



LUND UNIVERSITY
The Institution of Psychology

Doing Gender in Pre Schools

Supervisor: Margot Bengtsson
PSY 142 C-uppsats
VT 2004

Emelie Abrahamsson
Christina Ekström

Abstract

Gender categorization is something we are confronted with in our daily lives. The main purpose of this study is to see how children and pre school teachers “do gender” in interaction with each other. We did an observation in a Pre School in Southern Sweden. Our requirement was that there must be at least one male pre school teacher working there. We decided to study “doing gender” from three different perspectives; our perspective, the children’s perspective, and the staff’s perspective to get different views upon “doing gender”. The method that is used is observation, by filming and tape recording the children’s and staff’s interaction in this particular Pre School. “Doing gender” for children is done in society and the first confrontation with outer society in the child’s life is pre school it is therefore, we chose to research it. Results show that gender is done by both children and pre school teachers in pre schools, and this is where children start to attain male and female qualities.

Index

Introduction.....	1
Purpose.....	1
Background on the Organization of Pre Schools	2
Theoretical and Empirical Frame	3
Mainstream’s Psychological Approach to Gender.....	3
Social Learning Theory	4
Gender Schema Theory	4
Cognitive Development Theory	5
Challenges to Mainstream Psychological Approaches	6
Social Constructivism	6
The Three Perspectives of this Study.....	7
The Staff’s Perspective.....	8
The Children’s Perspective	8
Our Perspective	9
Purpose in Detail.....	10
Method and Process.....	10
Our Choice of Pre School.....	11
Pilot Study.....	11
Participants	11
Method of Observation.....	13
Documentation	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
Our Goals for Observation	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
Environment.....	14
Results	14
Children Interact and “Do Gender”	15
How Teachers “Do Gender”	19
Handling Boys and Girls	22
Gender Positions	24
Discussion.....	27
Our Three Perspectives	28
The Staff’s Perspective.....	28
The Children’s Perspective	29
Our Perspective	30
Validity of the Different Perspective and the Different Methods	32

Reflection of the Different Theoretical Frames in Mainstream Psychology	33
Social Learning Theory	33
Gender Schemata Theory	34
Cognitive Development Theory	34
Reflections about Feminism and Social Constructivism.....	35
Feminism	35
Social Constructivism	35
How to Make a Change in Society.....	36

Introduction

Due to our former knowledge and our experience we have encountered many discussions that surround gender and how it is “done” among children. People have fought as well as they have tried to make the world see that there is an underlying difference, and to answer why there is a dissimilarity between men and women, however it is in our interest to start from what would be the future, which would be children. Freud has been a huge influence in our society. He claimed that girls have a complex which leads to anxiety due to growing up without a penis, and it is therefore they feel more at ease to associate with the female figure in the family which in his case would be the mother, the boy would take on manly tasks and imitate the father to prove his pride in having the biological male quality being his penis. However, it is not as simple as to state that the girl is jealous and that the boy has to prove himself but, it is his explanation to why girls acquire female qualities as opposed to why males acquire male qualities (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 2002). Freud’s analysis can be somewhat preposterous and may be far from the truth, but then why is it that girls and boys end up having those qualities throughout life? Our society is built upon the patriarchate system where individuals are labeled by their biological gender. Men are usually prioritized in our society, culturally and socially and they have been the leading gender for centuries. Simone De Beauvoir wrote in the forties that women are the “other gender” (Elvin-Novak & Thompson 2003). We do agree with this comment, and we would also like to claim that it is still like this in this day and age. Our focal point is to understand what theories and ideas have been used, publicized and even referred to in various occasions to comprehend why children attain qualities according to their sex.

Purpose

The main purpose of this study is to see how children and pre school teachers “do gender” in interaction with each other. We have decided to study “doing gender” from three different perspectives: our perspective, the children’s perspective and the staff’s perspective. Our study has its basis on a study done by Pirjo Birgerstam, called “Kvinnligt och manligt i förskolan” (1997). The Pre School we chose is not the same one as Birgerstams, but our point is that the study can be used as a reference when observing other pre schools in this day and age. We understand that children, as well as the educational institution, is in constant change and it is

therefore possible that the Pre School in Malmö that Birgerstam researched does not apply to our particular Pre School and our process and results. However, our main focal point will not be the staff as it is in Birgerstam's study. Instead we are going to focus on observing children, but we are not going to discard the staff.

Background on the Organization of Pre Schools

In Sweden, people who have any connection with pre schools are confronted with a document called "Läroplan för förskolan" (1998), National curriculum for pre schools (1998). This document is a national curriculum for pre schools within the whole country. The curriculum is used for pre schools and pedagogical organizations. This syllabus is supposed to be a guide for these organizations, that is to say that it should insure an equal insight to knowledge, development, and education. This curriculum is to formulate goals and requirements for the organization. There are various amounts of sections which address different issues, from safe environment to issues concerning equality. Since we are seeking a full comprehension on the organization to have an insightful understanding to do our research we looked upon the section of how staff should approach children and their task to raise and develop children to become well rounded individuals. This section claims that staff and children should foremost be treated in the same way regardless of gender or ethnical background, to assure an objective organization. In the syllabus, it clearly states that adults should approach boys and girls in the same ways and that pre schools should be drawn away from the conventional gender pattern and gender roles. They should also implement the opportunities of developing the children's interest without limitations of the typical gender roles. In conclusion, the document claims that this pedagogical organization meaning the pre school, should be adjusted for all children in pre schools. By looking at this course outline we can get a general view upon the organization of pre schools, as well as an insight to how the organization works and how it is built up.

In Swedish;

"Vuxnas sätt att bemöta flickor och pojkar liksom de krav och förväntningar som ställs på dem bidrar till att forma flickors och pojkars uppfattning om vad som är kvinnligt och manligt. Förskolan skall motverka traditionella könsmonster och könsroller. Flickor och pojkar skall i förskolan ha samma möjligheter att pröva och utveckla förmågor och intressen utan begränsningar utifrån stereotypa könsroller" (Läroplan för förskolan Lpfö 98, 1998 pg 8).

Free Translation in English;

“Adults should treat girls and boys as the requirement and expectation that are portrayed on them and contributes them to form girls and boys understanding of what is feminine and masculine. The Pre School should obstruct the traditional gender pattern and gender rolls. Girls and boys in the Pre School should have the same opportunities to try and develop abilities and interest without restrictions on the basis of stereotypical gender roles” (Läroplan för förskolan Lpfö 98, 1998).

The curriculum is a national document, which as stated before concerns all pre schools. However, all pre schools make a local work syllabus that concerns their particular pre school. To make this local document, the staff discuss together in groups and come to conclusions of what is most important to concentrate on the pedagogical process of development concerning children in their particular pre school (Lokal arbetsplan för förskolorna) (Local working curriculum).

Theoretical and Empirical Frame

Mainstream’s Psychological Approach to Gender

In psychology we have encountered a great amount of mainstream psychology. In Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers (2002) several mainstream psychology theories are being approached; from the social learning theory to Freud’s theory. There are many relevant theories and researches that base themselves on mainstream psychology approach to gender studies and that is why it still has a great influence in our contemporary psychology. We have chosen to present theories to see if they still are relevant, in our research on “doing gender.” To support our research we have tried to refer to theories in mainstream psychology, as well as we have tried referring to theories in contemporary psychology that challenges the mainstream approaches. Due to these different perspectives one can gain a wider and more valid research.

Social Learning Theory

Bandura and Walters presented the first social learning theory, which implies that gender is a product of socialization more than it is a question of biological terms (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 2002). One learns how to be a girl or a boy by observation and model learning which would mean that one observes and then imitates someone else's behavior. According to the social learning theory gender development starts as soon as there is socialization among the actors. Bandura and Walters studied children in different cultures and came to the conclusion that boys followed the father figure and learnt to imitate the fathers working process during daily life. In comparison girls often followed the mother figure and imitated daily activities which often included household duties (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 2002). Children are not only influenced by guardians, they are also influenced by society as a whole. Children tend to look up to certain people within TV and media according to their own gender. It is also very important to state that children tend to imitate role models that have similar qualities they already have. It is because of the reasons stated above that children imitate role models of the same gender. This is what one would call the identification process of a child.

Gender Schema Theory

Bartlett refers to his schema theory according to how individuals organize the intake of knowledge in schemas (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 2002). He claims that every individual has the ability to structure experiences, control behaviors, draw conclusions, and last but not least analyze. Children develop a schemata for masculinity and femininity which they use to understand their own and other characters and behavior. This schema influences in depth how a child tends to arrange information, that would mean how a child looks and builds a roundabout view on the world as well as it influences how they act in it. For example, a child can look at a magazine where there is a picture of a women cooking while the man is screwing a light bulb, this would lead to the child visualizing the idea and later on encoding it which would lead the child to categorize which are male and female traits. In Bem's gender schema theory a child codes and organizes incoming information according to the definition of "male" and "female" behavior current and active in that society at that time. Gender schema theory illustrates that gender development starts when cognitive ability is present. According

to Parsons, gender stereotyping is a sort of gender scheme, which is the behavior one expects from women and men. According to the social learning theory, children are the most susceptible to this stereotyping, for they are known to make social categories to understand the world they live in (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 2002). Gender stereotyping is most commonly seen in families where there are marked traditional roles; therefore, we can conclude that if there are traditional roles in pre schools one could also see traditional stereotyping there.

