Johanna Svahn

The Everyday Practice of School Bullying

Children's participation in peer group activities and school-based anti-bullying initiatives
Abstract


This thesis explores the everyday practice of school bullying by examining children’s participation in peer group activities as well as in school-based anti-bullying activities within an educational setting. The empirical material is drawn from a long-term (1 year) ethnographic study conducted among preadolescent children in a 5th grade class in a Swedish elementary school. An ethnomethodological approach is used in analysis of ethnographically based fieldnotes, and in detailed analysis of video recordings collected during participant observations.

The first study examines, through elaborated investigation of a peer group’s everyday peer encounters, how social exclusion is situated within the flow of intricate, subtle and seemingly innocent interactions. In this, the study offers detailed information about how girls’ everyday peer group interactions, taken across a range of activities, may be consequential for the process of social exclusion.

The second study examines the interactional moral work accomplished within the situated practice of ART classroom sessions on moral reasoning used as part of the school’s anti-bullying prevention program. The study contributes an understanding of the interactional management of children’s moral stance-taking, something that has previously been overshadowed by the quest to project the outcomes for individual children’s moral reasoning.

The third study examines a gossip dispute event, in which a group of girls take action against another girl for reporting school bullying to the teacher. The study demonstrates how, as the gossip dispute unfolds, the girls accused of bullying appropriate and even subvert the social organization of the school’s anti-bullying program, and manage to turn the tables so that the girl initially reporting to be a victim of bullying is cast as an instigator, and the girls accused of the bullying as victims of false accusations.

The thesis illuminates the complex meanings and functions of social actions referred to as bullying within a school context and in the literature. Also, it sheds light on the difficulties that come with teachers’ attempts to structure children’s social relationships. All in all, the thesis illuminates the need to challenge an individualistic approach to bullying, recognizing the social and moral orders children orient to in their everyday life at school.

Keywords: School bullying, children’s participation, peer group interaction, classroom interaction, interactional practices, morality-in-interaction, ethnography, ethnomethodology

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Förord


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Uppsala, Februari 2012
CHAPTER 1

Introduction and aims

Introduction

The scope of this thesis is the everyday practice of school bullying, and its findings are derived from ethnographic fieldwork conducted in a 5th-grade class at a Swedish elementary school during the 2007-08 school year. Based on empirical data collected through participant observation and video recordings children’s participation in various activities that generate issues related to school bullying is examined. A first analytic focus of the thesis is certain peer group activities, such as socially excluding others and gossiping, activities customarily referred to as an indirect type of bullying. A second analytic focus is activities that are part of school-based implementations for countering bullying within the school setting, in the form of ART2 classroom sessions, and the school’s action strategies for handling factual occurrences of bullying.

The significance of practices concerning school bullying in this thesis is thus twofold, as it refers to both children’s peer group activities as well as various forms of school-based countering activities in which bullying is directly or indirectly focused on and/or topicalized. This twofold significance can be connected to a binary scientific interest by which the intricately interwoven relation between the acts of school bullying and the prevention of and intervention in such acts becomes a primary interest. Such connection is important, since any way bullying is approached has implications; not only on our theories and definitions of the phenomenon of bullying, and on the methods used to assess and measure its occurrence, but also on the practices used to prevent and handle factual occurrences. Or, looking at it from the opposite direction, the way practices for countering bullying are organized recurrently manifests a common-sense understanding of what bullying is within a particular school setting.

In more recent years, a body of research has come forth to challenge the individualization that constructs most definitions of bullying (e.g. Davies, 2011;...
Horton, 2011; Bansel et al., 2009), and researchers have started to argue for the necessity to rather approach it as a form of social interaction (e.g. Goodwin, 2006; Evaldsson, 2009; Wrethlander-Bliding, 2004). In alignment with such a view an interactional perspective on school bullying is utilized here, underpinning the idea that bullying must be considered part of social practice, rather than attributed to individuals (Goodwin, 2006). By abandoning the common theoretic assumption that problems of school bullying can be connected to problems of individual children, focus is redirected onto children’s participation in specific activities relevant to the phenomenon of school bullying. By arguing that an individual’s expectations and possibilities are shaped in everyday interactions, and not merely by his or her own actions or personal characteristics, the social use of specific activities is approached. Consequently, the how of specific actions and activities are the main focuses, and the why of specific actions will be investigated more in terms of ‘why that now’ (Schegloff & Sacks, 1974), rather than as an attempt to explain the general occurrence of bullying. An intended aspect of such an applied interactional approach is to use participants’ interaction as a resource for understanding the local meanings, and functions, of various activities that “manifest the research interest” without making moral judgments about them (Tholander, 2007, p. 453).

The study of practical activities, such as those studied here, can be broadly located in the study of talk-in-interaction. Departing from the theoretical ideas on interaction originating from Goffman and Garfinkel, and by use of methodologies for studying interaction developed within CA (Conversation Analysis), aspirations of an explanatory nature are therefore connected to a focus on things said and done by interactional participants in their everyday life, accomplishing social activities in and through interaction. And, referring to the studied activities as interactional accomplishments involves a concern for how they emerge moment-by-moment, and for how they are continuously achieved by participants themselves in such moment-by-moment fashion.

For its intelligibility, interaction depends on the characteristics of the situation in which it is taking place. The abiding analytic concern for intelligibility thus opens up areas for detailed study that go beyond the concern of conversational sequencing and conversational activities (Jayyusi, 1984). It thus results in:

the systematic uncovering of various cultural conventions and enable the production of sense, of practical actions, and that inform the organization of social relations and the various practices of social life (Jayyusi, 1984, p. 3).

In order to illuminate how children’s everyday activities are interactionally accomplished, one thus also has to study social practices, and practical common sense reasoning, employed in mundane, everyday situations of talk-in-interaction.

The focus on the interactional accomplishment of children’s activities in this thesis connects to two key research emphases that have established studies of children’s talk. Firstly, the areas of peer talk, by which children construct and manage participation in the cultures of childhood (see Goodwin & Kyratzis,
2007, 2011 for an overview); and secondly, talk in institutional settings, an area in which analysis has often been concentrated on how children manage participation in adult-led interactions of different kinds (see Hutchby, 2005 for an overview). Both research emphases have held the theme of how talk in natural settings of interaction is a context for the display of children’s social competence (Hutchby, 2005). With such a focus also follows a central interest in children’s participation and agentive work.

The empirical work of this thesis, based on a view of bullying activities as part of social interaction, provides insight into the multimodal functions of such activities. An analytical approach to the interactional dimensions of bullying activities is thus favorable for investigating their practical purposes for peer group socialization, and for how children come to be participating members of their peer culture (Goodwin, 2006). Such a perspective is also fruitful for investigating the intricate social process through which anti-bullying initiatives are accomplished in everyday school activities.

Aims

The primary aim of this thesis is to explore bullying as a social practice, as well as the consequences of such a perspective on our understanding of children’s participation in, and the organization and meaning of, peer group activities and school-based anti-bullying activities. In order to undertake this primary aim, the following questions are addressed:

• How are activities, such as social exclusion and gossiping (often referred to as indirect bullying), organized within peer group interaction? What interactional resources are used within these activities? And, how are children’s social competencies displayed?
• How do children and adults, through interactional contributions, accomplish different forms of participation in ART classroom sessions as a forum for school-based bullying prevention? And, how are blame and responsibility distributed within this activity?
• What consequences do school-based bullying interventions have on children’s peer group participation outside the classroom? And how do children enforce their agency in dealing with adults interfering in their peer group relations?

Disposition of the thesis

The first chapter of the thesis draws a map over the broad field of school bullying research. The purpose of drawing such a map is to encircle what the phenomenon of school bullying has been contemplated to be, and how this phe-
nomenon, as well as children’s participation, have been approached within this research field.

The following chapter entails an introduction to the theoretical framework, presenting an interactional perspective on children’s participation and a theoretical framework for understanding and approaching talk-in-interaction.

In the following chapter, methodological considerations are discussed, both in a more broad sense of methodological framework as well as more directly connected to the conducted fieldwork.

Thereafter comes a summary of the three studies, highlighting the primary results, followed by a concluding discussion that rounds off the thesis as a whole. Lastly come the three studies, which compose the empirical contributions of the thesis.
CHAPTER 2
School bullying: definitions, explanations and counteractive implementations

This chapter is divided into two parts, the first concerned with the general tendency within bullying research to individualize bullying and the second with the work of countering bullying within Swedish schools. Several dimensions of school bullying are thus presented, discussing various and versatile features that have been the focus of interest within the extensive field of school bullying research.

Initially, various definitions are presented and discussed, particularly highlighting the complexity of such a defining process. This section is followed by an introduction to different theoretical explanations for the existence of bullying, accentuating their varied implicational views on children. Thereafter, a section discussing the work of countering school bullying in the national context of Sweden is presented. The chapter then concludes in a clarification of the specific contributions of this thesis to the field of school bullying research.

The selection of what to include in the different sections has been done based on several considerations. The overview of the theoretical perspectives and explanations for school bullying encircles international research, and includes the most referred to researchers within the school bullying discourse. The reason for including a wider research base in this area was that much of the knowledge on the phenomenon is grounded in research conducted in countries other than Sweden. The ensuing section on prevention and intervention is narrowed down, situated more in a local Swedish debate. This is done because the work of counteracting school bullying is far more diverse, and locally adapted, than the theoretical explanatory research field of bullying in schools.

Defining bullying

Most definitions of bullying mark it as a collection of aggressive behaviors, and accordingly, the main stream of research focusing on bullying approaches it as a subset of the overarching concept of aggression. In its turn, aggressive behavior is most often defined as negative acts carried out intentionally to harm another person. A consequence of such definitions is that behaviors that harm another
unintentionally are not labeled aggressive (Smith et al., 2002). However, even though the definitions of bullying and aggression seem to be interrelated in many ways, they do have distinct constructs (Griffin & Gross, 2004). The concept of aggression as used in scientific research covers a whole range of acts that vary according to age-typical manifestations and severity (Loeber & Hay, 1997), and is not a unitary term. Customarily, bullying is thus approached as one form of its manifestations.

Rigby (2002) concludes that the use of a definition of bullying that equates it with aggressive behavior has a tendency to be overly inclusive. Griffin & Gross (2004, p. 382) even go so far as to say that it appears that much conducted research has “defined bullying in a rather imprecise manner, often misclassifying solitary or ‘random’ acts of aggression as bullying”. Persson (2000) asserts that, also in Sweden, bullying has become an overly inclusive term, signifying most of the interpersonal violence in our society. This means that almost every type of violence within a school setting tends to be sorted within a bullying discourse.

The emphasis of earlier work on bullying was on physical aggression or verbal acts of teasing and mocking, done directly to a victim (Smith et al., 2002). Olweus’s pioneering work ‘Aggression in the Schools: Bullies and Whipping Boys’, (1978) for example, did not fully acknowledge the magnitude of more indirect forms of bullying. It was not until later that the category of indirect aggression was introduced in Finland in the research of Björkqvist and colleagues (1992a), in which they made a distinction between direct physical aggression, direct verbal aggression and indirect aggression. Indirect aggression, entailing activities such as spreading rumors, gossiping and social exclusion, was characterized by its rather covert nature and use of third parties (Björkqvist et al., 1992a; Smith et al., 2002).

A similar, yet slightly different, category was soon thereafter identified by Crick and colleagues in the United States as relational aggression (Crick et al., 1997; Crick et al., 1999). What differs in the descriptions of indirect aggression and relational aggression is that the latter relates more to the consequences of the bullying act, in terms of damaging relationships, friendships and/or group inclusion (Crick et al., 1999) while the former relates to the carrying-out dimension and its characteristic form. Akin to the concept of relational aggression, the term social aggression has sometimes also been used (e.g. Björkqvist et al. 1992b; Galen & Underwood, 1997). Galen & Underwood (1997) define social aggression as behavior that is:

directed toward harming another’s self-esteem, social status, or both, and may take such direct forms as verbal rejection, negative facial expression or body movements, or more indirect forms such as slanderous rumors or social exclusion (Galen & Underwood, 1997, p. 589).

Underwood (2003) argues that there are three main reasons for using the term social aggression, rather than any of the related constructs of relational or indirect aggression. Firstly, it more clearly describes its function, which is to do social harm. Secondly, it includes non-verbal displays of social exclusion. And lastly, it
includes both covert and overt forms of relationship manipulations.

In the bullying research literature, school bullying is often used interchangeably with peer harassment (Espelage and Swearer, 2008), and both terms include negative actions inflicted upon or directed toward another student repeatedly and over time by one or more perpetrators (Olweus, 2001). The fundamental part of peer harassment involves behaviors that harm someone physically or through verbal teasing, social exclusion, lies or rumors (Espelage & Swearer, 2008). However, some researchers have differentiated bullying from peer harassment by describing bullying as a subset of peer harassment that involves only verbal teasing and threatening behaviors that have a potential to cause harm (Espelage & Holt, 2001; Espelage & Swearer, 2008). Consequently, this definition excludes the component of direct aggression that causes physical harm. This exclusion is made based on two considerations. Firstly, due to ethnographic findings (e.g. Eder, 1991; Eder et al. 1995; Goodwin 2006) indicating that teasing occurs with considerably more frequency than physical aggression. And secondly, based on the argument that aggressive conflicts, such as fist-fights and wrestling, although they can potentially cause physical harm, may happen regularly without necessarily involving bullying (Espelage & Swearer, 2008).

As illuminated above, definitions of bullying may differ somewhat in their formulation. However, some features are undoubtedly similar within these different formulations. Greene (2000) suggests that there are in fact five features of bullying that can be seen as widely accustomed among researchers: (1) The bully intends to inflict harm or fear upon the victim; (2) The aggressive actions occurs repeatedly; (3) It is unprovoked; (4) It occurs in familiar social groups; and (5) The bully is more powerful than the victim.

Most are alike in the way they focus on aggressive intentionality (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). This means that the intention of bullying is taken as a given (Horton, 2011). As Griffin & Gross (2004) elucidate, it is interesting how the definition of bullying is typically focused on the actual behavior and/or probable intention of the bully, rather than on the experiences of the victim, while the most common scientific instrument for assessing bullying behavior is victim self-reports. The actual occurrences referred to in research thus most commonly entail experiences of being bullied, with no reference to the intention of the person(s) doing the bullying. Meanwhile, most definitions of bullying referred to in research describe it as an intentional act to cause harm. Hence, it could be argued that the correlation between what is intended to be examined and what is actually examined when using such measurement strategies is often rather weak.

Many researchers assert that empirical results are comparable across cultures (e.g. Craig et al., 2009; Due et al., 2005; Eslea et al., 2003; Juvonen & Graham, 2001; Smith et al., 1999). However, this can be arguable depending upon the way bullying is operationally defined within different investigations (Griffin & Gross, 2004). For example, Arora (1996) reviewed a large body of literature and discovered that there really is no clear, generally accepted definition of bullying in either research, schools or the public debate. Also, it is not simply the fact
that there is a large variety of definitions in use that makes the concept of bullying rather inaccessible. Each and every one of the definitions in use is also accompanied by an indistinctness, which makes them difficult to implement in practice. Rigby (2007) discusses three different features of bullying definitions, which creates uncertainty: firstly, how the meaning of an intentional act is rather elusive, since it is unclear whether it attests to an intention to actually bring harm to another person or simply to the intention to perform an aggressive act, without necessarily understanding its consequences on other parties; secondly, the case of bullying having to include an imbalance of power, since it is difficult to capture what that imbalance is really made up of, and from whose perception it should be inferred; and thirdly, in the bullying criterion of repetition over time it is uncertain to what extent an act must be carried out for it to be labeled repetitive and how much time ‘over time’ actually is.

This type of indistinctness has also been shown to open up for children in school to make their own interpretations, and for negotiation concerning the “true” meaning of school bullying (e.g. Karlsson & Evaldsson (2011) [see also Evaldsson & Svahn, ms - Study III]). The difficulties in defining a phenomenon like bullying are also important to emphasize in relation to schools’ antibullying work because this clarifies that although bullying is highlighted as an unaccepted behavior that is not allowed in schools, it is not entirely clear how the referred to problematic behaviors are made sense of and organized in practice.

Various theoretical explanations for school bullying and their implicational views on children

The general understanding of school bullying is deeply rooted in the psychological domain, and most research on this phenomenon is restructured around the concepts of aggression. This inevitably implies an individualistic focus. However, even though the mainstream of bullying research has evolved within the same scientific discipline, vastly different theoretical ideas about the nature, forms, prevalence and contexts of bullying co-exist. An overview of five various theoretical perspectives, based on an identification made by Rigby (2004), will now be presented. In this particular overview, however, the content of the different perspectives targets the ways children are approached, and positioned, within these perspectives.

A view on children as carriers of predisposed characteristics

A common assumption guiding much of the research on school bullying and peer victimization pertains to the bully/victim dyad (Gini, 2007). The reasons for the victimization of children have repeatedly been researched from both sides of this dyad, in an attempt to identify specific characteristics of both bullies and victims (see for example: Olweus, 1993; Smith et al., 1999).
A long-lived trend in research has thus been to approach school bullying by pinpointing different children’s personal characteristics. A consequence of this trend is that the frequent and repetitive occurrence of school bullying is explained as an outcome of children’s individual differences. From this view, bullying incidents happen as a result of interactions in which individuals differ in their personal levels of power, and in which the more powerful individual repeatedly seeks to oppress the other. The power differential connected to bullying within this perspective is associated with physical and/or psychological differences, which are declared to create invariable imbalances in power between individual children within a school setting (Rigby, 2004).

A great deal of work has been conducted to identify psychological and physical factors associated with dominating behavior and victimization within school settings. Children identified as bullies have been found to be aggressive, hostile and domineering toward peers, and to exhibit little anxiety or insecurity (Byrne, 1994; Olweus, 1995). They have also been found to be physically stronger than their victims, have more positive attitudes toward aggression and negative attitudes toward peers (Lagerspetz et al., 1982). In conducting quantitative measurement strategies, researchers have also found that children identified as bullies score lower on measures of cooperation (Rigby et al., 1997) and higher on measures of externalizing behavior and hyperactivity (Kumpulainen et al., 1998). Björkqvist and colleagues (1982), after conducting self-report questionnaires with children identified as bullies, concluded that these children also perceive themselves as impulsive and lacking in self-control. Children identified as bullies have also been found to like school less (Rigby & Slee, 1991), and to be less popular with teachers, than their peers (Slee & Rigby, 1993).

Children identified as victims, on the other hand, have been found to have lower levels of self-esteem and to be cautious, sensitive and quiet, leading them to be more depressed, anxious and insecure than their peers (Craig, 1998; Olweus, 1995; Rigby & Slee, 1991). They are also described as more withdrawn, worried and fearful of new situations (Byrne, 1994). Children identified as victims have also been found to score higher on internalizing behavior and psychosomatic symptoms (Kumpulainen et al., 1998). Some researchers assert the notion that these types of behaviors when exhibited by individual children might even contribute to victimization (Hodgers and Perry, 1999).

Bullies have sometimes been characterized as lonely and friendless, but also as gaining acceptance in small, peripheral social networks consisting mainly of other unpopular, aggressive children (Rubin et al., 1998). However, others have claimed that most bullies are not rejected (e.g. Hodgers & Perry, 1999). These contrasting ways of describing bullies are connected to a division made between high status and low status bullies. According to Perry et al. (2001), the hostile peer environment associated with some children who are seen as aggressive, who lash out when sensing provocation from others, can be connected to children labeled low status bullies, particularly those who are also victims of harassment.

However, attempts to label characteristics of victims and bullies have always been somewhat troublesome. Already in his pioneering work, Olweus (1978) reported that a small percentage of victimized children did not fit the generali-
zations since they were, similar to bullies, aggressive. Since then a subgroup of
victims, referred to as bully/victims or aggressive victims, has been identified (e.g. Bowers et al., 1994; Rigby, 1994). Bully/victims (or aggressive victims) have been found to score higher on measures of externalizing behavior and hyperactivity than both bullies and victims (Kumpulainen et al., 1998). In addition, they have been found to score lower on measures of scholastic competence, social acceptance, behavior conduct and global self-worth (Austin & Joseph, 1996).

In relation to the categorization of bullying roles, a division of types of aggression has been made in relation to bullying, by which bullies are defined as proactively aggressive, and bully/victims as reactively aggressive (e.g. Dodge, 1991). These two concepts of reactive and proactive aggression originate from long-lived traditions within the aggression research field, reactive aggression having its origin in a frustration-aggression model (e.g. Berkowitz, 1962), viewing aggression as a hostile, angry reaction to perceived frustration, while proactive aggression comes from a social learning theory (e.g. Bandura, 1973) in which aggression is seen as an acquired instrumental behavior, controlled by external rewards and reinforcement (Dodge, 1991).

