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Donner, Patricia; Lundström, Siv; Heikkilä, Mia

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A case study of young children's play negotiations in free play

Patricia Donner ^a, Siv Lundström ^b and Mia Heikkilä ^a

^aDepartment of Early Childhood Education, Åbo Akademi University, Vaasa, Finland; ^bCentre for Lifelong Learning, Åbo Akademi University, Vaasa, Finland

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to understand how children express themselves socially and emotionally in play negotiations in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings. It addresses the following research questions: What strategies do children employ in play negotiations? How do these strategies manifest themselves socially and emotionally? The study was conducted in eight ECEC centers and one preschool located in Swedish-speaking regions of Finland. The target group consisted of children aged 3–6. Data were collected through video observations that captured children's social interactions and engagement with their peers during free play. A multimodal interaction analysis approach was employed to identify a prominent category termed "exclusion", which refers to how children employ strategies (e.g., fantasy and fiction) to limit the participation of other children in play negotiations. The results of this study contribute to our understanding of children's complex play negotiations and highlight the significance of addressing their social and emotional development in these contexts.

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Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on the importance of play in the context of child development. Scholars have recognized the multifaceted benefits that play provides to children; as a result, there has been a concerted effort to prioritize this type of activity in a variety of settings. This emphasis on play is rooted in a comprehensive understanding of child development (Pellegrini 2013; Yogman et al. 2018), a commitment to well-being (Puroila, Estola, and Syrjälä 2012), a focus on learning (Kangas et al. 2019) and a desire to create inclusive and healthy communities (Whitebread 2012). In Finland, play is considered an essential part of children's daily lives, and it forms a central aspect of the national curriculum guidelines for early childhood education (Kangas and Harju-Luukkainen 2022). A number of elements are prevalent in children's play, which means that play research can take several different stances. In this study, play negotiation is considered an interesting facet to explore in order to understand how children's socio-emotional competence becomes visible through everyday play in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings.

CONTACT Patricia Donner  patricia.donner@abo.fi  Åbo Akademi University, Rantakatu 2, Vaasa 65100, Finland

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According to Zosh et al. (2018), play is a spectrum that includes both adult-directed and child-initiated free play. This article mainly focuses on the latter. Play is an arena in which social constellations change and a variety of emotional expressions occur (Howe and Leach 2018; Kirk and Jay 2018). Halberstadt, Denham, and Dunsmore (2001) highlight the connection between emotional and social expressions by pointing out that emotional and social development are linked because children's social interactions are usually emotionally charged. Despite the fact that socio-emotional competence is of such vital importance for children's development (OECD 2015), there are several contrasting understandings of social and emotional development; therefore, different scholars highlight different aspects. More research is needed on how socio-emotional development is linked to social interaction and communication, especially in terms of the relationships between interaction, bullying, exclusion and inclusion in relation to children's socio-emotional expressions (Höstad 2005; Kirves and Sajaniemi 2012; Kirves and Stoor-Grenner 2010; Tellgren 2004). The literature also shows the importance of recognizing the nature of children's peer culture, its rules and its influences on play (Köngäs, Määttä, and Uusiautti 2022), something which is not easily done by adults (Wood 2014).

Our interest in conducting this study stems from a desire to help all children feel that they are accepted members of a group in an ECEC setting. This research aims to investigate how children employ play negotiations in free play and the social and emotional expressions that occur during these negotiations. It also suggests directions for ECEC settings to follow regarding the support children need in their social and emotional development. The following research questions are asked: *What strategies do children employ in play negotiations? How do these strategies manifest themselves socially and emotionally?*

Understanding play negotiations

Corsaro defines peer culture as 'a stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with peers' (2000, 92). According to the author, in their peer cultures, children strive to create control over their lives and share it with each other. One way for children to create control over their lives is to circumvent the rules of adults by making secondary adjustments collectively. Children use various kinds of strategies in their negotiations, and they can change their strategies if they do not function satisfactorily (Alvestad 2010). Play negotiations are multifaceted and can include dimensions of power, status (Wood 2014), agency, and conflict (Kochenderfer-Ladd and Ladd 2019; Laursen and Adams 2018).

