ lives. My roles as a mother, researcher, and adult interlocutor have occasionally merged into each other, intertwining over time. However, the way of being has not always been easy to bear at home nor in the day care center where my role sometimes resembled an undefined adulthood and sometimes motherhood or friendship. In the middle of navigating the research process, the metaphor of searching presence began to form a way of being in the study. It has meant being unhurried and applying research practices in which listening played a big role in the process. I closely connect the meaning of this metaphor with understanding the research as living inquiry (Springgay 2008).

Caine et al. (2013: 576) remind us that as we consider our research puzzles we draw upon our own experiences, which orient us to the inquiry. In the beginning, intensively spending time with the children as a mother – “living with stories,” as Clandinin and Huber (In press: 6) write – and at the same time studying the visual arts has affected the following encounters in my research journey in many ways.
For example, it shaped my being as a researcher from an outside observer toward a more dialogical way of being and further co-composing in research (Clandinin & Huber In press, see also Kallio-Tavin 2013). When mere observation is at the heart of the research process, children might continue to be colonized because “we have created them as psychological beings whose worlds we (as adults) can define, explain, and know” (Cannella & Viruru 2004: 79).

Being in the research meant being with others’ bodies, including touching, encountering, and being exposed (see Nancy 1996/2000). I tried to proceed by waiting and listening to what could be important to participants in different moments. I felt it was important not to hurry when doing research with children. However, I occasionally had the uncomfortable feeling that I was not researching at all if I was just looking for the direction through listening. MacRae (2013: 61) explains that sometimes the “not knowing” can lead to a productive relationship with children. When we do not know, the situation allows us to stumble on things that might feel as though they are relevant. Viljamaa (2012) writes that to the adults, educators, or researchers, the unknowing and un-explanation, the kind of un-understanding, is a much more difficult state than knowing. For example, we would like to explain things to the child. However, if we do not understand too fast and well, it might enable us to be even more interested in the child’s life. (Viljamaa 2012: 203–207). It is kind of a paradox that just staying in uncertainty and a lack of explanation can give space to the other’s specialty (Viljamaa & Kinnunen In press). MacLure (2013: 228) observes that it is being between knowing and unknowing that prevents wonder from being wholly contained or recuperated as knowledge and thus affords an opening onto the new.

### 3.3.2 Reading

The inspiration of searching presence has directed the interpretation toward staying holistically with the material and giving time and space to the narratives. It has been moving between the material and the memories of encounters in the field. The process has been similar to what Lieblich (2014: 115) calls “reading with the heart”; the stories were read holistically through following “gut feelings” rather than categorizing and removing narratives down to fractions. I felt that instead of creating, collecting, and documenting the data, I encountered it. I have recognized the disjointed and unfinished qualities of the material and its capacities to exceed our expectations and prompt new thoughts (see Koro-Ljunberg & MacLure 2013: 220). Every moving narration situation in which I followed “gut feeling” made it
possible to look at the whole material and other things differently (see Figure 3). For example, when reading the photography material, there was a touching moment with a six-year-old child named Iida (when she said, “If my sister was here, I’d take a photo of her”) that got me to look at the whole material in a new way and directed the process toward new choices. In that situation, I felt that sometimes it is necessary to pass over the other functions and just be there for the other (see Koutaniemi 2014). Moreover, these kinds of situations made me reflect on the implementation of the project (see Article III).

Fig. 3. The composition of the reading process.

In this study, every reading process contained co-composing when being in the field. Examples include the children choosing their favorite photographs, the children reading with me and the parents, and the teacher reflecting on the children’s story booklets. However, I have continued to make the choices, to follow the intentions, and to choose the theoretical lenses; it is like re-telling how the shared experiences and co-constructed knowledge have affected me as a researcher and how I have affected it. After all, I take responsibility for all narratives that I re-tell about the others’ lives. My interpretations might differ from the experiences of the participants. It is important to carefully and sensitively ponder how to re-tell so that the interpretations do not shadow the sun of the participants (see Viljamaa et al. 2013).

At times, I felt I was filling the gaps (Abbot 2002) and over- or under-interpreting the narrations. However, I see that people are always living with others instead of knowing others’ minds. As Abbot (2002) reminds us, all interpretation involves some level of creativity in the sense that we all are active collaborators in
making meaning out of narrative. In reading, viewing, or listening to any narrative, we are at once taking in and adding, tracing, and shaping. To tell a story is to try to understand it. (Abbot 2002: 101–102). The most important thing is what is experienced and made together in the narrative in-between spaces; I re-tell through my lifeworld but I am deeply impressed through the common narrative in-between spaces. Each story is always partial and contextual and offers new possibilities as the stories are retold (Caine et al. 2013: 577).

When continuing the reading process for this summary, my interest in children’s relations through narration increased. I started to ponder how the spontaneous situations were particular in children’s daily lives—or were they? My interest in the possibilities of multimodal narration in educational practices made me think about the stories from the relational viewpoint. I started with reading the findings of each article holistically and underlined in different colors how the articles related to relationality (Lieblich 2014). After this, I read through the materials and wandered again back and forth between the research texts and the memories of the encounters with the participants. Again, I found it important to find time for empathizing with participants’ lives (Lieblich 2014). The process was like seeing and then seeing again as a way to peel back the layers that obscured my memory of the time spent with participants, acknowledging that each layer mixed with the other (see Donald 2004).

### 3.3.3 Doing

Since I was a child, I have expressed my thoughts and emotions through visual arts. Later on, I began to include multiple art studies (art history and visual arts) as an important and irremovable part of my other academic studies. While writing this summary, researching by doing started to play an important role. I had a feeling I had to do something concrete; I joined the things and wonderings in lines. I brought big papers to my table where I sketched with pencils. I started to draw when I got stuck with writing the text. I teased out onto the papers the emotions, thoughts, and intentions of the experiences that arose during the reading process. In those papers, the many layers and signs of time and space are saved; the papers have been on the table, wall, and floor, and they have wandered with me in my bag between the university and home. During the process, more sketches, words, and visions have been added to them and these papers can thus be thought of as my research diary (see Kankkunen 2013).
In addition to these sketching papers, doing the study through pictures continued at home with my children throughout last spring in 2015. Sometimes I felt I needed to sit down on the floor next to the children in order to draw together the moments of daily life and the imaginations, thoughts, and emotions. We drew some pictures together on the same paper (see Pictures 9, 10) and others separately (see Pictures 1–8, 11, 12). One picture (see Picture 11) was made by the child in her day care place, while another was made earlier at home in 2011 (see Picture 8). These pictures greatly inspired me to do this study when the children came to show these important pictures to me.