The instrument used when applying this type of measurement strategy is most often a questionnaire designed for nomination inventory, whereby informants are asked to describe which characteristics they associate with the role of victim or bully, or with peers who are liked or disliked (e.g. Fox & Boulton, 2006; Hodges & Perry 1999, 1996; Hodges, Malone & Perry 1997; Salmivalli et al., 1996; Bukowski et al., 1994). This type of research is thus an attempt to label specific behavioral characteristics that may be seen as individual risk factors. From the perspective of this type of psychological research, individual children are understood to have unique sets of traits that influence their social adjustment and behaviors, and determine their propensity for becoming bullies or victims of bullying.

A view on children as objects of psychological development

Another common way to approach bullying is as a form of developmental process (Rigby, 2004). A common argument for studying bullying as a developmental phenomenon is empirical evidence suggesting that bullying behavior emerges already in preschool and persists throughout the school years. This has raised concern that the learned experiences of bullying in childhood generate into other abusive relationships in the future. For instance, Pepler et al. (2006) claim that there is a heterotypic continuity in bullying behavior, which means that with development, instead of ceasing it transforms into other aggressive behaviors.

Within this perspective, it is argued that a developmental approach to deviant behavior including aggression, violence and bullying can open many roads to knowledge (e.g. Loebner & Le Blanc, 1990; Loebner, 1997). For example, Loebner (1997) argues that there are several long-term and short-term social processes relevant to the etiology of aggression, and that even though some degree of aggression is understood as age-normative, at least in boys, some variations in
normal skill development eventually produce highly aggressive individuals. An understanding of developmental courses (from less serious to more serious) requires knowledge about the onset of the behaviors, changes in their prevalence with age, and their continuity over time (ibid.). Loeber (1997) also concludes that violence has both cognitive and emotional components, and that several cognitive factors are more specific to aggression, such as social cognitive deficiencies, rejection sensitivity and inflated self-esteem.

Björkqvist and colleagues (1992b) claim that physical, verbal and indirect aggression are acquired through developmental stages, and are linked to advances in language ability and perspective-taking ability. This theory suggests that aggressive behavior tends to appear within individuals in a specific order, starting with direct physical aggression and followed by direct verbal aggression, which then transcends into indirect aggression. Björkqvist and colleagues (1993) propose that developmental trends in regard to aggressive behavior can be explained theoretically by what they refer to as the effect/danger ratio (or cost/benefit ratio), namely the subjective estimation of the likely consequences of an aggressive act. This theory claims that the user of aggression, the bully in bullying research terms, tries to maximize the effect of the act while simultaneously trying to minimize his or her own risk. Björkqvist (1994) argues that indirect aggression can be understood as having a much more favorable effect/danger ratio, partly because it is easier to remain unidentified as a perpetrator. In relation to the same subject, Björkqvist and colleagues (1992c) found that indirect forms of aggression among girls drastically increased around the age of 11, and that the level of physical aggression among boys decreased during late adolescence and was replaced mainly with verbal and indirect forms of aggression. The authors argue that this developmental change can best be explained as a consequence of increased social intelligence.

The use of indirect and less confrontational strategies for managing conflicts and social exclusion has also been connected to an overall awareness among children of more direct approaches as unfair and harmful. Killen & Strangor (2001) argue that the justification for excluding children from peer group interactions derives from two forms of social reasoning – moral beliefs about the wrongfulness of exclusion and social conventional beliefs concerning peer group processes and functions. Their empirical findings suggest that preadolescents are more likely than younger children to allow peer exclusion if group functions are threatened, and that they justify this by using appeals to effective group functioning. In their view, this can be connected to a development of children’s social conventional comprehensions, and they claim that as children grow older they become increasingly concerned with the nature of social groups, with the norms and expectations that are related to the structure of a peer group, and with the effectiveness of peer group functioning.

Pepler and colleagues (2006) suggest that the forms of bullying also change as a function of developmental transformations during puberty. An emergence of sexual harassment and dating aggression was found to coincide with pubertal development. In addition, children who were more advanced in pubertal devel-
development were found to be more likely to use some of these emerging forms of bullying.

Approaching bullying as an area of children’s development means claiming to being able to explain problems of bullying by pointing to certain individuals. It is thus an equally individualistic approach to the phenomenon as the one identifying specific characteristic associated with the roles of bully and victim. However, this perspective more directly targets children’s development within assorted areas, such as cognitive, emotional, social and language skills.

A view on children as subjects to environmental stimuli

Yet another individualized focus within school bullying research is that on the aspect of ‘restorative justice’ (Rigby, 2004, p. 289). This perspective recognizes some children as being more likely to be involved in bullying situations, due to personal experiences, and raises a concern to identify various risk factors for engaging in bullying behavior or for becoming a victim of bullying in school (Griffin & Gross, 2003).

Problem behaviors such as bullying, violence, substance use and delinquent behavior are believed by some to share common mediators (e.g. Ellickson et al., 1997; Simons-Morton et al., 1999). And due to such beliefs, variables associated with other common problem behaviors have also been related to bullying. Two such variables are parent and school influences on behavior (Simons-Morton et al., 1999). A negative relationship with one’s parents and an unaffectionate climate at home are other external factors that have been investigated as potential causes of bullying (e.g. Olweus, 1980; Rigby 1994; Bowers et al., 1994).

Most of the findings reported with regard to bullying have been interpreted within a framework of contrasting parenting styles and their effects on adolescent development (Rodkins & Hodgers, 2003). Empirical findings indicate that individuals who harass others are often exposed to very harsh forms of disciplinary practices in the form of corporal punishment (Carney & Merrell, 2001). In one study, Olweus (1980) found that parents of bullies often tend to have a higher level of tolerance regarding violence, are more likely to use power-assertive discipline, and have a rather negative attitude towards their children. In other words, this type of socialization research suggests that the families of bullies are conflictual, and that the parents often use power-assertive techniques to manage their children’s behavior (e.g. Pellegrini, 1998).

These types of studies encompass the notion that environment and social interaction are strong influential factors on learned behavior (Griffin & Gross, 2003). However, even though the investigation of associations between parenting practices and bullying behavior is fairly common, associations between parenting practices and victimization have merited very little empirical attention.
A view on children as subjects of peer pressure

Even though the *bully/victim* relationship has been the primary subject of inquiry in bullying research, some researchers also suggest that the pervasiveness of bullying may be partly explained by group mechanisms (*e.g.* Rigby, 2005; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004; Olweus, 2001). One line of research has long described bullying as violence in a group context, in which children reinforce each other through interaction (*e.g.* Pikas, 1975; DeRosier et al., 1994). By describing bullying in this manner, a view on bullying as an interpersonal activity that arises within the context of peer groups is constructed.

Within this perspective on school bullying, emphasis is placed on the importance of social context in order to make bullying understandable. Rigby (2004) argues that social context, in such a case, should not be understood as confined according to socio-cultural categories, but rather as consisting of various behaviors and attitudes of a specific school community, which influence individual children in their perception of what is or is not acceptable behavior. Additionally, children are seen as in a more assertive way being influenced by groups of peers that constitute their closest relationships within the school (*ibid.*).

Salmivalli and colleagues (1997) point out that membership in a peer group brings about different constraints on behavior. From such a perspective, children’s peer friendships may be understood as also having negative consequences on individual children’s development (Cairns & Cairns, 1994). According to Cairns & Cairns (1994), the strongest behavioral pattern of within-group similarity in childhood, and adolescence, is aggressive and deviant behavior. Salmivalli and colleagues (1997) conclude that there seem to be two main reasons for similarities among friendship groups: the tendency of children to choose friends who are similar to them, and that friends tend to socialize each other in similar directions (*see also* Kandel, 1978; Berndt, 1982, 2004). Salmivalli and colleagues (1997) also assert that school class bullies choose friends who have a positive attitude towards bullying, who provide them with positive feedback and reinforce their behavior. When coming together as a group, their interaction is then seen as bringing about even higher levels of similarity, whereby the organization of peer networks within a school class can be seen as connected to the bullying problems in that class, being part of the same social process (*ibid.*, p. 306).

Other researchers have studied the attitudes and group dynamics that they argue underlie a certain type of inter-group conflicts. Nesdale & Scarlett (2004) examined the effect of group status on male students’ attitudes towards inter-group bullying, finding group status to be affective of participants’ liking of the bully group. Gini (2007) extended these findings by assessing the behavior of both male and female preadolescent students, examining the influence of group status on the perception of inter-group bullying; specifically on their attribution of blame to the groups involved. It was found that there was a clear in-group bias, as children tended to favor their own group by attributing more blame to other children than to bullies within their own peer group.
Within this line of research it has been repeatedly argued that the labeling of, and distinction between, different participant roles serve as an aid in looking at the social dynamics of school bullying (Smith and Brain, 2000; Salmivalli et al., 1996; Pikas, 1989). Lagerspetz and colleagues (1982) identified two main features of school bullying: its collective character, and the fact that it is based on social relationships in a group of children. Based on this, they suggest that aggression in groups of children can be investigated as a relationship between individual children taking on different roles, or having roles assigned to them. Rigby and Slee (1993) suggest that there are three dimensions of interpersonal relations among school children, and that these reflect different tendencies. Firstly, there is the tendency to bully other students; secondly, the tendency to be victimized by others; and lastly, the tendency to relate to others in a prosocial and cooperative manner. Salmivalli and colleagues (1996) suggest that school bullying should be regarded as a group phenomenon in which most children of a class have a definable part, and identify six different participant roles taken on by individual children in a bullying process: bully, victim, reinforce of the bully, assistant of the bully, defender of the victim and outsider. It is argued that the participant role a particular child takes on in a bullying situation is fixed by various personal as well as contextual factors.

The kind of empirical conclusions presented within this perspective draw mainly on questionnaire surveys using self- or peer estimations of bullying behavior. Direct observational methods have also been utilized in a few research projects in search of additional information regarding the social context of aggressive behavior (e.g. Pelligrini & Long, 2002). Often, however, such instruments and methodology are argued to serve mainly as a useful source of information regarding which behaviors are to be rated, and for which data are to be gathered on in future research, using quantitative method strategies (Griffin & Gross, 2004). So, even though most definitions of bullying acknowledge it as something evolving in social interaction, school-bullying research is generally not based on knowledge about everyday school interaction, even within a social psychological perspective. Rather, as MH Goodwin (2002) points out, a traditional, individualistic view on human behavior is still dominant, even within paradigms making claims on a more social view on children.

A view on children as part of larger societal patterns

Other researchers have examined the notion of bullying as an outcome of the existence of social groups, which possess different levels of power. These differences are most often identified as having a historical and cultural basis. Within this form of research, society is viewed as essentially patriarchal, and presupposes a power differential as a direct consequence of pervading social beliefs (Rigby, 2004). In the 1970s, when bullying started to gain a great deal of empirical attention, it was considered self-evident that males are more aggressive than females (e.g. Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974), and studies unanimously pointed to boys as more frequently taking part in bullying acts. In the 1980s, however, reviews on gender differences in bullying and aggression (e.g. Hyde, 1984; Eagly
& Steffen, 1986) started to highlight the issue in terms of quality rather than quantity.

In more recent years, the study of female bullying as a specific field of interest has begun to receive attention, suggesting that the common idea of bullying as more characteristic of boys is substantially wrong. In contrast to the paradigm that suggests that girls are non-confrontational, alternative forms of female aggression have been highlighted. As a consequence, the explanations for the overrepresentation of boys in bullying acts have taken into account the type of aggressive behavior.

One line of research argues that there is a trend towards gender differences in preferred modes of aggression, and that indirect aggression is the preferred mode for girls (e.g. Archer, 2001; Salmivalli et al., 1997). Salmivalli and colleagues (1997) argue, for example, that there are different characteristics of both friendship and harassment among boys and girls, and that among preadolescent girls bullies and victims often belong to the same social networks. This can be connected to other research that suggests that girls’ friendship is an arena for both competition and conflict (Besag, 2006; Owens et al., 2000b; Menesini, 1997; Hartup, 1983). In fact, it has been found that girls’ conflicts occur most often within friendship groups, and that these types of conflicts also last longer than those between non-friends (Hartup, 1983). However, several researchers have also found girls to more often be willing to intervene in bullying acts (e.g. Salmivalli et al., 1996; Österman et al., 1997). In relation to this, Cowie (2000) also found a large gender imbalance in the ranks of peer supporters, with girls significantly outnumbering boys at all stages of recruitment, training and implementation.

Björkqvist (1994) suggests that the trend of starting to explain bullying gender differences in qualitative terms can be connected to changes in sex role attitudes within our society; also, that it may be a reflection of the fact that suitable instruments for the study of more indirect forms of aggression had not yet been developed when the scientific interest in bullying began. In addition, at that time indirect aggression was not conceptualized as social manipulation or as an intention to cause harm in a circumvent manner.

The delay in recognizing the indirect modes of aggression as bullying actions has also been explained by the difficulty of identifying and tracking the subtle, social behavior argued to be used mainly by girls in disputes (Besag, 2006). For example, as Besag (2006, p. 537) puts it, “friendship is a matter of choice”, which makes it a difficult task to confront someone accused of social exclusion. Recognizing the instigator of gossip can be equally difficult. In particular, MH Goodwin’s (1990, 2007) research illustrates how girls in gossipping work hard to avoid implicating themselves until they can determine others’ positions regarding the person being talked about. The covert nature of girls’ attacks has been argued to necessitate more subtle and time-consuming research, which draws a higher cost than the quantitative measurement strategies more commonly used within bullying research (Maccoby, 2002). However, the emphasis on female aggression has been placed within considerably more diverse research fields than other theoretical notions related to bullying, as it has gained empirical
interest within sociological as well as ethnographic studies of girls’ friendships (e.g. Adler & Adler, 1998; Eder et al., 1995, Goodwin 1990, 2007, Evaldsson, 2007). Within these studies, repeated criticism has also been directed at the customary way of constructing gender within traditional bullying research, of boys and girls as having fundamentally different characteristics and behavior. In this, some researchers (e.g. Evaldsson, 2007; Goodwin, 2002; Thorne, 1993) suggest that it is rather a matter of a spectrum of behaviors that can be found across both genders. For instance, it has been empirically shown that children of both genders have access to similar ways of disputing (e.g. MH Goodwin; 1990; Evaldsson, 2007). Also, there have been some implications that schoolgirls use physical aggression against their peers as well, but to a higher degree manage to conceal such activities from teachers and other school personnel. For instance, Pepler & Craig (1995) recorded children’s playground interactions among children at two schools in Canada, and acknowledged that physical bullying was equally frequent among girls as among boys, despite the fact that significantly fewer girls admit to bullying acts in surveys.

Taking a view on children as interactional participants

This thesis takes a view on children as interactional participants. A most essential field of research for such a perspective in relation to the phenomenon of bullying can be found among peer language socialization studies examining activities like insulting, gossiping and social exclusion. Even though these studies rarely approach these activities in terms of bullying (except for Goodwin & Kyraatzis, 2007; Goodwin, 2006, Evaldsson, 2009), they offer a well-needed complement to the prevalent supply of psychological inquiries.

The focus of peer language socialization research is directed towards peer group interaction, as is also the case for school bullying research highlighting peer pressure as a catalyst for bullying behavior. However, the examination in this line of research targets how children through their participation in everyday interactional activities socialize each other, alongside how peer group interaction plays a role in children’s production of interactional skills, identities, cultural values and norms.

Research on children’s peer group interaction has come to show that the construction and maintenance of friendships is a common challenge in their everyday life. For example, Corsaro (2005) has demonstrated how procedures for accessing and protecting interactional spaces, activities and friendship groups are interwoven in the practices of peer group interactions. Gaining access to ongoing activities within peer group interactions has been shown to be challenging, and has been thoroughly investigated in the context of play activities (e.g. Evaldsson & Tellgren, 2009; Björk-Willen, 2005; Cromdal, 2001; Danby & Baker, 1998; Corsaro, 1979). In fact, several studies have demonstrated how members of girls’ friendship groups use the social organizational affordances of pretend play to construct asymmetrical relationships within their peer groups (Kyraatzis, 2007; see also Evaldsson & Tellgren, 2009, MH, Good-
Several researchers have also argued for a notion of friendship alliances within peer groups as a constantly shifting phenomenon (Eder, 1985; Goodwin, 2008; Evaldsson, 2004), and have pointed out that the origin and formation of such alliances become noticeable in the utilization of routine behavior. Through such routines, various forms of procedures, patterns, norms and possibilities are collaboratively constructed.

Seemingly, being part of a peer group means co-constructing a local social order (Danby & Baker, 1998). Through participation in communicative events within peer groups, children form their own notions of preferable behavior, and these local social orders are established within their own “arenas of action” (Hutchby & Moran-Ellis, 1998, p. 10). Another way to explain it is to say that children create local political systems within their peer groups (Goodwin, 1990; [see also Study III Evaldsson & Svahn, forthcoming]). However it is formulated, it is clear that social organization is a central concern for children in their peer groups, and that they use multiple resources to construct and reconstruct it on an ongoing basis. It is also clear that they accomplish local moral orders as well, and use social norms as informal social controls to regulate behavior (Evaldsson, 2007; Goodwin, 2007). However, as Hutchby (2005) also establishes, it is only by examining in detail children’s talk and interaction in the absence of teachers that we come to understand that there is in fact a different set of moral codes at work for them, and how that moral code is instantiated in practice.

Empirical interest has also been directed towards conflict talk and the negotiation of peer culture. Goodwin (1990) provides the notion that there may actually be a number of positive functions of conflict in children’s peer interactions, and that resolution is not necessarily something participating children orient to. Several researchers have pointed out that indirect and less confrontational strategies for conflict management can be very effective (Sheldon, 1990; Sheldon & Johnson, 1994; Goodwin, 2008). For example, Goodwin (2008) has brought forward the notion of conflict as something that is handled in the midst of interaction without interrupting the normal course of events. It has repeatedly been demonstrated that children are highly able, and polished, in managing peer conflict, and that they use complex sociolinguistic competences to manage peer disagreements (e.g. Goodwin, 1980; Sheldon, 1996; Danby & Baker, 2000; Cromdal, 2001; Evaldsson, 2007).

Detailed sociological and anthropological studies of interaction in peer and friendship groups have also demonstrated that power and social exclusion are central to how children negotiate social positions and construct the social organization of their groups (Kyratzis, 2004; MH Goodwin, 1993, 2008; [see also Study I Svahn & Evaldsson, 2011]). For example, social exclusion has been shown to be a key factor in adolescent and preadolescent girls’ organization of their peer groups (Goodwin, 1990; Sheldon, 1996) [see also Study I: Svahn & Evaldsson, 2011]. Other research studies (e.g. Goodwin, 1990; Evaldsson, 2002) have also illuminated the pragmatic aspects of gossiping and teasing, noting that these talk events provide resources for continuously constructing and recon-
structuring the social organization of a peer group, staging identities and sanctioning deviant behavior [see also Study III: Evaldsson & Svahn, 2012 forthcoming].

Sheldon (1996) points out that peer interactions pose the challenge of competing with other children for symbolic goods such as status and authority, and that such competitive dimensions also arise in interactions within peer friendship groups. James (1996) acknowledges, in fact, that hierarchical relationships within peer groups are features that children constantly balance against their understanding of equality in their everyday interactions. For example, Griswold’s (2007) work on Russian girls’ pretend play activities shows how bodily orientation is deployed alongside linguistic actions to display subordination to the authority of dominant peers. The children in her study did not merely display their predetermined status in interaction, but in fact jointly co-constructed authority through the use of multiple interactional resources. Subordinated verbal actions were performed from a crouched position and with an aversion of gaze, and Griswold’s (2007) work illustrates that authority in peer interaction can be ratified from below in two ways: either by willingly placing oneself in subordinate positions and thus abdicating any claim to power, or by submitting without dissent to the powerful actions and decisions of authoritative peers even when disagreeing with them (ibid.).

All in all, taking a perspective on children as interactional participants means going beyond the idea of explaining bullying in terms of individual children’s behavior, and acknowledging all children as social agents part of creating and shaping the social world they partake in. This will be further discussed in chapter 3.

The work of countering bullying in Swedish schools and finding effective approaches

The issue of how bullying can be successfully countered is one of the most debated issues in relation to the Swedish school context. Numerous bullying prevention programs, curricula and strategies have been developed in recent years for use in schools, based on existing research indicating that school bullying may be significantly reduced through comprehensive, school-based programs that are outlined to change norms of behavior (e.g. Olweus, 1991, 1994). Vigorous evaluations of the use of these bullying prevention programs in schools have also been encouraged from the governmental level. Next follows a discussion on the practices directed at countering bullying in school, also highlighting the elements of effectiveness.

