The metaphors of childhood in a preschool context

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Abstract

This paper raises questions on ideas of children and the meaning of childhood in contemporary society, with examples from Sweden as a welfare state with a long tradition of preschools. Within the sociology of childhood the conceptualising of children as ‘becoming’ has been criticised, and ‘children as beings’ (Qvortrup 1994) has been advocated as a way of recognising children’s competence and of taking the child perspective. However, this dichotomy has also been criticised for seeming to ignore the fact that we are all part of dynamic processes and that also adults are ‘becoming’ (Lee 2001). I will draw on this discussion and elaborate it in relation to preschool practices. In doing so I include the concept ‘children as projects’ as a way to capture the dominating ideas that parents and professionals have of children. When scrutinising how the concepts being, becoming and project are used in the context of the preschool, we can detect aspects of childhood that open up for the recognition of children as both competent and dependent. An understanding of the meaning of preschool must be informed by an analysis of the ideas favoured among the adults who are mandated to act in the best interest of the child. But it must also be informed by studies of children’s experiences where we acknowledge the importance of peers and of children’s forming relationships and exploring their position relative to other children.
In the book *The Century of the Child*, written in 1900, the Swedish author Ellen Key argued that the twentieth century should be the one in which we learn to let children develop into individuals, and not simply be ‘bad copies’ of each other (Key 1900). This was an attack on the kindergartens and schools of that time, which she saw as contributing to the brutalisation of children. Children need free space and stimulation, she argued, not institutions where they are all cast in the same mould. At the end of the century, when many scholars were engaged in summering up the changes that had occurred during the century, Ellen Key was frequently quoted and scholars and political decision-makers questioned whether this had really been the century of the child. This question can be answered in different ways, but it is obvious that children were not only on the agenda in family life but in the political debate as well. The UN Convention on the Right of the Child is one example. In Sweden most parents would say that they are favour of child centredness in the raising of their children. On the political level there has been considerable legislation in support of children and families. The 12-month parental leave programme and the preschool reform are two examples. But attending preschool can also be seen as an example of an institutionalised childhood. Today the majority of Swedish children spend their early childhood in preschool. What does this mean for the children’s childhood? Is it a childhood that is wholly scheduled, organised and supervised by adults? Or can we look upon preschool as an intermediate domain between the public and the private (Mayall 2002)? A domain where parents and preschool staff collaborate in order to care for children? A domain where children are active in the negotiations that create and recreate the institution? What are the meanings of childhood in preschool? And how are children described, if we take the child perspective and the children’s experiences as our points of departure?

This paper raises questions concerning how children live their lives in preschool and how childhood is conceptualised within this domain. The empirical basis is a project entitled *Changing preschool and a new meaning of childhood* (Halldén 2001), in which we studied children’s daily life in preschools using the child perspective. Our frame of reference was the new social studies of childhood, and I will argue here that this framework can be useful when approaching preschool as an arena for children. This means that we can analyse how children form a peer culture and establish in their social practices a world of meaning. Our focus is on children’s activities as part of their ways of ‘doing childhood’. In the project we used an ethnographic methodology and videotaped and audiotaped the activities. One study analysed
the children’s use of picture books and artefacts as resources in their collective and individual activities (Simonsson 2004). Another study analysed how children act and make meaning through their artwork (Änggård 2005). The third study took a more comprehensive view when examining how time and space were organised in terms of rules that result from the negotiations between all the actors in preschool, i.e. the children, their parents and the preschool staff (Markström 2005). I will not discuss these separate studies in detail, just call attention to the fact that by taking the child perspective, we were able to show that, although it is an institution, the preschool is not an agent in the institutionalisation of children’s childhoods, but rather is an arena where children are the agents. The child perspective signifies that children’s daily life is in focus. In the study of preschools in this project, our perspective was not pedagogical; rather our perspective was the children’s involvement in peer relations and their ways of constructing a child culture. This means that the preschool institution cannot be understood as being wholly controlled by the professionals who implement the curriculum. The preschool institution is an arena where children are actors and their way of ‘doing preschool’ might not be the same as that of the preschool teachers and other staff.

The new social studies of childhood

In the 1980s Chris Jenks (1982), Jens Qvortrup (1987) and Leena Alanen (1988) were among the first to introduce a new framework, followed by Allison James and Alan Prout as co-editors of the book Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood (1990). This new framework took the child perspective and advocated the need to study children in their own right and not as individuals on the way to adulthood. Six theses were formulated that established a paradigmatic platform (Prout and James 1990: 8).

