

Andrae, Markus (2018). **Gender socialisation in ECE and the significance of male workers.**

Paper presented on the 28<sup>th</sup> EECERA Annual Conference, 30.8.2018, Budapest, Hungary.

***Abstract***

This paper analyses the practice of gender socialisation in ECE institutions and the significance of male workers in these interactive processes with children. The research is mostly based on qualitative studies taking the prospects of children into account (Harris/Barnes, 2009; Nordberg/Saar/Hellmann, 2010). They show the challenges boys and girls are facing when they try to comprehend the gendered structure of the society they live in and how creative they are in doing so. Culture theory (Bourdieu, 1993) and microsociology (Collins, 2004) provide the theoretical and conceptual framework. Based on the paradigm of social constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1992) the methodology follows the idea of studying social action by interpretative methods (Weber, 1984; Mead, 1991). Means of qualitative video analysis are used. A thin description based on focused ethnography is thickened by using video interaction analysis (Geertz, 2003; Tuma/Schnettler/Knoblauch, 2013). All professionals and parents of the participating children have granted permission via consent form. Published video samples have been anonymised. The gendered socialisation of boys and girls can be described as an ongoing metaphorical discourse. Male workers can open up new rooms of experience in this interactive process. Two dimensions seem to be significant: interactions in the context of pretend play and constructions of membership or difference according to the sex category of the participants. Social constructivism should consider affective processes. Symbolic metaphors of gender are powerful and convincing (Lakoff/Johnson, 1999). Children will not realise the opportunities of gender diversity until they have explored stereotypes. ECE professionals should be aware of these processes.

***Keywords***

gender, identity, male ECE workers, symbolic metaphors, doing membership

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***Gender socialization in ECE  
and the significance of male workers***

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- Gender socialization as a metaphorical discourse
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### ***Research***

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- Qualitative analysis of the practice of gender socialization in ECE institutions
- Data: Videos of quasi-experimental play situations

### ***Questions***

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- What's going on in the play situations, e.g. topics of conversation, facial expressions, gestures, postures?
- Which „gendered issues“ are part of the interactions? And how does this happen?
- How do these phenomenon contribute to the gender identity?

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## ***Theories***

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- Pierre Bourdieu: Culture Theory
- Randall Collins: Interactionritual-Chain Theory

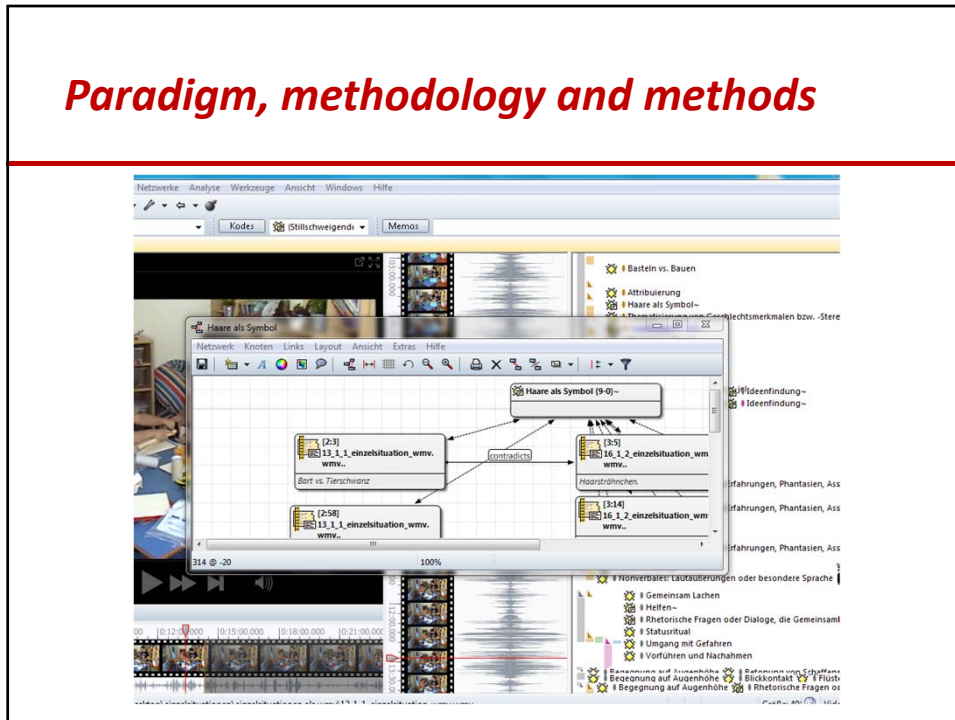
## ***Methodology***

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- Lev S. Vygotskij: Social constructivist theory
- Max Weber, Georg H. Mead: Interpretive paradigm
- Clifford Geertz: Thick description
- René Tuma et al.: Video interaction analysis

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## ***Paradigm, methodology and methods***



## ***Gender Socialization as Metaphorical Discourse***

### ***Gender identity emerges out of:***

- (1) Mutual postures in interaction rituals,
- (2) thereby constructed metaphorical meanings of symbolic objects,
- (3) and a self-efficacy which is internalized in those rituals.

Boys and girls want to participate in this discourse because they are looking for sense in the society they live in.

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***Gender Socialization as Metaphorical Discourse***



***Gender Socialization as Metaphorical Discourse***



### ***New Opportunities: Materials and Themes***

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- Male workers are inclined to other materials and themes due to their gender specific biographical experiences.
- This will broaden the opportunities for learning for boys *and* girls in ECE-institutions.

### ***New Opportunities: As-if Interactions***

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- The presence of male workers opens up new “rooms” of shared experiences.
- As-if interactions in play situations based on this understanding create chances for learning as an affective driven co-construction.

***New Opportunities:  
Doing Membership or Doing Difference***

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- The relationship between the professionals and the children depends on their perspective on the symbolic object in the focus of the interaction.
- This has an impact on the metaphorical interpretation of everything that surrounds them. The children internalize a metaphorical map that guides them.
- More gender balance can fill this map with much more diverse ways to interpret the world.

***Summary***

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- Boys and Girls are part of gender socialization as an ongoing discourse of powerful and convincing symbolic metaphors.
- Male ECE workers will broaden this discourse.
- Professionals should be aware of these processes and have to take into account they are part of it.



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