Two central strategies in children's play negotiations are inclusion in play and exclusion from it (i.e. joining and leaving). Corsaro (1979) defines 15 joining strategies that children use when they want to be included in play. Typically, children can try different strategies during the same play negotiations in order to achieve their aims. Playing and negotiations with peers can result in conflicts (Corsaro 2018), especially when peers are trying to get involved. Negotiations about who is included can be understood as a way of nurturing children's relationships and protecting the play activity rather than as a way of deliberately excluding someone (Alvestad 2010; Cobb-Moore, Danby, and Farrell 2009; Corsaro 2018; Singer and Hännikäinen 2002). According to Tellgren (2004), this can cause children to consider it more important to find ways to maintain peer relationships while playing than to let other children join in, which can result in exclusion.

Limitation and exclusion in play

Play and friendship are vital for children (Nergaard 2022; Sandseter and Seland 2018). According to Helgeland and Lund (2017), children fear being excluded from play the most when it comes to their everyday lives in kindergartens. A study done by Peltola, Karlsson, and Kangas (2023) shows that children experience peer exclusion daily in ECEC settings. The authors further highlight the importance for children to focus on positive experiences with peers in order to develop the ability to handle situations that might lead to rejection or exclusion. Many scholars classify exclusion as psychological bullying. Exclusion and bullying often occur during free play, but they can be difficult for professionals to observe (Bullock 2002, Höstad 2005; Kirves and Sajaniemi 2012; Kirves and Stoor-Grenner 2010). One reason for this is that they can be camouflaged in the theme of the play activity, and new forms of exclusion are created in every game to fit its context (Tellgren 2004). The practice of limiting each other is evident when children change the activity in unfavorable ways, which leads to some of them being excluded from the session. One way for children to take control over a play negotiation can be to set limitations, which lead to a child being excluded – intentionally or unintentionally (Alvestad 2010).

An exclusion strategy that is often used among children is reconstructing the rules and conditions of play. Rules provide an understanding of the norms that are prevalent and, therefore, of what is considered suitable or unsuitable behavior in different situations and settings (Cobb-Moore, Danby, and Farrell 2009). When a child wants to join play, which often already has more than one participant, their verbal and nonverbal gestures must be accepted by one or more of those playing (Bateman 2011). In this circumstance, to be given access, the child needs to be able to identify and understand the rules that have been established regarding play construction and context (Cobb-Moore, Danby, and Farrell 2009). Implicit rules in free play include distinguishing between fantasy and reality, involving others, maintaining an appropriate level of action, and accepting imaginative suggestions and contributions from peers (Curran 1999). Kirves and Sajaniemi (2012) note that changes in the rules of play can lead to a situation in which a child seems to be part of an activity but has no possibility of affecting how it develops. One example of this is when children manipulate things and places, which enables them to make claims about the play activities, scenarios, objects and participants (Cobb-Moore, Danby, and Farrell 2009; Corsaro 1979; Evaldsson and Tellgren 2009). Manipulation can also feature when children create fixed directives, which other children must follow in order to be part of the game (Goodwin 2002). According to Cobb-Moore, Danby, and Farrell (2009), this kind of play situation tends to become controlling, which increases the likelihood of limitations that lead to exclusion.

Exclusion through the use of fantasy and fiction

This method of exclusion involves taking control of play in a way that leads to the unnoticed and indirect rejection of another child. In the three examples presented in the results section, it is possible to follow how children maneuver the action of play in various ways with the help of fantasy and fiction. How they deal with the play situation covertly blocks access to others.

The exclusion of other children occurs both through verbal and nonverbal forms of communication, and both aggressive and defensive methods can feature in this process (Goodwin 2002). Cobb-Moore, Danby, and Farrell (2008) assert that children can use aggressive scare tactics and even threats of violence (e.g. ordering someone to die in the game; Evaldsson and Tellgren 2009) without being challenged by others. In this context, Tellgren (2004) and Evaldsson and Tellgren (2009) describe the ‘it’s dangerous’ strategy, which keeps some children out of the interaction space through arguments that something in the imagined game is too dangerous for them. Other exclusion strategies mentioned by Tellgren (2004) are those created in a more disguised manner by the fiction of the play scenario. One of these is the ‘take a trip’ strategy, whereby a few children decide to travel somewhere in the play scenario and leave one child behind and alone in the room. Goodwin (2002) also describes girls using nonverbal actions, such as leaving a scene, to exclude other girls. These actions might be difficult for younger children to put into words and, therefore, hard to tell to ECEC staff, which is a very common way for children to deal with rejection (Peltola, Karlsson, and Kangas 2023; Tay-Lim and Gan 2012).

