Elementary school teachers' perceptions of and experiences with children demonstrating social withdrawal in the classroom

Qualitative Interviews from Norway

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Abstract

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Children who demonstrate social withdrawal in childhood (including shyness and unsociability) may experience increased difficulties at school and may be at risk of developing later psychological problems. Given that teachers play an important role in the social development of school-aged children, they are uniquely positioned to minimize or prevent potentially negative outcomes for socially withdrawn children. Understanding how teachers perceive social withdrawal in children can help us determine how teachers can attend to these children within the social context of the classroom. The main research question of the current study was: How do elementary school teachers experience and perceive social withdrawal in children? Further questions explored were a) What attitudes do elementary school teachers have towards social withdrawal in children? b) Do they consider social withdrawal as problematic for the child? and c) What strategies do they utilize when interacting with these children in the classroom? The current study was an independent research project conducted by the author of this thesis. Seven (6 female, 1 male) Norwegian elementary school teachers were selected through convenience and snowball sampling. Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were administered. Results from a thematic analysis provided two main themes: 1) **Social perception:** How the teachers' perceived the children, and 2) **Emotional climate**: How they interacted with the children in the classroom. Teachers reported the importance of creating a safe classroom environment where they get to know the children to create secure teacher-child relationships, and to apply suitable strategies to attend to these children's needs. Teachers described the need to prevent socially withdrawn children from going unnoticed in the classroom. Additionally, teachers perceived socially withdrawn children to achieve academic success except when learning in a social interaction. Further, teachers expected these children to have few, but close friends, and to assume social roles in the classroom context. In general, shyness was considered more problematic for the child than unsociability. The findings of the current study may be beneficial for developing strategies and interventions for socially withdrawn children in the classroom context.

Keywords: Social withdrawal, shyness, unsociability, teachers, thematic analysis

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Although a large literature exists on externalizing and disruptive behaviors in children and how this impacts children in the school context, fewer studies have investigated manifestations of social withdrawal in the classroom. Social withdrawal in childhood, including the subtypes shyness and unsociability (Rubin & Coplan, 2004), may pose psychological risks, warranting clinical and research attention to aid the development of strategies to prevent potential adverse outcomes for these children. As teachers often are a big part of children's life, teachers can potentially help prevent negative outcomes for these children. Thus, research on teachers' perceptions of and experiences with these children can provide helpful information to investigate how we can assist these children in the classroom.

Studies show that teachers have recognized social withdrawal as problematic, especially shy behavior (Li, Archbell, Bullock, Wang & Coplan, 2018; Coplan, Bullock, Archbell & Bosacki, 2015; Arbeau & Coplan, 2007). Childhood shyness has been more consistently associated with later negative outcomes than unsociable behaviors. Shy children are more likely to be rejected and excluded by peers (Kalutskaya & Buhs, 2015), to be less popular, and more likely to be disliked than their non-shy peers (Eggum-Wilkens, Valiente, Swanson, & Lemery-Chalfant, 2014; Gazelle & Ladd, 2003). Shy children also appear to be at greater risk of becoming lonely and developing depression and anxiety, in addition to poor self-esteem (Coplan, Prakash, O'Neil, & Armer, 2004; Eggum-Wilkens et al., 2014; Gazelle & Ladd, 2003). Shyness in early childhood can also be a predictor of problems in adolescence, such as poor social skills (Karevold, Ystrøm, Coplan, Sanson, & Mathiesen, 2012). Given these potential negative outcomes, it is important to better understand the social context, such as the classroom environment, and developmental processes involved, so that one can address childhood shyness at an early age.

To date, there are fewer studies on the psychological consequences of unsociability in children than on shyness, and these studies have produced conflicting results. Unsociable children may be at risk of experiencing peer rejection and peer neglect (Harrist, Zaia, Bates, Dodge & Pettit, 1997; Coplan, Ooi, Rose-Krasnor & Nocita, 2014). Other research, suggests that unsociable children are not at risk of developing internalized problems such as anxiety, and thus, unsociability may be viewed as a benign form of social withdrawal (Coplan et al., 2004).

Teachers and schools are important environmental factors in both the development of social withdrawal in children and the prevention of developing psychological problems for

these children (Coplan & Rudasill, p. 66). However, shy and unsociable children may go unnoticed in the classroom, as they usually do not disrupt the classroom. Their more active peers may take up most of the teachers' time in the classroom, so that teachers do not have much time to attend to the more withdrawn students (Bosacki, Coplan, Rose-Krasnor & Hughes, 2011). Also, teachers may not realize that some children expressing shy or unsociable behaviors may need support, as these children usually follow the rules of the classroom and do what they are told. Therefore, attempting to understand why the children are withdrawing socially is important. Perhaps they withdraw because they are experiencing nervousness or anxiety in social situations, or perhaps they just prefer to play alone. In some cases, withdrawal behaviors in children may be an indicator of other difficulties, such as experiencing problems at home.

This thesis aims to qualitatively study teachers' experiences with and perceptions of social withdrawal in children, using a thematic analysis. Given that teachers play an important role in the social development of children (Kemple, 2004; Eccles & Roeser, p. 571, 2011), teachers are of great relevance when aiming to help children who are socially withdrawn. Improving knowledge could be helpful to 1) better understand how teachers perceive and interact with shy and unsociable children, 2) if they attempt to find out why the children are withdrawing socially, and 3) what strategies they use with these children in the classroom. This research is potentially of value for both teachers and their pupils, as it could be beneficial to develop suitable strategies or interventions to prevent the development of psychosocial problems mentioned above.

Background

The study of social withdrawal can be traced back to, for instance, Campbell's studies of "Morbid Shyness" in 1896 (Campbell, 1896), Thomas and Chess with the approach/withdrawal model of temperament (1977), and Kagan, Reznick, Clarke, Snidman, & Garcia-Coll (1984), who studied behavioral inhibition and consequently contributed to an increased attention to the study of shyness. Later studies have focused predominantly on factors influencing social withdrawal. The term *social withdrawal* refers to actively removing oneself from a social situation, although the motivations for removing oneself from a social situation differs from person to person (Rubin, Coplan, & Bowker, 2009). "Social withdrawal" as a concept has several similar terms which can make it challenging when exploring previous literature in this field. Such concepts include, (being) introverted, reserved, or having selective mutism or social anxiety, among others. This paper will use the

concept "social withdrawal" as an umbrella term for *shyness* and *unsociability* (Rubin & Coplan, 2004), and these two subterms will not be used interchangeably, but rather as two distinct forms of social withdrawal. In this paper, being shy will be defined as "nervous or timid in the company of other people" (Shy, 2018). Unsociability will be defined as "the expression of individual differences in the preference for solitude and solitary activities" (Coplan & Weeks, 2010). Hence, unsociable children do not avoid social situations because they are uncomfortable or anxious, but because they prefer to be alone.

Literature review

       Factors influencing the development of social withdrawal. In terms of development, biological factors in combination with environmental factors contribute to the development (or prevention) of socially withdrawn behaviors in children. Some argue that shyness is considered a temperamental trait and is therefore biologically based (Rothbart & Bates, 2006; Karevold et al., 2012). Regarding environmental factors at home, Lewis-Morrarty and colleagues (2015) found that childhood shyness was not predictive of social anxiety when the children had secure attachments with their caregivers. Teachers and the school environment are also important environmental factors in both the development of social withdrawal and the prevention of psychological problems in children. As mentioned previously, teachers play an important role in children's development, especially social development (Kemple, 2004; Eccles & Roeser, p. 571, 2011), because the classroom is a social context that encourages social interactions with teachers and peers (Coplan & Rudasill, 2016, p. 55).

       There are some specific protective factors in the classroom that can help prevent children from developing later psychological difficulties. For instance, developing and maintaining a healthy and secure child-teacher relationship can be a protective factor for children who withdraw socially (Arbeau, Coplan & Weeks, 2010). Also, a secure teacher-child relationship can increase children's academic engagement and achievement (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Moreover, it is important for teachers to get to know every child in the classroom, and attempt to understand the child's motivations for withdrawing socially, so that they can better understand each child's needs (Coplan & Rudasill, 2016, p. 69).

       Furthermore, a good emotional climate in the classroom can also be a protective factor for socially withdrawn children, and teachers greatly influence the classroom emotional climate (Coplan & Rudasill, 2016, p. 66). Research suggests that shy children are especially sensitive to the classroom's emotional climate (Gazelle, 2006). A longitudinal study

(preschool to second grade) by Howes (2000), used the Teacher Assessment of Social Behavior Questionnaire and found that a classroom climate high on behavioral problems, low on levels of closeness to one's teachers, and high teacher-child relationship conflict, predicted high ratings of social withdrawal. Another study found that a classroom environment with high levels of teacher sensitivity, was positively associated with students being engaged and negatively associated with students being rejected by peers (Buhs, Rudasill, Kalutskaya & Griese, 2015).

Teachers' experiences with socially withdrawn children. There are some early studies of teachers' experiences with social withdrawal in children. Two studies from the 1980s (Safran & Safran, 1984; 1985) suggested that teachers had greater tolerance for social withdrawal in children than other types of classroom behaviors. Another early study showed that teachers would use strategies involving punishments and rewards when interacting with socially withdrawn children (Brophy & Rohrkemper, 1981).

Later studies show that teachers are able to distinguish between unsociable and shy children (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Coplan et al., 2015; Li, Coplan, Archbell, Bullock, & Chen, 2016). This distinction is important because it can assist teachers to understand each child's motivation to withdraw socially. Some research show that teachers understand that shy children's motivations to withdraw socially could be because of discomfort or feelings of anxiety in certain situations, and not because they do not have a desire for social contact (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Coplan et al., 2004). Further, teachers report that they are more likely to intervene when children engage in shy behaviors, than when they engage in unsociable behavior (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007). Some research shows that teachers appear to be more concerned with children who have externalizing problems (such as aggressive behaviors), than those who have internalizing problems (Chang & Sue, 2003; Loades & Mastroyannopoulou, 2010). However, research by Coplan and colleagues (2015) found that teachers are the most worried about children's shy behaviors and children's physical aggression, and are less worried about other behaviors such as unsociable behavior. Coplan et al. (2015) also found that teachers predicted shy children to have more negative outcomes than unsociable children. This is consistent with actual predictive negative outcomes mentioned above, suggesting that shy children are at greater risk of later developing psychological problems, compared to unsociable children.

Teachers' perceived expectations of socially withdrawn children. Some teachers expect unsociable children to do the best in class (Coplan et al., 2015), which may be due to

the fact that these children are expected to sit quietly and concentrate on the task at hand. Other studies show that teachers expect shy children to be less academically successful, less intelligent, in addition to having poorer language skills than their peers (Deng et al., 2017; Coplan, Hughes, Bosacki & Rose-Krasnor, 2011). This may be because these children usually do not participate in the same way in class as their more outgoing peers. Actual academic outcomes for these children include poorer performance on language abilities than peers (Evans, 2010).