Childhood is understood as a social construction.
Childhood is a variable of social analysis.
Children’s social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right.
Children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own lives.
Ethnography is a particularly useful methodology for the study of childhood.
To proclaim a new paradigm of childhood studies is also to engage in a reconstruction of childhood in society.
Since then, there has been considerable research using this approach; what started as the sociology of childhood is now a broad umbrella encompassing childhood studies by researchers from the fields of sociology, psychology, education, geography, anthropology and history. This perspective has made it possible to theorise childhood. Adultism has been criticised and the child perspective advocated (Alanen & Mayall 2001; Corsaro 1997; James, Jenks & Prout 1998). In my presentation of the Swedish preschool as an arena for children’s everyday life and a place where modern childhood is lived, I draw on the distinction between being and becoming that has been formulated within this framework. Qvortrup (1994) formulated it as a distinction between adult ‘human beings’ and child ‘human becomings’; a division between the complete and independent and the incomplete and dependent.

Qvortrup’s reason for making this distinction was to draw attention to the way children were usually seen, namely as developing according to certain stages as described by developmental psychology and socialised in relation to the family, the school and the surrounding society. In contrast to this dominant framework, the scholars within the new social studies of childhood launched the idea that children were to be seen as being, not becoming. This view of the child as being has served a dual purpose. On the one hand, it has highlighted the importance of analysing children as a social group in relation to other age groups. Qvortrup’s point is that there has always been and will always be a group of individuals labelled children. The size of this group in relation to other groups is of relevance and it is important to make the group visible, not hidden away within the family (Qvortrup 1990). Prout and James (1990), on the other hand, argue that it is important to listen to children’s’ voices and not look only for the generalised child as described in Piagetan and Parsonian concepts. In these two standpoints the child is conceptualised as being, not becoming – the child who is not hidden in the family but visible in statistics, and not perceived in terms of developmental stage theory that measures the child’s competence of rational and hypothetic thinking. It is of importance in childhood studies to take the child perspective, to listen to children’s voices, and in doing so to aim for knowledge that takes into account the standpoint of children. Alanen (1994) describes this as a way of recognising children.

**Questioning the being-becoming distinction**

Nick Lee has discussed the dominant framework with its references to Parson and Piaget who ‘wove children into a universal human drama of struggle for order’ (Lee 2001: 43). Referring to Harvey (1989: 135), he argues that ‘Fordism, with its stability, reliability and product standardisation, was not just a business strategy; it was a “total way of life”’ (Lee 2001: 11).
Lee’s point is that the being-becoming distinction was part of the industrialisation process which produced ‘a Fordist adulthood’, but that this is no longer a reasonable framework in our time of uncertainty when ‘adulthood can no longer be understood as the state of stable completion and self-possession on which “being-hood” once rested, and that childhood is increasingly open to ambiguity’ (ibid: 2). So, if the dominant framework no longer works, what does this mean for childhood studies where children are regarded as ‘being’? If the adult is no longer a stable being in an existential sense, what does this say about the child’s being-ness? Lee’s argument is that we must look upon both children and adults as being and becoming at the same time and that there are ‘potentially unlimited ways of “becoming human”’ (ibid: 2). With the collapse of the Fordist adulthood, the child as being no longer has any meaning because it was developed in relation to the being-becoming dichotomy. Prout comments on the dichotomy in the following way: ‘For some writers in the new sociology of childhood, this has been constructed as an opposition, often dogmatically insisted upon, such that they deny the possibility of considering children as both being and becoming’ (Prout 2005: 66). Here Prout is referring to Lee and states that ‘both children and adults should be seen through a multiplicity of becomings in which all are incomplete and dependent’ (ibid: 67).

Lee and Prout are both part of the childhood sociology framework and their books must be read as contributions to the discussion on how to move beyond the initial statements where the deconstruction of concepts within developmental psychology and mainstream sociology was on the agenda. Lee discusses the conditions for becoming human in an age of uncertainty, where nothing is certain and everything must be negotiated. This post-Fordist period influences both childhood and adulthood. Qvortrup (2005), however, argue that there is a need to analyse childhood in relation to demographics and to raise the question of what the generational order means for power relations. The fact that the 55+ group is increasing and the birth rate is declining creates a situation where solidarity towards children might be called into question. The generational perspective is important from this point of view, as is the concept being which emphasises that children are a social group in the generational order. I cannot see that there has to be a contradiction here, not if we specify what questions should be in focus. We are no longer in the initial stage of introducing a new paradigm, but we need research that perceives the lives of individual children as well as childhood as positioned in a social order and age group. In highlighting the diversities of childhood in a time of uncertainty, Lee (2001) stresses that children and adults are part of the same society and
therefore share the same life conditions. He says in the beginning of the book, however, that his way of arguing is relevant mainly for children of school-age. Does this mean that infants and small children should be excluded? Why? Are younger children more dominated by biological processes than are older children? Or is the parent-child relationship so closely knit that the influence of societal processes becomes less important? Lee does not answer these question, but does say, ‘I do feel that the patterns of human becoming that babies are involved in are so tightly woven that they deserve a degree of examination that is beyond the scope of this book’ (ibid: 3).