I continued to work with some of our/my drawings through the graphic arts. The understandings came partly through my hands in motion – creating drawings or writing narratives – which helped me to go further and achieve deeper understandings over time (Sameshima 2008: 49). By doing, I wandered back in the materials and encounters and got some ideas for the streams of thought. For me, living in inquiry was similar to what Sameshima (2008: 49) describes: “situating and accepting self as a continuous burgeoning being.” I think of the pictures as living events instead of considering them as a symbolic form of the research process (see Kontturi & Tiainen 2007: 16). The pictures do not have traditional complementary roles as mere illustrations or supplements to a written text. Instead, they disrupt or interrupt the smooth progress or logical representation of data, an argument, or point of view. Images are not used to represent, but instead to energize and mobilize; maybe even to hail data. (Koro-Ljungberg & MacLure 2013: 221).

The poetic writing in this study became an interpreter between the pictures and the academic writing, often done in the situations of confusion and silence. Saarinen (2003: 153) writes that interpretations and meanings are both created and shared through poems. She explains that they give space for breathing, thinking, and emotions and bring the reader into the text instead of alienating her. Both the pictures and poems intertwine and crystallize many inspirations and thoughts from the theories and practices (see Oikarinen-Jabai 2012: 61). I found that the methodology interfaces art and scholarly writing not as descriptions of each other, but as an exposure of meaning, pointing toward possibilities that are yet unnamed. Neither is subordinate to the other; rather, they operate simultaneously as inter-textual elements that are often in tension with each other. (Springgay 2008) At the end of the reading process, I find that my feelings are similar to Caine’s (2013: 578) evocative description of a landscape from the past:
But even though I am not there, fragments of this story have traveled with me across continents, through time, serving as a constant reminder that we are our stories, and our stories are what we need to learn, to live … Today, I live and see the world and my work through a lens that compels questions about how our stories shape us, and our relationship with the world in which we live.
4 A description of the articles

In this chapter, I describe the main viewpoints of the original articles.

4.1 Article I: Feeling, wondering, sharing and constructing life: Aesthetic experience and life changes in young children’s drawing stories

Article I discusses young children’s spontaneous narration processes in the drawing situations in a home context during a period of close to one year. In this study the participants, two young children named Maria (1.5 years) and Anna (3 years), were my own children. In the article, the children’s narration is reflected especially in relation to the aesthetic experience and life changes. In addition, the ethical challenges of the research methodology are considered through the challenges that the familiarity presents. The research questions for exploring the spontaneous narration in the home context were as follows: 1) How do the two young girls narrate aesthetic experiences through drawing stories? 2) How do the two young girls narrate change in their lives through drawing stories?

The analysis was composed of two phases: 1) emphatic reading and holistic analysis of the structure, the content, and the children’s involvement in drawing; and 2) re-reading the material through the issues that repeatedly emerged from the research material, i.e. aesthetic experience and change in life.

The article highlights the importance of taking young children’s holistic and embodied way of living into account. It emphasizes that young children’s aesthetic experience, often arising in action, is a vital part of their construction of knowledge. The article also points out the role of experiencing together.

The results underline the value of young children’s drawing stories and illustrate how this activity provides children with many different ways to narrate their emotional and multi-sensuous experiences, to explore the surrounding world, and prepare for life changes. Hence, the findings highlight the power of listening to multimodal narration as an essential part of children’s well-being and the importance of sharing the experiences of drawing stories. Through multimodal narrations, including the process and form of narration, children not only express their lives, but also construct them. Methodologically and theoretically, this study points out the importance of listening to children’s multimodal narrating as a tool for understanding young children’s processes of responding to life changes and for enabling their voices in supportive ways.
4.2 Article II: Kato papukaija! Spontaanit piirustushetket lapsen ja tutkijan kohtaamisen ja tiedonrakentumisen tilana

In this article, the target of the inspection is the meaning of the drawing situations and the narration within them in a day care context, especially from the viewpoint of the knowledge construction. In addition, the ethical challenges related to the research method are discussed. In the core of the study, there are the encounters between the children and the researcher during spontaneous drawing. The research question is as follows: What kind of encounters and knowledge production was created between the children and the researcher in the day care center context?

The theoretical and methodological basis of the article is in visual narrative research. The children’s drawing situations are approached as a narrative process where the “song of the drawings,” the aesthetic experiencing, and multimodal narrating while drawing is highlighted. The article challenges the traditional use of children’s drawings as ready products of a certain researcher’s subject. The material, i.e. children’s spontaneous drawing situations, was analyzed holistically through emphatic reading and “searching presence.”

The findings highlight that valuable knowledge about children’s current important matters was formed during spontaneous drawing situations. The drawing situation was a chance to make the reciprocal acquaintance with children, to give time to children’s multimodal narration, and to wonder about life together. It was also a valuable way to keep in touch with young children or with children who had no common language. During the drawing, the most important thing was not the words, but rather encountering and finding each other; sharing thoughts and emotions generated the interlocutors’ confidence for the feeling of being for the other in that moment.

Taking the spontaneous drawing as a part of the research and pedagogic practice enables the narration that arises from children’s intentions and encourages meeting children holistically, not only as a skillful and developing performer. The results of this article challenge the adults to consider how children’s drawing is treated in different phases of the research process and also in the pedagogical culture in children’s daily life.
4.3 Article III: ‘If my sister was here’ – The narrative in-between space in young children’s photography process

This article explores a photography project that was implemented with two groups of children in Finnish day care centers. The aim of the project was to learn about children’s daily life experiences in day care. Based on the premises of recent narrative research with children, the children’s photography process was approached in terms of multimodal narration. The question in this article is as follows: What kind of narrative space is formed for young children during the photography process?

The theoretical and methodological choices were based on two sources: art-based and narrative approaches. The research material consisted of photographs, observations from the photography process, and narratives around the pictures. The holistic analysis was inspired by the analytical metaphor of the searching presence. Applied to this study, this means staying holistically with the material and giving time and space to the narratives rather than categorizing and removing them. While reading the material I recognized that the outcomes (the photos) were not the most important part of the study; the entire photography process had offered many rich encounters and experiences for the children and researchers. As a result of the reading, the following five issues that were relevant to the research question were identified: 1) a space for narrating differently; 2) a space for multisensory adventure; 3) a space for breaking cultural limits; 4) a space for encounters; and 5) a space for spontaneous cache stories.

Theoretically, the findings open potential perspectives into narrative research with young children through the concept of narrative in-between space. The concept offers a holistic view, highlighting that the context and relations form an inseparable part of children’s narration processes. This concept challenges the researcher to acknowledge the significance of being present for children and creating spaces for different children to narrate in multiple ways.

Methodologically, the article points out how by acknowledging the narration around the pictures, the study broadens the view of photography as a method from the perspective of the products to include the perspective of the process itself. This kind of process provides opportunities for children to choose their own way to narrate and consequently enables their multiple voices to be heard.