Methods

Data and process

This qualitative case study was carried out at eight ECEC centers and one preschool located in Swedish-speaking regions of Finland. Participatory video observations were used to explore the strategies employed by children during play negotiations and the corresponding social and emotional expressions that arose as they interacted with peers. The target group was children aged 3–6. The video recordings were made both indoors and outdoors in the course of one day with each ECEC group. At the time of observation, the group sizes at the ECEC centers and the preschool ranged between 10 and 20 children. Participatory observations are helpful to directly observe the behaviors of individuals and groups and document the contexts within which activities and events occur (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2017; Pellegrini, Hoch, and Symons 2013). Field notes were taken between the recordings and after each visit. Notes were also taken on discussions with ECEC staff regarding the factors that might influence a group’s interactions or certain play sessions with peers. The use of field notes makes it possible to describe the setting, which was not recorded, and mention other factors that may have played a role in the sessions (Norris 2004). The video recordings and field notes yielded data on how children cooperate and interact with each other during free play and play negotiations as part of their everyday ECEC and preschool routines. The filmed sequences ranged from 30 seconds to 5 minutes in length. An average of 1 hour of free play was filmed during each center visit, meaning that the collected material amounted to approximately 9 hours of footage.

Ethical considerations

This study adheres to the *Guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity* (TENK 2019). When the primary data consist of video observations of playing children, scholars face a number of ethical questions. After each participating municipality had given its approval to conduct research at the ECEC centers, the children’s guardians

received a form that contained information about the study and a request for consent. The children for whom parental consent was not given were not filmed. To guarantee anonymity, the participants' names were changed at the transcription stage, and some dialectal expressions were standardized so that regional origins could not be detected. Before filming, the participants were informed that the observer wanted to learn about children's play by looking at them playing games. They were shown the iPad used for filming and were asked for consent; if they declined, this was accepted. While filming, the researchers also considered ethical issues and respected a child's wish not to be filmed even if they had received parental consent.

Data analysis

The video recordings were transcribed, and multimodal interaction analysis was used to examine them; this approach draws on the methodologies outlined by Cowan (2013) and Norris (2004, 2013). In a qualitative study, the transcription process can be considered a negotiation that involves making both minor and major decisions early on regarding the following analysis (Heikkilä 2017). First, all the video sequences were examined in their entirety, without interruption, at least once. Then, the sequences that exhibited child-initiated free play, interactions between at least two children, and acceptable light and sound quality were selected. In the third step of the analysis, we discovered that play negotiations often featured in the clips. The chosen video sequences were analyzed through a transcription scheme that captured verbal and nonverbal communication in the form of time, speech, body language/gestures and glances. Representative still images were taken from the videos and inserted in the transcriptions from beginning to end so that they may be incorporated into the analysis. Under each transcription scheme, a categorization was made that consisted of action patterns according to the nature of the play negotiation, occurring social and emotional expressions, and explanations of how these emerged in the play negotiation; this information was supported by representative still images.

A total of 58 sequences of play negotiations were transcribed, which amounted to approximately 2 hours of raw data that was preliminarily analyzed. Of this material, 26 sequences were chosen to be examined in more detail for the presentation of the findings. At this stage, the phenomenon of exclusion was noted to be prevalent in the play negotiations and was selected as a main theme. We identified an overarching category of exclusion that focuses on how children *limit* each other during play. Within this category, we found three subcategories that illustrate how exclusion can be realized by 1) using fantasy and fiction, 2) ignoring and neglecting others and 3) practicing favoritism. Of the 26 selected sequences, 7 represent the first subcategory, which is presented here. The other two subcategories are published elsewhere (Donner, Lundström, and Heikkilä 2022; Lundström, Donner, and Heikkilä 2022).

Results

The research questions driving this study were: *What strategies do children employ in play negotiations? How do these strategies manifest themselves socially and emotionally?* This section begins with three examples of how children use fantasy and fiction as strategies to

employ play negotiations that lead to the exclusion of another child. These examples are representative of the collected material and constitute thick descriptions of the analyzed play situations. Thick descriptions refer to detailed and richly layered accounts or narratives that provide a deep and more holistic understanding of a particular social phenomenon or context (Ponterotto 2006). These data are then further examined in relation to the literature and connected to the act of exclusion.

Example 1 – It’s just poison! You could die!