The work of countering bullying in Swedish schools

Schools’ operations and everyday activities are regulated by legislation as well as national and international agreements about common objectives. One main function of schools’ work is to provide the function of social learning, namely
to cultivate socially approved attitudes and modes of behavior. The Curriculum for the Compulsory School System (CCSS, 94, p. 8) manifests that the objectives of Swedish schools should be of social and civic, as well as academic, character, and states that the school “should actively and consciously influence and stimulate pupils to embrace the common values of our society and express these in practical daily action”. According to the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket, 2002a), an enhancement of ethical issues and a strengthening of schools’ local work on democracy could also be a workable way to counteract school bullying. One part of the Swedish school’s democratic assignment is thus to counter violations of all sorts, among them bullying (ibid.).

Anti-bullying initiatives include actions taken to prevent the occurrence of particular forms of violations, as well as more acute proceedings for when they do occur. Actions for prevention are a matter of working long-term for a safe school environment, targeting relations between all individuals in the school setting, and most often include implementations on all organizational levels. The procedure for handling reported and detected violations consists of defined routines and plans for action (ibid.). Clearly, the forms and proceedings are rather different for these two levels of counteractive work. And, the prevention level of school-based anti-bullying work is often very broad and not as clearly connected to the actual concept of bullying, but rather addresses the school environment, behaviors and local norm systems in a broader sense.

There has indeed been an accumulating trend in Sweden to promote school-based anti-bullying programs (e.g. the Olweus method) to manage social problems such as bullying, aggression, anti-social behaviors and emotional deficiencies (Skolverket, 2011). This trend has led schools to integrate such programs into teaching subjects, for example in Value exercise classes or Life competence education, to focus on moral values, social and emotional skills and personal development (e.g. Lööf, 2010; Karlberg, 2011). This can be understood in relation to the expected task of schools to promote certain moral values and modes of moral reasoning that are incompatible with oppressing others (Rigby, 2007). As mentioned, a salient feature of school bullying research is that it takes an individualistic perspective. In connotation, the programs and activities developed to counter school bullying rest for the most part on the same individualistic perspective (for a review see Galloway & Roland, 2004), and within such school-based prevention children’s moral reasoning is customarily understood in terms of linear stages of development.

In 2003, the Swedish government assigned the Public Authority of School Development [Myndigheten för Skolutveckling] the task of conducting an inventory of various anti-bulling programs commonly implemented in Swedish schools. This inventory resulted in a presentation of 21 programs. Of these, four different types of programs were identified: firstly, programs inclusive of both prevention ideas as well as strategies for action3; secondly, various forms of peer

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3 ‘The Olweus Program’, developed by researcher Dan Olweus; ‘The Method of Common Concern’ (Gemensamt bekymmer-metoden), developed by researcher Anathol Pikas, and ‘The Farsta Method’, developed by teacher Karl Ljungström.
support models; thirdly, various forms of mediation and conflict solution models; and fourthly, methods designed to strengthen a school’s value foundation. The inventory concluded that the choice of which anti-bullying program a school ended up using was rarely grounded in reflection on actual local problems or in specified aims (Myndigheten för skolutveckling, 2003). Important to consider is thus how anti-bullying programs can be adapted to different schools’ local circumstances, and which modifications could be beneficial in such an adaption; especially since the effects of a specific program cannot at all be decided upon without connecting it to the users’ attitude towards and employment of it. Evaldsson & Nilholm (2009) also assert that changes in students’ social behavior ultimately come down to how students and teachers interpret different components of these programs, rather than to the actual programs (see also Rigby, 2002).

The debate on quality in countering efforts in Swedish schools

In association with the national action program against racism, xenophobia, homophobia and discrimination presented by the government in 2001, an assignment was given to the Swedish National Agency for Education to survey the prevalence of various types of such phenomena in Swedish schools, among them bullying. A marked ambition of this assignment was to investigate students’ reactions to experienced events at school in the past year, and which possibilities the students saw to gain support, assistance and attention for such experiences within their own school setting (Skolverket, 2002b).

4 The Peer support-model developed by the anti-bullying organization Friends; The Peer support-model developed by the Hassela foundation, and ‘MOMBUS’, a peer support-model developed by former policeman Janne Staff.

5 ‘Fellow Friend’ (Medkompis), developed by Therapist Eleonore Lind; ‘Nonviolent Communication’, developed by American researcher Marshall B. Rosenberg; ‘Forum-play’, initially developed by Brazilian cultural worker Augusto Boal, and revised by Swedish author Katrin Byrèus-Hagen; ‘The Iceland Model’, developed by Icelandic professor Sigurd Abajarnasdottir in collaboration with researchers at Harvard University in the U.S.; ‘MOD- Diversity and Dialogue’ (Mångfald och Dialog), developed by the Study Associations Sensus and Bilda, and ‘Befriending Conversations’ (Kompassamtal), developed by author Lars Edling.

6 ‘Building a Value Foundation’ (Bygga värdegrund), developed by Swedish psychologist Kjell Ekstam; ‘Life Competence Education’ (Livskunskap), developed by the Stockholm Education Department in cooperation with the National Public Health Institute; ‘Step by Step’ (Stegvis), an adaptation of the American program, Second Step, developed by the nonprofit organization Committee for Children, introduced in Sweden by the two psychologists Björn Gislason and Lars Löwenborg; ‘SET’, developed by psychotherapist and special education teacher Birgitta Kimber, but also based on several other programs (mainly PATHS and Life Skills); ‘Project Charlie’, developed in the U.S.; ‘Lions Quest’, developed in a collaboration between Lions Clubs International and Quest International; ‘ICDP- International Child Development Programs’, a result of international collaborations; ‘Dare Meet’ (Våga mötas), developed by the Red Cross Foundation, and ‘EQ – Emotionell Intelligence’, developed by American behavioral scientists Peter Salovey and Daniel Goldman, and further developed by Swedish psychologist Bodil Wennberg.
A clear result of this survey was a great difference in the ways students, compared to teachers, apprehended school-based work for countering these types of experiences. Teachers generally conceived there to be a higher degree of active prevention than the students did. Another result indicated that Swedish schools were generally reluctant to aid students in reflecting on their everyday relations with peers at school, and to examine what meanings various actions had for the students themselves. Recommendations were formulated in terms of schools in general having to enhance teachers’ and other school personnel’s knowledge about students’ local peer cultures and norm systems.

A more recent evolution in the area of educational research in Sweden is an ongoing discussion concerning evidence-based research. Part of this discussion has centered on the issue of finding anti-bullying programs that have been scientifically approved. As a concrete effect of this debate, in 2007 the Swedish government commissioned the Public Authority of School Development to conduct a review, compiling existing evaluations of the 21 programs part of the inventory from 2003 referred to previously. A result of this review was that few of the representatives of the different programs knew whether their programs had been evaluated. Neither did they seem to know what a scientific evaluation should entail. The review concluded that few of the programs had been examined in a satisfactory manner, illustrating concrete effects on bullying rates. A possible explanation was offered, that few of the programs explicitly approached school bullying, even if they could be applied for such purposes, which of course affected the eventuality of their being evaluated as such (Mynigheten för skolutveckling, 2007).

The governmental assignment to the Public Authority of School Development then also came to include the accredited chore of conducting its own assessment of existing programs used for countering bullying and violations in the Swedish school. Due to authority changes, the mandate for this assignment was given to the Swedish National Agency for Education in 2009. Nine programs were evaluated: Friends, SET, Lions Quest, The Olweus Program, The Farsta Method, School Comet (Skolkomet), School Mediation (Skolmedling) and Step by Step (Stegvis). The aim of the assessment was to examine how these anti-bullying programs, in sole implementation or in combination with other anti-bullying initiatives, worked under different circumstances. A finding of the assessment was that an anti-bullying program was seldom implemented in its full anatomy, but rather more commonly in combination with other programs and initiatives. So while schools claimed to be users of one particular program it was found to rather be a matter of adjusting various guidelines and mixing elements from several programs (Skolverket, 2011).

In relation to the debate on evidence-based programs, and the subsequent governmental ventures, Evaldsson & Nilholm (2009) confer five principled problems on the idea of evidence-based research within the area of anti-bullying implementation work: firstly, the problems of identifying which methods have actually had positive effects; secondly, the interrelated problem of determining what it is in a particular method that in such a case has resulted in positive effects; thirdly, the problem of transferring results from research onto
the everyday practice of various schools; fourthly, the problem of fundamental research focusing on the complexity of children’s everyday social lives at school often being excluded from the debate; and finally, the problem of not including factors of bullying outside of the actual school context in research connected to anti-bullying prevention.

There are indeed several reasons why it is problematic to evaluate actions, plans and methods for preventing or reducing school bullying. For one, anti-bullying programs typically comprise a variety of components, involving actions to be undertaken at different levels such as the school, the classroom, individual children and parents (Rigby, 2002). A complication of this is consequently how to apprehend what actually generates an effect. Another dilemma is that schools adapt local versions of various action plans and anti-bullying programs, choosing components that they feel fit their own local school context, which for the purpose of an evaluation creates aggravating circumstances.

Another issue is the actual methods used in the assessment of anti-bullying programs. The assortment of numbers adduced in research in relation to the frequency of bullying incidents points to a tendency to at times include other types of inter-relational problems within the concept of school bullying. This is problematic, if as a consequence the numbers are treated as representing a homogenous and clearly defined phenomenon, while they more likely include several different ones. However, since most anti-bullying programs derive from a specific definition of bullying, their implementation targets specific behavioral patterns. Indeed, this creates aggravating circumstances for the task of assessing the effectiveness of counteractive approaches. In attempts to assess these anti-bullying programs with clearly delineated objectives, using quantitative measurement strategies also encircling other phenomena, the results will be rather misleading.

Forsman (2003) concludes that all teachers are in need of more competence in the area of working with the social dimension of students’ everyday school life. If this is taken to be true another issue becomes crucial, namely how teachers as well as other school personnel are supposed to identify the research on which to build the evidence-based practice, so eagerly demanded on the governmental level (cf. Evaldsson & Nilholm, 2009). Frånberg & Wrethander (2011) assert that teachers’ everyday knowledge of bullying is insufficient both when it comes to theoretical knowledge, as well as in regards to implementation.

Some contributions of this thesis to the field of school bullying research

The existence of more indirect and subtle forms of bullying, involving interpersonally manipulative behaviors, have been suggested by several researchers, and have also been found to be fairly common particularly among girls (e.g. Crick et al., 2002; Owens et al., 2000a; Simmons, 2002). However, few studies have
investigated how the processes of social exclusion come about and are accomplished in peer interaction over time (but see Evaldsson, 2007; MH Goodwin 2002, 2006). Such investigation is made in Study I of this thesis. Through elaborated investigation of a peer group’s everyday peer encounters it is demonstrated how social exclusion is situated within the flow of intricate, subtle and even seemingly innocent interactions. This study thus offers detailed information about how girls’ everyday peer group interactions, taken across a range of activities, may be significant for the process of social exclusion (see also MH Goodwin, 2002, 2006). Moreover, the study contributes a deeper understanding concerning the difficulties in detecting patterns of exclusion in the complex composition of exchanges, activities and concerns that constitute children’s everyday social affairs in school. Because, it is only when subsequently looking back, and in view of already unfolded trajectories, that the total effect of certain interactions becomes truly apparent and can be identified as social exclusion.

The evaluation of the effectiveness of school-based programs has mainly concentrated on what outcomes they have for individuals after their use. A consequence of such a one-dimensional focus has been that the complex social processes through which these programs are accomplished in everyday school activities have been left rather unexplored. In Study II of this thesis, complex interactional moral work accomplished within the situated practice of ART moral reasoning sessions, used as part of a school’s anti-bullying prevention program, is illuminated. This study fills a gap concerning the understanding of the interactional management of children’s moral stance-taking, something which has mainly been shadowed by the quest to project the outcomes of educational training programs for individual children’s moral reasoning.

Although it has previously been demonstrated that children enforce their agency in dealing with bullying, little attention has thus far been paid to how children in everyday peer group interactions, in situations out of adult supervision, deal with children who tell teachers about bullying. Additionally, few studies have directly focused on how the effects of school-based anti-bullying interventions are handled by students. In Study III of this thesis it is demonstrated how, as a gossip dispute activity unfolds over time, the girls in a peer group accused of bullying appropriate, and even subvert, the social organization of the school’s anti-bullying program and manage to turn the tables so that the girl initially reporting that she is a victim of bullying is cast as an instigator, and the girls accused of the bullying as victims of false accusations.

All in all, the approach to bullying as a social practice applied throughout the investigative task of this thesis raises questions in relation to the different social and moral orders children produce, shape and orient to in their everyday life within a school setting. This approach also comes to emphasize differences in adults and children’s ways of dealing with matters that generate issues related to bullying.
CHAPTER 3

Children’s participation and the interactional accomplishment of everyday activities

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of the thesis by establishing the vantage point, namely the perspective, through which the inquiries of this thesis are approached. By outlining various conceptual systems, the aim is to provide a general understanding of how ethnomethodological concerns for members’ perspective in combination with a theoretical view on children as competent social actors can be combined as a tool for understanding children’s participation and their accomplishment of everyday activities.

Children’s competence, participation and agency

James et al. (1998) depict how the increasing interest in children and childhood during the last decades of the 20th century was motivated by an urge to turn childhood into an important entity in itself; no longer dependent on, nor subordinate to, adulthood. Within the paradigm that has come to be called “the new social studies of childhood” two dynamics have, above others, been brought to the forefront of discussions: firstly, the dynamic of children’s social competence, grounded in the argument that they are neither as innocent nor as incompetent as prior ideologies of childhood have described them (Hutchby & Moran-Ellis, 1998), concluding in an emphasis on children as agents of their own socialization and not merely unfolded adults (e.g. Schwartzman, 2001); secondly, the circumstances of childhood, in terms of social enablement and constraints, have been repeatedly raised as a way to highlight that the agency of children is situated within social contexts in which the manifestations of their competencies are either encouraged or suppressed (Hutchby & Moran-Ellis, 1998).

James et al. (1998) allude to the studies of children’s social lives, and state that they illuminate how children through everyday interactions create local child identities, while concurrently evoking questions around their status within a more global, and general, category of children. So, while being social actors in their own everyday life, orienting in society and creating social worlds to consequently live in, children are also placed within another more overriding order of society where their age places them on a lower rank and affects their rights and others’ understanding of them.
If children’s competencies are assessed against the abilities of adults, the result will undoubtedly be that children fall short. For instance, Corsaro (2003) notes that developmental psychologists often underestimate children’s knowledge, and that a crucial reason for this is that they focus on outcomes and classify children at different stages in the acquisition of adult knowledge in relation to their age, or other developmental abilities. Cromdal (2009, p. 1474) argues that such an “adult-oriented deficit view of children” still forms a basis of lay conceptions of children since it informs a good portion of current research. Also, the focus on what children do not know about the world still takes epistemological priority over inquiries that seek to understand how children use whatever knowledge about the world they already have for their own purposes (see also Butler, 2008). Kitzinger (1997) argues that any expressed lack of competence in children should be understood in relation to the socio-structural position from which they are directly influenced by adult demands for obedience. Children are expected to abide by adults’ rules, advice and instructions, and if they fail to do so it is commonly explained as a lack of competence. In the same manner, children’s practices, decisions and ways of reasoning are generally not awarded the same status as those of adults because they are considered immature (Meyer, 2007).

However, by analyzing everyday conversations and social interactions, conventional and taken-for-granted assumptions about childhood can be opened up and problematized (Danby, 2009). Through an interactional perspective on everyday activities - rather than treating children’s conduct as displays of their competence or lack thereof - a more impartial position, more focused on understanding how particular actions are designed and taken up in the unfolding and management of social relations is formed (Cromdal, 2009; see also Butler, 2008; Danby and Baker, 2000; Goodwin, 2002). By studying children’s participation as social events involving an exchange of actions in interaction, and by pointing to their actions as essential to the accomplishment of activities, a depth and range of social competences can be revealed. Though, in order to understand children as competent social actors, the study of their abilities has to be situated in the empirical circumstances of their ordinary and everyday activities. And, as Hutchby & Moran-Ellis (1998) point out, such empirical circumstances can be both allowing and constraining in terms of children’s ability to demonstrate social competencies.

In order to sufficiently understand the features of children’s social competences and participation in the contexts in which they are situated, it is essential to try to look at relevant social actions “from within” (Hutchby & Moran-Ellis, 1998, p. 10). This requires a recognition of the procedures by which the participants themselves organize, and make sense of, activities in a particular social context. And, by focusing on children’s abilities it becomes obvious not only that social constraints structure children’s lives, but that children’s lives are in fact also structured by their own activities (ibid). It is thus important to explicate the social processes of children’s everyday life in interaction with peers as well as with adults, in order to demonstrate how talk and other activities repre-
sent resources by which they, through *participation*, display interactional competence in various contexts.

A common way to emphasize children as participants and social actors is in terms of their *agency* (e.g. Wyness, 1999; Christensen and Prout, 2002; Mayall, 2002), which can be observed as their autonomous expression in communication (Baraldi, 2008). The concept of agency works as a way to conceptualize children’s social relations, and recognize them as influential participants within a variety of social contexts (Vandenbroeck & Bouverne-de-Bie, 2006). Conceptions of agency can be connected to two separate theoretical approaches that relate to children as social agents (Wyness, 1999): firstly, to studies that position children in their own contexts of peer interactions; and secondly those that locate children within a larger social structure with an interest in the systematic denial of this agency. The emphasis of the former is on identifying agency through the analysis of social interaction, while the latter reconciles the notion of agency with theories of power and social inequality (*ibid.*).

Next, a combined overview and discussion of children’s participation in peer group interaction as well as child-adult interaction will be presented.

**Children’s participation in peer group interaction**

The interest in studying children’s peer talk and interaction has evolved through several facets that have, in various ways, contributed to a view on children’s language use as a chief part of their own socialization process (see Kyratzis, 2004 for a more exhaustive overview). A discourse-centered approach (e.g. Ervin-Tripp and Mitchell-Kernan, 1977) was the first to highlight the concept of children’s communicative competence, thereby also pointing to the social knowledge needed for context-appropriate speech in naturalistic activities. The birth of an approach of children’s language socialization (e.g. Ochs & Schieffelin 1984; Schieffelin & Ochs 1986) then came to lay focus on children’s social competence, inaugurating the investigation of how children become participating members of a culture through participation in its language routines. Later, a focus on children’s agentive work in processes of cultural learning through their use of language (e.g. Goodwin 1980; Corsaro 1985; Gaskins et al. 1992) created a view on children as members of a culture that is different from that of the adult world. All these different approaches, as Kyratzis (2004) notes, have had an impact on how we currently view children and their talk events in peer group interactions.

The idea of children as part of a culture that is not simply an imitation, or a direct appropriation, of the adult world have come to be commonly accepted (e.g. Cook-Gumpertz & Kyratzis, 2001; Corsaro & Eder, 1990; Kyratzis, 2004; Evaldsson, 2005; Schwartzman, 2001; Goodwin, 2007). Corsaro & Eder (1990) define *peer culture* as:

>a stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values, and concerns children produce and share in interactions with their peers (Corsaro & Eder, 1990, p. 197).
This definition offers an alternative perspective in relation to the understanding of children’s socialization as a passive reproduction of adult culture; a perspective through which children are attributed with agency over their own cultural learning. Such a perspective is crucial in understanding how children, in and through peer interaction, actively take different stances towards cultural resources (Gaskins et al., 1992), and negotiate reformulations of social categories in relation to their own social context (Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2007). These social categories are often appropriated (Corsaro & Eder, 1990) from the adult culture, but by manners that are sensitive to context (Kyratzis, 2004; Thorne, 1993, 2001). According to Corsaro (2005) this appropriation is twofold, as it both expands peer culture since features of adult society are remodeled to meet the concerns of the peer world, and simultaneously contributes to the reproduction of adult culture. Corsaro & Eder (1990, p. 200) refer to this process of appropriation as interpretive reproduction. By identifying central elements of children’s peer interactions, analysis can thus be focused on their meaning and organizational significance to local peer cultures, but also on their contribution to the reproduction of adult culture (Ibid.). For example, children commonly utilize adult-formulated rules within peer group interactions to achieve authority (Maynard, 1985), and thus engage in “a complex process of constructing their own social orders while also strategically drawing upon existing adult-formulated rules” (Cobb-Moore et al., 2008, p. 598).