The research conducted within the new framework is concerned mostly with children between 5 and the mid-teens. The projects within the Economic and Social Research Council’s Children 5-16 Programme, of which Prout is the Director, is an example of such research. What about children in preschool? Can they be fruitfully discussed as becoming in the way Lee does, by which is meant that they are not individuals on the way to adulthood, but rather are persons whose life courses are ambiguous? I can agree that there is a point in discussing how life is lived in the time of post-Fordism. There is also a risk that ‘being-hood’ will be associated with ‘the tribal child’ (James, Jenks & Prout 1998), with a peer culture and a child culture of its own. Talking about children as being can ignore the influence of the surrounding society. There is, however, also a risk when describing children in relation to both the concepts of being and becoming. The consequence can be that children are looked upon as in some sense the same as adults. In the effort to give children a voice and the right to speak, there is a risk of ignoring the big differences between young children and adults in terms of vulnerability and dependency. The new social studies of childhood have given us a framework for understanding children’s social lives. However, it is important to take the developmental aspects into consideration and to discuss age as an important factor. In this paper I do not question the theoretical framework of the new social studies of childhood. My point is that when discussing very young children, we must be constantly aware of their vulnerability. In his descriptions of the unlimited ways of becoming human that characterise children of our time, Lee (ibid) ignores the fact that young children are totally dependent on at least one adult. This dependency does not imply that children are not social, but we must acknowledge the differences between children of different ages. And in doing so, we also need to take into consideration those who take care of children.
The contextualised child

Agnes Andenaes has pointed out the need to contextualise the discussions rather than talk about a universal abstract child. Her point of departure is the struggle to reinforce children’s rights and position in the Nordic countries. In her analysis of what this means in the Norwegian practice, she notes that ‘focusing on the child’ often means neglecting the everyday life of children and their families; ‘the child is presented as a vulnerable receiver of care, in need of protection from an overwhelming outside world’ (Andenaes 2005; 220). In contrast to this image, she says that childcare should be perceived as work, a job that is performed in an everyday context. She argues that we must acknowledge that development is related to hard work. Referring to John Morss, she writes: ‘Babies do not develop, they demand’ (ibid; 221). Children’s development is not a result of a natural inner force, but rather of personal relationships and childcare. We need to reclaim developmental psychology, and in doing so destabilise the idea that there is only one mainstream developmental psychology. Developmental psychology must be analysed in action and children’s needs cannot be separated from the life of the rest of the family. ‘This means that cultural context should not be seen as something outside the process of development’ (ibid; 223). If we accept the fact that the young child’s life depends on care, and that this care is given in relation to the concrete cultural context in which the child lives, we can arrive at an understanding of ‘development in action’. The being child was introduced by scholars in childhood studies as a metaphor of a social child worth studying in his or her own right and not only as an individual on the way to adulthood. As has been shown, this has been an important way of theorising childhood. However, there is also a need to theorise parenthood and childcare in order to understand how young children’s lives are lived. The being child can be recognised, but the adult is also aware of the developing child.

In an earlier study (Halldén 1991); parents of four-year-old children were interviewed concerning their ideas of child development. I found contrasting images of the child, sometimes co-existing in one and the same person. I used the metaphors child as being and child as project, and showed in the analysis how parents adopt these contrasting ideas as a way of dealing with the conflicting demands of parenthood. In combining the two ideas, the parents in the study emphasised the necessity of providing protection, of accepting the child’s individuality and of giving the child free access to the parents’ time, but also of establishing a bridge between the home and the outside world. This study was conducted in a small town in Sweden in the late 1980s, and the parents were mostly from the skilled working class. It is an
empirical question how parents’ ideas of the child would be formulated in various contexts today. The important concern, however, is that parents formulate an everyday psychology that directs their actions in relation to their child. These frames of reference are constructions made by parents in a specific historical and cultural setting. Parents’ images of the child are, like the ideas of researchers in the sociology of childhood, constructed in relation to the society and are interpretations of what this society demands of its citizens. The being-becoming distinction, as aspects of lived childhood, can be complemented by the being-project distinction which focuses on the ideas of those who take care of the little child. These aspects are important, as Andenaes (2005) shows, if we are to understand ‘development in action’.