A qualitative study on shyness by Bosacki et al., (2011), explored elementary school teachers' reflections on shy children in the classroom. In this study, telephone interviews were used to interview seven teachers (6 female, 1 male) from Canada. The interview included questions that explored teachers' understanding of shyness, how they perceived shy children's abilities in the classroom, advantages and disadvantages that may come with being shy in the classroom, and teachers' strategies and interventions aiming at helping shy children. One of the themes discovered was that some teachers predicted children's shyness to translate into academic success, explained by the expectations of better listening skills in shy children compared to their non-shy peers. Shy children were also expected to spend more time and energy on tasks provided by the teacher. Thus, this is in contrast to the studies above that found expectations of poor academic skill in shy children. Further results of the study of Bosacki et al. (2011) included that shy children were believed to be more likely to experience problems with self-confidence and difficulties in peer relationships. However, the teachers expected them to develop few, but close friendships with peers. In regard to teachers' strategies to assist shy children, the teachers helped the children by motivating them to engage in oral communication in class. When asked how they could help shy children succeed in oral communication in class, teachers suggested that a secure classroom environment would be beneficial.

Moreover, Bosacki et al., 2011 found that some teachers predicted shy children to be overlooked because their more outgoing peers take up teachers' attention in the classroom. Research by Dellamattera (2011) showed that teachers were more likely to intervene with socially defiant children, than socially withdrawn children. In addition to managing disruptive behavior in class, teachers' lack of time to take care of the shy students might be due to the amount of work teachers have to do (Rudasill, 2011).

A qualitative study from Canada (Bosacki, Rose-Krasnor & Coplan, 2014) explored elementary school teachers' ($n = 5$, 3 female and 2 male) experiences and perceptions of

children's listening and talking habits in the classroom. The authors investigated quietness and talkativeness in children. Regarding perceptions of quietness in the classroom, teachers believed that being quiet could hinder children's relationships with peers and teachers, as well as restrict academic development.

Coplan and colleagues (2011) published a quantitative study from Canada ($n = 275$, 241 female, 34 male) where they examined elementary school teachers' attitudes and strategies towards hypothetically quiet/shy children, talkative/exuberant children and average children. The researchers used teachers' self-reports as the method of data collection and found that teachers perceived quiet/shy children to be less intelligent and do worse academically and socially compared to their more talkative peers. Teachers were also more likely to use strategies of engaging peers or indirect strategies (such as seeking additional information about shyness, or reporting the behavior to parents) to help quiet/shy children.

As well as research on elementary school teachers, some research has been done on kindergarten teachers' experiences with social withdrawal (e.g: Coplan & Prakash, 2003; Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Coplan, et al., 2015; Li et al., 2016). Further, there is some research on students studying to become a teacher and their beliefs about social withdrawal (Li et al., 2018; Deng et al., 2017). Li et al. (2018) conducted a quantitative study and found that Chinese students in the teacher education program ($n = 506$, 91.7% female, 8.3% male) distinguished between shyness and unsociability, and also believed that shyness was more problematic than unsociability. Deng et al. (2017) found that American students studying to become teachers ($n = 354$, 312 female, 42 male), were likely to utilize social learning strategies with shy children as well as being warm and attentive when interacting with shy children. They also found that pre-service teachers perceive shy children to be less academically successful and have poorer language skills than average or exuberant children.

Perceived gender differences in socially withdrawn children. There are some contradictions in the study of perceived gender differences in social withdrawal in children. Previous studies suggest that it may be more socially acceptable for girls to be shy than for boys to be shy (Rubin & Coplan, 2004; Bosacki, 2008; Rubin, Burgess & Coplan, 2002). Researchers propose that teachers perceive boys to be less engaged, have more conflicts and be more aggressive than girls (Stipek & Miles, 2008). Others have found that teachers' perceptions and strategies do not differ for shy girls and boys (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Coplan et al., 2011). The fact that it may be more socially acceptable to be a shy girl than a shy boy might be influenced by the current gender stereotypes of society. Girls are often

expected to be more quiet and coy than boys. This bias may be present in both parent/teacher reports, peer reports and in self-reports, and may have more negative effects for boys than for girls (Doey, Coplan & Kingsbury, 2014). More research is needed on actual gender differences in social withdrawal, as well as perceived gender differences.

Research on teachers' perceptions of social withdrawal from various cultures. A limitation of prior research on teachers' experiences with and perceptions of social withdrawal in children is that studies have been mostly conducted in the USA and Canada. Although, some studies have been conducted in Russia and China. In some collectivistic cultures, such as China, shyness can be considered a positive trait (Chen, Rubin & Sun, 1992). Although, later studies from China have showed that shyness is considered negative, as it is for instance related to peer rejection (Chen, Cen, Li & He, 2005). Scarce psychology research on this topic exist from Scandinavian countries, such as Norway. People from Scandinavian countries are argued to be more reserved than other Western countries, yet some perceive Scandinavian countries as more collectivistic than the USA, for instance. Thus, the applicability of findings from other Western cultures to the Norwegian culture may be limited. Therefore, a study from Norway is much needed in this field of research. Furthermore, the existing studies are mostly conducted by the same research teams, hence, more research is needed in this field from different researchers, as well as from different cultures and countries.

Summary of the previous research. In sum, teachers seem to distinguish shyness from unsociable behaviors in children. There is conflicting research concerning expectations of shy children's ability to succeed academically compared to more outgoing children, while some research suggests that unsociable children are expected to do better in class than shy children. This may be because unsociable children do not experience the nervousness or anxiety that shy children experience. Hence, unsociable children are able to pay more attention to the subject at hand in the classroom, without being worried about asking questions and having understood the topics correctly. It has been hypothesized that having certain expectations of children's academic outcomes may affect children's actual academic success, working as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Coplan et al., 2011, Rosenthal, 2002; Jussim, Robustelli & Cain, 2009). It would be unfortunate if shy children with great academic skill and potential, end up living up to the possible lower expectations of their teachers, who may feel they are shy and less able to perform as well academically as their non-shy peers. The different expectations in shy vs. unsociable children, and the likelihood of a self-fulfilling prophecy, should be further

explored in regard to teachers' expectations of children who exhibit social withdrawal. Shyness in children has been studied to a greater extent than unsociable behaviors in children, in addition to teachers' perceptions of and experiences with these children. More research is therefore needed on unsociable children and teachers' experience with and perceptions of them. Additionally, further research should explore the influence of gender and perceived gender roles, as well as more research form different countries and cultures. As noted above, the majority of research on teachers' experiences and perceptions of social withdrawal in children has been performed in the US, Canada, with few research groups investigating this issue. Limited studies have been conducted outside of Western society, but some exist from Russia and China. Also, few studies exist from Scandinavia. The extent to which past findings may generalize to other countries is unclear, and additional research is thus warranted.

Theoretical framing

Concepts from both developmental psychology and social psychology have been utilized in this thesis, with a focus on how to prevent later psychological problems in socially withdrawn children, as well as a focus on the effects of social contexts on teachers and their pupils. Due to the fact that this thesis focuses on environmental factors (teachers and social contexts) effect on social withdrawal, theories on children's biological foundations and temperament has not been included. Although, Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979), explained below, conceptualizes how children's characteristics interplay with their environment(s). The following is a brief review of those concepts and theories that have been relevant and useful to integrate into this thesis.

Attachment theory. Although many have attempted to explain attachment between children and their caregivers, the most influential theory on attachment was introduced by Bowlby in 1969 (Lamb & Lewis, 2011, p. 471). Attachment theory holds the notion that attachments form between children and their primary caregivers when the children instinctively send signals to the caregivers for them to respond to. Whether or not the attachment between the child and the primary caregiver develops into a secure attachment is greatly influenced by the caregiver's sensitivity. Characteristics of caregiver's sensitivity include responsiveness to children's signals, such as crying in distress, and responding to these cues by providing comforting contact. Children with more sensitive caregivers tend to form secure attachments to these caregivers (Bowlby, 1988, p. 15).

Contributors to this theory include Ainsworth, who further developed a procedure to measure the security of the attachment, that she named the Strange Situation (Ainsworth,

Blehar, Walters & Wall, 1978). The Strange Situation included introducing children to unknown and stressful situations and observed how attachment behaviors occurred. According to attachment theory, the primary caregiver would function as a secure base, so that the child could safely explore their environment and could return to the caregiver in need of support. The quality of the attachment would, according to this theory, further influence how the child perceives the social world around them, through internal working models. Hence, these attachments scripts could also influence children's social development.

Some researchers have applied attachment theory to the classroom context. Secure attachment between the child and their teacher can contribute to perceiving the classroom as a secure base that is safe to explore, as well as laying the groundwork for socialization in the classroom (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Similarly to caregiver's sensitivity, teacher's sensitivity can contribute to a secure attachment between a teacher and the child, as well as making the classroom context safe to be explored by the child. Teacher's sensitivity can include getting to know the child, finding the child's motivations for exhibiting certain behaviors (such as social withdrawal) and being aware of their signals to further be able to attend to their needs (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Although attachment theory includes different attachment patterns (secure, ambivalent, avoidant, and disorganized), this thesis will focus on the importance of having secure teacher-child attachments.

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of developmental processes. Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979) was one of the first to highlight the necessity of exploring the effects of social contexts on human development (Eccles & Roeser, 2011, pp. 571). Although this theory emphasizes the effects of the social environment, the theory also holds the notion that individuals encounter their environment with their own biological dispositions. Hence, encompassing both nature and nurture in the theory. It includes different systems that are interrelated and refers to the environment surrounding the individual. Bronfenbrenner named the systems microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. The chronosystem refers to the aspect of time, and that individual's development happens over time. The microsystem refers to the social contexts that are the closest to the individual, such as family, friends, peers and teachers, and the individual interacts with the people in the microsystem on a regular basic over time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007, p. 796). Further, the mesosystem refers to how elements from the microsystem interact. The exosystem refer to components in society that the individual interacts with at a lesser extent over time, such as neighbors, social services and the mass media. The macrosystem includes the attitudes, norms

and values of the individual's culture. Interactions with all these different systems are argued to have an impact on children's development. However, the influence will vary based on what Bronfenbrenner named PPCT (process, person, context and time): the individual's characteristics, the specific social context in which the process occurs, and the aspects of time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007, p. 795 and 808).

Applying Bronfenbrenner's theory to the classroom context can be beneficial to further understand how social contexts influence both teachers and their pupils in the classroom. Proximal relationships to others, such as friends, peers and teachers, are according to this theory influenced by the societal context. For instance, teacher's perceptions (microsystem) of social withdrawal can be influenced by society's norms and culture (macrosystem), which over time (chronosystem) could influence how the teachers interact with these children. This could further have an effect on the children's developmental processes, such as academic development, socio-emotional development, and behavioral development (Eccles & Roeser, 2011, p. 571).