Cognitive Development Theory

Piaget saw children as “cognitive strangers”; he meant that they understand the world and the people in it in a different way than adults do. This is a major point in all theories concerning cognitive development. However, Piaget most commonly is related to cognitive development theories, although it was Kohlberg who applied these theories to a gender perspective (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 2002). Kohlberg meant that there were three stages of how children approach gender roles. The three stages are:

- *Gender labeling*, which means that one can correctly use terms like boy or girl. This happens more or less at three years of age.
- *Gender knowledge*, which is the knowledge of what are feminine and masculine traits.
- *Gender constancy* which is the knowledge of understanding that gender is unchangeable which is attained at the age of six and upwards.

Within cognitive development theories one claims that children act upon their gender identity. This means that he or she knows their gender and acts upon it however which later leads to gender consistency, as for social learning theories gender identity comes from a behavior which is later put in a gender category (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 2002). Having three stages that occur one after the other is highly possible although we believe these stages can occur all together or even in a different order. What Kohlberg does is that he is stating stages that supposedly apply to all children, what we believe is that all children have their individuality even concerning gender. All children are different; some are verbally gifted at an earlier age as well as there are other children that are gifted with motor skills at an earlier age, and we feel gender should not be any different. Some children will go through these stages at

diverse ages or, they might not even do it in this particular order. The main purpose in the national curriculum is to seek distinctiveness in all children and we feel that Kohlberg has failed to see that children are all unique individuals that learn and develop new things all at different times.

Challenges to Mainstream Psychological Approaches

According to Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, (2002) feminism is a challenge to the mainstream psychological way of making theories and research surrounding gender. Feministic psychology has helped challenge the conventional way of doing research in psychology; it confronts the mainstream theories of knowledge and claims that there are other ways of knowledge. Feministic psychology also disputes the themes and subjects that psychology is built upon, it is constantly trying to counteract upon oppression and prejudice which women still face under a patriarchate system. Last but not least it also challenges the old research methods and it is constantly trying to find diverse ways of research methods, an example of this is the psychologist Bronwyn Davies, (2002) which we will present later.

Social Constructivism

In social constructivism, according to Berger and Luckmann (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 2002), reality is constructed through three main moments; externalization, objectification or objectivation, and internalization. These three concepts are important because they show us how individuals form and understand their social reality. Externalization implies that culture, society and the social group we are in make us construct our knowledge to fit in, in “our social world”. This means that depending on experience we form ourselves so we can fit in a so-called “social group”. The second concept is objectification; this states that when we have already found our social reality in externalization, one looks at what is out there to find reconfirmation of the social reality we have created. The final concept is internalization, when one by objectification has found reconfirmation in the social reality that we have created one looks for a way to categorize former knowledge. This knowledge can be changed for this is a continuous process (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 2002). This means for example that a child categorizes who has male traits and who acquires female traits; this can change over their life time and in various

situations. According to Burr (1996) there are many ways of defining social constructivism, but there are four aspects that she feels are important:

- A critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge
- Historical and cultural specificity
- Knowledge is sustained by social processes
- Knowledge and social action go together

(Burr, 1996).

In the first point social constructionists are inclined to view knowledge openly. This is also something we strived to attain when we observed, in our study. Burr questions why people are divided into man/women, and not other categorizes like height or weight (Burr, 1996). In line with Davies (2003) and Burr (1996) we have prioritized to look at the child and the social process, to find out how children “do gender” as an outgoing process. The second point is to attain knowledge according to the area in question and that it has a relevant time aspect. The national curriculum is a document that helps us understand what is current in pre schools. The national curriculum is done to insure a pedagogical point of view concerning pre schools; this curriculum is partially done upon our society and the crucial changes. The third point, according to Burr (1996), is that social processes come through day to day interactions between people; this is where knowledge comes from. Social constructionists believe that language in social context is the most important interaction of attaining knowledge. The final point is how knowledge plays a part in our lives. It is important to say that knowledge/language and social action go hand in hand. This means that the knowledge we acquire is used to understand and then apply this in an appropriate manner which later leads to social action. (Burr, 1996) To observe this process we do it from three perspectives; ours, the staff’s and the children’s, for if having only our perspective during the observation we would have assumed behaviors. By speaking to the teachers and the children, in the situations we found interesting to our research, one gains insightful perspectives.

The Three Perspectives of this Study

In order to study “doing gender” in pre schools we used three different perspectives: the staff’s, the children’s and our perspective. All perspectives derive from studies or theories. The staff’s perspective has it’s guiding principle from a study done by Birgerstam, the

children's perspective come from studies that were done by Davies and last but not least our perspective where we use a phenomenological point of view.

The Staff's Perspective

In Birgerstam's book (1997) there are some fundamental ideas that we used as guidelines when doing our research. Birgerstam's (1997) study portrays how male and female pre school teachers interact with each other as well as with children. She claims that there is a difference in how male vs. female pre school teachers approach children. This would imply that there is a difference when a male approaches a child as opposed to a female that approaches a child. Birgerstam (1997) writes that men want to develop strong and positive qualities, to attain self confidence in children, to get children to fit in, in a functional group, to observe the children in a group and be there if help is needed, to encourage them to find happiness and creativity in what they do and finally to set defined rules. As for women, she writes that they seek the capacity to be familiar with every child's need, to adapt the organization to the children's differences, to develop a child's capacity in communication, and last but not least to develop a child's sense for fellowship and collaboration towards others. These are some of the qualities in men and women that we tried to notice and if they are reflected on the children by looking on how they interact. What Birgerstam (1997) did was to categorize how female pre school teachers and male pre school teachers approach and relate to children to give them the best opportunity to develop and grow. However, we do not say that the male form of relating to children is not seen in females, and vice versa.

The Children's Perspective

Staiton Rogers & Staiton Rogers (2002) criticizes stereotypical frames, and how it has influenced theories and studies in how gender is done. It also worries them that the stereotypical thought might continue to influence psychology. However, Bronwyn Davies in her book "Frogs and Snails and Feminist Tales- Pre school Children and Gender" (2003) one is encountered with an unconventional way of observing children. According to Davies (2003) social constructivism gives people a chance to think about themselves as neither man nor woman. This can help people understand how caught up they are in established discourses. Davies (2003) thinks that children should get the opportunity to act like they feel is right in

the situation. If a girl feels like acting in a really “girlish” manner she should do that without any complaint from parents or pre school teachers. Children should also get the opportunity to act like the opposite gender if they feel like it. In the world we live in today the difference between manly and womanly is a fact and children do understand this. Davies (2003) questions why it matters to children to understand which gender they belong to and which gender others belong to. She also questions why suggestions concerning change in the patriarchic system have so little effect. The answer she gives is that the only identities children see is ”boy” or “girl”, “manly” or “womanly”. These categorizes make sense in relation to each other and are grounded on biological facts.

Davies (2003) sees the child as an individual, not as boy or girl. She tries to look for why children are boys and girls, how they attain these qualities, and why this gender division has continued to be so powerful to our society. She discards the biological aspect of this to get an understanding of how children attain a gender. What is central in Davies study is that she tries to find out what it means to be a boy or a girl, and which frame of definition children use to understand this with. She also wants to find out how their points of view on masculine and feminine qualities are portrayed in their daily life, concrete activities. For us the most important part of her work, which can help us do a better rounded study, is how most children adopt traditional male/female behavioral patterns. What is of main interest to us is her method of observation as well as her innovative work on how children “do gender”. Davies uses social constructivism as theory and method (Davies, 2003).

Our Perspective

Our perspective concerns our interpretation of the study and by that we mean the interactions among the individuals. The phenomenological way of thinking implies that one observes things clearly through thorough all consideration, by looking for it, by living through it, by analyzing it and by understanding it. That is why we use interpretative phenomenological analysis also known as IPA (Lindén, Westlander & Karlsson, 1999). IPA consists most of the time on qualitative studies. The main focal point is that one studies the individual’s personal and social world. What IPA also refers to is the fact that it is not only concerned by analyzing the individual, it also claims researchers usually have their own interpretations and that is why former knowledge of the researchers in question has a relevant impact on the study. IPA

consists in trying to understand people's individual world by experiences and how they make sense of them. IPA also states that the researcher's goal is to get close to the individuals personal world and that is why that while doing this the researcher is dependent on their own understanding which is required to make sense of that individual world through the process of interpretation. IPA states that the research is an active process meaning that the researcher has an active part in the study (Kopala & Suzuki, 1999). This is where our perspective takes place in the study, because of our former knowledge, experiences and because it is we who do the observation and analyze. It is therefore very likely that our interpretation will be present.

Purpose in Detail

The main purpose of this study is to see how a group of children and their pre school teachers "do gender" in interaction with each other in a Swedish Pre School. We will observe how children and the staff "do gender" through language, gestures and social processes, from three different perspectives: our perspective, the children's perspective, and the staff's perspective. Our interest is whether the mainstream perspectives or the social constructivism perspectives are the most useful in explaining the process of "doing of gender."