Pedagogically, the article challenges educators to acknowledge how the photography process creates valuable spaces for children’s home stories and other important matters. In addition, the photography process facilitates creating and
maintaining the adult-child relationship and peer relationships; it calls for the creation of a space for unhurried co-presence in children’s daily life contexts.

4.4 Article IV: Curiosity, care, comprehension and confidence: Parents’ and a teacher’s reflections on spontaneous narrative encounters with children as part of cooperation

This article deals with cooperation between children’s home and day care context. The article focused on a story booklet project that was conducted in a Finnish preschool group in spring 2011. In the project, the children’s parents and teacher documented spontaneous narrative encounters with the children in a story booklet as part of the cooperation between home and the day care center. At the end of the project, the experiences of the project were discussed with the teachers and parents. In this article, I ask how parents and the teacher reflect upon spontaneous narrative encounters with children as a part of the cooperation between home and the day care center. The study focuses on the under-researched topic of children’s multiple voices and position in the cooperation field through the parents’ and teacher’s reflections. Consequently, the study examines what kind of information the stories point out concerning the prevailing practices and the pedagogical culture.

The theoretical approach of the study is based on the narrative and aesthetic ways of knowing as an integral part of meaning-making and collaboration. I employ the concept of spontaneous narrative encounters emphasizing the central place of stories in our relations. The study followed the narrative research methodology for listening to children’s spontaneous stories. The stories were collected by parents and the teacher in story booklets during a period of three months. At the end of the project, the material was enriched by the discussions with parents and the teachers.

Acknowledging children as collaborators in parent-professional partnership research is uncommon in previous research. The study foregrounds issues that are relevant for theoretical and practical applications. Theoretically, the study highlights the need to critically rethink the concept of cooperation. While in official pedagogical documents children are increasingly seen as active participants in the settings where they find themselves – home, school, and their community – this viewpoint is absent from the societal cooperation discussion. The study argues that alongside the recent parent-professional partnership research, the concept of cooperation between home and day care should be reexamined in order to provide more space for children to participate in cooperation. Rethinking the discussions and documents through the concept of spontaneous narrative encounters challenges
the adults to work toward the basis of cooperation being more democratic and reciprocal.

In practice, the study asks the educators to consider the role that spontaneous conversation with children plays in early childhood practices. The study highlights that when children have more agency over the stories narrated in cooperation, they can be better heard as more democratic knowledge constructors in cooperation in relation to both their parents and teacher. The encounters with children also challenge educators to reflect on how the prevailing practices are arranged for spontaneous narration. The study highlights that paying attention to and sharing spontaneous narrative encounters with children encourages adult interlocutors to discuss more with children and with each other and to reflect on and develop pedagogical practices. These discussions strengthen confidence in the relationships, not only toward the child, but also between the parents and teacher. The study argues for developing the practices toward a common narrative “landscape” for continuous cooperation, which in this study was the story booklet. In this landscape, everyone is a learner.
5 Findings

At moments when
a sleepy child crawls into my lap, at home or in day care,
tells me about her important things,
shows me a burn on her hand,
sighs softly that she loves her sister so much,
brings me her drawing as a present,
the originality of this research seems to fade away – and yet gain even greater clarity.

In this chapter, I present the main findings of the study in order to reflect on the research task of how children’s relations were shaped and reshaped in narrative in-between spaces. The spaces were formed spontaneously mainly through the children’s initiative. In the articles, I concentrated on children’s spontaneous and multimodal narration processes and other interlocutors’ and my reflections on them. In addition, I pointed out the role the drawings, photographs, and story booklet played in the narration processes in different contexts. For this summary, I have read the research material in the light of relations in children’s daily lives as a phenomenon where the relations were explored through the in-between spaces. The main findings can be crystallized in the following four dimensions: The spaces 1) enable children and adults to encounter the unplanned together; 2) call for aesthetic sensitiveness toward others; 3) enhance intergenerational co-agency; and 4) create and maintain caring reciprocity and continuity.
5.1 Enabling children and adults to encounter the unplanned together

The findings addressed that the spontaneously formed narrative in-between spaces created possibilities for unplanned narration processes. In these spaces, the adults’ aims were not the primary reasons for narration; rather, the issues rose up from the children’s needs. The narrative in-between spaces emerged from children’s initiatives for several reasons; for example, in order to familiarize themselves with each other\(^7\); to question, show, or narrate something important about daily happenings\(^8\); and to invite the adult to participate in children’s plays and doings\(^9\).

A common issue that was present in all narrative in-between spaces was the emergent curiosity toward others’ thoughts, emotions, and experiences\(^10\).

The findings demonstrated how the children invited the adults in multiple ways in their daily life. For example, the children asked to look at their drawings\(^11\), to

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\(^7\) See articles II, III, and IV.
\(^8\) See articles I, II, III, and IV.
\(^9\) See articles I, and II.
\(^10\) See articles I, II, III, and IV.
\(^11\) See articles I, II, and IV.
record or write down different things\textsuperscript{12}, and to read aloud their narrations\textsuperscript{13}. The call for interaction might also be a request to wonder about or admire something important together\textsuperscript{14}, a touch\textsuperscript{15}, holding hands\textsuperscript{16}, or climbing on one’s lap\textsuperscript{17}.

In some of the narrative in-between spaces, the meaning of materiality was highlighted. On one hand, the camera magnetized and mesmerized the interlocutors, but on the other hand, it caused challenges in some situations\textsuperscript{18}. The drawings or pictures were often given to others as a gift\textsuperscript{19} and the story booklet appeared to be a concrete way to create associations with the other groups’ teachers, parents, peers, and the researcher\textsuperscript{20}. These practices highlighted how materiality played an important role for the diffractive research practice (see Davies 2014).

Taking account of the multiple ways that children brought them (adults) along into their daily lives motivated the adults to search for and actively create more spaces for presence, in which children would be able to approach the adults in different ways\textsuperscript{21}. The teacher highlighted how the child can experience her/his place safely in the group when she/he has their own route to the teacher\textsuperscript{22}. The children were more eager to make contact with the adult when they noticed that the adult was keen to listen to their daily narrations\textsuperscript{23}. The study pointed out that while acknowledging children’s different ways to create the spaces required time, doing so strengthened the relationship between the interlocutors\textsuperscript{24}.