Group socialization theory. Harris' group socialization theory (1995; 1999; 2009) contrasts the view that parents are the main influencers in shaping their children's personality (Rubin, Coplan, Chen, Bowker & McDonald, 2011, p. 521). Harris proposed that the social context outside of the home, peer groups in particular, are of greater influence on children's personality development as well as social development. Group socialization theory combines components of both developmental psychology and social psychology. It includes the importance of norms, groups and the need to belong. When the child is outside of the family context, they often spend time with other children, seek group memberships, and take on the social norms that are prevalent in that specific group of children. Hence, further influencing the child's social development and personality development. As children often spend a lot of time interacting with peers and friends at school, this theory can be applied to the classroom social context. However, it is important to keep in mind that young children may be less influenced by peers, than they are in adolescence.

Social norms. Social norms include beliefs, values and behaviors that are appropriate for certain social contexts and groups. APA dictionary of Psychology defines social norms as:

any of the determined consensual standards that indicate (a) what behaviors are considered typical in a given context (descriptive norms) and (b) what behaviors are considered proper in the context (injunctive norms). Whether implicitly or explicitly, these

norms not only prescribe the socially appropriate way to respond in the situation, but also proscribe actions that should be avoided [...] (Social norm, 2018).

In addition to descriptive and injunctive social norms, there are personal norms, societal/global norms and provincial norms. Personal norms are on the individual level, provincial norms are the ones that are close to the individual and societal/global norms are on the societal level (Goldstein, Cialdini & Griskevicius 2008, p. 473). All of the above can influence an individual's thoughts and behaviors in different social contexts, such as the classroom social context.

The belongingness hypothesis. Our need to belong motivates us to fit in and to be liked by others. The belonginess hypothesis was introduced by Baumeister & Leary (1995), and proposed that it is a basic human need to experience a sense of belonging, to search for positive and meaningful relationships with others as well as to avoid social sanctions. Their hypothesis is grounded in evolution, proposing that having relationships with others would benefit survival and reproduction. This theory applies to different social contexts such as the classroom context, where children strive for developing meaningful friendships with peers.

Self-fulfilling prophecy. Self-fulfilling prophecy refers to "a belief or expectation that helps bring about its own fulfillment." (Self-fulfilling prophecy, 2018), and has often been used to explain how teachers' expectations of students' outcomes can influence actual student outcomes (Rosenthal, 2002; Jussim, Robustelli & Cain, 2009).

Social role theory. Social role theory holds the notion that gender roles are greatly influenced by society's gender stereotypes, without suppressing the effects of biology (Eagly & Wood, 2011). According to this theory, gender roles will influence individuals' behavior through regulating their own behaviors in regard to other's expectations of their behavior. These expectations or gender role beliefs refer to people's perceptions of how people will behave in certain social contexts (Eagly & Wood, 2011, p. 459). In the classroom context, teachers may have certain expectations to the children's behaviors based on gender. For instance, expecting girls to be quiet and boys to be more active in class.

Classroom emotional climate. A positive emotional climate in the classroom can be defined as "… the feeling of warmth and support shared between teachers and students" (Coplan & Rudasill, 2016, p. 66-67). It is further characterized by teachers supporting the children in the classroom through smiling, warmth, and kindness, as well as understanding and attending to the children's needs. The emotional climate of the classroom is an important

contextual feature influencing children's development (Eccles & Roeser, 2011, p. 585). Moreover, it is shaped by the relationships between teachers and children, and between peers, as well as being influenced by the quality of these relationships (Meirovich, 2012; Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White & Salovey, 2012). Teachers can contribute to the development of peer relationships in the classroom, which is often referred to as "the invisible hand" (Farmer, Hamm & Hamm, 2011).

Purpose of this study

The developmental and social psychology theories outlined above were aimed to be applied in the analysis process of this thesis, and the application of this theoretical framework is further presented in the results and discussion section. The purpose of the current qualitative study was to explore Norwegian elementary school teachers' experiences and perceptions of social withdrawal in children, using a thematic analysis. Hence, aiming to investigate their perceptions of social withdrawal in children as well as their experiences, including how they interact with these children in the classroom. The main research question in this study is: "How do elementary school teachers experience and perceive social withdrawal in children?"

Further research questions explored were: a) what attitudes do elementary school teachers have toward social withdrawal in children, b) do they consider social withdrawal as problematic for the child, and c) what strategies do they utilize when interacting with these children in the classroom? Other topics of interest were teachers' perceived academic performance and perceived gender differences of social withdrawal in children, as well as whether these teachers were able to distinguish shyness and unsociability. Finally, there was an interest to explore the influence of social context on teacher's thoughts and behavior, which is further explained in the method section below.

Method

Epistemology

The epistemological framework that was found most suitable for this project was a contextualist thematic analysis. It was preferred due to its emphasis on the effects of social contexts on how people make sense of different phenomena. Contextualism entails a belief that "absolute truth" or "one single reality" does not exist, but rather aspects of the truth are created in different social contexts (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 31). In the current study, one interest was to explore how the classroom, as a social context, can influence how teachers

experience and perceive social withdrawal in children. Another interest was how the broader social context, including societal norms, influence how teachers perceive social withdrawal, which can further have an impact on the children in the classroom.

In addition to selecting Contextualism as the epistemological framework, this thematic analysis takes the form as a deductive thematic analysis. This becomes apparent in the development of the interview guide, as it is based on relevant theories and previous research on social withdrawal in children. Further, the process of analyzing, coding and theme development is grounded in the chosen theoretical framework. When utilizing a contextualist framework it is important to emphasize the interpretative role of the researcher, where the researcher interprets the participants' versions of reality and these interpretations are influenced by the researchers' personal position and chosen theoretical framework (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015, p. 224).

Recruitment

The recruitment process began by contacting principals at public elementary schools in Norway. The schools were chosen at random, using a randomization equation in Microsoft Excel. The schools were initially contacted by e-mail, presenting the research topic and what it entailed to participate in the project. See Appendix A for the recruitment flyer (in Norwegian) that was attached to the e-mail. Follow-up calls were made to the different schools. Each school declined due to the fact that they get many inquiries from master's degree students and do not have the time to attend to them all. Simultaneously to contacting principals, friends, family and acquaintances were contacted who work in the school system, and asked if they knew of any elementary school teachers that would be interested in participating in this project. Information about the research topic and study details was passed on to potential participants. As such, all the participants were recruited through the latter recruitment method of convenience sampling, in addition to using snowball sampling, as some participants introduced additional teachers who were interested in participating in the project.

Participants

The final sample comprises seven Norwegian elementary school teachers, including six females and one male with ages ranging from late 20s to mid 50s. All participants had at least three years of experience working as a teacher. Three of the participants were first grade teachers. The rest included one second grade teacher, one third grade teacher, one fourth grade teacher and one seventh grade teacher. One of these teachers was currently on maternity

leave. The purpose of selecting elementary school teachers as interview subjects was that they could provide valuable perceptions of social withdrawal in children, as they work with young children almost on a daily basis. Insights from teachers could help us understand how teachers perceive and interact with these children in the classroom, and further how to better assist children with socially withdrawn behaviors.

Data collection

When conducting experience-type research, interviews are especially suitable (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 81). Face-to-face and qualitative semi-structured interviews were used as the method of data collection in this project. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they provide an opportunity to explore topics with open-ended questions to further acquire in-depth information about certain phenomena, with the use of follow-ups and probing. The interviews in this master's project were conducted in the time period from mid-September 2018 to mid-October 2018, and all interviews were performed in Norwegian. The interviews were audio recorded. Notes were taken during and after the interviews to include the participants' nonverbal communication such as body language and pauses, as well as other relevant information such as laughter. The interviews were transcribed shortly after each interview, to ensure that the interview context and content were fresh in mind. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes.

The interview guide, as mentioned previously, was semi-structured and developed based on previous research and relevant theories. While developing the interview guide, consultations with professionals in the school system were done to make sure questions were relevant to the classroom context. A pilot run with the interview guide and audio recording equipment was made prior to beginning data collection, to familiarize with the interview setting and prepare for potential challenges that could occur during an interview. After the first interview, the interview guide was evaluated to make sure that it provided suitable data to answer the research topic at hand. Also, after every interview "field notes" were taken to reflect on how the interview went and to think of potential ideas for data analysis. Each interview began with some general questions to assist with participant engagement and to gather demographic information. Such questions included the participants' ages, what grade they teach, what subjects they taught, how many children were in their class, how long they had worked as a teacher, and why they wanted to become a teacher. Further, 14 main questions were asked with sub questions (see complete interview guide translated from Norwegian to English in Appendix B). First, teachers were asked what came to mind when

they heard the term "social withdrawal". Then, it was explored whether the teachers differentiated between unsociability and shyness. Later questions touched upon different topics, such as how the teachers perceive social withdrawal in children, including their perceived academic performance of these children, and perceived gender differences. Other questions involved how the teachers interacted with socially withdrawn children in the classroom. Following the flexible nature of semi-structured interviews, the questions were not followed in the same order for each interview, but rather asked as appropriate. Semi-structured interviews provide an opportunity to explore relevant topics that were not thought of during the development of the interview guide, as the participants are free to talk about any relevant topics that come to mind. Participants were often asked to clarify what they had said, to avoid potential misunderstandings. Participants were also often informed that they could take some time to think about the question, to avoid rushing through the interview. Each interview included a final question asking the participants if there were anything they would like to add, ensuring any last minute valuable information.

Six of the interviews were conducted at the teachers' respective schools. This was suggested because it could be beneficial for the teachers to perform the interview in a familiar environment, so that they would feel comfortable. Also, it was found the most convenient for the participants. Moreover, this was thought to be helpful because it is often easier to think of relevant information while in the same context as the one being discussed, i.e., the school context. One interview was conducted in a meeting room at a library at the University of Oslo. This was due to the fact that this participant was on maternity leave, and therefore the University of Oslo was considered the best alternative because the university is also a learning environment. The participants were free to choose the time and date of the interview and all interviews were completed in a calm setting to minimize distractions. However, two interviews did include some distractions from others who were present at the school.

Data analysis

As mentioned previously, thematic analysis was used as the method of analysis in this master's project. Motivations for selecting this type of qualitative analysis include its flexibility and its aim to explore patterns across the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It also works well with the sample size and method of data collection in this project as Clarke, Braun & Hayfield (2015, p. 229) recommend 6-15 participants in master's projects that use interviews as the method of data collection. Themes across the data set are actively found by the researcher, and refer to patters that are discussed by most participants. However, it is

important to pinpoint that the aim of a thematic analysis is not to make any generalizations, but rather to acquire in-depth information about a certain phenomenon. Furthermore, theory development is not an objective in thematic analyses, compared to other forms of qualitative research such as grounded theory. This master's project follows Braun & Clarke's guidelines, applying the recommended six stages of a thematic analysis (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015, p. 231-245), described below.