A group of boys are sitting around the play area and negotiating about Lego. Tim picks up a Lego set from the bench and holds it up in front of Sami while praising it.

00: 12 – **Tim:** *What a cool box!*

00: 13 – **Mikael:** *Here’s one . . . You could break that one into bits right now because it was built with plus-plus pieces.*

00: 21 – **Tim:** *Whose is it?*

00: 22 – **Mikael:** *It’s Sami’s! Don’t open it, there’s poison in there.* [Figure 1, Walks behind Tim and looks down at him.]

00: 29 – **Tim:** *Sami, can I have a look at what’s inside?* [Turns around to face Sami.]

00: 31 – **Mikael:** *It’s just poison! You could die!*



Figure 1. Mikael (in black) goes behind Tim and observes his movements.

In this example, Sami does not take notice of the compliment paid to his Lego set (00:12), while Mikael, who is sitting further away, reacts immediately and warns Tim that the play object is very fragile (00:13). Mikael gets up and walks to Tim, leaning over him from behind (Figure 1). He looks at the box and answers Tim's question by taking the warning to the next level with his strong assertion that the content is poisonous (00:21, 00:22). Tim does not let go of the box with the poison in it, but he turns inquisitively to Sami, asking if he can look inside it (00:29). Sami does not answer Tim's question, while Mikael, who is still standing over Tim, threatens him with the claim that the box could kill him (00:31). Tim places the box back on the bench.

Example 2 – then Optimus came, but he could not fly . . .

The same boys from the previous example are playing with Lego. Tim picks up a play object – a toy made of Lego – which he enthusiastically names Optimus Prime (a famous robot), and he starts to fly it toward the other boys behind him. Mikael, who is not playing with Tim, notices his move and starts to observe what he is doing (Figure 2).

00: 52 – **Mikael:** *That is not Optimus Prime!* [Stands up and stares at Tim.]

00: 56 – **Tim:** *He is red and blue.* [Shapes the Lego pieces like a pair of binoculars and stares back at Mikael through them.]

00: 58 – **Mikael:** *That's not what he looks like.* [Reaches out to take the object from Tim's hand but does not succeed.]

01: 05 – **Tim:** *I can see through it!* [Turns over to Sami to get his attention.]

01: 09 – **Sami:** *Hey! He is not like that because they are not that small!* [Points at Tim's robot.]

01: 13 – **Mikael:** *He is big, Optimus.* [Looks down at Tim]

01: 20 – [Tim turns away and starts playing with something else.]

01: 31 – **Mikael:** *Then Optimus came, but he could not fly . . .* [Turns back to his play station.]



Figure 2. Mikael (in black) observes Tim's robot from behind.

In this example, Tim is trying to gain access to the other boys' play by flying his robot to their play stations. Mikael seems bothered by Tim and tries to reject his invented play character (00:52). Tim is not bothered by Mikael and Sami, even though they repeatedly criticize his robot (00:58, 01:09, and 01:13). In the end, Tim gives up and continues playing on his own behind the other two boys, while Mikael returns to his play station and passes one final judgment on Tim's robot (01:31).

In example 1, Tim tries to gain access to play by lifting up a Lego set and giving it a compliment; in example 2, he tries to do the same by flying his play object – the robot – toward the other boys' play stations. In the first example, Mikael assumes a position of authority to set limits on Tim. He does this through his rejection of Tim's gesture in the form of a warning that his action might have dangerous consequences (Cobb-Moore, Danby, and Farrell 2008). In the second example, both Mikael and Sami reject Tim's attempt to gain access to play by taking control over and manipulating the character of the robot (Cobb-Moore, Danby, and Farrell 2009; Corsaro 1979; Evaldsson and Tellgren 2009). In both examples, Tim does not question their warnings and terms (Cobb-Moore, Danby, and Farrell 2008), but he continues to explore new ways of gaining access and being allowed to join play (Bateman 2011; Cobb-Moore, Danby, and Farrell 2009). In example 1, he does this by looking for the owner of the play object (the box); in example 2, he continues playing. In the first example, it is noteworthy that Mikael wants to keep Tim outside the interaction space by making use of the 'it's dangerous' strategy (Evaldsson and Tellgren 2009; Tellgren 2004). This is evident as Mikael leans over Tim, observes his movements, and resorts to aggressive tactics (Cobb-Moore, Danby, and Farrell 2008; Evaldsson and Tellgren 2009) by saying scary things such as 'But there's poison in it' (00:22) and 'You could die!' (00:31). In the second example, it is notable that both Mikael and Sami wish to keep Tim outside their play. They do this by controlling him and repeatedly finding faults in and manipulating his robot. In the end, Mikael takes ownership of Tim's character with the words 'Then Optimus came, but he could not fly ...' (01:31).