The findings highlighted that the narrative in-between spaces were more the spaces for asking who you are than what you should be like\textsuperscript{25}. In these situations, the adults attended to the children beyond just focusing on the developmental and learning skills assessments that usually guide the early childhood practices (see Kjorholt & Qvortrup 2012). The importance of adult’s presence in children’s important daily issues was highlighted\textsuperscript{26}. Furthermore, the spaces enabled adults

\textsuperscript{12} See articles III, and IV.
\textsuperscript{13} See articles I, and IV.
\textsuperscript{14} See articles I, II, III, and IV.
\textsuperscript{15} See article IV.
\textsuperscript{16} See articles III, and IV.
\textsuperscript{17} See articles I, and II.
\textsuperscript{18} See article III.
\textsuperscript{19} See articles I, II, and IV.
\textsuperscript{20} See article IV.
\textsuperscript{21} See articles I, and IV.
\textsuperscript{22} See article IV.
\textsuperscript{23} See articles I, II, III, and IV.
\textsuperscript{24} See articles II, and IV.
\textsuperscript{25} See article IV.
\textsuperscript{26} See articles I, II, III, and IV.
and children to be curious together about the unknown and toward the things that they would construct, be affected by, or experienced together\textsuperscript{27}. The preschool teacher brought up contradictory experiences about how it was difficult to work out unhurried practices in line with the present preschool curriculum\textsuperscript{28}. However, the teacher valued listening to the spontaneous narratives because, the teacher told, “these stories were important for them (children).” According to this teacher, “they live in these stories!”

The confusion of noticing the children’s multiple spontaneous invitations also emerged in the results\textsuperscript{29}. In many narrative in-between spaces, the adults were surprised to see how much the children narrate if the adult listen to what they are doing and catch the children’s invitations to create unplanned spaces\textsuperscript{30}. Also, confusion was experienced when a four-year-old child in a day care center walked straight from the sleeping room to the researcher’s lap\textsuperscript{31} and when a child asked the researcher to visit her home\textsuperscript{32}.

\textsuperscript{27} See articles I, II, III, and IV.
\textsuperscript{28} See article IV.
\textsuperscript{29} See articles II, and IV. See also Puroila \textit{et al.} 2012.
\textsuperscript{30} See articles I, and II.
\textsuperscript{31} See article I.
\textsuperscript{32} See article III.
5.2 Calling for aesthetical sensitiveness toward others

Picture 7. Home of the heart. It is true that someone likes to write, someone else to run and play, someone knows how to draw, and someone else how to speak. But it is even truer that when all these things flow together into a stream where experiences sing, one is permitted to narrate even if one does not know how. To search together for the home of the heart. Through the past and the future.

The narrative in-between spaces that rose up from the child’s initiative often included ways of narration that were already different and therefore inspired the adults to pay attention to the different tones and forms of narration. As Pascal and Bertram (2009) note, listening to multimodal narration is an active process of receiving, interpreting, and responding to children’s communications using all the senses. It does not mean possessing extraordinary sensory sensitivity; rather, it involves paying better attention to the senses as a whole (Naukkarinen 2011: 32).
The findings reveal that in the context of relations, being aesthetically sensitive was not only a matter of offering the experiences to others but also being “open-hearted” when receiving them (Sava 1998). In general, the findings pointed out that in the light of relational being, the spontaneous spaces enabled attending holistically toward the other’s life. Through listening in multisensory ways, the child’s multiple ways of narrating and the multiple ways to be in relation to her/his surroundings were acknowledged (see Davies 2014: 22, Louhela 2012, Viljamaa 2012). The participants’ aesthetic sensitivity manifested toward the multimodality in other’s narration, the other’s aesthetic experiencing, and also the matters and emotions beyond the narration.

The sensitivity to non-verbal narration was highlighted in multiple narrative in-between spaces33; for example, when there was no common language, visual and body language became important elements of narration34. In particular, the study highlights that the sensitivity toward the silent/shy children was enabled in the spontaneously formed situations through multimodal narration35. Listening to the multimodality evoked the sensitivity toward the shy children who were unsure how to narrate their matters in the adult-directed group situations36. In addition, the children who were otherwise shy narrated spontaneously a lot of cache stories besides camera and pictures37. The spaces also challenged the adults to have the sensitivity to understand the importance of sharing the silent moments; although the child was quiet, her/his body language told that the adult’s or peers’ presence was significant38.

The narrative in-between spaces with multimodal narration enabled sensitivity to understand the holistic nature of experiencing in which the thoughts, bodies, and emotions unite (see Rosenberg 2008). The situations opened a way to become sensitive to the involvement in narration processes and therefore to the emotional and sensuous meanings of the narratives and pictures39. For example, when painting, Maria enjoyed smoothing and stroking the paper and seeking other touch experiences40. During photography, Eelis and Santtu sniffed out clues like a pair of good detectives. The children were open-hearted and fully directed their senses

33 See articles I, II, III, and IV.
34 See articles II, III, and IV.
35 See articles II, III, and IV.
36 See article IV.
37 See articles II, and III.
38 See articles I, and II.
39 See articles I, II, III, and IV.
40 See article I.
toward their material environment when the material mattered and intra-acted with them (see Lenz Taguchi 2010: 35, see also Barad 2007: 151–153).

In addition to being sensitive to the holistic nature of experience in the here and now, the spaces were a chance to be sensitive to the other’s emotions, beyond the heard and told narratives\(^{41}\). The findings pointed out that there were narrative in-between spaces where the content of the narrative might differ from the message that the child would like to convey to the others\(^{42}\). These stories awakened many kinds of feelings. The teacher told about touching and shared shocking and wild narratives, and the parents described slanted narratives\(^{43}\). The study demonstrated that it is not always significant to concentrate on whether the narration is true or not; rather, it is important to understand that beyond the story there might be experiences, including emotions and senses, which the child constructs in multimodal and imaginative narratives\(^{44}\). In a situation where the child had narrated quite a wild narrative, the teacher reflected “that she could not say to the child that you should not narrate like that. In their narrations, they might deal with fear or something related to joy of success.” Similarly, the parents first pondered the role of imagination “but then reminded that such stories reveal something important”\(^{45}\). “

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\(^{41}\) See articles I, II, III, and IV.
\(^{42}\) See articles I, and IV.
\(^{43}\) See article IV.
\(^{44}\) See articles I, and IV.
\(^{45}\) See article IV.
5.3 Enhancing intergenerational co-agency

**Picture 8. Lucky field vole.** Like the lucky field vole, he carries his treasure stories in his backpack. The stories are meant to be shared and re-constructed as our story, to be told and re-told together. When will there be time to tell them?