Stage 1: Familiarizing with the data. In the transcription process the seven audio recordings were listened to three times each, while being aware of potential patterns across the data. The data was transcribed directly in to the qualitative computer analysis program NVivo. Non-verbal communication such as laughter and pauses was marked in square brackets in the transcriptions. The transcripts were then read several times to get properly familiar with the data set, now actively making sense of the data and looking for (analytic) patterns in the data, starting to incorporate the chosen theoretical framework. Notes were taken along the way.

Stage 2: Coding. The coding process started by looking for entities of meaning that could be relevant to answer the research question. The coding was completed in NVivo, using color-coding.

Stage 3: Themes. Further, codes were sorted into potential themes, while continuously considering which themes could be main themes, which could be subthemes and which codes did not qualify as making up a theme. Thematic maps, which are figurative representations of themes, were created both in NVivo and on paper to explore the relationships between the themes and to further organize the themes. See the appendix C for an example of a thematic map made in the research process of this thesis.

Stage 4: Themes reconsidered. In this stage it was evaluated whether the themes provided a sufficient response to the research question. It was important to make sure that the data was being analyzed, and not solely a repetition of what the participants had said. Also, it was important that patterns were actually found across the data set, and not only from one or few participants.

Stage 5: Themes named and defined. In this stage the themes and subthemes were given suitable names and further defined.

Stage 6: Writing up the paper. The process of writing up was done simultaneously with the analysis process, which is normal practice for thematic analyses (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015, p. 241). Results are presented while implementing relevant theories and

previous research, which is in line with the deductive approach to Thematic Analysis.

Ethical aspects

To address the ethical aspects of this project, applications were sent in June 2018 to the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD) and to the Internal Ethics Committee at the Department of Psychology at the University of Oslo. Both applications were approved before beginning data collection (see appendix D and E for attached approvals).

When recruiting, participants were informed at initial contact that the interviews were going to be audio recorded. Consent forms were given to each participant prior to beginning the interview (see the appendix F for original consent forms in Norwegian). Consent forms were developed in line with the Norwegian Ethics Committee's (REK) and the Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees' (NESH) recommendations. The consent forms provided the participants with information concerning what the study would entail, that participation was voluntary, that they could withdraw from the study at any point, and that the information about them would be made anonymous. Information regarding how the information about them would be stored was also included. Finally, contact information was provided, in case the participants had further questions after the interviews had ended. During the interviews the participants were asked not to mention any children by name, to assure anonymization of current or previous children at the teachers' respective schools.

To assure anonymization of the data, participant names were given pseudonyms when presenting the results through participant quotations. A list containing the fictional names and the corresponding participants' names and contact information were stored separately from the data set. School names were anonymized in the transcriptions and not mentioned in the results. Further, the audio recordings were stored safely on an encrypted and password protected memory disc.

Results and Discussion

Results are presented and discussed with regard to previous research, chosen method of analysis and theoretical framework. It is important to stress that it is the researcher's interpretations of the participants' version of reality in a specific social context, which are presented through themes. These interpretations are influenced by the chosen theoretical framework and may also be influenced by the researcher's personal position and previous experiences.

Two main themes were developed, based on the seven teacher interviews. See the thematic table below for an overview of the themes and how they are organized. Participant extracts are presented with their given fictional names.

Table 1

Thematic table

Main themes	Subthemes
Social perception	Children's functioning
	Social roles
Emotional climate	Creating a safe environment
	Understanding children's motivations for withdrawing socially
	Engaging with these children

Theme 1: Social perception

The first main theme entails how the teachers in this study perceive social withdrawal in children, in the classroom social context. This theme was named "social perception" because it involves how the teachers in this study perceive these children in a specific social context, following the rationale of the epistemological framework chosen for this thematic analysis. In social psychology *social perception* refers to "… how we form impressions of other people and how we make inferences about them." (Aronson, Wilson & Akert, 2014, p. 90). This first main theme includes two subthemes: "children's functioning" and "social roles".

Children's functioning. This subtheme explores teachers' perceptions of different aspects of the functioning of children that demonstrate social withdrawal, and includes how the teachers expect these children to perform academically and how the children are expected to work with peers and friends.

When asked how social withdrawal could affect the children's academic performance, the teachers stated that they expected these children to do well academically, using descriptions such as: being able to concentrate, pay attention and staying still in the classroom, exemplified by Olivia:

Most of those that I have met who are quiet have been good at concentrating, doing what they are told, paying attention […].

However, the teachers expressed concerns regarding learning in a social interaction. See participant extract below.

Elizabeth*: […] In time it might be a challenge since you do not participate in the same way, you withdraw socially. You learn a lot by cooperating with others, when you put up your hand and choose to participate actively.*

In the classroom context, active participation in class is expected, which in turn may pose certain challenges for children displaying socially withdrawn behaviors.

Caroline: *Like I said before, I think today's society expects everyone to actively participate. And I think that quiet children will suffer because of this. At the same time, I don't think that they will perform any poorer academically. I think that they might even do especially well in written subjects.*

In the participant citation above, Caroline pinpoints that societal norms may negatively impact these children. Today's society expects children to actively participate in the classroom context, thus the more quiet children may fall short. Thomas shows in the extract below how active participation is integrated in the educational practices at school.

[The teaching plan] includes a great deal of working in pairs and cooperation, probably more now than in the 1960/70s' school system. Group assignments, right, these processes are a part of the learning process. Then you're in a social interaction. And then if you're not speaking up in the group, you might get stuck with something you don't like working with and this may influence your engagement with the project […].

The broader societal and cultural context can contribute to shaping the school's educational practices. Within Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of developmental processes (1979), the macrosystem including the norms and attitudes of culture and society affects the school practices and the teachers in the microsystem, and thus, the children's development is influenced by both these proximal and distal social contexts. This influential

process happens over time in the chronosystem. Moreover, teachers' expectations of academic success in withdrawn children can influence actual academic outcome for these children, working as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Coplan et al., 2011, Rosenthal, 2002; Jussim, Robustelli & Cain, 2009). Such teacher-expectancy effects can have negative consequences if teachers wrongfully expect the children to perform poorly academically.

Previous research on teachers' perceived expectations of social withdrawing children's academic success is contradictory. The findings of the current study are similarly conflicting as teachers state that they do not believe that these children will perform poorly academically, but also state that the children may perform worse than their more outgoing peers if learning entails a social interaction. In addition, the results of the current study are not consistent with research showing that teachers perceive socially withdrawn children (especially shy children) to be less intelligent and have poorer language skills than their peers (e.g: Deng et al., 2017; Coplan et al., 2011). Further, the teachers in the current study did not identify differences in academic achievement for unsociable vs. shy children.

All of the teachers in this study said that they expect the children to do well with peers and friends, and some said that the children will often have few, but close relationships rather than many friends. See participant extract below.

> Elizabeth: *They often find their own group of friends. There are always others that are a bit quiet as well, so they find each other and play more calmly together. […] But they may not be comfortable with absolutely everyone around them, they would not join a group of ten children and take the lead, and play tag for instance. So they have their safe base with their own close friends that they trust.*

What Elizabeth states above is consistent with previous research on teachers' experiences with social withdrawal in children, suggesting that teachers believe these children are likely to have a few close friends (Bosacki et al. 2011). Previous research also suggests that children showing withdrawing behaviors are more likely to be rejected by peers. However, this was not a prominent pattern found in the current study. High-quality friendships in childhood are important and are shown to be a protective factor against later development of psychological problems (Gazelle & Rudolph, 2004). Similarity, we seek group memberships in our social environments. According to the belongingness hypothesis (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), our need to belong motivates us to fit in and to be liked by

others. Olivia highlights the importance of experiencing group membership, and thinks that the more quiet children might have fewer of these memberships. See participant citation below.

> *[…] feeling safe, what group you belong to […] and that you can feel like you're a member of different groups, although the more quiet [children] may not be a member of that many groups, but hopefully [laughing] they will have one group at school.*

Social roles. The teachers in this study state that some children withdrawing socially may take on a certain role in the classroom setting. They may take on the role as the *quiet one* because that is the most comfortable for them in that social context.

> Olivia*: I think that it has a lot to do with roles, that you take on a role in regards to who you are as a person but also how you can feel secure in that particular group […] It depends on the situation. Then even though no one has said it out loud, the others in the classroom may implicitly think «Oh, are you going to say something out loud in front of the class» or «You usually don't say anything.»*

Olivia demonstrates in the extract above that when the more quiet children take on a role in the classroom, they may experience certain expectations based on being the quiet one. The social roles that we take on greatly depend on the social context we are in and further affect people's expectations to how we will behave (Secord, 1982, p. 36). Some children may, for instance, be socially withdrawn at school, but more outgoing at home.

Furthermore, when exploring the teachers' perceived gender differences of these children, the teachers reported that there might in general be more girls that withdraw socially than boys. See participant extract below.

> Olivia: *All of the [quiet] ones that I think of during my time working as a teacher are girls. So that's pretty typical. But I have had some quiet boys as well, just a lot more [quiet] girls.*

The teachers in this study also show awareness of the different expectations for boys vs. girls at school, and know of some consequences of these expectations. See participant extract below.

Marianne: *There are probably certain expectations. It takes longer to figure out that a quiet girl has a problem, maybe. Because there are some expectations for boys and girls. Girls are supposed to be good [at school] and to be conscientious and quiet [...]. Boys are more active and make more noise as well. There are some gender roles there [...].*

As Marianne identifies in the extract above, there are gender roles in our society that contribute to our expectations of the children in the classroom. This is consistent with social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2011), arguing that the current gender roles in certain social contexts will have an effect on the children's behavior. Furthermore, how we perceive and expect girls vs. boys to act are influenced by the macrosystem in Bronfenbrenner's terms (1979), namely the norms of the current society and culture. These norms further influence teachers (microsystem) and their expectations of the children, which in turn can have an effect on the children's development over time. As Marianne mentions in the citations above, it may be more difficult to figure out whether girls struggle with their quietness, because they are expected to be quieter and more reserved than boys.

Previous research suggests that it is more socially acceptable for girls to be shy than for boys to be shy (Rubin & Coplan, 2004; Bosacki, 2008), although few studies suggest that perceptions of shy girls vs. shy boys do not differ (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Coplan et al., 2011). The participants in the current study do not specifically talk about the acceptance of shy girls vs. boys, but it is apparent that they perceive that socially withdrawn girls are in general more socially accepted than socially withdrawn boys. Consequently, these gender roles may contribute to socially withdrawn boys being easy to notice, but may also pose certain difficulties with these quiet boys as they do not fit in to the social role or gender stereotype that society expects them to fit in to. See participant extract below.