James et al. (1998) discuss whether it is possible to talk about a separate children’s culture, and how it would best be explained. They question whether it is enough to say that such a culture manifests itself through various forms of play, or if it should be seen as the everyday contexts within which children create their social lives in collaboration with their peers. Furthermore, they touch upon the question of how the everyday lives of children in such a case are supposedly separated from the lives of other family members, and how it can be analyzed apart, in isolation, from the regulations and commands of adult society. They conclude that there is no sufficient method to describe children’s culture, and that the aspects of children’s cognitive, emotional, social and materialistic relations within their own lives that have been illuminated in research should be seen only as a representation of instances in the socialization of children. From such an angle, the analysis of children’s culture and peer culture would be understood to unmask only glimpses of the temporary, social positioning of children as individual and collaborative learners of culture; glimpses that can at best give us insight into the processes of cultural reproduction. However, I would argue that this is an unfair reduction; and most importantly, a reduction that can in fact be avoided by studying the actual problem-handling activities that children engage in as they organize and make sense of their social worlds as a way to describe the activities, routines, values and concerns of children (cf. Corsaro 2005, p. 96). With such an approach, an understanding of how interpersonal relations constitute cultural practices, and how children become part of such interpersonal relations and cultural practices through their participation in communicative activities, is possible. Or as Goodwin & Kyratzis (2007) puts it:
The close observation of children interacting, negotiating and teaching one another provides new ways of envisioning the processes through which human sociality is developed during childhood (Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2007, p. 287).

As Thornborrow (1998, p. 135) brings forward, studies of peer group interaction are crucial for showing how language use plays a central role in forming the social worlds in which children exist to a large extent independently of adults. In other words, when participating in peer group interaction, children demonstrate communicative competencies having more to do with being proficient participants within their own culture than with learning how to be competent members of an adult world (ibid.).

Today, the study of children’s talk is both multidisciplinary and wide-ranging. However, within the field, one stream of research raises the question of the linkage between children’s talk and social processes in natural settings of social interaction (see Hutchby, 2005 or Goodwin & Kyriatzis, 2011 for a further description). Through such a linkage, talk is often highlighted as a tool for accomplishing social actions (e.g. Corsaro, 1985; Gaskins et al. 1992, Goodwin 1980; Evaldsson, 2005). Such work on children’s talk in naturally occurring settings demonstrates, as Hutchby (2005, p. 68) puts it, the importance of seeing children’s activities of language use, in the case of my study e.g. social exclusion and gossip-disputes, as bound up with their interactional contexts, and as situated in the unfolding flow of talk-in-interaction.

Children’s participation in child-adult interaction

Children commonly find themselves having to manage the contingencies of adult-controlled institutions (Hutchby, 2005), among these school classrooms. Such settings routinely involve organizational representatives, whose task it is to interact with children in specific ways. Hutchby (2005) argues that one key feature of such interactions is the way contrasting agendas, and to some extent differing moral imperatives, can inform the participation of adults and children. One relevant part of analyzing such differences is how they may contribute to the ways practitioners themselves understand the social competencies of children (ibid.). However, it should be pointed out that such institutional imperatives are only significant if factually orientated to by the participants in interaction, since a specific context is both produced and managed through ongoing interaction (Heritage, 1993).

The study of institutional interaction often aims at explicating the ways such institutional tasks are carried out in various settings, through the management of action in context (Arminen, 2000). However, ethnomethodological studies in the field of education have held a diverse range of different themes. For example, there has been a lingering interest in classroom order and management (e.g. Payne, 1982; Macbeth, 1990, 1991) covering work on, e.g., classroom control, the management of deviance and the sequential organization of teacher-student interaction (Hester & Francis, 2000). It has been found that a common characteristic of adult-controlled institutions, such as classroom interaction, is adult
attempts to ensure changes in the behavior of the child, or to manage and regulate children’s behaviors according to professionally defined agendas. The classroom as an interactional space often has clearly defined rules concerning how children are expected to behave (Corsaro and Schwarz, 1999). Such rules, however, do not necessarily correspond with the social orders children construct within their own peer interactions (Cobb-Moore et al., 2008; Evaldsson, 2012).

There has also been interest in the production of classroom activities and events within ethnomethodological studies in the field of education (e.g. Payne, 1976) in terms of how lessons, as an organizational event, are staged phenomena with recognizable beginnings and endings, the accomplishment of which involves interactional work on the part of teachers and students (Hester & Francis, 2000). Communicative activities within classrooms can be seen as connected to certain conditions specific to that institutional setting. It has long been accepted that classroom interaction is both complex and multidimensional (e.g. Nuthall, 1997; Sahlström, 1999; Liljestrand, 2002), and one such complex feature is that of authority since institutional roles are assigned to interactional participants (Griswold, 2007). This means that teachers acting in the classroom will do so from a professional position, and with a responsibility for the students’ learning process (e.g. Liljestrand, 2001). In the same manner, children entering a classroom do so as students, using situated knowledge of the context they are in (e.g. Kofoed, 2008). So in classroom interactions, both children and adults can be understood to orient towards various institutional orders. The concern for the practically accomplished and locally situated character of educational activities thus involves investigating such educational orders to which parties of activities are oriented in the course of the very doing of them (Hester & Francis, 2000, p. 1). Crucial to such interest is also to inquire into how certain phenomena are recognizable as educational in the first place (ibid, p. 6).

One communicative activity found to be common within classrooms is the discussion. Classroom discussion as a specific form of activity involves two central aspects. The first relates to what is discussed, and the second to how interactants are expected to participate (Burbules, 1993, Liljestand 2002). Entering into an activity of classroom discussion thus has consequences, based not only on what is contributed but also on how it is contributed. All communicative activities are produced and upheld through various forms of interactional routine practices, and a specific feature of classroom discussions is that someone, most commonly the teacher, often leads them. And, as Liljestand (2002) asserts, the leader of a classroom discussion has rights not afforded to other participants, such as appointing him or herself speaker at any given time, introducing new topics and finishing other participants’ turns (see also Edelsky & Adams, 1990).

Negotiation, self-expression and verbalization of the self are often treated as educational norms these days (e.g. Vandenbroeck and Bouverne-De Bic, 2006). However, a focus on such democratic features is not just any norm, but one that is part of a democratic discourse used in specific educational contexts in which active student participation is promoted. As Prout (2000) asserts, the Nordic countries, and perhaps Sweden in particular, are often referred to as
primary examples within the domain of active student participation (see also Tholander, 2007).

An informal education in democracy may involve organizing discussions in relation to emotionally and morally charged topics, thus cultivating both reasoned argumentation as well as basic democratic values among the students (Tholander, 2007; see also Harris, 2003). This is relevant for the scope of this thesis in the aspect of how morality is put into practice, in and through child-teacher interactions within a classroom setting. In Study II, accounting practices are explored as a way of understanding how morality is enacted and negotiated in student-teacher discussion during ART classroom sessions, in order to explicate what moral references are made explicit and how the participants acknowledge and align/disalign with these references. These ART classroom sessions on moral reasoning constitute a rich context for exploring the situated character, and interactional management, of moral reasoning by examining different forms of moral work accomplished in the discursive actions of students and teachers. This is of interest in order to shed light on the construction of different forms of moral orders among students and teachers, as well as on moral discourse in classroom discussions.

Research has shown that children “grapple with multiple and diverse moral frameworks”, and that they are aware of a variety of value systems, ranging from the formal and accountable to the more unspoken and assumed (Thomson & Holland, 2002, p. 114). Because of this, they are also highly able to adjust their conduct based on specific expectations in various contexts. However, this does not mean they do not also autonomously create their own meanings while relating to external rules and norms. Sterponi (2009, p. 445) points to the “inherently dialectical character” of accountability, stressing that being assumed accountable for one’s own conduct implies the positioning of an individual as an autonomous and responsible agent, while also exerting a controlling function, which limits that individuals’ actions. That is to say that a request for an account grants autonomy to the individual as agent, but at the same time limits autonomy of action. Targeting how children are called to account for their conduct and provide a remedy (i.e. an excuse, a justification or an apology) for the targeted behavior highlights the production of situationally appropriate talk within the setting of classroom ART.

The accomplishment of everyday interaction

The remaining part of this chapter will be devoted to presenting some key orientations within Ethnomethodology and CA (Conversation Analysis). It initially touches upon the issues of how the sense, and meaning, of social actions are interrelated with the immediate context in which they are performed, and as such are situated. Thereafter, the matter of viewing and approaching talk and embodiment as social actions, and as resources by which people accomplish social activities and events, is highlighted. The way interactional participants use and rely upon resources such as practices, procedures and reasoning in their
production and sense-making of social actions is also discussed, as is the social order of interaction and the concept of accountability.

Situated action, practices and activities

A fundamental interest of this thesis is that of situated action. This entails a concern with context, and the uniqueness of interactional action and activities. Rather than treating context merely as a structure within which actions are performed, Ethnomethodology regards it as the product of interactional participants’ actions and activities. As Heath & Hindmarsh (2002, p. 12) put it, “participants constitute circumstances and situations, activities and events ‘in and through’ their social actions and activities”.

Activities can be understood as central in studies of interaction, in the sense that we do specific things through collaborative action. By studying situated activities separations between actions, thoughts and feelings are not made in the sense of saying people act the way they do because of predefined thoughts or emotions. Rather, the social order7 of interaction renders possible social actions, collective meanings and social reality (Heritage, 1993). This is particularly interesting in relation to bullying, due to its definitions being so closely tied to an idea of intentionality, and to bullying being carried out with an intention to cause harm. From the perspective taken in this thesis, however, contexts as well as meaning-making are understood as sequentially accomplished in interaction. In other words, the meaning of an action is created and shaped in relation to what has preceded it, to which it is a response. Thus, the meanings of actions are produced in a sequential flow (Heath & Hindmarsh, 2002) rather than in any individual’s preexisting intention. In fact, as Duranti (1997) asserts, there is an ongoing dialogical process in interaction through which language and context mutually feed into each other. A consequence of this is that the meaning of a specific utterance or a particular word cannot be pre-defined as a particular type of action due to the high level of context-sensitivity. In one sense, this demands a view on social interaction as a set of interactional practices that cannot be completely defined prior to the emergent activities in which they are embodied (ibid.).

As previously stated, this thesis advocates the central relevance of activities to the study of school bullying as an interactive phenomenon. The analysis of activities has been both important within the field of face-to-face interaction as well as relevant to general theoretical issues posed in anthropological studies of culture (MH Goodwin, 1990). MH Goodwin (1990) proclaims that there is a common awareness that interaction occupies a central place in the organization of social behavior and is central to the organization of culture, and it thus constitutes a central place where members of a society collaboratively establish how relevant events are to be interpreted and moreover use such displays of meaningfulness as a constitutive feature of the activities in which they engage (ibid.). As Cromdal (2009) establishes:

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7 The concept of a social order will be further discussed on page 44.
Detailed study of children’s social interactions in their everyday lives can thus show their own methods for making sense of their everyday contexts using the interactional and cultural resources they have at hand (Danby, 2009).

Talk and embodiment as social actions

When ascribing interaction significance to social organization, language use is automatically made equally important since it provides the basis for group life. Language, in terms of thinking and talking, enables us to comprehend and define the social world of which we are a part. Also, it is central in the construction of self since people, when participating in communicative interaction, “become fixed in position through the range of linguistic practices available to them” (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 109).

Language is approached in this thesis as social actions. Such a view has a more dialogical framework and focuses on communicative meanings and functions, which makes it necessary to also consider the contexts of language use. Thus, the main concern is what participants in an interaction do through talk, and what is made known and reciprocally understood by interlocutors in a specific conversational context (Linell, 1997).

Consequently, within such an approach the interpersonal understanding of language is more relevant than individuals’ linguistic capabilities (ibid.). The focus of investigation is thereby directed towards things said in interaction, and towards how people collectively use language to accomplish social activity. If talk is viewed as social actions used to create meaning in every interaction, one person’s utterance (action) is connected to others’ understanding of it. From this point of view, a major concern can be focused on an effort to descry what it is in the details of a person’s utterance to which others attach special meaning and respond to, in order to also shed light on the interactional consequences of such details.

Although spoken language can be understood to be the main form of communication, other types of communication are equally important. Understanding the purpose of actions in interaction requires a broad range of evaluative processes, and spoken language is only one resource available for such purposes. For investigations of interaction, embodied actions are gaining more and more attention, pointing to the different ways people may participate in interactions with others and the surrounding world (e.g. C. Goodwin, 2000, 2003; Heath & Hindmarsh; 2002; Mondada, 2009, 2011; Melander, 2009; Martin, 2004).

Schegloff & Sacks (1974) argue that the concern for talk in CA derives from the recognition that social actions and activities are accomplished in and through talk-in-interaction. In face-to-face interaction, social actions and activi-
ties are accomplished through a variety of means, and talk is inextricably embedded in the material environment and participants’ bodily conduct (Heath & Hindmarsh, 2002).

Mutually organized actions
As has been established, the meaning of social interaction is a matter of course, in which actions have to be worked out in the process of their own production. As actions are created and shaped in a moment-to-moment fashion and the interactional consequences of specific actions can never be determined beforehand, participants in interaction have to continuously grasp the meaning of actions in order to reply to them (Heath & Hindmarsh, 2002). All participants in interaction are thus dependent on the ability to make shared sense of common courses of actions (Garfinkel, 1967). The name of the perspective of ethnomethodology comes from the idea of shared methods of practical reasoning (ethno-methods) that social actors use to produce a shared conception of the context of action and the social world they inhabit. No coordinated or meaningful action is possible without this form of shared understanding (Garfinkel, 1967). The study of how these socially shared methods are used in interactions in people’s everyday life works as a ground for the analysis of ongoing events, activities and actions, emphasizing the idea that every aspect of shared understanding of the social world depends on a multiplicity of tacit methods of reasoning (Heritage, 2001).

Participants in an interaction draw on these methods so as to produce actions that will be accountable in context. The accountability of actions makes shared methods of practical reasoning visibly available in social interactions. Garfinkel (1967) defines this by declaring that:

> the activities whereby members produce and manage the settings of organized everyday affairs are identical with members’ procedures for making these settings accountable (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 12).

This means that shared methods of practical reasoning characterize both the production and the recognition of social action. And, as Garfinkel (1967) notes, the accomplishment of social actions, practices and activities is dependent upon participants displaying the very ways they produce and recognize conduct. Accordingly, participants produce their actions with regard to the conduct of others, particularly the immediately preceding action or activity, and in turn their action forms the framework to which subsequent action is oriented (Heath & Hindmarch, 2002). However, as Heath & Hindmarch (2002) eventuate, actions are also prospectively oriented. They are designed to encourage, engender and/or even elicit subsequent action, which in turn forms the basis of the participants’ assessment of their own and others’ conduct. So, actions within interaction provide opportunities for subsequent action and are designed to build

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8 The concept of accountability will be further discussed on page 45.
possibilities for conduct \textit{(ibid)}. Heritage (1984, p. 254) describes this process as participants constructing “an architecture of intersubjectivity” within the evolving course of interaction, within which they display their contingent orientations towards the ongoing business at hand.

The social order of interaction

The question of how social actions are possible in connection to the question of how social organization is interactionally accomplished has long been debated. In the endless attempts to determine when a person’s actions align with other people’s actions, the constant and managed accomplishment of social order has been most essential. Goffman (1967) argues that interaction can be viewed and approached as a form of social organization in its own right, in the sense that it embodies a moral and institutional order that can be treated like any other social institution. In Goffman’s (1967) terms, this is a social order, which comprises a complex set of rights and obligations.

As Berger & Luckman (1966) state, the only way a social order subsists is as a product of human activity.

Both in its genesis (social order is the result of past human activity) and its existence in any instant of time (social order exists only and insofar as human activity continues to produce it) it is a human product (Berger & Luckman, 1966, p. 51).

The accomplishment of order in talk-in-interaction could thus be seen as inextricably tied to the local circumstances in which utterances are performed (Heritage, 2001). Therefore, the social structure of interaction is also a situational feature of human encounters to which participants actively orient as having relevance to how they design their actions, rather than merely an objective, external source of constraint. Hence, in order to achieve a local social order, participants must display to each other, in the midst of interaction, what they are doing and how they expect others to coordinate their actions with them (Goodwin, 2006). Ethnomethodology offers an approach to the study of social order that analyzes such local sense-making practices. This tradition delves into close and detailed analyses of the various practices through which the work of accomplishing local social order is achieved \textit{(ibid)}.

Social order is not primarily maintained by mutual values but rather by social processes, and interaction, in situated activity (Goffman, 1981). Goffman (1964) argues that if attention is directed primarily towards various social variables like age, gender or social class, and how these influence people’s talk and actions, the social situation and its consequences are disregarded. A social situation is defined by Goffman (1967) as:

an environment of mutual monitoring possibilities, anywhere within which an individual will find himself accessible to the naked senses of all others who are present and similarly find them accessible to him (Goffman, 1967, p. 2).
The order of interaction also has a particular social significance, since it underlies the operations of all other institutions in society and mediates the business they transact (Goffman, 1967). As Heath & Hindmarsh (2002, p. 2) put it, “social interaction lies at the heart of organizational life”, and it is as a consequence of social interaction that people develop routines, strategies, practices and procedures.

Cromdal (2009) claims that there is an adult bias in mainstream social and behavioral studies of children, and that such theoretical accounts of children and childhood(s) risk losing sight of the interactional basis of the social orders children inevitably produce by participating in social life. Children, in going about their everyday life, are routinely concerned with their own social and moral orders as well as those of adults, while adults are rarely required to concern themselves with the social orders of children (Cromdal, 2009; Payne and Ridge, 1985). Through investigation of the local social orders children build and maintain in their everyday interactions, analyses may reveal their complex and rich worlds as they assemble their social orders and identities through moment-by-moment encounters (Danby, 2009).

Norms in being: offensive actions and accountability

The focus of this thesis on the interactional accomplishment of bullying activities also aims attention at the collective construction of morality. A number of researchers have argued that morality becomes comprehensible when breaches in social practice occur (e.g. Evaldsson, 2007; Bergmann, 1998; Jayyusi, 1991). In other words, morality becomes available in interaction through the practice of accountability (Jayyusi, 1991). From such a perspective morality does not exist per se, but is rather a situated activity that is locally accomplished and shared in everyday face-to-face interaction.

Accountability refers to more than the recognizability of behavior; namely to its explanation and moral evaluation (Hester, 2000, p. 197). As participants in interaction account for their own actions, and make others accountable for theirs, moral values become evidently displayed and also negotiable in interactions. Tilega (2010) describes this process in terms of a wide range of alternative descriptions and categorizations as available for accountable courses of action in interaction. This availability enables participants in interaction to at some point be in a position to produce views on whether they see these as appropriate under current circumstances, thus aiming attention at moral dimensions of the ongoing interplay. Categorizations are thus explicitly exercised to display moral standards and to accomplish moral work. As Jayyusi (1984, p. 2) explicate, looking at how descriptions are used to accomplish various practical tasks makes it obvious that the social order is in fact a moral one. Categorization work is both descriptive and ascriptive, and involves both judgmental and inferential practices. Descriptions of persons are also intimately embedded in the description and ascription of actions, and in the work of practical, everyday judgment. Such descriptions are thus foundational in the understanding of participants’ practical activities (ibid.).
Linell & Rommerveit (1998) argue that the eternal presence of moral aspects in dialogues and discourse can be observable at different levels and in different forms, and also classify two major kinds of phenomena (see also Bergmann, 1998). The first is a so-called discourse-internal morality, which refers to the fact that every discursive action involves taking on and assigning responsibilities to oneself and others, thus owning up to and making others own up to interactional acts. The other kind of phenomenon applies to moral issues as they are handled in discourse, meaning particular topics to which a moral (evaluative or normative) attitude is implicitly or explicitly taken. According to Linell & Rommerveit (1998), such morally implicative topics may be broached in many different contexts, while still some communicative genres or interactional activities seem notably designed to do so, in specific ways. In relation to this thesis, the classroom sessions based on the ART moral reasoning training practice examined in Study II is such an interactional activity in which students are actuated to participate in moral reasoning in relation to problem situations in their own everyday life. Although, in clarification, even in these types of activities, designed to broach morally implicative topics, a moral discourse is not picked up at any time, but must be entered through a successfully coordinated entry (Bergmann, 1998).

In line with Luckman (2002), I argue that the most accessible way to talk about morality is to approach the ways it is communicated. In his work on moral communication, Luckman (2002) distinguishes between the thematization of morals and moralizing as two distinct types of moral communication. Thematization ranges from descriptive declarations relating to moral values here and there, and narratives of explicitly moral examples of conduct to accentuate formulations of ethical principles and criteria. Moralizing in its turn functions as a type of evaluation, of both the behavior of others as well as one’s own, and is either positive (as in praise) or negative (as in condemnation).

When actions are subjected to evaluative inquiry, such as through moralization work, and a participant as a consequence has to explain a condemned action, they make use of accounts. Scott and Lyman (1968) categorize two main types of accounts. The first is excuses, which are “accounts in which one admits that the act in question is bad, wrong or inappropriate but denies full responsibility” (p. 47). The other is justifications, which are “accounts in which one accepts responsibility for the fact in question, but denies the pejorative quality associated with it” (p. 47). Sterponi (2009), in her turn, argues that the distinction between these two types of accounts is highly valuable, not only because it introduces a fruitful systematization but also since:

it foregrounds the two fundamental dimensions of accountability, namely the negotiation of responsibility and the re-categorization of the problematic conduct (Sterponi, 2009, p. 443).