In daily educational practices, the adults tell children to be certain kinds of individuals (even when the child is present we might describe her/him as if she were not present). Similarly, children form us (adults) in their narrations and plays. In order to ensure that these assumptions and narratives are investigated, the moments for sharing the narratives are both valuable and crucial. In these spaces, the view of the other’s life can be surprisingly different than in the observations based on the prescribed goals. For example, the individual plan documents that guide the pedagogical and cooperation practices do not value the possibilities for intergenerational dialogue (see Alasuutari & Kelle 2015). In order to construct the views with the other instead of about the other, the narrative in-between spaces direct researchers and educators to explore what happens between the interlocutors in common narration.
In the findings, the narrative in-between spaces seemed to offer opportunities for the shared agency. The spaces enabled the agency for co-knowing between the participants; the children’s knowledge was meaningful as a part of the knowledge construction processes. In these spaces, the agency was emphasized as intergenerational, rather than just maintaining the ideology of children as active agents who create their “own spaces” (Mannion 2007: 409). As Hohti (2015: 13) writes, “the divisions between the adult and the child as the knower and the known were blurred” in the spontaneous in-between spaces.

Although agency was co-constructed, it was highlighted that in these spaces the children had possibilities to negotiate and navigate in more democratic ways; they were able to become the conveyors of the narration processes in ways that were natural to them and at times turned the traditional pedagogical roles upside down. Moreover, through the narrative in-between spaces, the documented stories and discourses became significant sources for further discussions between the children, parents, and teacher. The earlier discussions were constructed on the basis of observing the child.

The spontaneity created a space where the children’s concerns, interests, attitudes, and ambitions were able to come to the fore (see MacLennan 2010; Thompson 2007). The children had space to ponder, to suggest how things could be done in alternative ways, and to assume the role of a questioner. The co-knowing was not based only on representing the facts of something already known (see Vecchi 2010); rather, the ways in which the aesthetic experiences intertwined with things, emotions, and imaginations were highlighted as an important part of the shared and holistic knowing processes.

The findings also shed light on how the agency was not present only in interpersonal relations but instead was mutually constituted of both human and non-human entities (Mannion 2007: 415, see also Rautio 2013), which here refers to the movement between active and passive experiencing (Merleau-Ponty 2001/2010, Dewey 1934). In this study, the places, the things, and the multimodal narratives with lines and colors were all an essential part of agency leading and shaping the relationships toward new narratives. For example, the recycled...
envelope attracted the child to dig the pencil in to the paper. The child explored the hole that she made, creased the paper, and then leaned over the paper wondering: “There is maybe a hole ...”.

The spontaneously formed narrative in-between spaces accommodated narrating together in multimodal ways. The findings pointed out that children do not create borders between different ways of narrating; rather, they move between them effortlessly (Viljamaa 2012: 84). The early childhood education contexts aim to support multiple ways of expressing (Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman perusteet 2005), but in light of the findings, the communication between adults and children seemed to happen mostly through words and gestures52. Moreover, the adults were rarely present in situations where children’s narrative rights were the broadest53 (see Puroila et al. 2012). The findings reveal that visual narration, in particular, is less noticed in pedagogical practices54. For example, in the “free” drawing situations there were no adults present55. In the children’s story booklets, some drawing situations were documented from the day care context, but only one drawing from the home context was documented56. The spontaneous situations in this research challenged the adults to participate in the multimodal narration57. The children started to use the passive voice when the adult joined in the narrative in-between space; instead of saying I do they said Let’s, thereby forming the narration toward our story58.

The shared narratives promoted reflecting on the adults’ practices, and instead of interpreting only the children’s behavior, paying attention to the relations59. The spaces directed the researcher to rethink the adult’s position and role from a bystander to a co-narrator60. This was especially highlighted in drawing situations61. Knight (2008: 306) proposes that particular ways of drawing collaboratively can open up pathways of communication and facilitate the processes of transformation for both children and adults.

52 See articles II, and IV.
53 See article II.
54 See articles II, and IV.
55 See article II.
56 See article IV.
57 See articles I, II, III, and IV.
58 See article I.
59 See article IV.
60 See articles I, and II.
61 See articles I, II, and IV.
Within the study, the joy and pleasure of sharing the experiences while engaged in multimodal narration was emphasized. The spontaneous spaces enabled the interlocutors to experience the individuality together\textsuperscript{62}. The distinctive narration received new meanings in the shared relational spaces in which the children constructed knowledge of their experience in relation to the other children and the adults: they guided, advised, questioned, and admired each other\textsuperscript{63}. Although the interlocutors had different ideas for drawing, sharing the process of doing was important; narration of imaginations and inspirations together formed part of the core of the spaces\textsuperscript{64}. The children commented on each other’s drawings, not only verbally, but through their being and drawing\textsuperscript{65}. In photography, the children had a different tempo and individual interests, but they showed the pictures to each other and to the adults\textsuperscript{66}. The stories took on various meanings, although they also had their own purposes for the children. The interlocutors adjusted their views, supported each other, and wondered about the world around them together\textsuperscript{67}. In these spaces, there was a connection through concerted action, the collaborative occupation of space, and of activity in space (Davies 2014: 30).

\textsuperscript{62} See articles I, II, III, and IV.
\textsuperscript{63} See article II.
\textsuperscript{64} See articles I, II, and IV.
\textsuperscript{65} See article I.
\textsuperscript{66} See article III.
\textsuperscript{67} See article I.
Picture 9. Nature and the nature of life. “The name of this could be nature and the nature of life.” Pens fly swiftly over the paper. “This is important smoke coming from the chimney of this house. It helps this child to find his home.” We discuss together the life being constructed. “Shall we draw all kinds of creatures? You draw, too! Wow, will you draw one with many eyes? These here are making braids, like each one to the next.” Like in a line? “Yes.” For a moment, we quietly look at what was narrated. “Write down also that they need not be afraid.”
5.4 Creating and maintaining caring reciprocity and continuity

Picture 10. Large and small. Large and small stones are drawn into narration. Constant movement creates lines of new paths connecting stones with each other.
The findings highlighted that when listening and narrating with children, the shared moments had the effect of drawing the adults’ attention to the small things, to the things that happen all the time (see MacRae 2013: 63), but which at the same might be the big things to children. These stories were like cache stories$^{68}$ or how are you -stories$^{69}$. They mainly included narration about the home context, wonderings about life, and emotions$^{70}$. They were stories where the children were inspired to relate meaningful matters, such as their teeth coming out$^{71}$, their imaginings$^{72}$, their life changes$^{73}$, and peer relations$^{74}$. Through sharing these meaningful daily issues, a lot of reciprocal discussion about life, caring questions, and/or touch took place$^{75}$. These meaningful daily issues, narrated in the spontaneously formed in-between spaces, caused me to think about agency, not only in terms of being curious toward the others’ lives, but in terms of caring for each other$^{76}$.