Elizabeth: *Perhaps the quiet boys may have a harder time than the quiet girls, because girls talk about their feelings with their friends [...] But if you are a quiet boy in a typical class where all the boys play football and are very active, then it might be difficult to tell someone that you're struggling as a quiet boy. We say there's a lot of pressure for girls, but I think that there is a lot of pressure for boys as well, having to be social, macho and good at sports. Then wanting to sit quietly and read a book is not always what's favorable.*

What Elizabeth describes above is consistent with previous studies on this field, suggesting that gender roles may cause negative effects for socially withdrawn children, especially boys (Doey et al., 2014).

Theme 2: Emotional climate

This theme refers to how the teachers engage and interact with socially withdrawn children in the classroom, and what they do to attend to the children's needs. The theme is named "emotional climate" because the ways in which the teachers interact with the pupils, affect the emotional climate in the classroom (Coplan & Rudasill, 2016, p. 66). A positive emotional climate, as mentioned previously, is when teachers are trusting and supportive of the children in the classroom. Similarly to theme 1, this second main theme follows the reasoning of the contextualist approach, as it is focuses on how social contexts affect teachers as well as children in the classroom context. This main theme consists of three subthemes: "creating a safe environment", "understanding children's motivation for withdrawing socially" and "engaging with these children", which are all factors that can affect the emotional climate of the classroom.

Creating a safe environment. Six out of the seven teachers talked about the importance of creating a safe classroom environment for the children in the classroom, which is in line with other studies on teachers' perceptions of social withdrawal in children (e.g, Bosacki et al., 2011). The teachers discussed the importance of being a trusting adult, and said that this is essential for all children in the classroom. They argue that having a good teacher-child relationship is especially important for children displaying social withdrawing behaviors. See participant extract below.

> Elizabeth: *[…] they depend on you being there, dependent on a good relationship, and that relationship starts with us [teachers]. We have to develop that relationship. To have a trusted adult is important for every child, and in particular for the more quiet ones. That we [teachers] learn to see them and not write them off because they are quiet, to actually take some time to get to know the quiet children […].*

What Elizabeth states in the extract above is in line with previous research, which suggests that a secure teacher-child relationship could be a protective factor for children expressing socially withdrawing behaviors (Arbeau, Coplan & Weeks, 2010). Drawing on attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), teaching practices that include teachers' sensitivity are not much different from good parenting strategies that create a safe environment for the children

to learn and explore. Hence, teachers can function as a secure base for children to return to in need of assistance and for scaffolded learning (Eccles & Roeser, 2011, p. 579; Coplan & Rudasill, 2016, s. 67). This may further contribute to a positive emotional climate in the classroom. Elizabeth also mentions in the citation above that is it important to take time to get to know the more quiet children. This is essential to be able to properly understand the children's needs (Coplan & Rudasill, 2016, p. 69). When the teachers take time to get to know the children, the children may feel more comfortable opening up to their teachers, demonstrated by Linda in the extract below.

> *I do try to create a safe classroom environment [...] try to develop good relationships with all of the children, and to show that I am a trusted person for the pupils so that they won't become unsure of me. Then maybe they can slowly open up, if they wish to.*

Consequently, when the children trust their teachers, the children can be more likely to confide in their teachers if there are experiencing difficulties. Although all children can benefit from a safe environment in the classroom, previous research shows that shy children can be particularly sensitive to the classroom environment (Gazelle, 2006). Caroline says that she has experienced the positive effect of a good classroom environment on children's shyness (how she does this will be further explored later in the sections below).

> *When it comes to shy children, I've had many shy students. We work with creating a good classroom environment and consequently, these children usually become less shy.*

Understanding the children's motivation for withdrawing socially. Following Caroline's reasoning of the effects of a safe classroom climate on shy children, we can see in the extract below that she distinguishes shyness from unsociability.

> Caroline: *You distinguish being [unsociable] and being shy. I believe that those who are shy need to have... [pause], the [unsociable]ones need to have a safe environment as well, but if they are shy, if it helps having a safe environment, then perhaps they won't remain quiet, they may become very outgoing.*

When making this distinction, the teachers show that they try to understand the children's motivations for withdrawing socially. In the two extracts above Caroline demonstrates that she acknowledges the fact that shy children may want to be more sociable, and may actually become more sociable in the right and safe situation. Thomas also shows that he recognizes that shy children may want to be more talkative:

> Interviewer: *Do you distinguish shyness and unsociability?* Thomas: *Yeah, because when I think of shyness, I think that it can be an inhibition for the child. That they actually want to be more visible and outgoing.*

This in consistent with previous findings suggesting that teachers understand that shy children's motivations to withdraw socially is not necessarily because of a lack of desire for social contact, but because this contact makes them anxious or uncomfortable (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Coplan et al., 2004). All the teachers in this study, except one, said that they make this distinction between shyness and unsociability, and they perceived shyness as more problematic for the child than unsociability. Perceiving shyness as more problematic than unsociability is in line with previous studies on teachers' experiences with social withdrawal in children (Li et al., 2018; Coplan et al., 2015; Arbeau & Coplan, 2007). This is also consistent with actual children's outcomes as childhood shyness is argued in previous research to be a predictor of later psychological problems, compared to research on predictive outcomes of unsociability in children which are inconclusive. The one teacher in the current study that said that she was not sure if she was able to make the distinction between shyness and unsociability, later demonstrated during the interview that she tried to find out the motivations for why the children exhibited withdrawing behaviors.

> Linda*: […] It was like «Are you lonely or do you just prefer being alone?». And then I tried to work this out during my time as a teachers in that class.*

Linda shows that she distinguishes children that want to play alone and those who actually want to play with peers, but don't have anyone to play with. The fact that these teachers are able to distinguish shyness and unsociability is consistent with previous research (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Coplan et al., 2015; Li et al., 2016). As mentioned previously, understanding children's motivations for withdrawing socially is important to better

understand how to assist them. When teachers take time to get to know the children, they can hopefully discover why the children are either unsociable or shy (or if there is some other reason to why they exhibit socially withdrawing behaviors). Trying to determine children's motivations for withdrawing socially could further have a positive effect on the teacher-child relationship, because the children see that the teachers care for them. Moreover, being able to understand why children withdraw socially can positively influence the emotional climate of the classroom, as the children may feel safe and understood by their teacher.

Among several of the teachers in this study, there appears to be an acceptance of unsociable children (compared to shy children) and an understanding that these children do not necessarily need to become more sociable. See participant extract below.

Olivia: *I try to talk about the fact that you are allowed to be alone and that it is totally fine. We talk about how we can understand whether someone is alone and lonely or alone and fine. This is important, that you just don't always say: «Yeah, you guys need to play!» and then if someone has not played with others then that's a disaster. That's not ok! I think it is important for them [the children] to know. [...]. Also, there are those who are quiet and lonely, and that's a problem.* Interviewer: *Do you find it difficult to make that distinction?* Olivia: *I think you can see it pretty easily [...].*

Olivia states that being alone and fine is not necessarily problematic, but if you are alone and lonely it may be a problem. This finding is in line with previous research suggesting that teachers are less likely to intervene when children are unsociable than when children are shy. (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007), and are less worried about unsociable children compared to shy children (Coplan et al., 2015). Some researchers suggest that unsociability may be a benign form of social withdrawal (Coplan et al., 2004), while some research has shown possible negative outcomes for unsociable children (Harrist et al., 1997; Coplan et al., 2014). Hence, previous findings on this are contradictory. Olivia demonstrated in the extract above that she creates a social norm in the classroom that it is accepted to be unsociable, which may further positively influence the emotional climate of the classroom. Nevertheless, both shy and unsociable children need to be attended to in the classroom, to potentially prevent negative outcomes.

Engaging with these children. After teachers have spent some time getting to know the children, developed secure relationships with them, and understood the children's motivations

for withdrawing socially, teachers can further apply suitable strategies to assist the children in the classroom. All of the teachers in this study state that they have strategies that they use to help children that display withdrawing behaviors in the classroom. Four out of seven teachers said that they use strategies such as pulling names out of a box (instead of asking for volunteers) to engage all children in oral communication in the classroom. Marianne exemplifies this strategy in the extract below.

I also have popsicle sticks with names written on them, each child's name on each stick. And then instead of raising their hands, I choose a stick at random. And then you have to respond. And so, they get to practice, the ones who do not want to raise their hand, because there are some children that never do [raise their hand]. So, they get to practice saying something out loud in front of the class, and consequently become confident. Also, you avoid that just the same children get to talk all the time. Sometimes it is also hard to keep track of who has spoken and who has not […] so then I use the sticks. […]You can use them [the sticks] for many things [laughing]. Interviewer: *[Laughing] […]* Marianne: *You can also use the sticks when dividing the children in to groups. It's not like: «Work with whoever you want.» I take charge because it can be perceived as unsafe for the ones that do not know who they want to work with. Some of the children plan out straight away who they want to work with, and exchange looks. And I don't want them to have to think about this. So then I use the popsicle sticks, and just pull some [sticks] and say «You two will be working together and you guys... .»* Interviewer: *That's clever.* Marianne: *I do this so that the more quiet children will feel safe. You should not have to go through a situation where nobody chooses you, so then I take charge.*

In this participant extract above Marianne says that she uses the popsicle sticks to make all the children participate actively in class. She is following both the societal norm of the macrosystem and classroom social norm of the microsystem, expecting every child to participate orally in class. She further describes that the use of sticks can help the more quiet students to feel safe and secure in the classroom. When she takes the lead to choose groups in the classroom, she can help prevent negative situations where someone might feel left out, promoting a good emotional climate.

Another strategy that the teachers use to engage with these children in the classroom is the use of peers. The teachers form pairs of students that have to work together ("learning

partners"), or create "stations" in the classroom where the children will work in small groups. The use of "learning partners" and "stations" are intended to make every child more comfortable participating actively and promotes cooperation skills and social skills. All of the teachers said that they use a "learning partner" in the classroom; see participant extract below on how Olivia uses this strategy in the classroom to help make the more quiet children feel comfortable with oral communication.

I use learning partners a lot. They sit in pairs and talk about the questions together, and take turns on who will start talking. And then I often pull random names as to who will be answering the question in the class. And then they have already discussed the question together, so that they feel confident in their response. They can then answer by saying «Me and him/her.... we think that...» instead of «I think that... ». It can feel more comfortable to answer «we».