Method and Process

Birgerstam, (1997) studied the staff only. We have decided to use her interpretation to focus on children. The children's perspective on how they "do gender", was observed through interaction between them and the staff and them and other children. We were interested in the interaction between boys and female/male teachers and how the boys assemble female/male qualities as well as we were interested in the interaction between girls and female/male teachers and how girls assemble female/male qualities. We were also interested in how children do gender, how boys interact with boys and how girls interact with girls and how boys interact with girls and vice versa.

The teacher's perspective in doing gender constitutes if they see a boy as a boy and a girl as a girl. We also refer to how teachers relate to each other when they interact. Our perspective is important when it comes to how we interpret the situations according to our former knowledge. We observe situations through video taping, audio taping and by taking notes. It

is we who chose which situations we find relevant in our study according to what we consider is current within gender and the various interactions.

Our Choice of Pre School

Pilot Study

To insure a well-informed process, we decided to go to diverse pre schools to fully comprehend as well as understand the environment we were dealing with, within our study. We went to five different pre schools before we chose the one we were going to do our study in. This process was our pilot study, which helped us to gain insight on what we would later observe. The process started by searching on the internet as well as looking through the yellow pages to find and contact pre schools and most importantly to inform them and get their approval of us conducting our pilot study. Our only requirement while doing this, was that the Pre School in question had to have a male and female pre school teacher to insure relevancy in our study. When we found the particular pre schools that met our requirements, we called them and asked if we were allowed to visit their pre school. By visiting we meant that nothing was going to be documented. This visit was to help us get acquainted and to let the staff and children get acquainted with us. When we met with the diverse pre schools we explained thoroughly what the study was about and prepared them for what would happen if we were to choose their particular Pre School. We were also very clear on the process of observation as well as that we would ensure their anonymity.

Participants

The town that we chose to do our study in is located in a municipality in southern Sweden; in this municipality there are three school committees that are responsible for their respective geographical area. To get more acquainted with the organization we have looked at the municipality's website where there is a catalogue in education. This is where all guardians and others can see which pre schools are available in the municipality as well as this facilitates the choice of the guardians who are going to enroll their children in pre schools. It can help parents make their final decision in choosing a pre school for their child.

Our decision when we chose the particular Pre School, Disney Land (the Pre School and the sections have fictitious names), was mainly done because we looked at the positive qualities that would make our study easier to conduct due to the time aspect. The aspects we took in consideration were that they had a very positive attitude towards us and the research. Another aspect was the number of children in the section. Fewer children get a better chance to get approval from all the guardians and the fact that there might be fewer children makes it easier for us, for we can observe more in depth. The age was also very relevant in our decision making process. We wanted children that were in the process of understanding gender and had the ability to communicate with language. This would involve children ranging from two years and upwards. We decided to call the Pre School head quarters to finalize our decision and to get full approval. As researchers we thought that writing a letter, (see appendix 1: Pg. 1 for English and Pg. 2 for Swedish), to the staff and parents with the goal of the research, would clarify everything that was going to be done in those two days of research. By writing a letter we could answer questions and it would relieve us from ethical and moralistic questions parents and staff might be concerned about. We sent the letter to the Pre School principal to get approval; we gave the principal time to talk about it with the staff in the Pre School. After the approval we contacted and visited the staff to inform more thoroughly, and answered their possible questions about the process and came to an agreement where we could set up a schedule to make our observation. The schedule meant that we were going to do the observations on two different days, a few hours per day. One day was going to consist of a planned activity and the other day we were going to observe while the children were playing.

Within Disney Land there are three sections, the one that we did our study in we chose to call The Jungle Book, and we chose it because of our one requirement that there should be at least one male employee. It was also very important in our study that we have a female employee; however, it is more common that pre school teachers tend to be female. In this division there were two female pre school teachers, Kajsa and Mimmi, and there was one male pre school teacher, Calle (people who were a part of the study have fictitious names). There are 16 children in this section of the Pre School; these children vary from the ages one to four. The Pre School, Disney Land shares a playground with the neighbor division, The Lion King, where children are from ages four to six and the last section, Aladdin is a section for small children ranging from ages one to two.

Method of Observation

Like in most psychological research observation is very common; however there are many ways of observation. Most research processes do not explicitly use a particular method; they tend to use diverse ways to observe the participants, as have we. Since our research takes place in a Pre School we claim it is in a natural setting. This would imply observation without intervention. When looking at the children in their natural setting in the Pre School we used situation sampling because we were studying the children as well as the staff's behavior in different locations and under different circumstances, that is to say we observed both children and staff in the playground as well as their interaction while doing activities. To insure that we would get an accurate view on the teacher's perspective we did ask follow up questions if when confronted with a situation of interest. We even did some interviews to assure that we fully understood the situations in the Pre School. To insure the children's perspective we did ask follow up question in situations of interest as well and we did try to speak to the children as much as possible to get to know them better for an enhanced understanding of them and their world.

Documentation

While doing our research we videotaped, while the staff and children were interacting. We used audiotapes to record any specific situation we thought needed elaboration, that is to say we also asked questions to insure grasp of the circumstance. This behavior is called narrative records. While doing the observation we also took notes to have a structure concerning the observation (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister & Zechmeister, 2003).

Our Goals for Observation

Our goal was to see how gender is done at the Pre School and we looked at the interaction between the different teachers and children and vice versa, between children and children and between teacher and teacher. According to Davies (2003) children do choose a gender and act according to it. They do it through the language when they learn it and to get a position as an individual in the existing society. Through the interaction between children and the staff we looked at language, gestures and social processes to see how gender is done at the Pre School.

We also chose to observe two different occasions to see the difference in behavior and interactions between free playing and a structured activity. When we observed these situations we looked at particular circumstances, like if someone was hurt or if there was a certain group of children playing.

Environment

The environment in The Jungle Book consists of several rooms starting with an entrance hall where children keep their shoes and rain clothes. There is a second hall where the children have their individual shelves, where they keep their clothes and other personal things that could vary from drawings, information, and even private toys that they wish to take with them to the Pre School. The bathroom is also located near the clothes. Then one enters the main room which constitutes of a kitchen, and three tables where children eat and do other activities like drawing. There is also a small section with a sofa where they can play and read books. There are two other rooms which are for playing and napping. These two rooms have a lot of different toys that the children can play with, without any help or guidance. There is a final room which is also shared with the two other sections. This room is quite big, and this is meant for activities that involve a lot of running or dancing. This room has two other little rooms which are connected, one of them is the water game room and nap room where there is a relatively big bath tub which they can fill up with water, when there is activities that call for it like water painting. When it is not used for water activity they fill it with pillows and use it as a napping room. The other room is only for wood work and painting.

The yard they share with the neighbor section, The Lion King, is very spacey, with different areas where the children can play according to what they feel like playing that day, for example, they have a relatively big sand box, monkey bars that have slides, and a section with swings. There is also a store room where they keep all kinds of toys, for example bicycles and sand box toys, like shovels.

Results

We obtained our results by observing on two different occasions, two different days, around three hours each day. We did two days to insure more accurate results. The first day we

observed the gymnastics led by the male Pre School teacher, Calle, which first constituted in running to music and doing certain things when the music stopped like for example sitting down or laying on the stomach, among other things. Another activity was done with rings or -so called hoops- which were in two colors; green and pink. Each child had to sit in one of the rings when the music stopped, and then Calle took some rings out so children had to sit in groups in the rings. The next activity constituted in playing with a big blue ball, all the children sat in a circle and the big ball was rolled to a child and the child had to roll it to someone else. After this each child got to choose a ball from a bag that Calle was holding. The balls were in all different colors, there was red, green, blue, and there were balls that looked like footballs. After they had chosen the ball they got to kick it around. When they finished this activity they had to sit against the wall with their corresponding ball. Calle took out the bag in which the balls were from the beginning, and told them one by one to come to where he was standing to put the ball in the bag. The children had to lie down in the spot Calle was standing in. After this Calle encouraged the children to remain calm and quiet, he explained that he was going to get the blue ball and he was going to roll it over, if it touched them they were allowed to go and put on their outer clothes to go play in the yard with the younger children, Mimmi and Kajsa.

The second day we got to see the children playing at their own pace, meaning that there was no planned activity. When we got to the Pre School the children were ready to go out and play. The male pre school teacher Calle went outside with the children while the female pre school teachers, Kajsa and Mimmi, stayed inside planning upcoming activities, as well as they were organizing paintings the children had done to put them up in the class room. Kajsa was also in charge of doing the snack for the children after they had played outside because Mimmi was going home early. After the children had played outside they went inside for snack time. Kajsa had set two tables, one pre school teacher with more or less six children at each table. When they had all sat down, the children talked to Kajsa and Calle as well as Kajsa and Calle talked to each other.

Children Interact and “Do Gender”

The first situation we were faced with was the assembly. This activity was done by Calle, the male Pre School teacher. All the children ran into the room and sat down against the wall.