The meaning of documenting the narrative in-between spaces with the children was reflected in the light of strengthening the relations$^{77}$ and creating the confidence$^{78}$. In some cases, documenting was narrated as a concrete way to show one’s caring to the other$^{79}$. The children started to ask the adults or peers to write down the day and name on the drawing$^{80}$. The children looked after their story booklets and wanted the adults to read them aloud in preschool and at home$^{81}$, and it was important to bring home the drawings and photographs$^{82}$. The documented stories were given strong agency when they were read aloud, thereby making new intra-actions immediately possible. The documentation enabled new processes of meaning-making and investigative actions (see Lenz Taguchi 2010) toward new stories. A mother told that the first thing that her child wanted to do when she came home from preschool was to look to see if there were new stories in her story

$^{68}$ See article III.
$^{69}$ See article IV.
$^{70}$ See articles I, II, III, and IV.
$^{71}$ See article III.
$^{72}$ See articles I, II, III, and IV.
$^{73}$ See article I.
$^{74}$ See articles II, and IV.
$^{75}$ See articles III, and IV.
$^{76}$ See articles I, II, III, and IV.
$^{77}$ See articles I, II, III, and IV.
$^{78}$ See articles II, and IV.
$^{79}$ See articles II, and IV.
$^{80}$ See articles I, and II.
$^{81}$ See article IV.
$^{82}$ See articles I, II, and III.
booklet, and then they sat down and read them aloud. The saved spontaneous narratives were the sources for taking care reciprocally; spaces were created around these narratives for being together, listening, and valuing the fleeting daily moments.

In narrative in-between space, narrating together created possibilities for continuous being. In the space, the presence with the other was a form of continuously accepting the other; the child exists at every turn rather than thinking of them only in terms of their abilities or developmental phases. The findings emphasize that the child exists during the narration process, not only after the ready performance of what the child can or cannot do. The narration processes enabled the children to construct the continuous relations not only between the children who are narrating but also with those about whom the children narrated. Through narration, the boundaries of the contexts were obscured; the children brought the home context, siblings, parents, and pets into the day care. Similarly, the stories from day care were brought back home. In children’s daily life contexts, it was significant to value the spaces for the daily narratives of the other contexts by giving them time and saving them. The important issues were narrated again and again in different contexts. These ongoing narrative in-between spaces appeared to offer children and adults an important way of continuous communication in order to create confidence between them.

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83 See article IV.
84 See articles I, II, III, and IV.
85 See articles I, and IV.
86 See articles I, II, and III. See also Einarsdottir et al. 2009.
87 See articles I, II, III, and IV.
88 See articles II, III, and IV.
89 See articles I, and IV.
90 See article IV.
Picture 11. Princess with a bag. She uses her helmet as a basket and puts her drawing into it to take it home. She has written Mom and Dad on the envelope. Skipping steps, a small lurch. The child’s sun is shining from the envelope. There is space to breathe, to exist. To make drawings of feelings, light as a feather or heavy as concrete. The story of the picture will be constructed further at home.
6 Ethical questions

Everything that was done and written mirrors the ethical choices that have been not at all predictable; for example, what should one do if a child wants to delete all his pictures because they are so poor in his opinion (see Article III)? As previously mentioned, narrative inquirers cannot subtract themselves from the inquiry relationship (Clandinin & Huber In press). Narrative inquirers situate themselves in more or less relational ways with their participants. When co-composing the inquiry with participants, it means being a part of their lives (Clandinin & Huber In press) as well. In childhood research, a notable part of the ethical questions crystallizes in the power relations between the adult and children. When being in the field, the researcher needs to consider her/his position in the context and also the possible consequences for the participants. (Strandell 2010: 107).

While the theoretical and methodological framework has given me space to breathe, to change the way of scrutiny, to move on by searching, to stop and wonder, and to fumble/error and ask, being in relations with participants has demanded that I deeply ponder the research ethics in every part of the research (see e.g. Article I). Barad (2007: 185) reminds us how ethics are emergent in the intra-active encounters in which knowing, being, and doing (epistemology, ontology, and ethics) are inextricably entangled. Throughout the research I have valued the caring ethic as a guide for the study (Noddings 2012). According to Noddings (2012), being in relation with other people and the relationships created through the interaction are the deepest and most constitutive way of being. This has meant that I have tried to be sensitive to the participants, to identify their lives, and to respond to the uniqueness of the situation (Syrjälä et al. 2006). The emotions and well-being of the child were in every case the criteria for making the decisions. For example, this has meant that asking their consent has been an ongoing process, rather than merely being a signature on a form in the beginning of the research process (Strandell 2010: 96-97).

From the beginning, I have struggled with the concept of confidence. Starting the study with my own children forced me to consider confidence especially from the perspectives of the children’s anonymity, privacy, and future use of research findings and material. With my children, I balanced the roles of mother and researcher; there were times when I asked myself whether I spent time with my children for the sake of my study or for the sake of my children. Sometimes, when I was telling about my study in seminars, a question emerged regarding whether the girls were drawing only in order to please their mother. It might have been so,
but similarly, I cannot be sure if the children in day care have been trying to please me as well. Therefore, it is important in the reports to figure out clearly what kind of role the interlocutors have had in the research process.

With the other children, I found myself in unexpected situations on multiple occasions in which I had to ponder the role of their consent. One puzzling moment happened to me in a day care center with a young child who walked on my lap straight from their sleeping room (see Article II). I was unsure to react in that situation because of the child’s trust. Like the previous example points out, the daily life with other children forced me to balance between closeness and distance. As an ethnographer in day care, I pondered how the children experience a situation in which an adult makes their acquaintance and shows interest in their lives, but does so for research purposes and not in order to form a longer relationship. Moreover, when I read the narratives from the children’s story booklets, the lived moments, I felt a lot of empathy toward the children’s stories because I realized how intimate the issues were that the children had shared in their daily narrations. I pondered if the study was interfering with the children’s lives or connecting the children’s narration with larger stories that were not important for them. During the research process, I asked if I was narrowing the children’s right to their privacy with the practices of my study. The use of photographs, in particular, was related to participants’ privacy (Nutbrown 2011). For example, who owns the pictures and how do I interpret them? These multiple thoughts and questions challenged me to critically reflect on the space for children’s narration in the study.

Although I emphasize the co-construction of the study and everything that happened during the research process form the roots of these interpretations, I understand, as Coles (1989: 19) has said, that I give shape to what I hear. As a result, I shape the participants’ stories into something new through my own descriptions (see also Spector-Mersel 2011). Within the vivid and rich research process I have pondered many times whose knowledge is narrated, whose intention I am following, and whose interests are at the core of the research. I also thought how the children should have possibilities to obtain the study and express what they think about the findings (Viljamaa et al. 2013). The pictures in this study are for both adults and children. They are not only decorations; rather, as I have described earlier, they are the re-tellings and interpretations of the study intertwined with the text. If these visual narrations can spark new co-narrations for the readers, the study has achieved a new and meaningful purpose. Viljamaa et al. (2013) write as follows: “… we researchers are not used to telling about our studies in ways which would be familiar to our participants. The knowledge which touches our emotions and
experiences, and which is not always easy to verbalize, is as worthy as writing the scientific texts.”