However, and even though accounts can serve as a useful analytic tool, a stretched attention beyond a particular account is also necessary for an understanding of what triggered it, and what interactional consequences it has come
to have (ibid.). Sterponi (2009) also argues that it is essential to consider the participation framework of account episodes, including who solicits the account, to whom it is given, who actually provides the remedial move and so on.

A line of researchers have noted and highlighted the fact that it is not beneficial to exclusively approach children’s morality from a developmental perspective (Evaldsson, 2007; Tholander, 2002; Bergman, 1998) or to view morals as a demarcated content of competence that children should be socialized into adopting by adults. Explorations of ‘mundane morality’ (Sterponi, 2009, p. 441), namely how moral evaluations are produced and how blame and culpability as well as praise and honor are assigned in everyday interaction have been conducted within the fields of linguistic anthropology, microsociology and discursive psychology (e.g. Sterponi, 2009; Evaldsson, 2007; Goodwin, 1998, 2006; Drew, 1998; Duranti, 1993).

Research has illustrated that there are several different reasons for children to use justifications (e.g. Cobb-Moore et al., 2008; Corsaro & Schwartz, 1999; Orsolini, 1993). For instance, justifications related to breaking classroom rules are rather common (Cobb-Moore et al., 2008). Orsolini (1993) addressed the question of whether specific types of interactions are related to specific types of justifications produced by children, and found that justifications elicited by a teacher’s request for an explanation in classroom discussion generated far more references by children to causes, norms and rules than in disputes between peers.

Based on the theoretical framework outlined above, the importance of looking at children’s situated actions and activities, and the particularities of specific interactional events, become apparent. Because, it is only when taking into account the participants’ own orientations that we can say anything about the meanings and impacts of various actions for the particular social actors involved in those same actions and activities.
CHAPTER 4

Doing ethnographic fieldwork and analyzing video recordings of children’s everyday activities

This chapter will present the methodological framework for the conducted study. It presents the chosen modes of procedures, and provides more detailed information concerning setting, participants and gathered data. Also, it critically reflects on the methods used.

Initially, a description of the conducted study will be given, illuminating the basic features of what constitutes an ethnographic inquiry and the ways such features can be a beneficial part of the study of children’s participation in activities that generate issues related to bullying. The issue of data collection will be touched upon, as a means to illuminate the contributions of the two data collection strategies of participant observation and video recordings. The tasks of gaining acceptance in the field and of observing will also be discussed, alongside my own participant role and that of the camera.

In the ensuing section, the process of representation and analysis will be presented, followed by a final part entailing various ethical complications of doing ethnography in the specific case of the current study.

The empirical study

The empirical data on which this thesis is based draws on ethnographic research. The ethnography was conducted at an elementary school, _Aspåskolan_9 (Aspen River School), located in a low-income multiethnic neighborhood in a medium-sized Swedish city. During the time I was there approximately 230 students attended the school, which accommodates classes from the 0th to 6th10 grade. After their time there, the students were transferred to a secondary school close by.

Overall, my presence at the school stretched over a whole year, from my initial visit to the end of the fieldwork. The empirical data were collected on a daily basis during weekly periods throughout the year using different ethno-

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9 This is a fictitious name with no relation to the actual school setting studied.
10 These grades involve children 6-12 years of age. The first year of schooling, also referred to as 0th grade, is not part of the compulsory education but is offered to all children beginning the year they turn six. The 1st to 6th grades are part of the primary school education system.
graphic methods (Corsaro, 2005; Christensen & James, 2008) such as participant observation, video recordings and interviews.

At the school, research was carried out in one particular 5th-grade class. Early on during the fieldwork, girls from two different friendship groups within the class were also chosen for more close observation, and their interactions were video recorded on a reoccurring basis throughout the school year. Apart from filming peer interactions in these two girl groups, certain types of classroom activities were also video documented, among them ART classroom sessions, girl group theme discussions, role-play and ordinary classroom talk centering around the children’s social relations. During the last month of the study, focus group interviews with most of the students in the class were also conducted, as well as individual interviews with the two teachers and the vice principal in charge of all activities implemented to counteract bullying at the school.

Video recordings of the two peer groups’ interactions alongside video recordings of ART classroom sessions and certain extracts from my field notes constitute the main empirical basis of this thesis. However, it is important to acknowledge that all the collected materials serve as background for the analyses and conclusions. The empirical materials presented below should therefore be understood as also contributing to the content of the thesis.

### Empirical data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Form of data</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer group interaction (recess)</td>
<td>Video recordings</td>
<td>ca 13 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Peer group 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer group interaction (recess)</td>
<td>Observations,</td>
<td>ca 30 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Peer group 1)</td>
<td>field notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer group interaction (recess)</td>
<td>Video recordings</td>
<td>ca 15 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Peer group 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer group interaction (recess)</td>
<td>Observations,</td>
<td>ca 40 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Peer group 2)</td>
<td>field notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom ART sessions</td>
<td>Video recordings,</td>
<td>ca 6 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>field notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl group theme discussions</td>
<td>Video recordings,</td>
<td>ca 4 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>field notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other types of classroom interaction</td>
<td>Video recordings,</td>
<td>ca 155 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>field notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interviews (Students)</td>
<td>Audio recordings</td>
<td>7 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual interviews (Teachers, Vice principal)</td>
<td>Audio recordings</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School, class, peer groups and activities

For the major part of the fieldwork period the studied class consisted of 22 children: eight boys [Omed, Arvid, Hadar, Patrick, Azad, Sahir, Marcus and John] and fourteen girls [Zeliba, Tara, Linnéa, Samina, Liza, Paula, Josefin, Mona, Rana, Natalie, Esma, Azra, Salina and Yaasmiin]. At the end of the year an additional girl, Obab, joined the class. The children had mixed ethnic backgrounds: Kurdish (6), Swedish (5), Palestinian (4), Somali (2), Bengali (1), Chilean (1), Armenian (1), Eritrean (1), Swedish/American (1) and Bosnian (1).

A comprehensive task during my initial visits to the school was to try in a methodical way to grasp how the children's social relations were organized into stratified friendship groups. The class had most of their lessons in a classroom located in a corridor adjacent to the only other 5th-grade class, and it soon occurred to me that inter-relational constellations of friends were common within these two 5th-grade classes. Since their recess time usually coincided, they often played in groups consisting of children from both classes. Similar to what has been reported in other school settings (e.g. Eder, 1995; Evaldsson, 2007; Thorne, 1993), gender and age formed the most institutionalized grouping principle in this school setting as well. When I started my fieldwork there were seven more or less stable friendship constellations among the children in the class.

As the children’s friendship associations became clearer to me, the organization of different groups, as well as the activities they engaged in, became a more explicit interest for my directed focus. One of the friendship groups in class was a constellation of three girls, Linnéa, Paula and Natalie. Already during my first few visits to the class I noticed that processes of peer alignments, social hierarchies and marginalization were a common element in this group’s peer interactions. This led me to focus my observations on them already during the early stages of the fieldwork.

The three girls had known each other since kindergarten, when Paula and Natalie had been best friends. This had now changed, as Paula was instead best friends with Linnéa. All three had been transferred to the current school the year before my arrival after attending another school for their first four years of schooling. Most of the time they socialized with one another, and did not participate in games with the other children in their class during recess. A few months into the fieldwork, however, Emma (from the other 5th-grade class) started often joining the group of girls in activities outside the classroom. As Emma was gradually incorporated into the group, processes of peer alignments, social hierarchies and marginalization in relation to Natalie became even more apparent. Emma persistently refused to have anything to do with Natalie, and often ignored her presence while playing with Paula and Linnéa. While there was a common awareness that the friendship between Linnéa and Paula was special, they openly showed a willingness to also include Emma in their interactions [see Study I, Svahn & Evaldsson, 2011].

A few months into the study my closer observations also came to include a second peer group, consisting of Yaasmiin, Salina, Tara and Azra together with
Emine and Beyan from the other 5th-grade class. My interest in observing this particular group was due to gossip and in-group conflicts, as well as conflict with other children, being a common element in the girls’ everyday interaction. They often talked behind each other’s backs, and ganged up on each other. In disputes with other children, however, they always backed each other up, and did not permit others to talk badly of any member of their group [see Study III, Evaldsson & Svahn, 2012 forthcoming].

Though these six girls were the core of the group they also spent time with a variety of people, both outside the class as well as periodically with Patrick and Hadar, and later also Obab, in the class. The six girls had a long interactional history, and also spent most of their time outside school together. Within the group there were also smaller constellations: Salina and Beyan were best friends, as were Yaasmiin and Tara. Yaasmiin was considered the official leader of the group and some of the other girls, especially Tara, Salina and Azra, often turned to her for advice and followed her behavior. However, her leadership was often challenged and contested by Emine, who took the lead in conflicts and was often involved in fights with girls outside the core group.

Having confirmed with the children that they were comfortable with me studying their doings, I thus started to observe and video document peer group activities in these two friendship groups in order to detect the relational patterns and various interactional practices used to organize their peer groups. A major part of the two peer groups’ interactions was video recorded during recess, primarily in spaces where few or no other adults were present. The documentation was conducted using a small hand-held camera, since I had to be able to follow the girls as they circulated around the schoolyard area. For a great part of the fieldwork, the girls also took turns wearing wireless microphones attached to their collars.

It should be noted that in conducting the fieldwork I did not aim to cover the children’s, or even the focused peer groups’, everyday life at school in all its aspects, or to produce a broad cultural description. Rather, I aimed to emphasize particular forms of interactional activities, which in turn can be seen as cultural manifestations of what could be considered as bullying activities from the outside. While participating in the broader social life at school, the documentation thus all along targeted specific types of interactional contexts and activities. The choice of making such a demarcation was based on the idea that it is not individuals, or a group as a whole, that constitute the most relevant unit for the purpose of analysis of cultural phenomena, but rather situated activities (see Goodwin, 1990). In fact, it can be argued that culture can best be studied through the local activities within which cultural practices and procedures are situated (Goodenough, 1981; Goodwin, 1990), since the structures people use to build appropriate events change in different activities (Goodenough, 1981) and individuals therefore have access to several different operating cultures (MH Goodwin, 1990).

The interest in particular activities became relevant not only in relation to the two peer groups I came to observe more closely, but also regarding the types of classroom activities to which I came to devote the most attention. These activi-
ties were associated with the school’s strategic work for countering bullying and other interpersonal difficulties arising from the children’s peer group interactions. In fact, even the initial choice of school was based on its having a clear profile of working extensively with the social dimensions of the children’s everyday life.

As an educational setting the school had a progressive ideology, and a positive social climate and a safe environment were high on the list of goals on the school’s educational agenda. Within the school setting, a variety of work was devoted to the work of countering bullying, and to integrating social competence as an overall aim in the education. A large variety of prevention activities and anti-bullying initiatives were implemented throughout the different grades. In the studied class, ART classroom sessions on moral reasoning training, various forms of role-play, girl group theme discussions and activities connected to the school’s action plan for countering bullying were the most relevant to my inquiry.

For example, ART (Aggression Replacement Training) was widely implemented at the school. ART is a multimodal method, initially constructed to offer social alternatives to aggressive children and adolescents. Within this method, aggression is approached as behavior used by individuals who have weak or no socially constructed alternatives (Goldstein et al., 1998). Based on an assumed intercorrelation between aggression and the lack of a series of socio-cognitive, emotional and moral capabilities, three areas have been identified as crucial to work with. One of these is Interpersonal Skill Training, which entails a number of teaching procedures in social training, whereby functional examples of these skills are presented through modeling and these skills are rehearsed through role-play and then implemented into real life. Another area is Anger Management, which is constituted of different alternatives to anger and the practice of these alternative responses when provoked. The last area is Training in Moral Reasoning, which is an activity in which children are presented a number of dilemmas for which they should find a suitable solution by discussing them in groups (Goldstein et al., 1998). The majority of the teachers were certified ART instructors, and ART classroom sessions were held in the 0th to 6th grades. In the observed class ART sessions were held during one lesson, once a week, as a time-scheduled routine. However, it was not used as a step-by-step course program, and during the period I was there only the moral reasoning part of the program was used, being locally adapted. The ART moral reasoning training program, which emanates from a cognitive developmental approach, is based on Kohlberg’s (1964, 1967, 1984) moral theory entailing a set of different stages of the individual child’s moral reasoning. Kohlberg’s moral developmental theory is based on experimental studies of children’s moral reasoning in relation to various forms of hypothetical dilemmas. However, in the observed class the children were not subdivided based on their levels of moral reasoning, as advocated in the traditional ART moral model.

Within these weekly ART sessions, a variety of exercises were implemented, including ‘the hot seat’ (beta stolen), ‘four corners’ (Fyra hörn), ‘dilemma stories’ (dilemmasagor) and various forms of role-play (forumspel, pjäser, dramaövningar).
These exercises were meant to, in varying ways, help the children actively relate to their own value systems. A common denominator for all of the exercises was that they presented some form of moral dilemma. Often, the children were asked to take normative stances in relation to these dilemmas, and to argue for and defend their position. The exercises were structured as to favor open discussion engaging the students, thus abstaining from teacher-dominated approaches such as lecturing. Thus, the idea was not primarily to advocate particular moral positions but rather to encourage dialogue by addressing specific morally implicative questions, areas or themes. Hypothetical scenarios were often used as catalysts for more extensive discussion.

At the school, **boy- and girl-group discussions** were also periodically held with an aim to enhance the pupils’ social and verbal competences. **Value exercises** and **role-play** were conducted already in the 1st grade, with the formulized purpose of training active values and making the pupils aware of their own choices and influences. In addition, talks in which bullying was topicalized were also organized within different activities, such as peer conversations, peer mediation training, and befriending training.

The school also had an **anti-bullying support team** consisting of teachers, a school nurse and a school psychologist. The class teachers held the main responsibility for the social climate in their class, and the pupils were encouraged to first turn to their own teacher if they experienced bullying or wanted to report witnessed events. Turning directly to someone on the **anti-bullying support team** was also an option, but the teacher(s) of concerned children were always involved in the bullying countering process. The **anti-bullying support team** was also obligated to have regular talks with certain children who they thought had information about bullying incidents at school. The goal for these talks was to identify details of such incidents, who the involved parties were and when the incidents had taken place. A subsequent task was to set up guidelines to prevent the bullying behaviors from reoccurring. Another function of the **anti-bullying support team** was to inform parents of bullying situations that had occurred, initially in written form and followed up with a teacher-parent meeting in cases in which the situation could not be immediately resolved. The **anti-bullying support team** was also responsible for a yearly revision of the school’s anti-bullying plan.

A **peer support system** was also utilized at the school in all classes ranging from 2nd to 6th grade. Two pupils from each class (one boy and one girl) were chosen by their teacher to serve as **peer supporters**, which meant that they should set examples of good comradeship, as well as be a link between the children and adults at the school. Marcus and Linnéa (who also participated in one of the peer groups in focus – see p. 47–48) were the two peer supporters in the observed class. Every other week the **peer supporters** met with adult representatives of the **anti-bullying support team** to talk about how they had experienced the social climate during the past weeks. The **peer supporters** were not encouraged to directly mediate in or try to stop bullying events, but rather to serve as observers and actively work to include everyone in peer interactions. Already early in the fieldwork I identified the school’s **peer support system** as an important building block in the school’s anti-bullying work and therefore considered it also im-
portant to look into more closely. However, even though given the clearance early on from the vice principal, who also held the ultimate responsibility for this activity, after repeated requests I was denied access to the peer supporters’ weekly meeting with their adult mentors from the anti-bullying support team by the teacher holding these meetings. The reason given for denying me access to these meetings was that the children would not feel comfortable enough to talk openly about their experiences with me present.

The use of participant observation and video recordings

As has been shown in prior work on children’s peer group interaction (see Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2011 for an overview), ethnography offers a valuable set of techniques for connecting talk-in-interaction with particular cultural and social practices. Traditionally, the ethnographic research approach has been described as only involving two distinct activities: firstly, to enter into a social setting, often fairly unfamiliar until that moment, and come to know the people involved in it; and secondly, to regularly take notes on what is going on. So, according to this traditional description of ethnographic work, it is a matter of participation and observation, which produces a collection of written records of experiences (e.g. Emerson et al., 1995). However, the past two decades have seen a substantial growth in ethnography, also in Scandinavian educational research. As Beach (2010) proclaims, theories and foreshadowed problems of the education field have framed the initial focus and given direction to ethnographic research, while the subsequent production and analysis of materials, are usually developed from multiple sources and perspectives, which has led to the identification of previously unexplored dimensions of educational exchanges. In addition, the technical development of the past decades has led to a re-envisioning of ethnographic research in terms of data collection strategies.

In my case, participant observation was combined with video recordings. There was a need for additional resources, apart from participant observation, in order to explicate the details of the participants’ activities in their natural environment, due the tacit character of human action and interaction (Heath, 1993). Combining fieldwork with video recordings was thus crucial, particularly when it came to observing the children on the playground during recess. The use of a small hand-held camera enabled me to keep up with their constant, high-tempo circulation around the schoolyard area. The use of remote audiovisual recording, in which the children were fitted with wireless microphones, also proved indispensable for capturing verbal exchanges performed in motion. Participant observation in combination with the use of a video camera thus offered chances to pinpoint, select and record instances of talk and embodied practices, performed at a fast pace in places where the children interacted away from teachers’ supervision (see Evaldsson 2007 for a similar discussion).

There is a mutual idea in ethnographic fieldwork that the people studied share habits, social activities and ways of interacting and communicating. Because of this, ethnography is highly compatible with the theoretical ideas of Ethnomethodology and CA (e.g. Goodwin, 1990). The essence of CA is a body of methods
for working with recordings (audio and video) of interaction, which makes it very much an empirical tradition with a purpose of analyzing interaction from the point of view of how it is methodologically constructed (Sidnell, 2010). Since the situated character of practical action, as Heritage (1995) establishes, inevitably forces the analytic attention on interaction towards the investigation of activities and events within the contexts in which they occur, video recordings can provide useful resources with which to subject practical actions and activities to detailed analysis. In other words, the use of documentation that is available for repeated viewing facilitates the investigation of how children through their participation in routine interactions accomplish social relations and activities (see Goodwin, 2006 for a similar discussion). Also, it enables a scientific attention to details of talk and conduct that most certainly would not be possible if only relying on field notes (cf. C Goodwin, 2000).

However, even in cases when other data collection strategies are successfully deployed, participant observation is still an essential part of ethnographic fieldwork. And, at the initial stage of the field study this was what I solely relied on as I took notes on what went on around me, on the participants’ interactions, activities and routines. The camera was not introduced at all during the first month of fieldwork, even though the idea of filming had been presented to the children and teachers already at our very first meeting. The choice to wait was based on several factors. Most importantly, starting the fieldwork before starting to record enabled a search for, and the identification of, “interactional hot spots” (Jordan & Henderson, 1995), namely sites of activity for which videotaping could indicatively be productive. It was not until a few months into the study that I started video recording specific activities and events that during the initial phase I had observed as specifically interesting or relevant for my inquiry.

Indeed, participant observation has been vital to my study in several ways. Not least because it brought clarity about the routines the children participated in to accomplish their peer cultures (Corsaro, 2005; Evaldsson & Corsaro, 1998), which were an essential part of their everyday life at school. Anthropologists have long debated the significance of the concept of culture, and in later years some have arrived at the idea that culture never simply is, but instead rather does, leading up to a suggestion of treating and approaching culture as a verb rather than a noun (e.g. Thornton, 1988; Street, 1993; Heath & Street, 2008). The adoption of the culture as a verb idea creates an understanding of the relation between theoretical concepts and empirical details and experiences (Beach, 2010). An ambition of my fieldwork was to examine talk-in-interaction through the levels of anthropological concerns. And, since language can be viewed as a set of practices, which play an important role in mediating aspects of human existence and in bringing about particular ways of being in the world (Duranti, 1997), it can be understood as cultural practice. Language can also be understood as a way of making sense of the social world through, for example, stories, descriptions and performances (ibid.). In agreement with such a view, one could say that culture is produced and re-produced through various forms of social activities, and that it consists of practices and procedures. Participant observation was thus also imperative to the study as it illuminated the interplay
of the institutional structure as well as the children’s participation and agentive work in co-constructing the social practices within the setting, and allowed an exploration of the ways participants accomplished practical activities in and through interaction with each other.

