

Institutionen för pedagogik och specialpedagogik

Moraliskt arbete i förskolan
Regler och moralisk ordning i barn-barn
och vuxen-barn interaktion

av

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Abstract

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At a general level, the present thesis addresses the situated and practical character of morality in everyday life. More specifically, this study investigates moral work-in-interaction between children, and between children and teachers, in situations where they handle "breaches" of moral orders, for example rule violations in peer play activities. The study is based on video-ethnographic research in a Swedish preschool, recording activities such as games, play and circle time. From an ethnomethodological conversation analytical approach, video-recordings of a few such activities are analyzed in detail, focusing on talk and bodies in interaction in a material environment.

The findings are presented in three articles. The first study examines how preschool girls (aged 5) do moral work as they handle rule violations in board games. The study demonstrates the complexity of girls' situated game activities as they negotiate rules and handle various forms of moral orders in situ, orders that are both relationally oriented and game-oriented. The second study illustrates the collaborative nature of children's play participation. Further, multimodal aspects of how preschool girls form dyadic relationships are highlighted, as well as preschool girls' use of embodied alignments and material resources provided by the play activity, so as to protect shared activities from intrusion by a third party. The third study explores moral work-in-interaction in a circle time episode, where teachers together with children handle a problem related to children's own play. It becomes obvious that this is a meeting between two worlds or orders. First, the order of the teachers, who have an agenda, to morally foster children to follow institutional rules and moral orders regarding how to behave towards each other in peer play. Secondly, the children's peer culture, where the children with different strategies try to handle the teacher's moral work, as they simultaneously manifest their own moral agendas.

In sum, this thesis demonstrates the moral agency of young children, as they do moral work, negotiating and invoking complex moral orders in everyday activities. This interactional moral work appears to be part of how the children at hand socialize each other into shared relations and norms that constitute their local peer cultures. The children's moral work and orders both relate to, but at the same time can differ from, adults' norms and perspectives. Following this, the thesis argues the need for adults to gain knowledge of how children create their own moral worlds and orders. Further, to take a children's perspective on everyday life in preschool and to avoid adult deficit and moralizing views on children's, especially young girls', own activities and morality.