In the examples above, fantasy and fiction are used in aggressive ways to exclude a child from play. In example 3 below, this kind of play steering takes a more defensive shape. Goodwin (2002) describes this defensive approach as a rather rude behavior by which children suddenly decide to 'leave the scene' of the play action or scenario, thereby leaving another child behind. Tellgren (2004) notes that this exclusion method occurs also in connection with the use of fiction. The author describes this with the Swedish words *resa iväg-strategin*, which translate approximately to 'take a trip strategy'. In this situation, certain children move away from play and do not invite another child to 'travel' with them, or they directly forbid him/her from doing so. Using scare tactics and leaving play can also be linked to children's ways of supporting and sustaining their positions of power while playing with others (Cobb-Moore, Danby, and Farrell 2008).

Example 3 – come on, Ylva! Now we're traveling to Victoria

Ylva, Fanny and Rosanna have gathered around a rack from which dress-up clothes are hanging. Ylva and Fanny are the ones who initiated the game, while Rosanna is the one trying to get permission to join in by dressing up. Rosanna stands on a stool and touches some of the clothes (Figure 3). Fanny reacts by making it clear which ones belong to her.

00: 07 – **Fanny:** *Mommy! That one! That one is mine! That one there is mine, and those two are mine.* [Points at garments that Rosanna is touching.]

Silence

00: 13 – **Fanny:** *And that one is mine . . . And this is mine.* [Points at garments that Rosanna is not touching.]

Silence

00: 16 – **Fanny:** *And this is mine. Don't take it.*

00: 20 – **Fanny:** *Come on, Ylva! Now we're traveling to Victoria.* [Rosanna and Fanny look at Ylva.]

00: 22 – **Ylva:** *But . . . We have to put these clothes on, dress up in them . . .*

00: 26 – **Ylva:** *Victoria is closing soon . . .*

00: 31 – **Fanny:** *I'm leaving now!*

00: 34 – [Fanny and Ylva run away from the play area.]



Figure 3. Fanny (bottom left) points at all the garments that belongs to her.

Fanny, who before the conversation was searching among the clothes that had fallen on the floor, straightens up to face Rosanna and makes it clear that the garment Rosanna is touching belongs to her (00:07 and 00:13; [Figure 3](#)). Rosanna picks up a tiara from the rack and holds it in her hand. Fanny looks at it and states once more that the accessory is also hers (00:16).

In this example, Rosanna does not protest despite the fact that her actions are repeatedly limited by the other two. This could mean that she is aware of and accepts the explicit rules of the play scenario: the child who makes up the game is in charge of it ([Curran 1999](#)). Although the play scenario naturally involves explicit rules, such as Fanny and Ylva having more power of decision, a favorable outcome is not achieved through the support of implicit rules ([Curran 1999](#)). This is evident in that neither Fanny nor Ylva offers Rosanna alternatives that lead to her being included ([Cobb-Moore, Danby, and Farrell 2009](#); [Curran 1999](#)). When Rosanna refrains from questioning Fanny's limitations ([Cobb-Moore, Danby, and Farrell 2008](#)), she can easily manipulate the play; in this case, she claims the objects in the form of the dress-up clothes ([Cobb-Moore, Danby, and Farrell 2009](#); [Corsaro 1979](#); [Evaldsson and Tellgren 2009](#)), which leads to her participation being significantly curtailed.

In the latter part of the example (from 00:20 onward), Fanny becomes impatient and urges Ylva to leave the play area with her. Ylva looks down at the pile of dress-up clothes and starts to put them on in a hurry (00:22). Fanny runs away while declaring loudly that she is leaving (00:31). Ylva runs after her, and Rosanna silently watches their departure (00:34). Fanny and Ylva decide to leave the scene in the play scenario ([Goodwin 2002](#)). They use the 'take a trip' strategy ([Tellgren 2004](#)), which leads to the exclusion of Rosanna. This is done with nonchalance – by neither including her in the trip nor forbidding her from joining them. 'Come on, Ylva! Now we're traveling to Victoria' (00:20).