Linda shows how she uses this strategy also when the children have not discussed the questions together beforehand:

If the child that I have chosen to answer the question does not want to respond, I can use their learning partner and ask them «Could you help out? Could you whisper?». Because sometimes the learning partner has his/her hand raised and knows the answer to the question, so then they can whisper [it to the one that did not want to answer]. [...] So that it does not become a negative thing in the classroom, [I] try to avoid there being a focus on the fact that someone never wants to respond orally or are never able to respond. I encourage cooperation.

Linda specifies the importance of not focusing on the fact that someone always does not want to respond, contributing to a safer emotional climate for the children in the classroom. Using peers to engage these children and help them practice socially is in line with research on teachers' strategies with social withdrawal in children (e.g: Coplan et al., 2011). All of the teachers in this study say that they use group-work in the classroom and four out of seven teachers state that they use "stations".

Olivia: *We also use stations, usually two hours a day, as a type of group-work. The children are put at different stations, in addition to a station where the teacher is present. And then I get to interact with 4-5 children at a time for 20 minutes, where everyone in the group has to say something. For instance by reading out loud. So then they are in a small group and can become more comfortable with the others in their group, hopefully [laughs].*

How the teachers organize activities in the classroom can affect whether the children withdraw socially or not (Eccles & Roeser, 2011, p. 584). Olivia explains that with the use of "stations" in the classroom, the children may become more comfortable to speak up when in a small group of children, further encouraging oral participation in class. How the teachers organize group activities in the classroom can also influence the formation of friendships between children. When teachers contribute to friendship building between peers, it is often referred to as the invisible hand (Farmer, Hamm & Hamm, 2011). These relationships, including the quality of these are believed to shape the emotional climate of the classroom (Meirovich, 2012; Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White & Salovey, 2012). Thus, this is another way in which teachers influence the classroom emotional climate. Nonetheless, teachers can influence children's social development through different strategies in the classroom. According to group socialization theory, peer groups are of great influence when it comes to both children's social and personality development (Harris, 1995; 1999; 2009), although young children may to a lesser degree be influenced by peers, compared to children in high school, for instance.

Previous research suggests that teachers use social learning strategies to help socially withdrawn children in the classroom (Deng et al. 2017), this was not a prominent theme in the current study as only one of the teachers explained that she used social learning strategies to help these children. One last strategy that was brought up by the teachers in this study was taking time to attend to the children that withdraw socially. All of the teachers bring up the importance of paying attention to these children in the classroom, but only four of them said that they use strategies to assure that the children feel noticed. See participant extract below.

Caroline*: I try to make the children feel comfortable, I look at them and stay close to them, so that they experience being noticed. I also limit the ones that speak a lot, so that it's not always about having to raise your hand. I choose the more quiet ones [to*

answer questions] and often ask them something I know that they are good at, [...] so that I know they can respond.

Caroline makes the children feel noticed by asking them questions she knows the children can answer, showing them that she remembers something about them and demonstrating that she wants them to take part in the classroom. Recall Caroline's participant extract from the "creating a safe environment" subtheme, where she states that creating a safe environment help shy children become more sociable. The extract above demonstrates her strategy in creating a safe environment in the classroom. Attending to these children, and making them feel noticed can further contribute to a secure teacher-child attachment in the classroom.

Nevertheless, children that exhibit withdrawing behaviors are not always attended to in the classroom. Emily brings up the importance of being aware of the fact that these children may go unnoticed in the classroom.

I think, especially when we have so many pupils in this class, that it is very important for them [the children that withdraw socially] to be seen as well. That you stop by their desk and make sure that you have talked a bit with them every day. So that they feel that they have been noticed just as much as the ones who raise their hand a lot or speak up. Because they can quickly disappear in a noisy classroom, it is easy to overlook them. I think that this is really important to be aware of. Also that they get just as much praise [as the other children] [...] and make sure that you include them by asking if they want to participate as well, because sometimes they want to, but are too afraid to say so.

Five of the teachers in this study said that the more quiet children may be overlooked in the classroom, which is in line with previous studies on teachers' experiences with children's social withdrawal (Bosacki et al., 2011). There appeared to be consensus among the teachers in this study that the more outgoing children take up a lot of the teachers' attention in the classroom. See the following participant extracts from Olivia and Elizabeth.

Olivia*: They [the children that withdraw socially] are forgotten [instead of the teacher taking action]. With such few resources in school, it's the behaviors you see the most that get prioritized, such as language problems and behavioral problems.*

Elizabeth: *Children with externalizing behaviors take up a lot more time […]. The ones that are the most outgoing are the ones that get the most attention, that's just how it is.*

What Olivia and Elizabeth expressed is consistent with what other teachers have stated in previous research using teacher reports, about the likelihood of withdrawing children being overlooked more often than their more outgoing peers because the more outgoing children take up much of the teachers' attention (Bosacki et al. 2011). Another reason why the children with externalizing behaviors take up more of the teachers' time, may be because teachers are, according to previous studies, more worried about children with externalizing problems compared to internalizing problems (Chang & Sue, 2003; Loades & Mastroyannopoulou, 2010). Finally, all of the teachers in this study stated that they knew of no specific intervention programs at school designed to help children that withdraw socially. Nevertheless, the right use of strategies and interventions can contribute to a good emotional climate in the classroom context further benefitting the children that withdraw socially. This can consequently contribute to the prevention of later negative psychological outcomes for these children.

Implications for future research

The current study has provided in-depth information about how elementary school teachers perceive and experience social withdrawal in children. The results can be valuable for teachers as well as their pupils, because it can help teachers to better understand how to assist socially withdrawn children in the classroom. This may in turn have a positive effect on the children, as teachers may help prevent later development of psychological or social problems for these children. The fact that interviews on this topic were done, may further contribute to raised awareness on this topic for the current teachers in this study, as well as for their colleagues and the school in which they work. Findings from this study may also be beneficial for developing suitable strategies and interventions for socially withdrawn children in the classroom context. However, it is important to stress that qualitative research does not

aim to generalize across populations, thus, the current study does not claim to be generalizable. Although results from this study may be interesting for teachers, as well as interesting to further study in future research. It is important to stress that if teachers wish to apply findings from the current study, they should customize these findings to their specific classroom context, as no social context is the same. In addition, one should be wary when applying findings from elementary school to other school grades such as high school.

Findings from this research can potentially help raise awareness of the need to study teachers' perceptions of and experiences with social withdrawal in children. Furthermore, it may help explore possible protective factors such as having secure teacher-child attachments, and creating a good emotional climate in the classroom. The emotional climate of the classroom is an essential contextual factor in influencing children's development (Eccles & Roeser, 2011, p. 585), and research suggest that shy children are especially sensitive to the classroom emotional climate (Gazelle, 2006). Therefore, one could benefit from future studies exploring how teachers can positively influence the emotional climate of the classroom, as well as how teachers can help build secure teacher-child relationships in the classroom.

As many teachers, both in the current study and in previous research, worry that socially withdrawn children may be overlooked in class, one should further explore how one can prevent these children from going unnoticed in the classroom. Findings from this study, as well as previous studies, suggest that children with externalizing problems are attended to at a greater extent than children with internalizing problems. These are also the ones that have received the most attention in research, compared to internalizing behaviors. Future research could focus on exploring strategies that make sure socially withdrawn children feel seen in the classroom, as teachers in the current study demonstrated. For instance, one could explore the effects of reducing the number of children per teacher in the classroom.

Other strategies to help these children in the classroom deserve attention in future research. Findings of the current study included strategies where teachers pull names out of a box and engage peers when encouraging oral participations in socially withdrawn children, as well as taking time to make sure these children feel seen. Only one of the teachers in the current study said that she used social learning strategies with these children and previous studies suggest that teachers use this strategy when accelerating social development in socially withdrawn children (Deng et al. 2017). It would be interesting to investigate whether any of these strategies (or others that are applicable) actually work and whether these actually help these children. Future research should explore socially withdrawn children's experiences

with teachers' strategies and whether or not these children agree that the strategies are suitable for them, or have been suitable for them over time. Children's thoughts on what could help them in the classroom should be considered valuable when investigating which strategies to utilize in the classroom.

Although the teachers in this study used specific strategies when interacting with these children in the classroom, they reported no specific interventions programs used by the school to assist socially withdrawn children. Few interventions exist that aim to help socially withdrawn children. In 1938, Lowenstein & Svendsen developed what appears to be the first intervention program, using play therapy to help socially withdrawn children. Coplan, Schneider, Mathiesen & Grahan (2010) created an intervention program for shy children in kindergarten, and focuses on implementing social strategies with the use of groups (sitting in a circle) and free play. Classroom-based interventions such as "FRIENDS for life" (Shortt, Barrett & Fox, 2011) are grounded in cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), and is designed to help parents and children with anxiety. Thus, a program such as this could be beneficial for shy children experiencing anxiety (Coplan & Rudasill, 2016, p. 86). Another classroom-based intervention program called "INSIGHTS into Children's Temperament" (McClowry, 2014). This intervention program can help children, parents and teachers understand children's temperament, includes a puppet named "Cloretta the Cautious" who is socially withdrawn and aims at teaching children emotional and social skills. One could in future studies evaluate whether interventions from other countries could be applicable for Norwegian schools.

The current research could also potentially contribute to a raised awareness of the effects of teachers' expectations on these children in the classroom, for instance concerning academic performance and gender roles, and that these expectations often are influenced by the broader social context (society's norms). The effects of perceived gender roles on these children could be further studied, as well as whether these gender roles can have negative consequences for children that withdraw socially. Hopefully, the findings of this study can encourage teachers and society as a whole, to take on a way of thinking that accepts children who do not fit in to the current gender stereotypes of society. Both findings of the current study and previous studies propose conflicting results from teachers' perceptions of socially withdrawn children's academic success. More research on this is therefore warranted, and argued to be important because teachers' perceptions of children's academic success have an effect on actual academic outcomes, which may work as self-fulfilling prophecies. Also, more

research on perceived gender differences in social withdrawal, as well as the effects of gender roles on the children may be interesting to study further.

In general, more research is needed on unsociable behaviors in children, as well as teachers' perceptions and experiences of these, as most of the current research is on shyness in children. The current research did not provide extensive details on teacher's perception of shyness vs. unsociability, but found that shyness was perceived as more problematic than unsociability and that unsociability was found more acceptable than shyness. Previous research does not include consistent findings on the different perceptions of these types of social withdrawal. Therefore, research on the different perceptions and experiences of shyness vs. unsociability could be interesting to study in future research.

Research from other cultures and countries is needed as most of the research done on teachers' experiences and perceptions of social withdrawal comes from Western countries, although some have been conducted in Russia and in China. Nevertheless, the applicability of Western research on non-Western cultures are inconclusive, as well as the applicability of studies from the US and Canada on the Norwegian culture. Hence, more research is needed in this field of research from Norway as well as other countries and cultures. It would be interesting to investigate how the societal norms, the teaching plans, and gender roles of a more collectivistic culture would differ from the more individualistic cultures in the Western societies. Most research on teachers' experiences with and perceptions of socially withdrawn children have been conducted by the same researchers, thus, future research is also required from different research teams.