In order to gain insight into the delicately constructed order of children’s everyday life at school, time was also a crucial factor. Collecting the empirical data I collected would not have been possible had I not devoted as much time as I did. In my study of continuous, active processes of meaning-making in situational context, as a fieldworker I searched for inter-relational patterns (Heath & Street, 2008), and such patterns take time to detect. In relation to video recordings, field notes thus contribute another form of analytic ground because an ethnographer is generally able to present a more complete picture of the observed area, thanks to insider knowledge gained through participation (Ten Have, 2001). And, ethnographic facts may be needed in order to present a fair description of the setting within which the studied interactions take place.

The delimitation of data is clearly rather differently determined within the two data collection strategies of participant observation and video recordings. When filming, the documentation is limited by the choices made concerning camera placement, use of zoom versus wide-angle lens and so on, something that permanently determines what will be left for analysis. Therefore, ethnographic notes can add dimensions of description that cannot be captured by a video recorder, and offer a chance to describe the more overall situation of an ongoing event (Duranti, 1997). Furthermore, they open up for broader analysis as details of several situational contexts may be linked together.

All in all, the use of ethnographically grounded work in combination with video recordings, which permitted me to study talk-in-interaction in a more detailed way, made it possible to look at the children’s interactional accomplishments of everyday activities, and thereby emphasize their agentive work (compare Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2011). In addition, an approach to the participant’s interactions as situated provided insight into the construction of meanings. Namely, it became apparent in what ways specific activities were meaningful for the children in the particular contexts in which they arose.

Gaining acceptance and finding a place in the field

Davies et al. (2004) argue that at the point of entry into a field the researcher needs to understand the ways he or she is accepted by the participants as a particular kind of presence (see also Christensen & James, 2008). Even though for me the studied school was first and foremost a research site, it meant something completely different to the children. This was a place where they spent a large percentage of their normal everyday life, socialized with other children and built relationships. However, ethnographic fieldwork is about continually creating and upholding social relationships, and in observing the two friendship groups I spent considerable time with the girls to gain their acceptance, as well as approval to video document their interactions on a regular basis. A crucial factor for gaining such acceptance was to hang around with the girls in their
everyday school life, not interfere in their peer activities, and avoid acting like their teachers did (cf. Evaldsson, 2007; MH Goodwin, 2006). A contingent effort for me was to form relationships in which the children felt they wanted to participate throughout the research process, and over which they felt they had control (Christiansen & James, 2008).

At the beginning of the fieldwork the children treated me in one of two ways. Some went out hard, trying to test me; most commonly by saying or doing things they knew they would ordinarily be reprimanded for, while intently observing my reaction. My approach to this was to simply not react, or more importantly not react in the expected manner of pointing out the inappropriateness of their actions. Other children acted in the opposite way, hushing each other when speaking of certain matters, giving me worried glances. As time passed, however, and they established that I was not giving away anything about their dealings to their teachers, the provocations and the hushing stopped, and analyzing glances by which to interpret my reactions were no longer sent my way. Instead, they came to treat me as someone they could confide in, and did not have to modify their actions or watch their language in front of. One event that came to be particularly important to me in understanding my relationship with the children happened one day at the end of the first semester. At the time, I had been at the school for about four months.

At the end of the Swedish lesson the teacher starts up an exercise, telling the children it will train their ability to listen, concentrate and be attentive. Everyone is given an assignment in writing, with instructions for a particular individual task to be carried out. Sitting in the back, I am also given a note, and carry out my task without giving it much thought. My note says that I should, when seeing someone walk over to the window, tell whoever is sitting on the floor to go back to his or her seat. As I then see Paula walking over to the window I follow my instructions and tell Marcus, who is sitting on the floor in the middle of the classroom, to go back to his seat. In order to make myself heard in the ongoing turmoil of scraping chairs and people talking and moving about, I have to raise my voice. I wouldn't have been able to anticipate what then happened: the sudden silence, the children's stares and Marcus's surprised response: 'What?'

Field note December 2007

The children's reactions led me to further evaluate my presence in the classroom and what the children had come to expect of me. I realized I had not once before that moment told any of the children what they should or should not do. In my relationship-building with the children I had relied on the belief that if I approached and treated them as competent social actors, experts on their own lives, and did not interfere in what they were doing it would create methodological advances. Thus, I had tried to approach them as “makers of social relations” (James, 1996, p. 315), hoping I would thereby get better insight into their own life worlds. James (1996) argues that such a way of understanding children is mainly a product of the methodological style of ethnography, since it is a method used to study children from their own perspective, and observe them in the contexts of their own everyday lives.
Above everything else, however, I must say that the children regarded me as someone less knowledgeable of how it was to be a child (cf. Corsaro, 2005). Because of this it seemed they saw it as their duty to inform me of as much as possible about their lives, concerns, experiences, emotions and opinions. At certain times, when other children less acquainted with me displayed hesitance towards talking about certain things while I was present, the girls usually referred to me as someone who already knew all their secrets. Although I doubt this was altogether true, I always felt rather touched by how they in time came to so unconditionally allow me to join them in everything they did.

The observer’s paradox

In undertaking both field observations and video recordings it is important to be sensitive to one’s own part within, and influence on, events. Assessing the data to influences on the recording and analyzing one’s own part are thus crucial. The nature of a researcher's role, and the extent to which a researcher can or should get involved in the empirical setting of study, has been a recurrently mentioned issue in relation to ethnographic fieldwork involving children (e.g. Sparrman, 2002; Cromdal, 2000; Corsaro, 2005; Adler & Adler, 1998). In my case, I guess you could say I was a rather passive participant since I rarely entered games or conversations if the children did not directly ask or invite me to do so. Since being a complete participant, in the sense of actively pursuing the activities the children engaged themselves in, rendered the task of documenting much more difficult, for the most part I tried to stay on the periphery of interactions. Adler & Adler (1998) make a distinction between being an active-member and a peripheral member as a way to distinguish between different research roles. This distinction is made based on whether or not the researcher participates in the central activities of a community. In my view, roles that seek to define the level or nature of interaction are somewhat problematic, since in practice this is a much more nuanced and complex process (cf. Aarsand & Forsberg, 2010). As I entered the school setting for the first time in what I at least thought of as the role of observer, it immediately became clear to me that a separation of participation and observation was not as easily made in practice as it is in theory. This became the juncture for me to more fully understand the meaning of the term “observer’s paradox”. It presented itself and evolved in my mind during the months to come, as my presence in the classroom, and on the playground during recess, attracted more and more attention from the children. For me, the dilemma of determining when my observation of an event was influenced by my own presence had to be resolved by making my involvement as transparent as possible in my field notes. Making the written records inclusive of my own interactive influence on different events was the most crucial, I figured, since when I was using a video recorder the reactions to my presence were more automatically included in the documentation, and furthermore my involvement was limited by my position behind the camera. I was more frequently invited into conversations and activities when not using the camera.
Still there were times, even while filming, when my role as observer quite abruptly and unexpectedly transformed into an explicit form of participation. I most clearly recall an incident that occurred during an English lesson, in which the teacher was obviously losing patience with what she expressed as an unusually unruly lesson:

After repeatedly addressing the class, telling them to stop talking, she once again turns to them and tells them that she feels the need to show my video documentation of the lesson to their parents at the next parent-teacher conference.

Field note October 2007

For the teacher, perhaps this was just a way of intimidating the children into being quiet, but for me it had rather different consequences. I believe that, until that moment, I had been able to balance my adult role in such a way that the children did not see me as a teacher or as an adult there to educate or parent them, like other adults in the setting. Neither did they see me as someone there to supervise their behavior. The teacher’s comment, however, immediately shifted some of the students’ conceptions of me, as well as their behavior towards me, since it conveyed a scenario in which she had access to my documentation; something I, when first arriving at the school, had clearly stressed to the students was not the case. As the teacher presented it, however, I can understand that some of the children were confused and hesitant for some time after this event. Clearly, I further and repeatedly emphasized to them, that what the teacher had said did not correspond to how it really was, but it took some time before the conditions for my presence in the class were reestablished.

Being the odd adult

Throughout the fieldwork I minimized my association with the adults at the school. I never went into the teacher’s lunchroom during recess, and I seldom spoke with the class teachers in the presence of the children. The talks I had with the teachers most often took place at the end of the school day when the children had joyfully cantered out of the classroom after their final lesson.

Spending almost all my time within the school area with the children, and going where they went, I sometimes ended up in rather peculiar situations. By following their trail, and as they also knew I would not try to convince them otherwise, I often joined them as they tested various ways of bending or breaking school rules. Consequently, there were times when they (we) got caught, hiding in airing cupboards in the cloakroom during recess when supposedly outside on the playground, coming back from the grocery store to the schoolyard where we supposedly should have been the whole time, or sneaking over to the secondary school next door. The children often justified their rule-breaking by pointing to me as an adult. My presence in their daily lives was thus used by them as a way to legitimize doing things they were not supposed to do. And, while the actions were not new to them, their excuses for doing them were made in new ways. Apparently, they believed that having had adult super-
vision during these activities made them justifiable to other adults in the setting. Interestingly enough, they were almost always correct in this belief. Although this left me feeling rather awkward in relation to the adults at the school, they were often kind enough to pretend these incidents happened due to my not being familiar with school procedure. Even though no one ever approached me about these incidents away from the children, I believe as time passed we were all aware that this was not the case. Even so, they never held me directly accountable for my discrepancies.

For me as a fieldworker, this became an ethical predicament I had not predicted. Trying to balance the conflicting expectations across the different roles I played within the setting, and in relation to different participants, became a true challenge at times. In relation to the children I was expected to keep quiet about their dealings, while in relation to the adults at the school I was of course expected to act my age. In other words, the diversity of the school community, and the wide range of interests and values that I as a researcher came into contact with, created situations that seemed to hold no obvious solution.

The camera as an artifact in play, interaction and identity work
The children of the class quickly became used to being filmed once the initial curiosity had subsided. They often referred to the presence of the camera in terms of having their own reality show. Approaching the camera in this manner, they often interacted with it and made it part of games and role-play. A common and much appreciated game Yaasmiin and her friends engaged in was to stage a TV program called “Efterlyst” (“Wanted”), whereby one girl would take on the role of the host and interview the others about different made-up crimes.

The camera was also often used for commentary on certain activities. At times some of the girls, most often Beyen, would step out of ongoing activities and start talking into the camera, giving her commentary on what was being enacted around her. This analysis would often cause a great deal of amusement among the other girls, who soon joined in. In this way, the camera came to offer premises for new forms of activities. Not that commentary was an activity the girls rarely engaged in – on the contrary – but, due to the presence of the camera, it was done in a new manner.

When other children at the school commented on the camera, Yaasmiin and her friends often declared that they were being filmed because they were so interesting and special. Even though this was mostly said in a jocular tone, at those times I was always reminded of how they had first approached me at the beginning of the fieldwork, referring to themselves as the most interesting children at the school, and as such the most suitable to having someone observe them. On one occasion, while filming Beyen, Salina and Tara outside on the soccer field, next to where some 6th graders were playing soccer, the camera battery died. When the girls noticed this, they told me to pretend I was still filming. Apparently, being filmed served certain functions to which the girls attributed specific importance. Having the 6th graders see them being filmed was thus essential.
The work of transcribing video recordings

Even though the video recordings are the empirical data, and cannot be replaced as such, transcriptions of them provide a resource through which to begin to become more familiar with details of the participants’ conduct (Heath & Hindmarsh, 2002). In basic terms, the act of transcribing can be described as a process, by which visual documentation is transformed into written representation. Another simple way of describing it would be to say that transcription work is a process of matching the sounds of human speech to specific written symbols using a set of conventions. Such conventions are determined by an attempt to standardize transcription procedures, and refrain from too much variation. However, even though these determinate conventions are widely accepted they are not set in stone, and may still be applied rather differently depending on individual choices.

It is important to clarify that a process of turning a spoken conversation into written form also entails filtering (Ochs, 1979). As transcription turns conversation of spoken words into written language and symbols, the transcriber makes a number of selective choices that most are definitely colored by theoretical and analytic positions. Depending on the focus of the analysis of the transcribed sequence, details are included or excluded. No researcher truly begins the transcription work free of assumptions and specified interests. From this standpoint, the transcription work can more accurately be described as an early step of analysis, in which the elaborative nature and the wealth of details are determined by the nature of the researcher’s analytic interest (Jordan & Henderson, 1995).

Green et al. (1997) point to different levels of the transcription process, and establish that what is transcribed is the principal issue at an interpretive level, while how it is transcribed is what matters the most at a representational level. Since there is no ideal, complete or neutral transcript according to any abstract standard, on neither an interpretive nor a representational level, it is important to make evident the basis for selective choices (Jordan & Henderson, 1995; Bucholtz, 2000); not only to others, but perhaps most importantly to oneself while transcribing, in order to know when an analysis is illegitimately forced in some way. So, as Bucholtz (2000, p. 1440) notes, there is a necessity within the practice of transcription to be aware of one’s own role in the creation of the text, and “the ideological implications of the resultant product”; not least in order to avoid making “self-fulfilling analysis” (ibid, p. 1459). When making the mapping from sound to script, it must thus be considered not only what can be read off the transcript in the form of possible analytic angles, but also in what ways underlying theoretical or analytic assumptions affect the choices made. However, as Ochs (1979) stipulates, we have no meta-language that is applicable to the identification and comparison of actions and interactions that aggravate the circumstances for such procedures. There is not one true, definite description of reality that we can compare our transcriptions against and thus secure a reliable representation of what was actually enacted. Also, as Bucholtz (2000)
claims, transcription practices ought to be motivated by analytic concerns as well as a sensitivity to the sociopolitical context of transcription.

A choice made in the process of transcribing the analyzed sequences of interaction included in this thesis is a general use of standard spelling in order to make it more accessible to the reader, while indicating variation in pronunciation in terms of high pitch, prolongation of sound, stressed syllables, etc. using particular markings. All transcripts are single-columned and include all participants’ interactional contributions, verbal as well as embodied, in order to avoid assigning primacy to any speaker or any particular type of action. The transcription format is a simplified version of that used in conversation analysis. In two of the studies (II and III), the original Swedish transcripts are included, in these cases in a separate column next to the translated version. In the other study (I) only the translated transcripts are included, due to journal space conventions. In all cases, the English translations are as close as possible to the Swedish verbatim records.

As Melander (2009) points out, the selective choices of details become an even more complex matter when transcribing embodied action and participants’ orientations to the material world (see also Mondada, 2007). One methodology used as representation of embodied actions, developed by Charles Goodwin in more recent years, is the use of drawings in (e.g. Melander, 2009; Goodwin, 2000). This method was also applied in Study I of this thesis.

The transcription of talk and action provides help in starting to grasp the details of interaction and how it emerges, and enables clarity about what is said, by whom, to whom, in what way and at what exact time. These aspects make it possible to explore potential relations within interactions, such as alignments/disalignments and affiliations/disaffiliations, and provide a tool for clarifying the location of actions and for exploring the interrelated talk and bodily conduct. This type of detailed investigation is thus necessary to clarify the emergent and contingent relations between participants’ conduct and the sequential character of interaction (Heath & Hindmarsh, 2002).

Analyzing situated action

Something that can be claimed to be both a benefit and a constraint in working with naturally occurring events is that the natural organization of events entails some practice understood by co-participants within that event as having some importance, sense or consequence (Schegloff, 1988). Consequently, subsequent actions that build on this understanding constitute part of an interactional reality. Children’s experiences of the types of everyday activities studied here will, as Cristiensen & James (2008, p. 157) put it, vary; not only across cultures but also “in quite subtle ways within cultures”, and thus “change in and through different localities”. However, as Schegloff (1993) argues, no number of other episodes that for one reason or another develop differently, will undo the fact that in the cases studied here it went the way it did, with that exhibited understand-
ing, and with an object of study made available to inquiry, demanding an account along those lines. And, as Schegloff (1993) further asserts:

The best evidence that some practice of talk-in-interaction does, or can do, some claimed action, for example, is that some recipient on some occasion shows himself or herself to have so understood it, most commonly by so treating it in the ensuing moments of the interaction, and most commonly of all, next. Even if no quantitative evidence can be mustered for a linkage between that practice of talking and that resultant "effect," the treatment of the linkage as relevant - by the parties on that occasion, on which it was manifested –remains (Schegloff, 1993, p. 101).

A primary concern in the analysis of interaction, are the ways the production and interpretation of action rely upon a variety of spoken, bodily and material resources. It is in fact, as Heath & Hindmarsh (2002) describe, a conversation analytic commitment to empirically demonstrate the relevance of particular features of the context to the actual production of action by participants in interaction. Analytic focuses on interaction thus lie with the methods through which participants produce their own actions and make sense of the actions of others. And, through detailed investigation of particular sequences of interaction, analysis can be directed towards elucidating the resources and competencies upon which participants rely in the interaction focused on (ibid).

Subsequent actions can thus be investigated in order to observe how participants themselves respond to each other’s actions. In relation to this, it is also important to see that each action displays an understanding of the prior action, to which it is a response. As Heath & Hindmarsh (2002) put it, the detailed study of interaction provides the resources with which to systematically examine the participants’ relevancies; how they deal with others’ actions and how others respond to theirs. Detailed and repeated inspection of the accomplishment of actual activities can thus provide resources by which to identify the practices through which particular events are produced (ibid).

Since the analyses of the studies in this thesis are designed to reveal the resources and practices deployed by the participants in the social organization of their activities, this is of great importance in the analytic procedures. Seeing that the situated and contingent character of activities is created and shaped by moment-by-moment production of participants’ actions, it is possible to disassemble aspects of the social organization in the accomplishment of particular activities if analytically approaching interaction in this manner.

As Sheldon (1996) points out, close sequential analysis of complex episodes of talk offers a number of advantages in the study of children's social uses of language (see also MH Goodwin, 1990). Firstly, keeping track of entire episodes of talk reveals ways single utterances are contingent on the context and how they are threads of an interconnected social situation. In other words, the meanings of individual utterances are affected by the linguistic and social context of which they are a part. Secondly, keeping whole talk episodes in view also gives a sense of how children are able to track the discourse through the pro-
gression of interaction and recruit different interactional resources to manage the social business at hand (ibid).

The key concepts of participation, participant framework and footing

Taking a participant’s perspective on interactional activities means that focus is placed on the participants’ factual orientations. In responding to a prior action, participants display to each other the meaningfulness of that prior action in how they design their reply. In studying the sequential organization of ongoing talk-in-interaction, it is thus possible to see how participants themselves interpret the interaction they are involved in (MH Goodwin, 2002). Three terms that are highly relevant to the analytic inquiries of this thesis, in terms of what they say about such organization of talk-in-interaction, are participation, participant framework and footing.

Goffman’s (e.g. 1964, 1981) theoretical ideas provide analytic tools for understanding the dense layers of meaning in talk, and offer a lens for examining how speakers position themselves vis-à-vis one another in and through interaction. Through the years various intermediaries have also filtered Goffman’s microsociological framework, thus adding to his work (e.g. Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004; Levinson, 1988).

Participation is an essential dimension of the study of social interaction. It is in fact, as Duranti (1997) establishes, an analytic notion often taken as the starting point of the study of talk within interactional perspectives. Goodwin & Goodwin (2004, p. 222) describe participation as a reference to actions demonstrating forms of involvement performed by parties within evolving structures of talk. From this view, the notion of participation can thus be used to capture the fact that speaking, and interacting, form part of larger activities, stressing the inherently social and collective quality of any act of speaking. It can also be an analytic tool for understanding different types of involvement (ibid.). Goodwin & Goodwin (2004) assert that a thorough study of participation demands:

an analytic framework that includes not only the speaker and her talk, but also the forms of embodiment and social organization through which multiple parties build the actions implicated in a strip of talk in concert with each other (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004, p. 223).

This assertion is based on the fact that while speakers talk, they also attend to their hearers as active participants, and systematically take into account what these hearers are doing (ibid.)

MH Goodwin (2007) argues that if one acknowledges the sequential organization of conversation it becomes apparent that a participant’s position is partly defined by the possible types of contributions a participant can make with respect to what is being talked about. And, much analysis of participation has concentrated on categorizing different forms of it, and different types of participants. For this venture, Erving Goffman’s theoretical framework is highly relevant. Goffman (1974) uses the term participation status for the particular relation an interactional participant has to what is being said in a specific situation,
and contends that talk can only be properly analyzed in the context of the **participant status** of everyone involved in a focused interaction (Goffman 1964; see also Levinson, 1988). If one adds the total configuration of all participants’ statuses at any given time, the result is what Goffman (1974) refers to as a **participation framework**. There are many dimensions to communication beyond language, and the idea of a **participant framework** is a matter highly relevant to the uncovering of how interactional participants can make out and understand these dimensions.