There were nine children, five girls and four boys; these children were in the ages of three to four. All the boys and one girl sat together in one corner, and the rest of the girls sat together in the other corner. The activity started with an assembly where the children ate fruit and had a chance to get an introduction of why we were there and to clear out any questions. The boys in the assembly were very curious about us, they asked us questions and they talked freely about everything from what clothes they were wearing to how old they were. While this was happening the girls in the assembly were very quiet and calm. Emelie (E), asked the children some questions, she asked about what their names were and how old they were. (E) asked a child, Ronja, questions in particular and a boy, Emil, answered for her continuously, and she let him do that. We did question this behavior and thought that she was shy but later on we noticed on several occasions especially in the gymnastics activity that the boys had a tendency to take over the situation on behalf of the girls. Surprisingly the girls let them do this. The teacher did not seem to react on this matter, at least not in this particular situation. There were other situations where the boys took control and in some cases the teachers tried to help the girls gain back power but often failed. We got the impression that both the girls and the teachers had accepted the situation and let the boys maintain the power over the girls.

When we entered the room at the gymnastics activity it was immediately a representation of the social learning theory that one is influenced by their own gender due to similar qualities. Gender development according to social learning theory starts with the socialization among individuals. We felt worried that we would fall back in a stereotypical way of thinking. However, we realized that it is an identification process for a child, when children due to gender find their group. We think children try to find a group with similar qualities which not always is referred to gender but there might be a correlation. Later we will discuss the fact that the teachers did say that they did try to help the children find the “right” or functional group for them, the one they thought the child would fit in and like. The teachers also included gender when talking about the “right” group, meaning that most of the times since they have been encountered with the scenario that girls chose to play with girls and boys often played with boys, they felt that functional groups tended to be gender inclined.

Calle, the male pre school teacher at The Jungle Book, told us that the pre school teachers try to help children find a functional group where they fit in. By functional group Calle meant a group that works well together, which helps children grow as individuals and find compatibility; this does not necessarily mean that it consists of gender but he claims that it

usually tends to be. Calle asserts that girls often play together with girls, and boys together with boys, if they mix it is usually in a bigger group where they do not play directly with one person. He thinks this is unfortunate but he still thinks it may be positive. He stated that children find their gender role and their right place through this process. Some of the children may have a problem finding friends to play with, so then he tries to help them get into the group he believed is constructive for them. Calle states that most of the times he tends to be right about what group the child should fit in. This is one of the categories Birgerstam (1997) has stated in her book on how male pre school teachers relate to children. We can not be sure that it has to do with gender but we believe it is an obvious indication of it. It is very common that the boys play with boys and girls play with girls in this Pre School. We clearly saw that children played in groups, and many times it was gender inclined. An example of this was on the second day when the children were going out to the yard little by little and the girls immediately went to the swings, where they helped each other to get on the swings and push whereas the boys were playing near the sand box. The groups were formed when all the girls ran to the swings and, one of the boys, Emil was playing alone. This is an example of a situation where a boy chooses not to be part of a group, but instead chooses to be alone or wait for a friend: When another boy called Linus came out to the other children outside on the playground. Emil was relieved and happy; he shouted out his name and told him to join him. They instantly went to the storage room and took out bicycles and diverse toys to play beside the sand box. When asked what they were going to do they answered that they were going to clean up around the sand box. Later when Linus went home Emil chose not to be a part of the girls activity and played alone.

When we did our observations the children, most of the time played in groups according to what Calle told us. However, boys and girls did mix, we saw this in two situations where children of opposite gender were mixed and on both occasions they were playing family. Two children; Pelle and Madicken were playing in the yard. We asked them what they were doing and what they were playing, when asked these questions they said they were playing family. Pelle was bicycling and Madicken was riding in the back, she was carrying sticks and other things to build their house. Another incident where one can see the children playing in groups is when the children: Pelle, Madicken, and Elsa were playing family and another child Lotta came and wanted to be a part of the game. Pelle rejected her and said that the family was already full. All and all, girls did play mostly together because they seemed to have similar interests; we assumed they had similar interest because all the girls ran to the swings and later

to the monkey bars. If it is not similar interest, group pressure can be a reason for the girls to engage in the same activities which can be gender prone. We can not be sure if it was because they were girls or just similar interest or group pressure. One could question the children's similar interests, whether it is favorite colors to what they like to play with. Burr (1996) questions why people and in this case children are categorized into man/women or boy/girl. Our conclusion is that it is most likely due to gender but it might just be because of other things as stated above due to similar qualities, similar interest or even group pressure. However, most of the time, similar qualities, similar interest or group pressure is created by children towards children of the same sex, this may sound like a generalization; nevertheless, our observation showed us exactly this.

The children's choice of who they want to interact with is usually gender inclined when it is about choosing friends or groups but it is not certain that it is because of this particular reason, it may be because of similar interests. However this interaction may lead children to do gender, they assimilate their own physical aspect in teachers or in other children and they seem to transform it in a social process. When a child looks upon the world it does seem to look at some role model to guide them through an identification process. It should be quite natural that a boy and girl will try to assimilate to what they observe in society, starting with the father figure or mother figure and later on maybe looking at other family members and then society as a whole. A children's gender role and how it looks upon gender patterns is in constant change over time aspect and situations according to social constructivism. According to Davies (2003) it seems like children do things according to the gender they have. What we are trying to say is that children realize a pattern in gender but they are not aware of the gender division. Nonetheless, they start acquiring more female or male qualities that are comparable to their own traits.

It is not always easy to see if a gender pattern is present. An example of this was when one of us, Christina, (C) asked a group of children what their favorite colors were, they all answered colors that they had in their sight. One could think that the girls would say "girly colors" and boys would say "boyish colors" but surprisingly enough the children answered colors that they either had on their clothes or on other children's clothes. For example, Lotta said red and pointed to her red jacket, Madicken answered almost immediately that black was her favorite color. With this we can conclude that we could not see any differences in gender patterns in which colors the children preferred in this special group.

How Teachers “Do Gender”

One of the things we realized at the beginning of our study was how the staff had developed a positive team work process. They tried to help each other to do the best things for the children, an example of this is that after snack time, when the children played with each other. Calle, the male pre school teacher went on his break that he was actually supposed to take before the snack, but since Mimmi, one of the female pre school teachers, had left for the day, Calle helped out, the other female pre school teacher, Kajsa. These three teachers had an extremely good relationship between each other, and they were also very quick in speaking about it. Kajsa said that she, Mimmi and Calle were a team and that they thought very alike. They hardly ever encountered a problem related to who was going to do what. She also explained that they do things that they enjoy; she said that Calle for example likes to bake so he does that, and that he also enjoys doing the gymnastics class. Kajsa explained that she and Mimmi like to take the children on field trips so they tend to do that instead. At the beginning when we heard them talking about random things we felt it sounded very unprofessional, yet we understood later on that they were good friends and that they value each others opinions to a great extent. They are not afraid to be outspoken towards each other. The fact that they can work good together leads to a high-quality thinking process, whether it is making decisions when it comes to scheduled activities or to spontaneous activities.

The good relationship they have as a team and the fact that they like each other as individuals made us realize that there were no clear gender roles or gender patterns between them. This was very clear when Kajsa, one of the female pre school teachers, was asked how she felt about working with a male pre school teacher. She said that it had no importance whether he was male or not, it had to do with how he was as a person. Still, Kajsa did say that she had nothing she could compare with, due to the fact that she had never worked with a male pre school teacher before Calle. She also believed that she did not know if the good relationship between the team members was due to the fact that he is a man, or because he had qualities that made him a good working colleague. In the national curriculum it clearly states that adults should approach boys and girls in the same way and that pre schools should be drawn away from traditional gender patterns and gender roles. The teachers at The Jungle Book work as a team and have a good relationship between each other, this insures us that there are no clear differences overall between how they work and how they relate to children according

to them; we therefore think they approach children in the same ways. However, we did observe some interesting occasions where there might be a gender pattern.

An example of a role division where the traditional gender roles seemed clear is that one of the days the staff had made a schedule with corresponding activities. Kajsa was supposed to stay inside and structure an art exhibition with paintings the children had done and get things in order for snack time. Mimmi had come up with an idea for the paintings which she wanted to finish; however, she was the one who was supposed to be outside according to their schedule. The solution was that Kajsa asked Calle if he could go outside, which he complied with. Given that we saw Calle outside most of the times we assumed he liked it and he had chosen this role. This is a typical male gender role that he takes and the fact that the two female teachers were inside preparing the snack, decorating and making an art exhibition is even more gender inclined.

We portrayed the roles they had as that Kajsa was the structured one, she seemed to have the most contact with the children's guardians as well as what activities were planned and not planned. It also seemed like she was the negotiator when problems surfaced between them and other problems, which we would refer to as a female thing to do. Calle on the other hand was the one that spend the most direct time with the children while we were there. He was the one who most of the time was out with the children sometimes alone and sometimes with one female pre school teacher. Mimmi was the one that we had least contact with, but we saw that she was very inclined in decorating and making things pretty. She also seemed to care very deeply in each child's personal situation during their time at the Pre School, but we chose not to make any statement about her role since we focused on the other two teachers. When we asked Kajsa about authority, meaning whether the children listened to her, Mimmi or Calle, she explained that the children listened to all three. However, she also claimed that if one of them was tired due to personal things and the children were being a little uncontrolled the other one would jump up and would naturally address the problem.