Both quantitative and qualitative studies have previously been utilized when exploring teachers' perceptions of and experiences with social withdrawal in children. Together, quantitative and qualitative studies are beneficial for a better understanding of how teachers experience, perceive and interact with socially withdrawn children. More research using both of these methodologies can be beneficial to acquire a deeper understanding of this phenomenon. Qualitative studies can for instance provide new subtopics that can be further explored in quantitative studies.

Methodological Aspects

As mentioned previously, qualitative studies do not aim to generalize across populations, but rather aim to acquire in-depth information about a specific group of people in a specific social context, hence, this project does not provide generalizable results. It is important to stress that findings from this study are subjective interpretations of the data, done

by the author of this thesis. This study has been evaluated by the criteria applicable for qualitative research, including trustworthiness, reflexivity, transparency, coherence and consistency.

Trustworthiness

To enhance the trustworthiness of this study, certain precautions were made. Participant extracts were carefully translated from Norwegian to English, assuring that the meaning was maintained. The translated participant extracts were then cross-checked by someone that was both fluent in Norwegian and in English. Further, participant validation was used on cases where the meaning of the data could be perceived as unclear. Inter-rater reliability was found not applicable for this study due to the chosen epistemological framework; a contextualist framework allows different interpretations across researchers (Madill, Jordan & Shirley, 2000). Although, it was found necessary to consult with others to assure that the analysis was logical and relevant to the research question. Throughout the different stages of the study (data collection, transcribing, coding/analyzing, theme development, and writing up) it was important to stay true to the chosen qualitative method, but also the chosen epistemological framework, continuously thinking about the effects of social contexts and about the interpretive role of the researcher.

Reflexivity

Regarding the role of the researcher in this study, it has been attempted to emphasize that it is the researcher that interprets the participants' understanding of reality in a particular social context. The researcher's interpretations are influenced by the chosen theoretical framework, which is in line with a deductive thematic analysis and a contextualist framework. Also, the researcher's interpretations may be influenced by the researcher's personal position as well as previous experiences. There was a personal motivation for studying social withdrawal in childhood and a personal interest for including social psychological terms and the influence of social contexts on human thoughts and behavior.

Transparency

It was attempted to make clear descriptions of what had been done during the research process, including justifications for methodological choices, as well as being transparent in conveying the results.

Coherence and consistency

Throughout the research process, it was continuously evaluated whether the individual parts of the research (research question, literature review, theories, method, analysis,

discussion and conclusion) corresponded with each other and made sense as a whole, attempting to improve coherence. Further, attempts were made to ensure that the theoretical concepts were consistently used in the research process.

Methodological limitations

Thematic analyses focus on exploring patterns across the data set, and consequently one might miss valuable information from participants that say something distinctive from the other participants. Also, when using interviews as method for data collection, there is a chance of social desirability. Participants may present themselves in a more socially desirable manner, leaving out possible valuable information about the topic at hand. In the process of translating interview extracts there is a possibility of information becoming lost in translation, although certain measure were made to assure the quality of the translations (cross-checking). It could have been interesting to present participants' demographic information alongside participant extracts, but to assure anonymization, demographic information was excluded from the results.

More open-ended questions could have been included in the interview guide, in addition to more follow ups in the actual interviews, as this could have provided more fruitful data. Specifically, it would have been interesting to get more extensive data on differences in teachers' perceptions of shyness vs. unsociability. Nevertheless, being a novice researcher provides an opportunity to learn from research experiences.

Concluding remarks

In this thematic analysis, the purpose was to explore Norwegian elementary school teachers' perceptions of and experiences with social withdrawal in children. After exploring the main patterns across the data set through coding, two main themes were identified. The first main theme, "social perception" referred to how teachers perceived these children in the classroom, and the second main theme "emotional climate" referred to how teachers interacted with the children in the classroom. Teachers and the classroom context can have a great impact on children's development, as proposed by Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979), group socialization theory (1995; 1999; 2009) and Bowlby's attachment theory (1969) applied to the classroom context. Throughout the study, there was a focus on the effects of social contexts (society-at-large and the classroom context) on teachers' perceptions and experiences, as well as how this could influence children's development, continuously following the rationale of the contextualist framework chosen for this thematic analysis.

The first main theme of social perception was comprised of two subthemes, "children's functioning" and "social roles". Children's functioning in the classroom related to teachers' perceived expectations of academic achievement for these children, as well as how these children were expected to work with friends and peers. In sum, the teachers expected the children to do well academically, except when learning entails social interaction, such as working in pairs or teams. Teachers did not identify differences in academic achievement for unsociable vs. shy children. Socially withdrawn children were expected to do well with peers and friends, however, they were predicted to have just a few close friends. The subtheme named "social roles" included how the teachers experienced the children to assume roles in the classroom, such as being the quiet one, as well as perceived gender roles in social withdrawal. Gender roles were discussed in regard to social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2011), and results suggest that there might be greater social acceptance for quiet girls vs. quiet boys. In addition, it was proposed that being a quiet boy may pose comparatively greater problems, as it conflicts with current gender expectations held in society-at-large.

The second main theme called "emotional climate" included strategies employed by the teachers when interacting with the children in the classroom. Three subthemes included "creating a safe environment" in the classroom, "understanding children's motivations for withdrawing socially" and how the teachers are "engaging with these children" in the classroom. These themes were discussed in regard to attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) and previous research on emotional climates. The teachers pinpointed the importance of having a safe classroom environment, in which they get to know the children. Getting to know the children is important to be able to understand and attend to the children's needs. This can further be beneficial for a secure teacher-child attachment and can have an overall positive effect on the classroom emotional climate. In this section, the teachers demonstrated that they were able to distinguish shyness and unsociability. Teacher strategies to encourage participation of socially withdrawn children included drawing names out of a box and engaging peers to encourage oral participation in class. Finally, teachers brought up the importance of noticing the children in the classroom, although many said that socially withdrawn children may go unnoticed in class.

It was apparent in the data set that teachers focused greatly on active participation in the classroom and hence follow the societal norms and classroom norms that children are expected to participate actively in class, as part of the teaching plan. Using Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979), it was proposed that teachers in the microsystem are influenced

by society's norms in the macrosystem, consequently influencing the children's development. Although there was great emphasis on encouraging oral participation in children that demonstrated socially withdrawing behaviors, there appeared to be greater acceptance of unsociable behaviors vs. shyness in children. The teachers demonstrated an understanding that unsociable children may not need to become more sociable, because these children are comfortable in solitude, while shy children may need to become more sociable because these children may actually want to become more outspoken. Thus, shyness was considered more problematic for the child than unsociability.

In conclusion, teachers can have a great impact on children's development in the classroom, thus, investigating how they perceive and interact with socially withdrawn children is therefore highly relevant. Teachers could benefit from increasing awareness of their own perceptions of these children, avoiding potential negative outcomes such as poor academic outcomes. Teachers can ensure that children feel seen in the classroom, take time to get to know them and find out why they are withdrawing socially. They can help build a secure teacher-child relationship, thereby positively contributing to the classroom emotional climate. Moreover, teachers should apply suitable strategies to help these children in the classroom. Future research could further investigate protective factors for these children in the classroom, potentially avoiding adverse outcomes for these children. Hopefully, the current research can help prevent socially withdrawn children from being overlooked in the classroom, as well as in psychology research.

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Appendix A.

Recruitment flyer

(see the following page)

Vil du bidra til forskning om

sosial tilbaketrekning

hos barn?

Søker <u>barneskolelærere</u> til å delta i et forskningsprosjekt til en masteroppgave i psykologi

Deltakelse innebærer <u>å bli intervjuet i ca. 1 time</u>, hvor deltakerne forteller om sine oppfatninger og opplevelser med sosial tilbaketrekning hos barn. Intervjuet blir tatt opp på lydbånd.

Hvis du er interessert, eller har noen spørsmål, ta kontakt på e-mail eller telefon:

E-mail: kinedym@student.sv.uio.no
Tlf: 4155915

Universitetet i Oslo

1. Let's begin with some general questions
   - For how long have you worked as a teacher?
   - Why did you want to become a teacher?
   - What subjects do you teach?
   - What grade?
   - How many students are in your class?
   - Is your class multicultural?
   - Is it ok if I ask how old you are?

2. When you hear the term "social withdrawal in children", what are you immediate thoughts?
   - Do you distinguish shyness and unsociability (i.e being quiet but not shy)?

3. Can you tell me about any experiences you have with socially withdrawn children?

4. What benefits or disadvantages come with being shy or unsociable?
   - Do you consider being shy or unsociable a challenge? Why/why not?
   - A challenge in the classroom context? Academic performance?
   - A challenge for the child?
   - Do you think that they need to change? Why/why not?
   - Do you think that today's society prefers people that are outgoing or more quiet?
   - Is a quiet child a topic when meeting with the parents?
   - Any other thoughts on social withdrawal in children?

5. What effects later in life do you think these children can experience?
   - Positive/negative effects?
   - Work life?
   - Social life?
   - Well-being?

6. Have you noticed any gender differences in social withdrawal?
   - If yes, what are the differences?
   - What about acceptance for quiet boys vs. quiet girls.

7. (if applicable) Have you noticed any cultural differences in social withdrawal in children?

8. How do you interact with these children in the classroom?

   - Do you use any particular strategies? Why? Do they work?
   - If no strategies – could you think of any that could beneficial?
   - What about during recess?
   - Are there any routines or interventions that exist at school to assist the children that withdraw socially? Any workshops for teachers?

9. During you course of education, did you learn any strategies for helping/interacting with children who withdraw socially?
   - If yes, which strategies?

10. What factors in the classroom do you think contribute to whether a child is shy or unsociable?
    - Do you use mostly group exercises or individual exercises? How do you think this affects the children?
    - What group sizes do you use?
    - Any other reasons why children withdraw socially, that are not dependent on the classroom?

11. What role do you think you have as a teacher for children's development?

12. Any thoughts on how you think these children work with peers?
    - Friends?

13. Any other experiences with social withdrawal in children that you would like to share?

14. Do you identify as being shy or quiet yourself?
    - Outgoing?
    - How do you think that your personality influences how you interact with these children?