The three examples analyzed above illustrate exclusion methods that do not involve verbal expressions such as 'You're not allowed to play with us' or nonverbal expressions such as physically pushing someone away. Instead, fantasy and fiction are used to steer the play scenario so that entry into it is rather innocently limited and blocked. The difference is that, in the first and second examples, aggressive methods such as scare tactics ('It's just poison! You could die!') and the manipulation of play objects and characters ('Then Optimus came, but he could not fly ...') are used, while the third example features defensive methods, such as disguising the fact that one is excluding another child by hurrying away from the play area ('Come on Ylva! Now we're traveling to Victoria!'). Directing the play scenario through fantasy and fiction limits entry into children's games covertly.

Discussion

This paper aims to raise awareness of how young children employ somewhat hidden and lighthearted strategies in play negotiations that lead to exclusion. Since play is considered an essential aspect of socialization and the construction of social connections ([Halberstadt, Denham, and Dunsmore 2001](#); [Howe and Leach 2018](#)), it is important to recognize how children's peer culture and its rules influence it ([Köngäs, Määttä, and Uusiautti 2022](#)). Through play, children learn to collaborate, communicate, negotiate and develop social skills ([Corsaro 2000](#)). Playing helps foster a sense of community and

social cohesion among children. Negotiations that are emotionally charged can easily lead to conflicts among the parties involved, and if the emotions become difficult to deal with, destructive social consequences can ensue (Laursen and Adams 2018; Wood 2014). In unfavorable cases, these consequences can lead to exclusion (Cobb-Moore, Danby, and Farrell 2009; Corsaro 1979; Evaldsson and Tellgren 2009).

When exclusion occurred, we very rarely captured verbal expressions such as ‘You can’t play with us’ or nonverbal expressions such as physically pushing someone away. However, we also did not witness questions such as ‘Can I join in?’ Asking for permission to join play was rare. Elsewhere (Donner, Lundström, and Heikkilä 2022), we have argued that this had a positive effect on inclusion. Children’s exclusionary behaviors became more apparent during the transcription process, as such behaviors have a tendency to be camouflaged in different ways during play activities (Tellgren 2004). This camouflaging and children’s strategy changes mean that exclusion tends to initially go unnoticed by the observer (Kirves and Sajaniemi 2012). When children use these kinds of strategies to employ play negotiations, it becomes difficult for the excluded child or children to explain to adults what happened, which is a normal way to tackle rejection by others (Peltola, Karlsson, and Kangas 2023; Tay-Lim and Gan 2012). During our study, we also reflected on the difference between social exclusion as bullying (Bullock 2002, Höstad 2005; Kirves and Sajaniemi 2012; Kirves and Stoor-Grenner 2010) and as the protection of play (Alvestad 2010; Corsaro 2018; Tellgren 2004). Therefore, a suggestion for further research would be to examine these two perspectives to better discern what characterizes them. While we cannot guarantee that the children who participated in this study would agree with our interpretations, we have made clear how the analysis was conducted and presented excerpts to be as transparent as possible.

Conclusion

This study examined social and emotional expressions in situations that involved interaction and communication among children. These instances of interaction and communication were most evident in play negotiations, and they were often linked to some type of conflict. All the situations of exclusion involved some form of limitation. This paper focused on the role of fantasy and fiction in rejecting others. It documented how children use fantasy and fiction as strategies to employ play negotiations in a hidden and light-hearted way. The social expressions present in these exclusionary situations were scare tactics, the manipulation of play objects and play characters, and defensive methods such as leaving the scene in the play scenario. The emotional expressions connected to these social expressions differed. Conflicting frustration and anger were usually exhibited by the child or children who employed the play negotiations that led to exclusion. In contrast, the children who were rejected did not show frustration or anger toward those who excluded them. Instead, they often withdrew from the play negotiation or gave up the attempt to join in. These results will hopefully increase our knowledge of the exclusionary strategies children use in play. If these relatively hidden strategies (Donner, Lundström, and Heikkilä 2022; Lundström, Donner, and Heikkilä 2022) are not identified and focused on, ECEC staff will not be able to provide the right kind of support so that children may handle their emotions positively. Children need this support to master social situations involving playmates, such as conflicts and negotiations, in a more constructive way, both when it comes to the risk of excluding others and that of being excluded by them.

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ORCID

Patricia Donner  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7482-7321>

Siv Lundström  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4141-0236>

Mia Heikkilä  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3361-348X>

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