The interaction between the teachers and the children was there when doing gender. As argued before all of the teachers had a different role within The Jungle Book. When all the children were outside the second day, the girls were on the swings and two of the boys were near the sand box, when Calle came outside all the children started calling after him. One child started and the others continued. Calle told all the children to wait and that he would be

there in a while. He did as he said, but he only went over to the girls. We saw that Calle went over to the girls first but we deduced it was because they were more insistent than the boys. The girls were also in a bigger group, with children that were younger. Furthermore, we can state that the teachers among themselves had no clear gender patterns or gender roles, but we can say that while interacting with the children conscious or subconscious, there was a gender division.

We heard Linus, a boy that was sitting on the swing calling after Calle for a long time, when he had gone in to get or do something inside. Christina went over to ask him if she could help him, but he was very skeptic, maybe because he did not recognize her and she had taken on a role that did not correspond to her and because of that she did not have a clear role according to Linus, she was neither a teacher nor a child. Linus became very shy, as a result, (C) asked him why he was calling after Calle and not Kajsa or Mimmi; he said quietly that it was because Calle was outside. When asked why he was calling after Calle he answered that it was because Calle was outside and it was consequently he who should help him. We believe that Linus in no way was making a gender division; it seemed he was asking for Calle because of the obvious reason that it was he that happened to be outside with the children that day. This example can illustrate that children observe roles in general, whether they are manly or womanly. Children are often confused if it does not act in accordance with “their world”, and it was therefore that Linus did not need Christina’s help for she was not the correct person to help him. In social constructivism this would be called internalization, where the child is trying to make sense of the world he or she thinks is truthful.

The children who were left in the afternoon in the Pre School had snack time. This constituted in that there were two tables with a pre school teacher at each of the table, Calle, the male pre school teacher and Kajsa, the female pre school teacher, with approximately six children at each table. They interacted with each other as well as with the children. As soon as all the children were sitting down on their chairs Kajsa checked to see which children were still there, and marked it on the board almost instantly. The children told Calle stories about what they were going to do on the weekend, while at the other table where Kajsa was sitting; the children were talking about the snack itself. Calle and Kajsa also talked with each other however, mostly joking. Both Calle and Kajsa lit candles on their designated tables. The children at Calle’s table wanted to blow out the match so he re-lit the match several times so

that every child could have their chance to blow out the match. At one point during the snack Calle left the table and all the children at that table started to call out for him loudly.

During the snack time we saw an interesting situation with Lotta and Kajsa. That day, the snack consisted of a cinnamon roll and milk or water. All the children were gladly eating their rolls that Calle had baked. After a while most of the children were done with their rolls. Calle took out some cookies for the children; although, some of the children were not done with their rolls. Kajsa had a little discussion with one of the girls Lotta, because she wanted to eat cookies but she had not finished her roll. Lotta did not obey her, as soon as Kajsa's attention was on something else; Lotta hid the roll and took a cookie. Kajsa never noticed and after a minute she obviously felt bad and told Kajsa that she had taken a cookie but that she was going to put it back and start eating the roll, but Kajsa did not pay any attention. We could see on Lotta's body language that she knew she had done something wrong and she regretted this. One of the things that we were told by the teachers was that they treated children like individuals; Kajsa's way of dealing with the situation was perhaps due to that she knew how to handle Lotta and that by ignoring this she would give Lotta time to understand that what she had done was wrong. This example can imply that children in *The Jungle Book* did obey and searched for guidance from the teacher in question; this means that teachers have a large responsibility in educating and treating the children in the same way, like stated in the national curriculum.

Handling Boys and Girls

During the gymnastics activity the girls obviously sought after Calle's, the male pre school teacher's attention; on the other hand, the boys had no interest. When Calle started talking with the girls, they immediately showed him old wounds that they had; he was very compassionate and expressed how much he cared. It started with a girl called Elisabeth and it went over to two girls called Lotta and Madicken. It felt like they were competing with each other for his compassion, empathy and attention. Another example of competition was when all the children had to sit in a circle and two girls were fighting to sit next to Calle. Elisabeth had not been a part of the gymnastics activity but suddenly wanted to be a part of the activity, she wanted to sit next to Calle; however, a girl called Ida did not let her, and she moved closer to Calle and did not let Elisabeth sit there. Both these situations show how the girls tried to get

Calle's attention. This behavior was not present among the boys in the same obvious way which led us to a great gender difference where the girls are the ones who "do gender".

In the gymnastics activity, we could clearly see that the ball was always rolled from boy to boy; the girls did not have the chance to receive the ball. Yet, Calle interrupted and took the ball and rolled it to the girls so they would also have a chance to be part of the activity. As stated before the boys had a tendency to take over the situation on behalf of the girls and this is a very clear example of how the boys did that. We think this is a difference here in gender and how it is done by the children. The boys take control and the girls seem to let them do that which leads the boys to have more power in the situation than the girls had. The fact that Calle tried to give the ball to the girls works perhaps one time but when the girls received the ball they would usually send it back to a boy again and once again they gave the power to the boys, according to our interpretations.

The children noticeably made a gender difference according to the way they act in the gymnastics activity, but it felt as though the male pre school teacher, Calle, tried not to make an obvious gender division among the children. However, we could see that he was a bit more firm with the boys, but not in a great extent. An example of this was that Calle was constantly telling Anton to calm down because he was being extremely loud and uncontrolled. During the time the music was playing and the children were running, Calle took Anton aside and tried to talk to him about his behavior. Calle had several times during the assembly and at the beginning of the activity told him to calm down and to start acting like his usual self. Calle claimed that he was being louder and less controlled than he regularly was. Meanwhile, Elisabeth was always trying to get Calle's attention in every way possible by for example holding his hand, and not participating in the activity. Calle told her to go sit down in the corner, she did this for a while but then she insisted in trying to get Calle's attention, so she kept on trying by holding his hand and following him where ever he went. Thus, Calle explained to her that if she did not want to be a part of the activity she had to sit down, because he was busy doing gymnastics with the other children. The way Calle talked to these two children differed, he spoke to Elisabeth, calmly; nonetheless, he took Anton aside while doing the activity to tell him to behave in a firmer way. The tone of voice generally tends to be very essential when telling a child to behave. The tone of voice was clearly different when Calle talked to Elisabeth as when he talked to Anton and the gestures were also different. Calle was more determined with Anton, but with Elisabeth he was gentler. Nevertheless, we

did find out later on that Elisabeth was new in the group, so Calle maybe felt like he had to go easy on her to make her feel comfortable. It was clear to us that he did make a difference in how he treated these two children that were acting in a difficult manner. Our conclusion is that he did make a difference in their gender and; therefore, treated them differently and that can be a way to treat children according to their gender. On the other hand, there is always that chance that he was not necessarily doing a gender difference. It can also mean that he felt the situations were different.

A situation when he treated two girls in the same way was when a ring activity was over in the gymnastics. Calle took the rings to put them in the storage room. Two of the girls; Elisabeth and Madicken, wanted to help him and started to pick up rings as well, which also can be a way of competing for his attention, as stated above the girls did this to a great extent. Calle got annoyed by this. He had asked the children to sit in those places where the rings were. He raised his voice to both girls, but mainly to Elisabeth, because by this time he had told her several times to sit in the corner if she did not want to be part of the activities.

Gender Positions

In *The Jungle Book* we encountered quite a lot of role changes, that is to say, that children change their roles according to situations; however, there are situations within this research that marked very clearly a gender role, for example when Christina started conversing with a girl called Annika about what she was going to do when she got home. She started talking about that since it was raining she was going to watch a movie with her mother. (C) asked her what her favorite movie was, and she happily answered that she loved princess movies.

Nevertheless, there were two situations where we saw role changes, the children changed roles according to what was needed or appropriate in the situation. According to social constructivism, people change in different situations to fit in. One of the situations was when Emelie changed her role from being a sort of “authority figure”, placing herself in the boy’s position. (E) told one boy, named Emil, to put a bicycle in the storage room. Emil aggressively answered that he would refrain from doing that and claimed that he had not used it and that it was not his job. He told Emelie to do it, which she refused, because of the fact that (E) had not used it either and (E) was not a pre school teacher so it was not her job. Emil

started to pick a fight and became aggressive towards (E) because she did not obey his wishes in putting the bicycle in the storage room. He started to get annoyed and started humiliating and threatening her if she did not comply with his orders. (E) refused, with the outcome that he became physically aggressive towards her. (E) decided to compromise. The compromise was that he would have to follow while (E) got the bicycle so that they could do it together. When they got back to the storage room he was still upset and said things that he thought would offend her. Calle came and told him to calm down, (E) said it was alright and walked with Emil on his way in. (E) decided to change the subject to something else to gain back a more friendly relationship and she succeeded. The child in this particular situation quickly took on a very masculine role when he got the opportunity. He became like this because Emelie abandoned her role as a grown up and stooped to his position as a child, automatically making her a girl in his eyes which he had the power over. This led him to use an aggressive tone with her and being decisive over her as well according to our interpretation. Subsequently, Emelie decided to regain her power as an adult and stopped him. We clearly saw how he changed his role from a powerful male to a child obeying the adult. We came to the conclusion that children do understand how they should act according to what gender they belong to.

