

Institutionen för pedagogik och didaktik

# Demokratiska värden i förskolebarns vardag

av

Rauni Karlsson

AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

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# Abstract

Title: Democratic Values in the Everyday Life of the Preschool Child  
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The theme of this thesis is democratic values in pre-school and how these are revealed in the children's relations in that setting. It describes *what the children take responsibility for and how they do it; how they demonstrate care in the sense of consideration, and what they show respect for and how they show it*. The study was carried out within the framework of *the state pre-school* as portrayed in two pre-school departments in a municipality in western Sweden.

The daily activity was followed in two pre-school groups comprising children aged 3-6 years, among which field studies were carried out over a total of 36 weeks. Observations focusing on the children's behaviour and their communication both with each other and the teachers, made with the help of an open research protocol, audio-recordings and diary notes, resulted in descriptive field records, which were analysed in four stages. The understanding of domain theory was used as a conceptual tool for comprehending and explaining how values, value judgement and consensus may be distinguished and sorted. The analytical procedure has been influenced both by a perspective of positioning and power relations and interpretation based on value theory.

The analysis has resulted in three thematic values, among which *Responsibility* is shown in the way the children behave in words and actions, meaning that the children do not speak about taking responsibility but, a fact that is central to this study, initiate responsibility. They show in different ways that they take responsibility for everyday matters both on their own behalf and on behalf of others. *Care* refers to the perception of others' needs in an empathic way, and that the children demonstrate by their actions an empathic understanding of someone else. This means that care is a value that the children use in order to support each other within their cultural community as separate from adults' perspective. In this way, their caring acts sometimes appear to be in opposition to the perspective that the teachers' positions express. *Respect* is shown to be a value that means that the children, when encountering another, abstain from what they are doing or change their current position for that other person's benefit. In certain situations, the children abstain from their self-chosen position in favour of a social convention or an opinion that is asserted, which means that respect is embedded in a complex way. *Gender differences* have been identified as an all-pervading theme in the empirical material. An important part of the children's experiences takes place in the group divisions between girls and boys, which is why these affect the affinity that they develop. In the everyday structure, girls and boys participate as social actors with expectations and norms formed with the support of the gender differences that are made. Both girls and boys stress the importance of their fellowship, while at the same time a pattern can be discerned that ascribes girls and boys different degrees of agency.