The concept of **footing** encircles how the frames and modes of conversation are determined and contained by participants (Goffman, 1981). Levinson (1988) explains this by saying that **footing** can be understood as the projection of a speaker’s stance towards an utterance, and towards other parties and events. Instances of changes in **footing** can be understood as conversational shifts (like turning from direct to reported speech, selecting a particular recipient or changing the type of discourse), and imply a change in participants’ alignment to themselves and their co-participants (Goffman, 1981, p. 127). And, such shifts can affect social roles and interpersonal alignments as well as tasks. (ibid.). According to Goffman (1981), the business of changing **footing** is not simply a matter of dropping one context and assuming another, but rather holding it in intermission with the potential that it can be revoked. This means that while some shifts indeed have more enduring implications, such as transforming social relations and sometimes whole activities into something else (e.g. Levinson, 1988), others are momentary suspensions of social relations that are later resumed (Goffman, 1981). Embodied elements such as proximity, touch, gaze and so on are also crucial in **footing**.

### Ethical considerations

Ethnographers are confronted with the question of ethics in at least two general domains: an academic institutional one, and one of interactions with our participants (Dennis, 2010). In Sweden, the academic institutional domain is monitored mainly through ethical guidelines constructed and implemented by the Swedish Research Council. And, in accordance with such guidelines, this study followed the recommended directives.

Information on the research project, introducing its object of study as peer group interactions and school-based activities for countering bullying, was given out at a parent-teacher meeting held for the class in question. The empirical collection strategies, in the form of observations and video and audio documentation, were also presented, as was the length of the fieldwork. All the students in the class received their parents’ permission, as well as gave their own consent, to participate in the study. They were also given written information entailing contact details so that they would be able to make contact at a later time. Information on the study was also given to all school personnel at a weekly staff meeting. Also, due to the inter-relational constellations of friendships within the two 5th-grade classes, I soon had to expand the initial consent-
gaining process by contacting the parents of other children with whom the children in focus interacted on a reoccurring basis.

Another important ethical consideration relates to communication and confidentiality. An accustomed rule is that children’s real identities should remain confidential in any discussions of findings. In accordance with this, all the names of the children, the school personnel, the school, the neighborhood, the city, and even the children’s pets have been changed in the written text to secure the participants’ identities. However, the issue of confidentiality becomes perhaps an even more crucial rule when it comes to video recordings. With this in mind, the video recordings collected during the fieldwork have only been used for research purposes and have not been viewed by any outsider or by school personnel. The use of transcriptional drawings also involves ethical consideration. However, while they served as visual representations, they bear little resemblance to the actual individuals in terms of identifiable features.

More ethical issues arise during research than can be addressed though formal ethical guidelines, and the matter of acting ethically in practice, once in the field, is a dynamic as well as complex mission. As Dennis (2010) establishes, determining what lessons have been learned and what could have been done differently in the field depends upon reflection on the part of the fieldworker. Reflection, or reflexivity, can be described as the ways an ethnographer takes an ethical position within his or her own field practices, and approaches dilemmas and challenges with the affected participants in mind (e.g. Dennis, 2010; Sikes, 2010; Barbour, 2010). In other words, most ethical decisions are linked to the everyday interactions and ongoing research activities, rather than merely to preexisting principles and guidelines.

An ethical dimension that was instantly present, and continued to be throughout the fieldwork, was directly connected to the focus of the study itself. Since the focus of investigation was on children’s participation in activities that generated issues related to school bullying, I knew beforehand that I might come to encounter situations in which I would witness things that would urge me to intervene. However, an equally basic as crucial prerequisite for my ever being able to access the children’s interactions and activities, in spaces where other adults were seldom around, was for me to not interfere in what they were doing. This was an unwritten rule, which simultaneously became an ethical dilemma.

The decision of when it is right, or even necessary, to intervene in other people’s social interactions is not an easy one. It is a combination of circumstances by which probable outcomes must be weighed. Without really striving for it, with time I became someone who some of the children would confide in, and sometimes this involved telling me about events that in one way or another had upset them. In some cases this was just a matter of being able to talk to a neutral party, but occasionally I felt the need to channel the information to someone in a more adequate position to handle it. In such cases I was always very careful not to disclose anything said in confidence, without the consent of that particular child.
In relation to the processes of social exclusion examined in Study I, it should also be stated that the subtle and indirect manner by which it was accomplished made it difficult to detect even for someone present in the very doing of it all. When present, I did not experience it as an obvious case of someone in distress, and it was in fact not until after close scrutiny of interactional details, through repeated viewing of recordings of the girls’ interactions, that the sum of these encounters crystallized as a case of social exclusion.

Something to further consider is also that it is not a given that an adult’s intervention is always in the best interest of the child. On the rare occasion that I actually interfered in ongoing interchanges, I was in fact met with particular skepticism from the children I was trying to help. In retrospect, I realized that the other children saw this as a display of those children’s inability to stand up for themselves, something that mattered a great deal in the children’s local peer culture. The times when I chose to actively step in to intervene were most often in situations when physical fights were hanging in the air and a single child was at an obvious disadvantage.
CHAPTER 5
Summary of studies

Study I
[`You could just ignore me`: Situating Peer Exclusion within the Contingencies of Girls’ Everyday Interactional Practices]

Co-author: Ann-Carita Evaldsson

Building on prior research establishing the situated character of children’s interactional practices (e.g. Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2011; Goodwin, 2008; Corsaro, 2005; Evaldsson, 2005; Eder, 1985), this study highlights the development of a social exclusion process within a particular friendship group of preadolescent girls. Abandoning the commonly applied concept of a bully/victim dyad, the study targets the collaborative nature of social exclusion, involving a focus on the various interactional resources used by the girls in the organization of peer alignments, social hierarchies and marginalization.

The analyses reveal the ways by which the girls managed to administrate various forms of participation, and construct and maintain a social organization, by aligning and disaligning with their own and others’ actions. The analyses of the girls’ peer group interactions also demonstrate that the process of exclusion was situated within the course of intricate, subtle and seemingly ordinary interactional practices.

By analyzing empirical data from different periods throughout one school year, three distinct phases of the peer exclusion process were illuminated. During the initial phase it is shown how a marginalization process unfolds by which one girl, Natalie, is placed in a subordinate and peripheral position in relation to the other girls. Bodily alignments alongside ignoring and critiquing the marginalized girl’s interactional contributions resulted in her limited access to peer group activities. In the course of a subsequent phase, during which a fourth girl was incorporated into the peer group, a reorganization of the group took place through which Natalie’s position was further solidified. Procedures for ritualized inclusion were established, by which Natalie had to repeatedly request information, ask for permission and attempt to elicit the other girls’ attention. And eventually, during the final phase, a social organization of three-against-one was finally established through the use of bodily gestures, spatial arrangements and a neglecting of the girls’ shared interactional history.
Study II

[Talking Moral Stances into Being: The Interactional Management of Moral Reasoning in ART Classroom Sessions]

Co-author: Ann-Carita Evaldsson

A cognitive developmental approach has long been the most influential direction of research on children and morality. This is to say that morality has been viewed as an underlying internal mechanism, or as an abstract entity that lies outside, and governs or explains, individual behavior (for a critique see Bergmann, 1998; Jayyusi, 1991; Sterponi, 2003; Wotton, 1986; Cromdal and Tholander, 2012 in press). In contrast, this study inquires into how students account for their moral stances during classroom sessions that build on a modified form of the ART (Aggression Replacement Training) moral reasoning training practice. In addressing the significance of capturing the situated character of children’s moral reasoning in particular interactional contexts of use (e.g. Sterponi, 2003, 2009; Cromdal and Tholander, 2012 in press; Wootton, 1986) naturally occurring classroom sessions on moral reasoning training, in which teachers elicit children’s discussion on the morally charged topic of fighting, are analyzed.

The analyses illuminate the interactional management of children’s moral reasoning by the ways possible alternative moral stances are accounted for, made sense of, and even dismissed in teacher-student interaction in this particular educational practice. It is demonstrated how features of the talk-in-interaction during these classroom sessions indirectly make available systems of accountability that are bound to the sequential organization of talk. The accounting practices used by the participants in the midst of the contingencies of the turn-by-turn organization in fact comprise several tasks: (i) a teacher’s questions to elicit an account from a student; (ii) a teacher’s uptake and further accounts in the unfolding of the talk, (iii) a student’s moral stance, and (iv) alignments/disalignments made with respect to the activity at hand.

In addition, the systems of accountability are bound to categories and descriptions that the participants synchronously enact, construct and even challenge as they align/disalign with the particular moral stance taken by the teacher in the moral reasoning activity.

The analyses illuminate how the participating students, rather than relating to current moral issues as was expected, pursued the elaboration of more personal issues and invited the rest of the class to join in. However, although they staged versions of fighting that contrasted with the moral stances taken by the teacher, they simultaneously oriented to the problematic nature of their own stance-taking through the frequent use of explanatory resources such as defensive detailing, second stories, event descriptions, script formulations and extreme case formulations.

In addition, the study illuminates a paradox in that teachers try to enhance children’s active moral reasoning within an institutional practice actuated by authoritative criteria for talking about morality in standardized ways. Because,
the organization of talk within this complex classroom context, while orienting
towards eliciting and supporting children’s active moral reasoning, paradoxically
also works to strengthen asymmetrical relations and indirectly restrain their
moral stance-taking. This paradox is displayed through the teachers’ use of
questions, assertions and formulations, which function not only to elicit the students’
open moral reasoning but also to hold them accountable for taking a certain
moral stance.

All in all the study illuminate that the primary lesson learned by the children
seems to be what forms of descriptions can be appropriately applied as to both
comply with and subvert the institutional moral standards expected in this edu-
cational practice, rather than what forms of moral stances can appropriately be
accounted for.

Study III

[School Bullying and the Micro-politics of Girls’ Gossip Disputes]

Co-author: Ann-Carita Evaldsson

Bullying studies have repeatedly highlighted the dilemma of pupils’ hesitance to
report bullying incidents to teachers (e.g. Yablon, 2010; Oliver & Candappa,
2007; Unnever & Cornell, 2004). Some reasons found for this hesitance are the
fear of reprisal and the risk of breaking codes of local peer cultures (Oliver &
Candappa, 2007). In relation to this, the present study set out to examine the
social organization of a gossip dispute event in which a friendship group of girls
took action against another girl, and held her accountable for reporting school
bullying to the teacher. To this end, the constructed local social order, alongside
the social identities and members’ categories mobilized in this gossip dispute, is
examined.

The analyses demonstrate, through an examination of how the gossip dispute
evolved, how the girls stage identities and display alignments as they report about,
make claims about and confront the targeted girl for her breaches of social
conduct (Evaldsson, 2007; Goodwin, 1990; Goodwin & Kyrratzis, 2011) in
turning to the teacher. The examined speech activities also demonstrate how
different descriptions of the actions of telling the teacher are ascribed to the
targeted girl, and how derogatory person descriptors, such as ‘snitch’, ‘bitch’,
‘fucking whore’, ‘liar’, ‘coward’, ‘friendless’ and ‘fraud’, are attributed to her as a
person. Further, these types of descriptions and ascriptions are shown to pro-
vide warrant for the other girls to justify confronting her and sanctioning her
actions.

This study illuminates a great dissimilarity between what is recommended in
current bullying policy concerning telling adults about bullying events and the
ways children themselves choose to handle the issue of bullying (cf. Oliver &
Candappa, 2007). Interestingly enough, however, the analyses also illuminate
that a bullying intervention session held by a teacher with one of the accused girls not only displays a *triadic organization* similar to that used by the girls in the upcoming gossip dispute event, but is in fact what initiates and sets the stage for what then unravels as the reporting girl is held accountable for her actions in peer group interaction at a later stage. This highlights how children’s appropriation of adult-initiated activities can accomplish ostracism for preadolescent children in everyday interactional practices *(cf. Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2011).*
CHAPTER 6
Concluding discussion

The present thesis has had a split focus in that it has explored how bullying, as well as school-based practices for countering bullying, can be interactionally accomplished in everyday school interaction. This split focus was urged by an ambition to link these two types of activities together and illuminate their inter-relational features within a school setting. While the first set of activities is more obviously connected to the concept of school bullying, the second is equally important for understanding the everyday practice of this social phenomenon. And, a connection between the theoretical understanding of the concept of school bullying and its everyday practice can only truly be made through such a linkage. In the pursuit of making such a linkage, the thesis has been structured around three main objectives: (I) To examine how various activities referred to as bullying (more precisely social exclusion and gossiping) are organized within peer group interaction; (II) To examine the prevention of such activities, through analysis of classroom work on moral reasoning training; and, (III) to examine the consequences of anti-bullying interventions for children’s participation in peer groups.

The interactional features illuminated in this thesis, as connected to children’s participation in activities related to these three areas, raise many important questions that demand further reflection. In this concluding section I will touch upon issues related to three different domains. Firstly, I will discuss what a perspective on school bullying as social practice can offer to the understanding of school bullying, and what implications such a perspective have on a concept customarily seen through an individualizing lens. Secondly, the issue of detecting more indirect forms of bullying is addressed in relation to the thesis’s connection to the process of social exclusion. And, lastly, a discussion is held on possible implications and dilemmas for anti-bullying initiatives in schools.

Understanding bullying as social practice

The meaning of bullying is often taken as a given. However, when trying to identify actions that correspond with the criteria of commonly applied definitions, and when examining these more in detail, dimensions surface that are far more complex than the definitions express. Due to these definitions having a huge effect on the way we think about school bullying, in what we try to prove about school bullying, and in how we shape the related area of counteractive
implementations it is crucial to draw attention to their general failure in taking into account the context of social situations (cf. Aurora, 1996). In fact, a major dilemma is that we cannot at all pre-define specific actions, for instance insults, threats or gossip, as bullying, since it depends on what meanings these actions are given within the context in which they occur. Due to this predicament this thesis has sought to examine which observable actions oriented to as problematic by the participants themselves (cf. Danby & Osvaldsson, 2011) actually take place between children interacting at school.

A consistent argument throughout the thesis has been that an increased awareness concerning what functions various actions have for children in their everyday life at school - rather than simply identifying aggressive and norm-breaking individuals - is necessary if ever to reach a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of school bullying. In relation to this, the analyzed peer interactions (Study I and III) illuminate that the activities of social exclusion and gossiping are intimately connected to a sanctioning of violations of local social codes, which work as an interpretive device that can be employed, not only to impute certain actions, such as telling the teacher (Study III) interrupting and/or intruding ongoing activities (Study I), or invading personal spaces (Study I), but also to justify one’s own conduct in policing the boundaries of the peer group. These social codes are used to fashion moral claims, by ascribing motives to themselves and others, by which to sanction other’s actions, as well as justify one’s own (cf. Weider, 1974). The thesis thus demonstrates various practical functions of activities such as social exclusion and gossiping by illuminating the political character of the girls’ peer interactions, in terms of how they establish power relations, assert their own positions and re-organize their peer groups while orientating to these local social codes. In these activities, the children thus selectively display what is seen as proper peer group conduct, while also constructing it as something separate from that of the official school regime. In this, they simultaneously display their knowledge of, and resistance towards, the dominant educational ideology of school bullying.

The idea of a power differential sprung from individual children’s physical and/or psychological differences has long dominated our common understanding of bullying (cf. Horton, 2011). And, alongside this dominant feature has come the idea of victimization. In combination, the predisposed characteristics and the role of victim lead to an assumption that some children are destined to be victimized and have low status among peers. However, studies of children’s peer group interactions have convincingly demonstrated that participants in interaction treat authoritative criteria as tools that can be used in social encounters, rather than as preexisting attributes that entitle certain individuals to particular statuses (e.g. Goodwin, 1990, 2007; Evaldsson, 2007; Griswold, 2007). It can thereby be suggested that no authoritative criterion is absolute in its power to organize hierarchical relationships (Griswold, 2007). Moreover, the concept of someone being a victim of actions is problematic, since it means attributing certain children with weakness, passiveness and lack of control (cf. Andersson, 2008), and dismissing them from being seen as interactional participants (cf. Evaldsson, 2007). As can be noted (Study I), a process of social exclusion need
not entail an innocent victim of offences, as is often argued in bullying research (cf. Evaldsson, 2007), but can in fact be seen as collaboratively constructed through the ways Natalie’s consistent solicitation of the other girls’ attention, as well as her disruption of and intrusion on their ongoing activities, come to play a part. The way she constantly searches for belonging within the group, as well as confirmation from the other girls, thus become resources utilized in the process of their excluding her.

Within a developmental approach, repeated attempts have been made to explain school bullying in terms of skill deficits in various areas of child development. However, leaving the moral dimension aside for a moment, it can also be stated that conflicts can offer a context for developing social, linguistic and cognitive skills (compare Goodwin, 1980; Sheldon, 1990, 1996). So while psychological research frequently equates disputes and conflicts with aggression, they can also serve other means. Arguably, an approach to school bullying as social activity in context, rather than as an outcome of certain personality traits or lack of skills, thus contributes insight into the ways bullying is accomplished in everyday interaction, and the local purposes it has for those involved. It also sheds light on a number of social competencies that children display in processes of disputing, arguing, producing norms and protecting peer group boundaries.

Implications for the detection of more indirect forms of bullying in schools

A critical predicament for trying to detect more indirect forms of bullying taking place between children at school is its deep embedding within the practices that participants use to construct the events and actions that make up their social lives. This creates difficulties for someone outside the concerned groups - not only to see - but also to capture the meanings and functions of often gradual and escalating processes. In the case of the girls’ peer group focused on in Study I, the everyday interactional practices leading up to the social exclusion for the most part went unnoticed by the other children in the class. This was due partly to their socializing away from the other children, but also precisely to the nature of their peer group practices such as poetic wordplay, bodily alignment/disalignment, repeated summons and non-replies, ritualized forms of inclusion, repeated requests for entry and neglect of a shared interactional history, being very intricate and subtle, and largely seemingly harmless. However, detailed investigation shows how the girls manage to establish different forms of participation, as well as construct more enduring forms of social organization, by aligning/disaligning with their own and others’ actions, with the effect of Natalie being recurrently cast as a non-ratified participant and eventually being excluded from the friendship group. These findings confirm previous work (see for example MH Goodwin, 2002, 2006; Evaldsson, 2007; Griswald, 2007), illuminating that children also rely on a range of embodied practices such as gaze, bodily orientation and proximity in their relation-building within peer group interaction; and, more im-
portantly, the ways these practices may be critical to the accomplishment of peer alignments, social hierarchies and social exclusion. In fact, the embodied resources employed by the girls proved to be an equally crucial dimension of the accomplishment of the exclusion process, as well as of its subtle execution. The matter of being included, and of belonging to the group, was confirmed on a reoccurring basis through the ways the girls related to each other physically. Friendship alliances become apparent through seemingly innocent gestures of intimacy such as putting an arm around someone’s shoulder, always directing one’s gaze towards someone after making a comment or a joke, or smiling or simply standing in close proximity. The girls’ bodily conduct was thus used as a resource in forming group boundaries and in positioning themselves in relation to each other. Consequently, not being the recipient of these kinds of gestures meant being left out of bonding rituals, even when included in the peer activities. These findings underscore that embodied practices can be crucial in the establishment of a particular child as a non-ratified participant in peer group activities. In this, the study demonstrates that social exclusion is not solely accomplished in and through certain actions, for instance spreading rumors, name-calling, staring, laughing, mocking or criticizing, as in the commonly applied definitions, but in fact also through the absence of particular actions. And clearly the absence of particular actions is far more difficult to detect than the execution of actions, since a child might be actively participating in peer activities, seemingly under similar conditions, while in fact holding a subordinate position from which he or she has to repeatedly ask for belonging.

Dilemmas for the counteractive implementations

One dimension of anti-bullying initiatives targeted in this thesis is related to the incorporation of value training into the school curriculum, and the idea of an enforcement of ethical issues and a promotion of certain moral values, being a workable way to counteract bullying within a school setting. A main idea of the concept of various forms of training of moral reasoning has been to address moral questions rather than as a form of simple moral exhortation, which is generally seen as a rather ineffective approach for promoting pro-social dispositions in children (e.g. Reiman & Dotger, 2008). However, the sequences of student-teacher talk within the forum of classroom ART sessions, analyzed in Study II, demonstrate how the teachers’ attempts to elicit and support the students’ active moral reasoning simultaneously strengthen asymmetrical relations and indirectly restrain the children from elaborating on their own moral stances. This elucidates the difficulty teachers have in encouraging children’s active moral reasoning, while relating to a practice motivated by institutionalized standards to talk about morality in certain ways, and that this creates a pedagogical dilemma for the teachers involved in those practices. It indeed seems an intrinsic task for teachers to balance the encouragement of students’ own moral expressions against the task of teaching moral responsibility. The teacher’s high usage of reversed polarity questions, compared to explicitly expresses moral
positions, could be understood as an attempt to create a productive site for the students’ moral explorations, allowing the children to take on alternative moral stances. However, the study shows that an effect of the teachers’ indirect modes of moralizing is in fact that they come to restrain the students’ possibilities to talk openly about what they consider problematic, ambiguous or diverse aspects of moral dilemmas in their everyday world. The way the teachers tend to use broader, more general and less specified arguments, and as such lay claim to a more universal morality that is applicable across situations thus indirectly becomes a barrier to rather than a catalyst for reflection on particularities and practical actions.