In the first article (I), I have written that there is no answer to the question regarding what the children might think of the research when they are grown. However, my children are now nearly nine years older than at the beginning of the study. Recently, I briefly discussed with them how they feel about the fact that I have written about their life. It seemed that the issue is still complex for them. “It is just fine,” one of them said. “Maybe, if someone reads and thinks that my stories are boring, I would feel a little bit uncomfortable,” the other continued. When I look at my children I understand that the other young participants are also not the same small day care children that I remember; their lives have continued down their own paths. The latter utterance of my child helped me to understand that when I retell the children’s and all the interlocutors’ stories, I expose them to the readers’ ethics.

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91 Translated from Finnish to English by the researcher for the purpose of this research.
7 Evaluation of the process

The mesh of artistic, narrative, and childhood research layers are the areas where my position has constantly changed. I have found this framework as a way of doing reciprocal, sensitive, and multimodal research practices together with the participants. The alternative ways of doing this study, for example, the ways of thinking of the research material and reporting differently, are still marginalized in the field of educational research (see Koro-Ljunberg & MacLure 2012). This reasoning leads me to ask what kind of criteria would be relevant for evaluating the artistic and narrative childhood research. Heikkinen et al. (2012: 8) suggest the following principles for evaluating the narrative (action) research: historical continuity, reflexivity, dialectics, workability, and evocativeness. As Heikkinen et al. (2013: 10) write, in the narrative framework, science approaches art. I understand the narratives as art and art as narratives. Also, because the diffractive nature of this study can be compared to action research, I touch on these principles in order to evaluate this study.

In the light of historical continuity, the content and methodology of this study position both in critical and diffractive ways in relation to previous and ongoing research practices and theories. In the context of narrative research, the production of research texts follows the art of engagement in a storied research relationship that is never final and could always be otherwise (Caine et al. 2013: 582). Because the study started years ago, many things have changed both in practice and theory. The articles (I–IV) describe the reflexive process during which my thoughts and knowledge have not been stable; rather, they have been constantly changing in relation to the material and social world around me.

When I look back on the research journey, I find plenty of things that I could have done differently. For example, I have reconsidered a lot of the viewpoints I included in articles. Would it have been better to explore the cooperation aspect in every article since I had narrations from the home and day care center contexts in every material generation process? Afterwards I thought that I needed to proceed with adhering to the issues that I felt important in that moment. In the light of the whole study, this seems now to be a relevant choice; I have first searched the important issues arising while being a part of children’s spontaneous and multimodal narration and then examined these issues in the cooperation research field. This is why I argue that the knowledge today is not old or wrong tomorrow but a spark for new thoughts. In addition, many of the things that I asked when I started the study are still worth re-exploring from different viewpoints.
When considering the principle of dialectics, I have tried to give space to different voices and interpretations of the same events (Heikkinen et al. 2012: 9). The strength of this study is that it broadens the perspective that dominates within childhood studies: instead of highlighting individual voices, this study takes steps toward polyphonic co-narrating. The dialectics have been present from the beginning to the end of the research process; my understanding of the meaning of relationality and narrativity in childhoods emerged in relation to the social and material world and was constructed together with co-writers, co-researchers, and participants. Still, I understand that the narratives that are not told in this study echo both in and beyond the study. As much as I want to enhance polyphonic voices through this study, there is a possibility of silencing other voices. Furthermore, although I have respected the unique and specific ways of expressing things (Heikkinen et al. 2012: 9), I am humble that in some places I might have interpreted and reported over the participants’ experiences. Like Squire et al. (2008: 3) write, the storyteller does not tell the story so much as she/he is told by it. Heikkinen et al. (2012: 9) posit that the basic attribute of authenticity is that the person feels that a given way of expression is his or her own, regardless of how it reflects the surrounding echoes of the narrative canon.

In this study, with the young children, I have not been able to make sure that they would find their re-told narratives familiar. In some co-narratives, especially in visual narrations, it has become impossible and hence irrelevant to separate the narrators. Furthermore, many times when we read or hear our own “authentic” narration, even as adults we might wonder how our outcome sounds and looks different when it is written down or recorded. A couple of years ago I read with Anna (9 years) one extract that she had narrated when she was three years old. Although she did not remember that drawing moment, she looked at the picture and described how she could imagine how she had rolled the picture of a snail and been “like, important” while doing it.

In retrospect, I would have emphasized to the parents and teachers the meaning of multimodality in narration and documenting processes (see Article II, Article IV). On the other hand, the paucity of visual narratives in the material mirrors the prevailing narrative practices in early childhood education in which drawing or photography are not inevitably seen as a natural part of narration. This consideration was also one spark for attending the co-drawings and graphic arts in this study and highlights the different ways of knowing in the field of science. Actually, I had no choice to do it any other way because when I could not write, I needed to work with pictures. This choice refers to the principle of reflexivity; I
have exposed my process of knowing to the readers by stratifying the text in a way that helps the readers to see my way of writing and doing the study (Heikkinen et al. 2012). In addition, I think that the use of multimodal narration in ways that are not based exclusively on cognitive-rational thinking touches the readers on an emotional level and brings to the fore the evocativeness of this study (see Heikkinen et al. 2012: 10). Through the choice of multimodality I would encourage people to narrate their daily life in multimodal ways and cross the borders together. It can begin from this book: move, draw, and write freely in the pages, leave notes in it and fill the gaps and empty pages, and the research process will continue. Indeed, this choice relates to the principle of workability, namely, through the pictures children might also read, consider, and evaluate this study in their own way. I argue that science is not only for adult researchers but for all people to compose and re-compose knowledge.

In the light of workability, it can also be asked what kind of consequences the study has for participants. The participants got some concrete memories, including drawings, photographs, and story booklets that, I later heard, were important to them. Sharing these materials, what we might call “story things,” enabled the participants to encounter different people and tell many new stories. The parents and preschool teacher experienced that the different way of cooperation developed in this study got them to rethink the child’s position among home-daycare relations (see Article IV). Moreover, the findings of the study can be utilized when developing pedagogical practices beyond the research contexts. For instance, the ideas of spontaneous co-drawing, photography, and story booklets can be applied in many educational, pedagogical, and co-operational practices. The findings also challenge the societal and scientific discussion of the need for developing intergenerational narrative practices and everyday democracy with children. In the beginning of the introduction, I quoted Moss (2014) who expresses the need for telling old and new stories. In this study, both old and new narratives about children’s relations have been told. The study shows that sometimes matters are too close for us to notice them. Even familiar everyday narratives are worth re-telling and reexamining from different viewpoints. The alternative viewpoints challenge us to notice that things could be done differently (see King 2003).
8 Concluding remarks and looking forward

In this study, I have explored what happens to children’s relations when their initiatives for spontaneous narration are listened to in and between children’s different daily life contexts. The main findings reveal that the spontaneously formed narrative in-between spaces influence children’s relations in multiple ways. The spaces enable children and adults to encounter the unplanned together; call for aesthetic sensitiveness toward others; enhance intergenerational co-agency; and create and maintain caring reciprocity and continuity. These aspects require and promote the confidence between children and adults as well as among adults.