The other situation where we could see role changes was when two girls started picking flowers. During the same time there were two boys calling people names that they thought were offensive while people were passing by on the street. The boys got tired of this and left, and the girls took over; however, they did not start name calling. Instead they used the flowers as some sort of weapons to throw after people that were passing by. When the girls finally went inside, they had a bouquet of flowers. Christina who had been inside told them how pretty the flowers were and asked if they had picked them for someone special, maybe for their mother or father. The girl, Lotta, answered softly that she had picked flowers for both her mother and her father and put them nicely on her shelf. They never mentioned the incident outside. This was a situation that was very clear, when “no one” was watching, they became troublesome and sneaky and when (C) engaged in a conversation with them they changed to a more appropriate gender position. We think this is one way for these girls to “do gender”, they gain power and toughness, and when confronted they become delicate and regain the “girl role” instead, which protected them from the social reality. This is a good example of how some of the girls “do gender” at the Pre School, they change gender positions to accommodate towards the social world they have been learning from.

As stated before the boys in *The Jungle Book* tended to be more dominant. They talked more often and louder. They tried to take control over the situations before the girls had a chance. One example of this was during the assembly where all the boys were talking in a constant manner to Emelie, as well as they were answering for the girls when (E) asked the girls a question. Another situation where one could see the dominance split according to the boys gender was when they were doing the activity with the blue ball, and the boys were only pushing it towards other boys. This could be a way of doing gender, maybe because one boy or two boys are talking a lot and being loud the other boys follow and due to the fact they are boys the others may classify this as a masculine trait. This is a social process that can lead to gender roles and patterns. Davies (2003) claims that men and women are divided in two parts, by this men have a position which allows them to act like they have power. The position that is left is assigned to women and this contains qualities like weakness and supporting the male power position.

According to the national curriculum children should get the opportunity to develop their interests without any limitations of the typical gender pattern. The staff in *The Jungle Book* helped children develop individual interests regardless of whether it was gender inclined or not. Calle, the male pre school teacher told us that the majority of the boys during their time here in the Pre School try to dress up in a skirts or dresses, at least one or two times. Most of the boys did not continue with this behavior. He considered this was a positive thing because they get the opportunity to try something new and maybe unknown to them and then they decide individually whether it is something for them or not. According to Davies (2003) children do things that “correspond” to their gender. When children try to explore the opposite gender through trying girl things, meaning boys played with dolls, it felt uncomfortable after a while. This may be because they are confronted with a society were corresponding gender actions and qualities are divided into masculine and feminine. Children seem to think that masculinity is the opposite of femininity. This does not mean that children can not be both masculine and feminine and sometimes these categorize can overlap and cause confusion.

Most of the girls at *The Jungle Book* dressed in a gender split way; we often saw them in nice skirts or dresses. Calle also confirmed in a conversation with Emelie that the girls like to dress nicely; (E) asked Calle if he could give us his opinion on how he thinks children “do gender” gender roles. He told (E) that by the age of three one notices that the girls start dressing very

nice. By this he meant, the girls almost “dressed up”; in dresses, skirts, and accessories. He actually said that there are girls who never would wear a pair of pants during their time here in the Pre School. He also said that this does not include all girls. We see this as a very clear way of making gender in pre schools to an observer. The fact that the girls chose to show that they were girls by their way of dressing is a confirmation to society that they are girls. The girls did dress nicer and cared more about their appearance than the boys did. The girls dressing nicely may also depend on the parents, the group pressure of other girls and the society.

It is not always easy to understand what the children meant; one example of this is when one of the children had a barrette in his hair. We asked why he had it on and he answered that it was earphones. Then we explained that it was a hair accessory but he ignored the comment and was still under the impression that it was earphones. It is almost impossible to know if the boy really understood that it was a barrette, and played with his imagination thinking it was the thing that was most similar to earphones and therefore used it. This is a good example of how difficult it is for adults to distinguish how children do things in their reality that include how they “do gender”. However, Davies (2003) claims that when a boy does this he is justifying the fact that he is playing with a “girly” artifact, and to gain his masculinity back he explains that it is “something else” to “defend himself in the social world”.

Discussion

Our society is built upon the patriarchate system where individuals are labeled by their biological gender. Feminism is a challenge to mainstream psychology’s way of making theories and research surrounding gender. When observing children we did not use the conventional way of stereotyping, instead we tried to look at a child as an individual and observe how they and the teachers do gender in the Pre School. We tried to perceive if these gender roles are still current in children and teachers. We looked at different forms of interaction, children interacting with children, children interacting with teachers and the interaction between the teachers to see how they “do gender”.

Our Three Perspectives

In our study we chose to have three different perspectives, the staff's, the children's and ours, to get a better understanding of how children and staff "do gender" in the Pre School. In the following part we evaluate what the three different perspectives gave us in our study and we also look at contradictions and concordance between them.

The Staff's Perspective

The staff like the parents and other people in society influence children in every possible way. The pre school teachers are the ones who take care of the children a great part of the day, they are very important in our study when observing children and how they act. Our study is about "how gender is done in pre schools" and we claim that the study would not have been as relevant as it was if the staff's perspective was discarded. We saw them interacting with the children and working together as a team. The interviews with the staff helped us understand in which direction they tried to guide the children. This was important when trying to understand the children. The staff could give us significant information about the children and their personality that we could not figure out on our own. This helped us in our work in understanding how "gender is done" in the Pre School.

The staff did treat the children differently. We saw examples of how the staff differed in how they treated boys and girls. The teachers also expressed that they made an effort to help the children find the "right" group, the group where they thought the children would fit in and like the most in order to function, this also involved gender. Birgerstam (1997) writes that male pre school teachers want to develop strong and positive qualities, to attain self confidence in children, to get children to fit in, in a functional group, to observe the children in a group and be there if help is needed, to encourage them to find happiness and creativity in what they do and finally to set defined rules. As for women, she writes that they seek the capacity to be familiar with every child's need, to adapt the organization to the children's differences, to develop a child's capacity in communication, and last but not least to develop a child's sense for fellowship and collaboration towards others. We can say that we saw these qualities in how the man and the women treated and met the children but we also want to

point out that some of the times the man could use the strategies that Birgerstam (1997) classified as female and vice versa.

The staff themselves expressed that they were equal as people when it came to dividing the work. They also said that they divided the work according to what they liked, and the division was natural to them. This leads us to the conclusion that all three teachers did the things with the children that they liked and a lot of the things we saw were prone to be gender specific. The male pre school teacher was the one we saw outside the most and the one we heard did the carpentry activities with the children. The females were the ones we saw inside the most and we saw them decorating and setting the tables for the children's meals. However, the male pre school teacher was also the one who baked with the children which can be seen as a womanly thing to do and the females did things which can be seen as "male" things, for example that Kajsa took more of the authority figure between the staff. It feels like it is her they ask for permission, the one who has the power to decide. This does not mean that she is the authority figure or that she was the one who decided, it was more like she happened to give that impression. She gave an impression of stern but fair. They also pointed out to us that they did not have a gender division in work. This leads us to the conclusion that they did cross the gender borders too.

Sometimes it seemed as if the staff tried to push the girls into taking the power back from the boys to make things more equal, but the girls did not seem to take the opportunities when given to them. Perhaps the girls already by this age accept the fact that they belong to the "other gender", and not the one that is prioritized in society, and act like they think they are supposed to which includes to stand behind the boys and giving them power. If that is the case, and it does look like that to us after this study, the pre school teachers face a very important job in trying to change the patriarchic system which we live in today.

The Children's Perspective

We could not have done this study without asking the children about their perspective. It is the most important perspective because we are interested in "how gender is done" in the Pre School and the children are the main actors there. It is how they act and their understanding of how they in the process of "doing gender" become boys and girls that was interesting to us.

We looked at them and how they interacted with each other and the staff and this was our main focal point. We also talked to them and asked questions when we were doubtful of certain situations but most of the time we just observed the children.

According to Davies (2003) the only categories children distinguish is “boy” or “girl”, “manly” or “womanly”. These categories make sense in relation to each other and are grounded on the biological factor. In today’s world the difference between a man and a woman is a fact, and children tend to understand this. We saw that children already in ages around three and even younger understand that there exists a difference between boy and girl and man and woman and that they belong to one of the groups. They also start to act according to their gender. An example of this is that the girls often did dress nicely in, for example, skirts and dresses to point out their gender and that the children often played according to their gender in gender split groups.

It often seemed as though the girls let the boys take control and gave them power. Sometimes the staff tried to help the girls to gain back some of the power the boys simply took, an example of that is the episode where the male pre school teacher tried to give the girls the ball the boys kept on passing to the other boys excluding girls from the game. The girls, even though they were given the chance to be a part of the activity, seemed more comfortable in passing the ball back to the boys. This is a good example of the girls giving the power to the boys, according to our interpretation. During this activity we could without difficulty understand that the children or the girls in this case were comfortable with this behavior. They gave the power to the boys with no questions asked, it almost seemed like they had accepted their role, and the boys felt evidently the same towards this. However, the teachers in this case Calle, the male pre school teacher tried to help the girls to gain power by becoming a part of the game and passing the blue ball to the girls; however, the girls passed it instantly to the boys. Calle did not insist after a couple of tries.