The children, as demonstrated, display through their use of specific explanatory resources (such as defensive detailing, second stories, event descriptions, script formulations and extreme case formulations) that they primarily try to defend their own moral stances, rather than join a discussion on possible versions. Paradoxically enough however, these types of student stances, towards which the teacher displays disaffiliation, are absolutely necessary for the progress of the exercise. It should also be clarified that such stances are underrepresented in a setting in which the students tend to supply the morally “correct” answer in an almost mechanical manner. Even when persisting with contrastive versions in which they disalign with the moral stances taken by the teacher, the children still orient to the problematic nature of their own stance taking. In relation to this one might ask oneself what may be gained from a practice based on moralizing, in which children feel obliged to argue for and against absolute and unitary moral positions. The fact that children become accountable not simply for their ways of talking, and their moral reasoning practices, but also for their personal character might not in the long run lead them to treat moral issues as an important content of education, but rather solely orient towards supplying correct answers.

An important dimension focused in this thesis with respect to school-based action plans for handling cases of school bullying is children's reception of adults’ involvement in their peer relationships. The interactional activities explored in Study III testify that the girls are bold, assertive and at times even threatening when it comes to policing the boundaries of their own peer group, and their concerns for local norm systems. The fact that most situations later handled as cases of bullying happen outside the presence of adults in school makes the project of uncovering what has actually been enacted an essential problem within the intervention level of school-based anti-bullying initiatives. Such an unraveling task can, as have been demonstrated, encounter different descriptions of what has been enacted, which will probably be organized and used for different local purposes in blame attributions among both children and teachers (cf. Evaldsson, 2012, Karlsson & Evaldsson, 2011).

A salient feature of anti-bullying programs is that they rely on individualized definitions of bullying, and involve the task for teachers to try to identify particular forms of peer group activities that fall outside of the category of children’s ordinary everyday conflicts, and to identify particular children as bullies and victims (cf. Davies, 2011). Regardless of the amplified increase in efficacy
evaluations of various anti-bullying programs in later years however, we still know very little about how children identified as bullies and victims deal with this, and what interactional consequences it has for those children. Davies (2011, p. 284) claims that teachers’ practices for recognizing certain children as bullies, as they engage in “a concerted effort to normalize the bully and bring him or her within the fixed order” also enter into a state of domination. In study III it is demonstrated how a resistance towards such practices is performed through the girls’ commentaries on the teacher’s categorizations of their actions as bullying, and how they by evaluation of the teacher’s descriptions are able to distance themselves from these categorizations.

The consequence of concrete implementations of anti-bullying plans (e.g. talks with children identified as bullies) on what unravels in peer interactions at a later stage is also a domain protected from adults’ insight. Horton (2011) establishes that bullying is not simply a matter of executing power over others, but may in fact be used to exercise resistance to the disciplinary power invested in schools. It is thus important to also acknowledge that what is termed bullying within a school setting may in fact be actions connected to an act of resistance in relation to adults’ involvement in, and categorization of, children’s peer interactions.

As have been demonstrated, getting involved in children’s relationships may have unexpected consequences. In fact, the moves by which the girls manage to rebel against the educational program, using particular components for local purposes within their peer group practices, accentuate the need to at a higher degree consider how children organize their social world in the search for a better understanding of the social organization of the school’s bullying intervention practices and the consequences they come to have. Because one result of different local moral orders colliding, as teachers get actively involved in and try to take control over children’s social interactions, is as we have seen, that practices thought to obstruct certain peer patterns may actually increase them. It is thus crucial within anti-bullying initiatives to go beyond practices of trying to bring children to reason concerning the wrongfulness of certain actions, to also aim to recognize the local moral orders children orient to in pursuing such actions.
Svensk sammanfattning

Introduktion och syfte

Denna avhandling behandlar skolmobbningens vardagspraktik och den bygger på en etnografisk studie som genomfördes i en svensk grundskola under 2007-2008 i en klass i skolår fem. Genom analyser av empirisk data som samlats in genom deltagande observation och videoinspelningar fokuseras barnens deltagande i olika aktiviteter relaterade till skolmobbning. Ett första analytiskt fokus riktas mot deras deltagande i specifika former av kamratgruppsaktiviteter såsom social exkludering och skvaller; aktiviteter vilka ofta betraktas som en indirekt form av mobbning. Ett andra analytiskt fokus riktas i avhandlingen mot barnens deltagande i olika typer av aktiviteter kopplade till skolans organisera anti-mobbningsarbete. Främst handlar detta om ART11 (Aggression Replacement Training) och om skolans handlingsplan för att hantera faktiska fall av mobbning. Betydelsen av skolmobbning som en vardagspraktik i denna avhandling är därmed dubbel i den bemärkelsen att den syftar såväl till barnens kamratgruppsaktiviteter som till skolbaserade aktiviteter som direkt eller indirekt berör ämnet mobbning.


11 ART är en multimodal metod som från början konstruerades för att erbjuda sociala alternativ till aggressiva individer. Inom denna metod ses aggression som ett beteende som används av personer som inte har några andra sociala alternativ (Goldstein m.fl., 1998). En central idé inom ART-modellen är att aggressiva barn har bristande förmågor inom olika områden och att dessa är kopplade till varandra. En sådan förmåga förklaras som en svaghet i, eller total avsaknad av, de sociala kognitiva färdigheter som utgör ett fungerande socialt beteende. En annan förmåga som beskrivs är en brist i att kontrollera impulser vilket leder till en oförmåga att hantera ilska. En tredje förmåga berör nivån på moraliska resoneringskunskaper, som förstärks ligga på en mer egocentrisk nivå hos aggressiva barn. Baserat på den antagna korrelation mellan aggression och brister i dessa förmågor har tre områden identifierats som avgörande att arbeta med. En av dessa är Social färdighetsträning, som innebär ett antal undervisningsmoment inom social träning genom vilka olika funktionella exempel på dessa färdigheter presenteras genom modellering varefter de övas via rollspel och implementeras i verkliga livet. Ett annat område är IJskekontrollträning, som består av olika alternativa till iska och utövandet av dessa alternativa vid provoceration. Det sista området är utbildningen i moraliska resonerande, som är en aktivitet där barn presenterats inför ett antal dilemma som de ska hitta en lämplig lösning till genom att diskutera dem i grupper (Goldstein m.fl., 1998).
inom vilket tanken om mobbning som en del av en social praktik (Goodwin, 2006) blir grundläggande.

Avhandlingens huvudsakliga syfte är sammanfattningsvis att utforska mobbning som en social praktik, såväl som de konsekvenser ett sådant perspektiv får för förståelsen av barns deltagande i, och organisationen och betydelsen av, kamratgruppsaktiviteter och skolbaserade anti-mobbningsaktiviteter. Mot bakgrund av detta syfte har följande frågor formulerats:

- Hur organiseras aktiviteter som social exkludering och skvaller inom kamratgruppsinteraktion? Vilka interaktionella resurser används? Och hur visas barns sociala kompetenser upp i dessa aktiviteter?

- Hur åstadkommer barn och vuxna olika typer av deltagande genom interaktionella bidrag i ART som en form för skolförebyggande arbete mot mobbning? Och hur fördelas skuld och ansvar inom denna aktivitet?

- Vilka konsekvenser har skolans antimobbningsinterventioner för barns kamratgruppsdeltagande? Och hur genomdriver barn sitt agentskap i hanteringen av vuxnas inblandning i deras kamratgruppsinteraktioner?

Skolmobbning: definitioner, förklaringar & åtgärder


I den tidiga forskningen om mobbning låg fokus på fysisk aggression och verbala handlingar som på ett direkt sätt riktades mot någon (Smith m.fl., 2002). Senare har en kategori av indirekt aggression introducerats, vilken avser andra former av aktiviteter såsom ryktesspridning, skvaller och social exkludering (Björkqvist m.fl., 1992). De två besläktade begreppen relationell aggression (Crick m.fl., 1997, 1999) och social aggression (Galen & Underwood, 1997; Underwood, 2003) används även.

Många forskare hävdar att forskningsresultat kan jämföras direkt mellan kulturer (t.ex. Craig m.fl., 2009; Due m.fl., 2005; Eslea m.fl., 2003; Juvonen & Graham, 2001; Smith m.fl., 1999). Detta beror dock på hur mobbning operationellt definieras inom olika undersökningar (Griffin & Gross, 2004). Till exempel så visar den genomgång som Arora (1996) gjorde av en stor mängd


Frågan kring hur mobbning kan förebyggas och hanteras på ett framgångsrikt sätt är en av de mest omdebatterade i den svenska skolan och en mängd anti-mobbningsprogram har tagits fram under senare år för att användas just i sko-
Läroplanen för det obligatoriska skolväsendet (CCSS, 94, s. 8) slår fast att de uppställda målen för svenska skolor bör vara av social och medborgerlig karaktär såväl som akademisk och enligt Skolverket (2002a) kan ett ökat arbete kring etiska frågor och en förstärkning av skolornas lokala arbete för demokrati också vara en framkomlig väg till att motverka mobbning. En del av den svenska skolans demokratiska uppdrag är därmed att motverka kränkningar av alla slag och däribland mobbning (ibid).

Anti-mobbningsinitiativ omfattar åtgärder som vidtas för att förhindra uppkomsten av vissa former av kränkningar, samt mer akuta förfaranden när de inträffar. Förebyggande åtgärder är en fråga om att arbeta långsiktigt för en säker skolmiljö och detta arbete omfattar alla individer i skolmiljön och innehåller implementering på alla nivåer i skolors organisation. Skolors hantering av rapporterade och påvisade fall av kränkningar utgår oftast från förbestämda åtgärdsplaner (ibid.). De former och förfaranden som finns inom dessa två områden för antimobbningsarbete ser alltså relativt olika ut. Det förebyggande arbetet är ofta mycket omfattande och är inte lika tydligt kopplat till själva begreppet mobbning, utan riktas mot skolmiljön, beteenden och lokala normsystem i en vidare mening.


Teoretiska och metodologiska utgångspunkter


Avhandlingens studier

Avhandlingens första studie undersöker hur social exkludering organiseras inom en kamratgrupp bestående av 11-åriga flickor. Genom detaljerade analyser av flickornas interaktionella praktiker visas de sätt genom vilka de administrerar olika former av deltagande och konstruerar och upprätthåller en social organisation, inom vilken en flicka stegvis kommer att exkluderas. Genom analyser av videoinspelningar, filmade vid olika tidsperioder under ett skolår, påvisas tre olika faser av excluderingsprocessen. Studien visar på hur marginaliseringsprocesser utvecklas under en första fas, genom vilken en flicka, Natalie, hamnar i en underordnad position i relation till de andra. Det sätt på vilka de andra flickorna ignorerar, såväl som kritiserar Natalies handlingar resulterar i att hennes tillträde till gruppektivitet begränsas. Under en andra fas tas en fjärde flicka in i gruppen, vilket bidrar till en omorganisering som förstärker Natalies redan underordnade position. Rutiner för inkludering etableras i gruppen, vilket bidrar till att Natalie får arbeta hårt för att försöka få de andra flickornas uppmärksamhet, efterfråga information och be om tillåtelse för att delta i gruppens aktiviteter. I
en tredje fas visar studien slutligen på hur en organisation av gruppen i tre-moten fastställs genom spatialisera, kroppliga handlingar och nonchale-rande av flickornas gemensamma förflytta. Studien visar på hur social exkludering är situerad inom olika former av intrikata, diskreta och ofta till synes oskyldiga interaktioner. Studien bidrar således med detaljerad information kring hur flickors vardagliga kamratgruppsinteraktioner, genom en rad olika aktiviteter, kan få avgörande konsekvenser för social exkludering

Avhandlingens andra studie undersöker hur olika moraliska ståndpunkter etableras i lärare-elevdiskussioner kring ämnet ’att slåss’ inom forumet för ART som en del av skolans förebyggande mobbningsarbete. Analyserna belyser hur barnens moraliska resonemang hanteras i interaktionen, genom hur olika moraliska ståndpunkter redovisas, görs förståeliga och även avskrivs inom barn-vuxen interaktionen inom denna institutionella praktik. En specifik karaktäristik av interaktionen påvisas vara det indirekta sätt på vilket barnen ställs till svars för sina ståndpunkter genom lärarens användande av en speciell typ av frågor.

Analyserna visar på att hur de deltagande eleverna, istället för att relatera till de moraliska frågor de ställs inför, utvecklar resonemang i relation till mer personliga frågor och bjuder in resten av klassen till att delta. Det blir även tydligt hur barnen, i de fall då de faktiskt framhårdar i moraliska ståndpunkter som går emot lärarens, samtidigt förhåller sig till sina egna ståndpunkter som problematiska. Detta blir synligt i användandet av förklarande resurser i form av detaljbeskrivningar, händelsebeskrivningar, hänvisningar till extrema fall etc. Studien visar på att det eleverna i första hand lär sig är vilka beskrivningar som kan göras i syfte att båda anpassa sig efter, men samtidigt underminera, den institutionella moraliska standard som övningarna förhåller sig till - och alltså inte vilka moraliska ståndpunkter som är tillåtna.

Avhandlingens tredje studie undersöker hur en ”skvallerkonflikt” organiseras inom en kamratgrupp bestående av 11-åriga flickor. Konflikten har sitt ursprung i att de har fått reda på att en annan flicka har rapporterat till läraren att de mobbar henne. Genom en granskning av hur skvallerkonflikten utvecklas visar analyserna på hur de utpekade flickorna iscensätter identiteter och skapar grupperingar genom att prata om, göra påståenden kring och slutligen konfrontera den flicka som har gått till läraren på grund av det, i deras ögon, normbrott hon begått (Evaldsson, 2007; Goodwin, 1990; Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2011)

Analysen visar vidare på hur handlingen av ’att berätta för läraren’ beskrivs på olika sätt i relation till den berörda flickan, och hur nedsättande personbeskrivningar, såsom ’tjällare’, ’bitch’, ’jävla hora’, ’lögnare’, ’fegis’ och ’bedragare’, tillskrivs henne som person. Dessutom visas på hur dessa typer av beskrivningar erbjuder täckning för de andra tjejer att rättfärdiga en konfrontation av flickan och en sanktionering av hennes handlingar.

Denna studie synliggör en stor skillnad mellan vad som rekommenderas i debatten kring mobbing, där viken av att berätta för vuxna om mobbning understycks, och hur barnen själva väljer att hantera frågor om mobbing (jfr Oliver & Candappa, 2007). Intressant nog visar analysen också hur ett samtal mellan en lärare och en av de anklagade flickorna, genomfört i antimobbnings-
ingripande syfte, faktiskt är det som initierar och skapar förutsättningar för flickorna att hålla den rapporterande flickan ansvarig och konfrontera henne för hennes handlingar.

Avslutande diskussion

Innebörden av begreppet mobbning tas ofta för självtalare. När man utgår från de definitioner som finns av mobbning och ägnar sig åt detaljerade analyser av aktiviteter som ryms inom ramen för dessa definitioner framkommer dock dimensioner som är mycket mer komplexa än vad definitionerna låter påskina. Eftersom dessa definitioner har en stor inverkan på hur vi tänker kring mobbingsfenomenet, vad vi försöker bevisa om mobbningsfenomenet och hur arbetet kring att förebygga och hantera mobbning läggs upp, är det viktigt att påvisa att dessa definitioner överlag inte alls tar hänsyn till de sociala sammanhang inom vilka mobbning förekommer. Detta kan förstås i relation till den generella svårigheten att egentligen alls kunna fördefiniera vissa typer av handlingar och aktiviteter som mobbning eftersom det helt och fullt beror på vilken betydelse dessa handlingar och aktiviteter får i de sammanhang inom vilka de utförs. Med detta i åtanke har jag i arbetet med denna avhandling istället varit inriktad på att undersöka de observerbara handlingar som deltagarna själva förhåller sig till som problematiska.

Ett genomgående argument i avhandlingen är att en förståelse för funktionerna av dessa handlingar och aktiviteter för barnen själva är ett viktigt kunskapsbidrag till mobbningsforskningen. Med sådant fokus har visats på hur aktiviteter som social exkludering och skvaller är intimt sammanhängande med sanktionering av olika typer av normbrott i relation till lokala sociala koder inom kamratgrupper. Dessa normbrott kan vara att informera vuxna om vad som händer i barngruppen (studie III) att avbryta pågående aktiviteter (Studie I) eller att invadera personliga sfärer (Studie I). Dessa sociala koder används sålades för att göra moraliska anspråk och visa upp vad som är ett accepterat beteende inom grupper. Avhandlingen visar därmed på olika praktiska funktioner av dessa aktiviteter genom att belysa den politiska dimensionen av kamratgruppsinteraktioner i termer av hur de etablerar maktpositioner och ständigt omorganiserar gruppernas sociala organisation. Genom dessa aktiviteter uppvisar barnen också att gruppens normsystem är något som är separerat från skolans officiella regim.

En dimension av skolors anti-mobbningsarbete som berörs i avhandlingen är användandet av värderingsövningar och idén om att främjandet av speciella moraliska värden är ett fungerade sätt att motarbeta mobbning i skolan. En övergripande tanke med värderingsövningar har varit att om vuxna adresserar moraliska frågor, snarare än ger moraliska förmaningar, så har det större inverkan på barns beteende. Dock visar analyserna av de lärareleverdiskussioner som förs inom forumet för ART i studie II att lärarnas försök att uppmanna till och stödja barnen i aktiva moralresonemang snarare kommer att stärka asymmetriskas relationer och indirekt hålla barnen tillbaka i utvecklandet av sina resone-
mang. Detta understryker det dilemma som lärarna möter i förväntningarna av att uppmuntra barnens egna moraliska uttryck inom en praktik som motiveras av ett specifikt sätt att tala om moraliska frågor. Lärarna ställs därmed inför uppgiften att stöta barnen egna resonemang, samtidigt som de ska undervisa i moraliskt ansvar.

En annan viktig dimension av skolors anti-mobbningsarbete är kopplad till de handlingsplaner skolorna utgår från i hanteringen av mobbningsfall. Där visar avhandlingen på vikten av att beakta hur barn hanterar vuxnas inblandning i deras kamratrelationer. De kamratgruppsaktiviteter som analyseras i studie III visar på att flickorna är djärva, bestämda och till viss del även hotfulla när det kommer till att bevaka sin egen kamratgrupp.

En del av antimobbningsarbetet handlar om att lärare förväntas kunna ur-skilja mobbning från ”normala” vardagliga konflikter mellan barnen, och att de ska identifiera olika barn som mobbare och mobboffer (jämför Davies, 2011). Trots den ökade mängd utvärderingar av antimobbningsprogram som genomförts under senare år vet man fortfarande förhållandevis lite om hur barn som identifieras i dessa termer hanterar detta och vilka konsekvenser det får för berörda barn. Davies (2011, s. 284) menar på att lärarens metoder för att identifiera vissa barn som mobbare utgör en form av dominanshandling. I studie III påvisas hur ett motstånd mot sådana metoder kommer till stånd genom flickornas kommentarer i relation till att läraren definierar deras handlingar som mobbning och hur de genom att utvärdera lärarens beskrivningar lyckas distansera sig från denna mobbningsanklagelse.

Horton (2011) hävdar att mobbning inte endast handlar om att utöva makt över andra barn, utan även om att göra motstånd mot skolors disciplinära makt. Därmed är det viktigt att uppmärksamma att vad som beskrivs som mobbning inom skolan även kan vara kopplat till vuxnas inblandning i och kategorisering av barnens kamratgruppsinteraktioner. Som denna avhandling har visat kan vuxnas inblandning få oväntade konsekvenser. Det sätt på vilket flickorna lyckas motarbeta de vuxnas implementering av skolans anti-mobbningsplan, och använda dess komponenter för att konfrontera den flicka som de påståtts ha mobbat, visar på vikten av att i högre utsträckning ta hänsyn till hur barnen organiseras sin sociala värld i sökandet efter djupare förståelse av antimobbningsarbets effekter. Ett resultat som studie III visar på är rent av att en effekt av de vuxnas inblandning i barnens relationsarbete faktiskt kan vara att de mönster man söker motarbeta istället förstärks. Detta visar på vikten av att gå bortom försök att resonera barn till insikt om vad som är rätt och fel beteenden och även försöka förstå vilka moraliska ordningar barn orienterar sig mot i utförandet av dem.
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