The study foregrounds issues that have relevance for theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical applications. First, the study opens potential theoretical perspectives into narrative research with young children by employing the concept of narrative in-between space (Caine et al. 2013). The concept highlights the context and relations as an inseparable part of the narration processes. The concept challenges researchers to acknowledge the significance of being present for children and creating spaces for their narrating in multiple ways. The findings also highlight the importance of incorporating the concept aesthetics of listening (Koh 2010) into the core of the narrative in-between space and thus in the heart of relations. The perspective of the aesthetics of listening calls for engaging with the other with a sensitive, curious, and caring attitude in order to learn to know the other and to live together. I suggest that the aesthetics of listening is like actively creating a common space through all the senses and asking how are you? This helps create the atmosphere where the experience and narratives can be shared. Although it is not always possible to understand each other, listening and being present are important.

Second, the study contributes the methodology of artistic and narrative childhood research. The study offers insights into how the spontaneous narration provides opportunities for children to favor their way to narrate and consequently enables their multiple thoughts to be heard and discussed. The study challenges the researchers to participate in the research process in multimodal ways, not only interacting verbally with the participants but also using the multiple means of narration and listening. Hence, the study encourages researchers to join the flexible and unplanned spaces that are less regulated or controlled and enable the participants’ movement (see Davies & Gannon 2011: 135).

Third, the study reveals the untapped pedagogical potential involved in children’s spontaneous narration and listening to children. As a core message of the
study, I propose that the aesthetics of listening and the spontaneous multimodal co-narration could be a more essential part of the pedagogical practices in young children’s art education and early childhood education in general. At the moment, the practices seem to be either adult-directed (circle times, meals, supervised art, or other activities) or child-initiated (free play, outdoor activities). There is a need to actively create common spaces where both parties can equally have the agency. The findings emphasize that valuing the children’s spontaneous narration provides means for promoting everyday democracy in both formal and informal educational settings (Moss 2014). In spontaneous and shared narration, the children can become agents for changing practices together with the parents and professionals. The story booklet project provided a concrete example of this: consciously creating space for children’s narration enhanced children’s participation and strengthened their agency in creating the common story. Realizing the everyday democracy in young children’s environments also requires paying attention to the multimodality of children’s narration that is in line with their holistic way of being in touch with the world. If only the verbal modes of narration are advocated, the youngest children tend to be excluded as agents in educational communities.

The findings raise critical views regarding the dominance of the pedagogical culture where children’s developmental goals, learning skills, products, assessment, and measurement are emphasized. Children are too often assessed by their end products and the teachers thus fail to pay attention to what children narrate when they are in the process (Faulkner & Coates 2011: 7). This study challenges the educators to notice children’s lives from holistic viewpoints: what is important to children here and now; how to promote children and adults’ co-narration and co-knowing; and what children and adults could become together. This orientation directs the early childhood pedagogy toward world-making that, as Davies and Gannon (2011: 129) write, requires openness to new unplanned directions and possibilities.

This study is also an opening for the re-examination and development of children’s agency and position in the cooperation practices between homes and day care centers. In the light of the findings, parents and teachers are called to join the narrative in-between spaces, to create the shared documentation together with children, and to discuss the matters that are important for children. Thus, it is possible to become sensitive to the most fundamental questions: Who are you? and How are you? The findings reveal that narration and listening to children enhance communication and confidence both between children and adults as well as among adults. As noted in previous research, this study also reveals that narration involves
the potential to empower, support, and cherish the interlocutors and thus promote their holistic well-being (Estola et al. 2014).

The findings of the study can be applied broadly in different formal and informal childhood arenas, such as hobby and club activities, child health care, child protection, and the school context. The study encourages the adults to consider children’s position in relational networks and the role of intergenerational co-agency in children’s daily lives. In addition to measuring what the child can or cannot do, the emphasis would be more on how children and their narratives are encountered (see Einarsdottir et al. 2009, Veale 2006).

The study offers concrete starting points for further developing pedagogical practices with children. For instance, the drawing together -pedagogy or the story booklets -cooperation practices provide professionals and parents means of attending to everyday democracy. I also suggest that photography could be utilized more both in childhood research and pedagogical practices in order to allow different children’s voices to be heard. Why cannot cameras be available for children to explore things together with adults? However, the purpose of this study is not to offer a ready tool kit for pedagogical practices, but rather to inspire educators to develop their own practices in their own daily contexts.

During the research process, several topics for further exploration emerged. Young children’s daily lives contain a rich field to continue exploring, thereby further developing the combination of artistic, narrative, and childhood research. For instance, children’s relation with the materiality came up in their narration and is a topic I would like to research further. It would also be reasonable to generate wider artistic and narrative action research projects in different educational settings in order to develop spaces for intergenerational and multimodal narration. In addition, the study calls for addressing the training programs of early childhood professionals from the perspectives of art education, narrativity, and cooperation practices between homes and day care centers.

This report mirrors the long process during which my understanding of the research topic has evolved. Although I am going to finish this report, the process is not finished; rather, the knowledge becomes shaped over and over again (see Sameshima 2008: 49). Since the inquiry is a continuing process, the terminus of the study is likely to become an entrance for another (Geiger 1958: 64). In this sense, I agree with Dahlberg et al. (2013: 3) that “… as we walk we see new landscapes opening up ahead while the landscapes we have passed through appear different as we look back.”
Picture 12. Shadows and treasures. The past and the future are present in this moment. Little one, I do not know where your path will take you, but I will be here, listening to your shadows and treasures.
References


Hart R (1992) Children’s participation: from tokenism to citizenship. Italy, UNICEF.


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Original publications

This doctoral thesis is based on the following original publications, which are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals.


IV Kinnunen S (Manuscript) Curiosity, care, comprehension and confidence: Parents’ and a teacher’s reflections on spontaneous narrative encounters with children as part of cooperation.

The original articles are reprinted with the kind permission of the Springer (I), Nuorisotutkimus (II), and Sage Publications (III).

Original publications are not included in the electronic version of the thesis.
144. Lutovac, Sonja (2014) From memories of the past to anticipations of the future : pre-service elementary teachers’ mathematical identity work
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