

## EXAMPLE OF AN ANALYSIS, PEDAGOGICAL PSYCHOLOGY

**Problem statement:** How is gender constructed discursively by the pedagogical staff in a kindergarten, and which gendered identity formation options are offered to the children?

Assignment text	Comment
<p>In order to answer the problem statement, I will examine in this section of my analysis: 1) how gender is constructed discursively by the pedagogical staff in the kindergarten, 2) which gendered identity formation options are offered to the children. In my analysis, I will only include a small number of the observations I made during my six-hour stay in the kindergarten. I have chosen the observations I include in order to highlight the gender construction process, focusing in particular on the concepts of discourse, positioning and gender category. In the first observation of my analysis, two children accept the position offered by the kindergarten teachers; in the second observation, a child does not accept the offered position.</p>	<p>Analysis introduction: The student begins by giving a short explanation of the 1) purpose, 2) objects and tools and 3) structure of their analysis.</p>
<p>At first sight, gender does not seem to make a great difference in the kindergarten. On the day of my visit, a singing game is being played in the Sunbeam room, and the children are sitting together in a circle on the floor – seemingly not grouped by gender. They are primarily singing and playing old singing games. One of the songs is about Sleeping Beauty, and one of the teachers says “Anna, you can be the lovely princess, and Tobias, you can be the big strong prince who saves her”.</p> <p>As is seen, the singing game is far from gender neutral. The girl is positioned as the beautiful princess who needs help, and the boy as the prince who must save her; the singing game can be seen as a discursive practice (Davies 2000:88) with clear gender categories. When the teachers choose a small girl to be the beautiful princess and one of the big boys to be the strong prince, a dichotomy is established (Hedlin I: Kirk et al., 2010:16) between the gender categories; the girl as small, lovely and helpless, and the boy as big, strong and heroic. Moreover, the teachers construct a gendered connection between the boy and the prince figure and the girl and the princess figure. This connection links them together, even though they are in the Western world in the 21st century and the singing game represents a “fairytale world”. The children are positioned as prince and princess, respectively, based on their body characteristics.</p> <p>The kindergarten teachers might have chosen to swap the roles or asked two children of the same gender to play the roles, thus confusing the existing understandings; however, the discursive gender stereotypes seem so obvious that alternatives become unthinkable. Moreover, heteronormativity probably plays a role too; the kindergarten teachers would probably find it wrong to draw on a homosexual counter-discourse and position two children of the same gender as role models in a romantic relationship. As is seen, the pedagogical practice contributes to legitimise, reproduce and maintain the stereotyped genders.</p>	<p>Analysis of the first observation. The analysis alternates between, on the one hand, an account of the student’s observations and a quote, and, on the other, their interpretation of the observation and quote, using theoretical concepts from pedagogical psychology. In other words, this is where object and tools meet.</p>

Assignment text	Comment
<p>In the above example, the kindergarten teachers position the children, who accept the subject positions offered; however, resistance is also shown against interactive positionings, which will appear from the following example.</p>	<p>Meta-text reminding the reader about the structure of the analysis</p>
<p>Free play is in progress in the Sunbeam room, and the children are playing in small same-gender groups; all except Nora, Freja and Jacob who are playing together with dressing-up clothes. The three children have all dressed up as bears. Suddenly, Jacob starts to cry, and the teacher arrives and asks: "What happened to father bear, .. why is he upset?" Jacob answers: "I'm not father bear!" Teacher: "What happened to baby bear then?" Jacob: "I'm not baby bear,.. I don't want to be baby bear!" After some time Jacob explains that the girls have decided that he can only be baby bear, and he does not want that; the teacher then asks: "Who do you want to be, then?" Jacob answers: "I want to be mother bear." The teacher, showing surprise: "Mother bear?" Jacob: "Yes, I have a baby in my tummy, and I'm having a little brother!" Teacher: "Oh, I see... like your Mum has a baby in her tummy,.. but that sounds like a good idea." The children then continue their game.</p> <p>In this example, Jacob is first positioned as a baby bear by the girls. He rejects this position by refusing and getting upset. Afterwards, the teacher positions Jacob: first as father bear and then as baby bear. However, Jacob rejects these positions, and in the end the teacher offers Jacob to take a reflective positioning, which he does by choosing to be mother bear. This position is not immediately accessible in the teacher's understanding of the gender category boy, and is therefore not seen as a possible act, since the teacher is presumably drawing on discursive matters of course and norms prescribing that the category of boy suggests masculine positions such as father and not feminine positions as, in this case mother bear. Jacob takes a gender atypical position, which requires courage. (Kirk et al., 2010:55). However, as it is not pointed out to him that he has gone astray as regards norm and legitimate boy behaviour, which often happens (Ibid.); he is expanding the scope for appropriate boy behaviour in this situation. His atypical positioning is accepted without resistance. The teacher accepts his positioning, presumably seeing the resemblance to his mother's position as pregnant and of course Jacob's motive for seizing this position, which makes it legitimate and meaningful. And the girls accept his positioning, either because, like the teacher, they understand the reason for this, or because belonging to the category of children, which is dichotomic to the category of adult, they are subject to the adult's power in the situation. In any case, the girls do not object to the positioning nor to the fact that the adult makes it legitimate.</p>	<p>Analysis of the second observation. The analysis alternates between, on the one hand, an account of the student's observations and a quote, and, on the other, their interpretation of the observation and quote, using theoretical concepts from pedagogical psychology. Here, object and tool meet once again.</p>

<p>The analysis of my two observations shows that gender blindness exists in the kindergarten I studied. The first observation is an example of how the teachers discursively promote stereotyped gender roles. The second observation is an example of how a child who wishes to take a gender atypical position must really struggle to be allowed to do so. Probably, the teachers are not aware at all of the extent to which they are setting the framework for the children's gendered identity formation options, but they nonetheless happen to restrict the children.</p>	<p>Interpretation, partial conclusion: The student summarises their results of the two partial analyses and relate these to the problem statement.</p>
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