To conclude

   - Is there anything you would like to add before we finish?
   - (say thank you, and let them know that they can contact you at any time if they have questions).
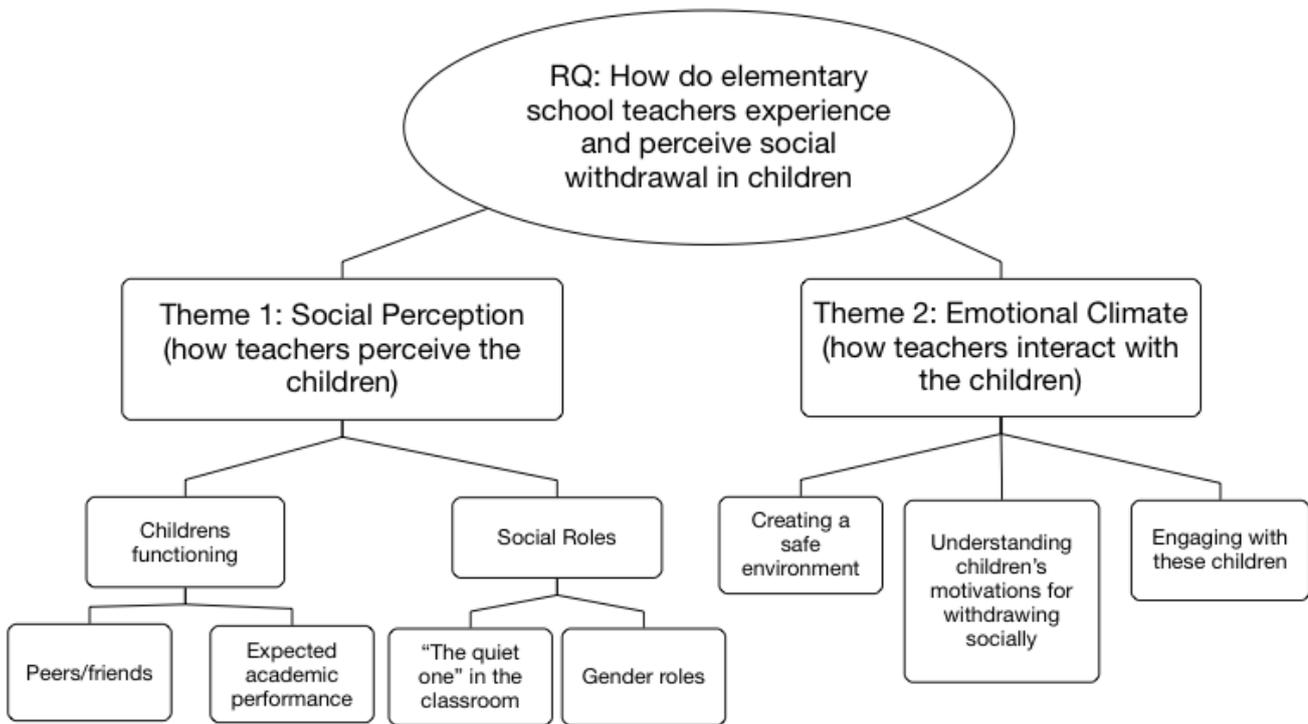
Figurative representation of the themes

Figure C1. Thematic map.

University of Oslo

Faculty of Social Sciences – Departement of Psychology

Kine Dymbe
CC: Sophie Seychelle Havighurst
Deborah Lynn Reas

Ref.number: 3512765 Date: 16 August 2018

Ethical evaluation of research project

Your project, "How do elementary school teachers experience and perceive social withdrawal in children?", has been ethically evaluated by the Department of Psychology's internal research ethics committee based on received information.

Your project, "How do elementary school teachers experience and perceive social withdrawal in children ", has been exempt from full review and thus approved by the Department of Psychology's Research Ethics Committee. Remember to register the project in Helseforsk: http://www.uio.no/for-ansatte/arbeidsstotte/fa/regelverk-og-forskningsetikk/kvalitetssystem-helse/prosjekter/sv/psi/ (not obligatory but recommended)

Sincerely yours, on behalf of the Committee,

Erik Stänicke and Anne-Kristin Solbakk
Members of the Department of Psychology's Research Ethics Committee

https://www.uio.no/for-ansatte/enhetssider/sv/psi/psi-eng/internal-ethics-committee/index.html

Sophie Seychelle Havighurst
Postboks 1094 Blindern
0317 OSLO

Vår dato: 02.07.2018   Vår ref: 61258 / 3 / BGH   Deres dato: Deres ref:

Forenklet vurdering fra NSD Personvernombudet for forskning

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 22.06.2018. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

61258	How do elementary school teachers experience and perceive social withdrawal in children?

Behandlingsansvarlig Universitetet i Oslo, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig   Sophie Seychelle Havighurst
Student   Kine Dymbe

Vurdering
Etter gjennomgang av opplysningene i meldeskjemaet med vedlegg, vurderer vi at prosjektet er omfattet av personopplysningsloven § 31. Personopplysningene som blir samlet inn er ikke sensitive, prosjektet er samtykkebasert og har lav personvernulempe. Prosjektet har derfor fått en forenklet vurdering. Du kan gå i gang med prosjektet. Du har selvstendig ansvar for å følge vilkårene under og sette deg inn i veiledningen i dette brevet.

Vilkår for vår vurdering
Vår anbefaling forutsetter at du gjennomfører prosjektet i tråd med:
• opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet
• krav til informert samtykke
• at du ikke innhenter sensitive opplysninger
• veiledning i dette brevet
• Universitetet i Oslo sine retningslinjer for datasikkerhet

Veiledning

Krav til informert samtykke
Utvalget skal få skriftlig og/eller muntlig informasjon om prosjektet og samtykke til deltakelse. Informasjon må minst omfatte:
• at Universitetet i Oslo er behandlingsansvarlig institusjon for prosjektet
• daglig ansvarlig (eventuelt student og veileders) sine kontaktopplysninger • prosjektets formål og hva opplysningene skal brukes til

• hvilke opplysninger som skal innhentes og hvordan opplysningene innhentes
• når prosjektet skal avsluttes og når personopplysningene skal anonymiseres/slettes

På nettsidene våre finner du mer informasjon og en veiledende mal for informasjonsskriv.

Forskningsetiske retningslinjer
Sett deg inn i forskningsetiske retningslinjer.

Meld fra hvis du gjør vesentlige endringer i prosjektet
Dersom prosjektet endrer seg, kan det være nødvendig å sende inn endringsmelding. På våre nettsider finner du svar på hvilke endringer du må melde, samt endringsskjema.

Opplysninger om prosjektet blir lagt ut på våre nettsider og i Meldingsarkivet
Vi har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet på nettsidene våre. Alle våre institusjoner har også tilgang til egne prosjekter i Meldingsarkivet.

Vi tar kontakt om status for behandling av personopplysninger ved prosjektslutt
Ved prosjektslutt 15.05.2021 vil vi ta kontakt for å avklare status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Gjelder dette ditt prosjekt?

Dersom du skal bruke databehandler
Dersom du skal bruke databehandler (ekstern transkriberingsassistent/spørreskjemaleverandør) må du inngå en databehandleravtale med vedkommende. For råd om hva databehandleravtalen bør inneholde, se Datatilsynets veileder.

Hvis utvalget har taushetsplikt
Vi minner om at noen grupper (f.eks. opplærings- og helsepersonell/forvaltningsansatte) har taushetsplikt. De kan derfor ikke gi deg identifiserende opplysninger om andre, med mindre de får samtykke fra den det gjelder.

Dersom du forsker på egen arbeidsplass
Vi minner om at når du forsker på egen arbeidsplass må du være bevisst din dobbeltrolle som både forsker og ansatt. Ved rekruttering er det spesielt viktig at forespørsel rettes på en slik måte at frivilligheten ved deltakelse ivaretas.

Se våre nettsider eller ta kontakt med oss dersom du har spørsmål. Vi ønsker lykke til med prosjektet!

Vennlig hilsen

Dag Kiberg

Lis Tenold Kontaktperson: Lis Tenold tlf: 55 58 33 77 / lis.tenold@nsd.no

Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjekt

Bakgrunn og hensikt
Mitt navn er Kine Dymbe og jeg er masterstudent i Psykologi på Universitetet i Oslo. Jeg skal skrive masteroppgave i fordypningen "Utvikling og forebygging av psykiske vansker hos barn og unge" og har i den forbindelse opprettet et forskningsprosjekt. Hensikten med dette prosjektet er å høre med barneskolelærere om deres erfaringer med sosial tilbaketrekning hos barn. Derfor har du som barneskolelærer blitt invitert til å delta i denne studien.

Hva innebærer prosjektet?
Studiet innebærer å bli intervjuet i maks 1 time i et rolig lokale. Intervjueren stiller spørsmål om ulike tema knyttet til sosial tilbaketrekning hos barn. Idéen er at intervjueren skal snakke minst mulig, og deltakerne kan snakke fritt om sine opplevelser og tanker om sosial tilbaketrekking hos barn. Deltakerne bes om å ikke nevne barn med navn eller andre gjenkjennende opplysninger, men at man heller forteller generelt om sine erfaringer med disse barna. Intervjuet vil bli tatt opp på lydopptaker, og intervjueren vil ta notater underveis.

Hva skjer med informasjonen om deg?
Informasjonen om deg vil bli anonymisert, og det vil ikke være mulig å kunne gjenkjenne deg hvis prosjektet blir publisert. Det vil heller ikke bli registrert navn eller andre direkte gjenkjennende opplysninger sammen med innsamlet data. Ditt navn vil bli erstattet med en kode, og navneliste med tilsvarende kode blir oppbevart adskilt fra innsamlet data. Originale navn vil bli gitt fiktive navn under oppbevaring og eventuell publikasjon. Skolen hvor du jobber vil ikke bli navngitt, men bydel/regional informasjon kan bli oppgitt i eventuell publikasjon.

Prosjektleder har ansvar for at informasjonen om deg vil bli oppbevart sikkert. Innsamlet data vil be oppbevart trygt og kryptert. Det er bare prosjektleder som vil ha tilgang til innsamlet data. Etter prosjektet er avsluttet i juni 2019, vil innsamlet data bli slettet. Prosjektet har blitt godkjent av Forskningsetisk komite ved psykologisk institutt, og av Norsk senter for forskningsdata (NSD).

Frivillig deltakelse
Det er frivillig å delta i studien. Du kan trekke deg fra studien når som helst mens prosjektet pågår, uten å avgi en grunn. Hvis du ønsker å delta, kan du signere samtykkeerklæringen nedenfor.

Spørsmål?
Hvis du har noen spørsmål, ta gjerne kontakt per e-mail med

Prosjektleder
Kine Dymbe: kinedym@student.sv.uio.no

Veiledere
Sophie Seychelle Havighurst: s.s.havighurst@psykologi.uio.no
Deborah Lynn Reas: deborah.reas@psykologi.uio.no

Personvernombud ved Universitetet i Oslo
personvernombud@uio.no

Samtykke til deltakelse i studien

Vennligst kryss av og signer nedenfor

- Jeg har lest og forstått informasjonen ovenfor og jeg er villig til å delta i studien

....

(Sted og dato)   (Signatur fra deltaker)