Our Perspective

We wrote earlier that it worries Stainton Roger & Stainton Roger (2002) that the stereotypical way of thinking of gender might continue to influence psychology. We can agree with this to a certain point. We now realize, after doing our observation that it is easy to fall back in the

mainstream categorizing pattern; nevertheless, we tried our best to keep an open view upon the research. We considered children to be different individuals who do not develop according to a certain gender pattern; instead they develop most likely with experiences they encounter. We must observe each person as an individual meaning that we have to learn to comprehend his or her social reality. We tried to observe the child, not as a boy or a girl as did Davies, and it led us to notice the differences in how children and the staff acted and looked upon boys and girls.

Our perspective is very relevant, we chose what to observe and how to interpret it. Our perspective concerns our interpretation of the interactions between the individuals. One of the reasons we did a pilot study was to gain more understanding of the organization in pre schools before doing our research to get acquainted and to have the ability to put ourselves in the environment and the actors living within. As a result, we have used IPA method because our active part in the study is important when conducting the research. Our former knowledge played a large role therefore we have not discarded it. Our perspective gives us the opportunity to comprehend the surroundings as much as it gives us the ability to understand the individuals and the content of the situations. Without our perspective, the analysis would have been impossible. IPA consists in trying to understand people's individual world by experiences and how they make sense of them (Kopala & Suzuki, 1999). There were many situations where one had to put two and two together to understand the complexity of the situation and its meaning behind it and to foremost understand every individual's social world as stated in IPA.

Social constructivism claims that objectivity is impossible, for the researcher or --the researchers in this case-- have their own perception of the world and the questions, theories, and analysis that arise within our research are reflections of our own considerations that are rooted in our perception. As Burr states "no human being can step outside of her or his humanity and view the world from no position at all" (Burr, 1996, pg. 160). It is therefore we as researchers are not discarding our point of view for we feel it is significant. To be able to go beyond our pre supposition, we have to be clear about our "frames of mind".

Validity of the Different Perspective and the Different Methods

It is a very difficult task for a researcher to attain “true validity”. We have tried our best to insure this so that our study can acquire as little flaws as possible. To have a more de-centered view upon our research we have to be critical upon ourselves and the research, as well as reflect on the theories and methods we have been using in making sense of the results.

Methods of Documentation

The methods we used had their positive and negative sides. To try to gain relevant information, we used methods such as video taping, audio taping, and of course taking notes. This gave us the ability to observe every situation of relevancy by using different methods; if one was video taping the other one would be using the audio tape and taking notes. We also understood very quickly that the children were very interested in the camera. They asked us why we were filming and if they could see themselves. This can be very negative concerning our study, because it took time from the observation and the actual purpose of why we were there.

The staff was positive towards our study from the beginning. The only thing that really bothered them was the fact that we were filming them, they even expressed this. However, we did explain to them during the visits we did before the observation that it was important for our study to use the method of filming. We are aware of the fact that they maybe did avoid getting in front of the camera which can lead to changes in their behavior; however, since they were informed of this, they might not have altered their behavior too drastically. Filming was one of our most useful methods of documentation for it gave us something to look at over and over again. If we had not video taped perhaps we would have missed many incidents that were significant, even though, we did take notes. By missing incidents we mean that since we video taped it is much easier to re-live the experience again and observe closely what had happened. Video taping gave us the ability to have a more detailed view of incidents.

The audio tape was the method that we used least. We did audio tape incidents but they were not as relevant as what we recorded with the video camera or by taking notes. Interviewing gave us more contact with the children as well as the teachers, it became more personal and

friendly, we became more trustworthy in their eyes. Regardless of how effective these sources of documentation, we had limited time, so the schedule that had been planned only had one structured activity, with Calle, and no structured activity with the other female teachers, Kajsa and Mimmi. If our research would not have had such a short time limit we could have scheduled a structured activity that involved both Kajsa and Mimmi, to observe thoroughly how they acted in a structured activity.

We asked the teachers if children, as every adult person, can have their “bad” and “good” days and they said they certainly can. We asked because it is hard for us to see if a child is acting like their usual self. For example when we observed the gymnastics one of the girls did not want to participate, this could have been because she was in a foul mood or because she happened to be new in the gymnastics group, however we asked the teachers and got the answer that she can act like that from time to time. We also asked the girl but did not get an answer. We just have to face the fact that we cannot understand everything that goes on in children’s mind.

Reflection of the Different Theoretical Frames in Mainstream Psychology

It is hard to neglect mainstream psychology. We have as students, been “overwhelmed” by it through the years of studying psychology. Many times during the research, using mainstream psychology seemed almost natural to us. We understood that mainstream psychology has had very good insights within psychology from social learning theory to cognitive development; on the other hand, we must realize that times change and better things come up so we must let ourselves try these new insights. In this research we tried to be as open as possible and not use mainstream psychology; however, it is almost impossible to say that mainstream theories are not present or that they are not viable to us.

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory explains that imitating your father and mother are how one does gender; it also includes members of family and TV or movie role models. We believe that it does have a vast impact in how children do gender observing others and then imitating. This theory can lead to quite a lot of assumptions considering that of course children imitate but maybe they

imitate qualities that they see fit as well, if a boy wants to dress like a girl it is maybe because he is imitating his mother. This may not be a bad thing for it can lead to the child doing gender by trying out things in order to feel comfortable and later to make his decision. The problem with this theory is that it claims that boys imitate mostly men and girls imitate mostly women. In this study we did not encounter the mother and the father of these children; however, using the mother and father figure can be a symbolism of important people in their lives, and we feel it is important to state that teachers are very essential in a child's life. It is therefore we think this theory can be applied and can be relevant when observing children. Moreover, pre schools are one of the first encounters they have with society, and as a result pre school teachers have a large impact and responsibility concerning children and how they reflect upon situations.

Gender Schemata Theory

Gender schemata theory is very similar to social learning theory; however, Bartlett was more thorough with his explanation upon schemas. He claims that all individuals intake knowledge in schemas. Bem discussed that a child codes and categorizes behaviors prevalent in the society they live in thus acquires male and female traits to understand the world they live in. (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 2001) However, there are always consequences in theories like this, how does one know that children really do this? And how is it measured? If children code and categorize everything they see in our society how one does really make a considerable change, for they are always going to have male and female relatives and society role models. If this should be so then there are other things that make a substantial role, for example race or status. Social learning theory discards this theory for it claims that making these categorizations would make children more predisposed to stereotyping.

Cognitive Development Theory

Cognitive development theory is the theory that we perceive is less suitable considering children and how they "do gender". Cognitive development theory claims that there are three stages a child goes through, and we feel that one cannot make an assumption like that, maybe they do go through stages such as gender labeling, gender knowledge, and gender constancy. Thus, presuming that they go through these stages at certain ages and that one goes after the

other is placing all children in a group instead of considering that they are all individuals and this is one of the major problems in mainstream psychology. Mainstream psychology puts everyone as a group and discards the fact that we are all individuals that have different perceptions of the world we live in.

All and all, it is fair to state that mainstream psychology theories are somewhat insightful but have failed to see that children are individuals and should be treated and researched as such. Contemporary theories have a larger understanding of this such as social constructivism, which implies gender as a process; “doing gender”, the impact of the cultural and situational context as well as the importance of language (Burr, 1996)

Reflections about Feminism and Social Constructivism

Feminism

We chose to focus mainly on feminism instead of mainstream psychology when doing our study on how children and pre school teachers “do gender” in pre schools. As stated before feminism is a challenge to the mainstream psychology’s way of making theories and research surrounding gender. We wanted to look at this problem in other ways than only through the mainstream theories of knowledge. Feminism as a theory and method has focused gender as a social process, the importance of social context and language, as well as the importance of patriarchy.

Social Constructivism

The theory we found the most helpful in explaining how children and teacher “do gender”, in pre schools has been the feminist interpretation of, Burr (1996) and Davies’s (2003) social constructivism. Furthermore, we make a conclusion of what social constructivism helped us see in our study. Social constructivism constructs the children’s knowledge in interaction with the environment and other individuals to fit in the social context. A child can do this by observing how other children interact. The teachers in The Jungle Book played a colossal roll in this process as well. A child in a pre school learns norms; develops interests among other

things and through externalization the child intakes knowledge by experience for further use. When children start realizing where they fit in they want reassurance for this, this is when a child starts playing with other children that have similar qualities, the child starts acting and being according to past experiences. In social constructivism this is called objectification. In *The Jungle Book* we saw this very clearly that children act according to their experiences primarily due to similar interest and it so happened it was gender inclined. Last but not least, the child starts categorizing former knowledge by internalization. It would be unfair for us to say that the children we observed categorized according to gender, for we never heard a comment like “that is for boys” or “that is very girly” but there were situations that may have implied this. Moreover, we found mainly gender inclination in the interaction between teacher-child and child-teacher. This could be because the teachers have already gone through the process of internalization and they are subconsciously portraying gender upon the children. The children in the study may have categorized other knowledge that they had attained through experiences; however, it was hard to clearly distinguish whether if gender was a dominant category. However, we do not reject that fact that they do act due to gender implications. On the other hand they were not as visible to the eye and therefore we cannot say that we saw the internalization process in children concerning gender, but this goes for the mainstream theories as well.

How to Make a Change in Society

We chose not to see the child as a boy or a girl and this opened up our eyes to the fact that everybody else around us; the parents, the pre school teachers and even the children themselves did see children as boys and girls. We realized that it is not easy to do something about the gender differences that are present in society. Nobody attempts to see boy/girl man/woman as equal. They tend to see them more as two categories and it therefore becomes very complicated to change what has been built up in society for centuries.

Davies (2003) states that children tend to do things according to their gender, and that is also what our study has shown us. Children sometimes do cross the borders to the opposite sex, but they often understand that they are in the “wrong” side and change back rapidly. The male pre school teacher told us that most of the boys try to dress up in skirts at least one or two times but then they tend to never do it again. The other children point it out to them that it is

wrong behavior, sometimes even the teachers can be the ones changing them back on the “right” track through finding the “right” group. The problem is that the society, for example parents, teachers, and the other children, stop this kind of behavior for it is “wrong”. Instead they should encourage the children to try the “other behavior” more often, and if the child feels uncomfortable they should have the option of changing back but they should never tell them it is wrong because they are boys or girls.

Thomsson (2002) portrays that it is a difficult task for one individual to change the structure of how a whole system is built up. Nevertheless, with team work one might be able to change the structure in society. Thus; we understand a child cannot go against a structure. It is in the hands of the adults to make the structure change on the behalf of the children. Davies (2003) clarifies in her book that the solution of the problem with the illegitimate difference between male and female, is to stop doing the gender categorizing and stereotyping that uphold the illegitimate difference in society. However, this is not easy, we then must change the way we think about our identity, gender differences, language, and the social structure. In our study we strived to look upon a child as a whole, not as a child in a special stage depending on age. This gives us the chance to observe how children and teachers through interaction do gender in the Pre School. What we can state is what we saw, and that is stated above. What we can not see is how to make a change in the patriarchic system that have prioritized men for as long as we know. Our study can help people realize that there is a gender difference constructed in children already in pre schools and the children get more inclined to learn gender roles and gender patterns the older they get. To change things it has to be done all over society. It is not an appalling idea to suggest that people have to try to influence the structure. A good start could be with parents, pre schools and children. Thus, as Davies (2003) claims, small changes do have little effects.

References

- Birgerstam, P. (1997). *Kvinnligt och manligt i förskolan*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Burr, V. (1996). *An Introduction to Social Constructionism*. London: Routledge.
- Davies, B. (2003). *Hur flickor och pojkar gör kön*. Stockholm: Liber.
- Elvin-Nowak, Y. & Thomsson, H. (2003). *Att göra kön: Om vårt våldsamma behov av att vara kvinnor och män*. Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag AB.
- Kopala, M. & Suzuki, L. (1999). *Using Qualitative Methods in Psychology*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Lindén, J., Westlander, G. & Karlsson, G. (red.). (1999) *Kvalitativa metoder i arbetslivsforskning*. Uppsala, TK i Uppsala AB.
- Regeringskansliet Utbildningsdepartementet. (1998). *Läroplan för förskolan: Lpfö 98*. <http://www.skolverket.se/pdf/lpfo.pdf>. Stockholm.
- Shaughnessy, J.J., Zechmeister, E.B., & Zechmeister, J.S. (2003). *Research Methods in Psychology* (6th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill Companies Inc.
- Stainton Rogers, W & Stainton Rogers, R (2001). *The Psychology of Gender and Sexuality*. Great Britain: Biddles Limited, Guildford and King's Lynn.
- Stainton Rogers, W. & Stainton Rogers, R. (2002). *Genuspsykologi: Kön och sexualitet*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Lokal arbetsplan för förskolorna. (Local working curriculum for Disney Land among other pre schools within that area)

Hi

We are two students from The University of Lund writing our bachelors essay in psychology this term. Our essay is going to be about male and female in pre schools and how it can eventually be reflected in children. We are going to research from three perspectives; our perspective, the children's perspective, and the staff's perspective.

We have visited several pre schools and consider that your pre school was the most appropriate for our study. The method being used is observational. This means that we are going to engage in the pre schools daily activities. Our goal is that the observation and documentation will be performed within two days, a couple of hours per day under week 19.

We are going to document this by usage of a video camera and a tape recorder; notes will also be used to complete these observations. If interesting situations arise that we feel need depth we will be asking questions to both the staff and the children in question. The meaning of this is to have a better understanding for both of their perspectives.

In a study like this it is important that we inform all who are included or in some way affected so that everyone can have a chance to reflect upon the research before it starts. We have spoken to the staff of section being studied, The Jungle Book, and we have also spoken to the pre school principal. It is therefore we address the guardians of the children in The Jungle Book through this letter before we start with our observation. We hope that you support and foremost agree with this research. We want to make sure that you understand that the pre school, Disney Land and the section The Jungle Book meaning staff and children have complete anonymity in this research. One will not be able to make out which pre school that has been observed and researched after the thesis is complete, and we that have done the research have professional secrecy.

This sort of essay always has a professional supervisor from the university in order to guide us. Our supervisor's name is Margot Bengtsson, University teacher in Developmental Psychology in The University of Lund. Only she and we will have access to the material that we have gathered in The Jungle Book.

We understand that questions may arise; you are welcome to call us or our supervisor if you wish to get more information.

Best Regards,

Emelie Abrahamsson Home: ***** Mobile: *****
E-mail: *****

Christina Ekström Home: ***** Mobile: *****
E-mail: *****

Supervisor:
Margot Bengtsson Telephone number: *****

Hej

Vi är två studenter från Lundsuniversitet som skriver kandidatuppsats denna termin, inom ämnet psykologi. Vår uppsats ska handla om kvinnligt och manligt i förskolan och hur det eventuellt kan avspeglade sig hos barn. Vi kommer att se på det ur tre perspektiv vårt eget, personalens och barnens.

Vi har varit och hälsat på flera förskolor och anser er förskola vara den mest lämpade för vårt arbete. Metoden vi kommer att använda oss utav är observation. Detta innebär att vi kommer att vara med under förskolans dagliga aktivitet. Vårt mål är att observationen ska äga rum under två dagar, några timmar per dag under v 19.

Vi har tänkt oss att dokumentera med hjälp av filmkamera och bandinspelningar i den mån det passar i det dagliga arbetet på förskolan. Anteckningar kan komma att komplettera.

I de fall då tillfälle ges så kommer vi att försöka ställa frågor, till både personal och barn, om de händelser/aktiviteter som vi anser vara intressanta. Meningen med det är att vi ska få en bättre förståelse för deras perspektiv.

I en sån här studie är det viktigt att vi informerar alla berörda parter om vad som ska äga rum så att alla kan få en chans att tycka till innan studien tar sin början. Vi har talat med personalen på avdelningen och förskolechefen. Därför kontaktar vi nu genom detta brev alla föräldrar till barnen på avdelningen Djungelboken innan dokumentationen på börjas. Vi hoppas att ni samtliga tycker det är ok.

Vi vill passa på och påpeka att alla på förskolan och avdelningen Djungelboken dvs. personalen och barnen kommer att inneha fullständig anonymitet i arbetet. Man kommer inte heller kunna utläsa av den färdiga uppsatsen vilken förskola som deltar. Vi som utförstudien kommer naturligtvis ha tystnadsplikt.

Vid uppsatser av detta slag så har man alltid en professionell handledare från universitetet som guidar studenterna. Vår handledare heter Margot Bengtsson, universitetslektor, och sitter på avdelningen för utvecklingspsykologi på Lundsuniversitet. Det är hon tillsammans med oss som kommer att ha tillgång till det material vi samlar in hos er på Djungelboken.

Vi är medvetna om att det kan uppkomma frågor eller att ni anser vår information för knapp och ni är mer än välkomna att ringa både oss och vår handledare.

MVH

Emelie Abrahamsson Hem: ***** Mobil: *****
E-mail: *****

Christina Ekström Hem: ***** mobil: *****
E-mail: *****

Handledare:
Margot Bengtsson tfn: *****

Author's Note

Doing this research was hard work and without the help of some people this would have not been possible. We would like to thank all those pre schools we visited before finding the one we were going to research. We would like to particularly thank the Pre School, Disney Land and the pre school teachers within The Jungle Book, for it would have not been feasible without them. Further we would also like to thank our supervisor Margot Bengtsson, we believe she has not only helped us, but has taught us very much within this area. We would also like to thank Nicklas Axelsson who lent us the equipment in order to do the observations. Last but not least, we would also like to thank a few people that read our study and has given us constructive criticism, Lina Paulsson, Ximena Di Vanni, and Sara Johansson.