There is now an open-mindedness in favour of broadening the perspective and arguing that childhood studies are necessarily an interdisciplinary field (Prout 2005: 4). In the book Researching Children’s Experience, edited by Sheila Green and Diane Hogan (2005), both of whom have a background in developmental psychology, it is argued that there is a need for multiple perspectives. ‘Children’s lives are complex and multi-faceted and require an analysis that is informed by knowledge of biological, psychological and social factors and their interactions’ (ibid: xi). In her chapter, Hogen refers to the growth of interest in contextual models of child development in developmental psychology, and argues for the need to take developmental perspectives into consideration when doing research informed by the new social studies of childhood. ‘In my view, the study of children’s experiences of their worlds, focusing on their perspectives, and the study of their development, need not be mutually exclusive’ (Hogan 2005: 37). Martin Woodhead and Dorothy Faulkner are two other researchers in developmental psychology who have pointed out the importance of ‘not throw[ing] out the baby with the developmental bathwater’ (Woodhead & Faulkner 2000: 31).

**Individuality and a new vulnerability**

In the debate on childhood and society, the emphasis has been on individualisation processes in late modernity, or ‘the transformed modernity’ as Marianne Gullestad puts it (Gullestad 1996). This period is characterised by complex negotiations in place of simple obedience. Children and young people spend their everyday life in multiple contexts where these negotiations take place. Marianne Gullestad discusses the new dilemmas that are raised in this period when children participate in institutional settings as autonomous individuals, not as members of families and kin groups. ‘They manage on their own, in complex institutional
landscapes where status is achieved rather than ascribed’ (ibid: 37). But this autonomy is linked to a new dependency. In order to manage to live in this complex institutional landscape, one needs basic trust. And it is parents and the professionals who take the parents’ place during the day who help the child develop basic trust. Marianne Gullestad writes: ‘In a changing world in which innovation and flexibility are in high demand, basic trust still remains an important principal’. (ibid: 37)

This remark concerns transitions of values between generations. I use her point of departure here to discuss the preschool. To make it a place where young children are taken care of and given the possibility to develop, there must be mediating processes between parents and the professionals. The strong bond between parents and children, which are a prerequisite for developing basic trust, must be transferred to the professionals. Young children are social beings, but are so only with the help of adults, and they cannot manage temporary relationships. If the child is to have the possibility to build stable relationships, there must be continuity and a commitment from the adult. In this sense, the adult-child relationship is asymmetrical. The adult must accept responsibility for the development of the relationship. Young children are dependent on someone who can ‘read’ them and understand their wants and needs. To be a partner in this process of discovery is demanding work. This means that preschools must be of high quality. By underscoring the children’s sociability and competence, we risk ignoring the fact that they can only achieve this if there are trustworthy persons in their environment who have the time and maturity needed to accompany the children as they proceed with their ‘love affair with the world’.

To theorise these processes we need developmental psychology. Not a rigid stage theory, but a theory of psycho-social processes where the hyphen is important (Hollway 2004). The psycho-social perspective draws our attention to the issue of identity as constructed in a relationship between the individual and the social world with its structures and discourses. Wendy Hollway and Tony Jefferson (2000) express this thought in the following way: ‘Thus experience, being constituted from both external and internal reality, is simultaneously social and psychological (psycho-social), like the warp and the weft in a piece of cloth’ (ibid; 138). The individual mediates and creates the inner and the outer simultaneously. This is the meaning of psycho-social processes. Identity is a result of a person’s interactions in relationships. Coming so far in the argumentation, we end up with an image of the child as both being and becoming, but not in Lee’s (2001) sense, as ambiguity. When taking
developmental processes into consideration, we account for an image of the child as being in the sense of the importance of understanding the child’s standpoint, and becoming in the sense that children must be understood in relation to time.

To understand children’s lives in preschool, we need to analyse the prerequisites of developmental processes, i.e. the mediation between the inner and the outer. Given the fact that preschool is part of normal childhood, it is a place where many ambitions are to be realised. And a place on which we make great demands. There must be an emotionally stable climate and the staff must be professional in identifying children’s needs, and they must collaborate with the parents in the care of the young children. The being child is a child who is acknowledged as someone who must be seen and accepted as an individual, but an individual who needs to be in a relationship. This child is also a child that will develop and learn because of such relationships.

**The Swedish preschool and the discourse of educare**

Today preschool is part of a normal Swedish childhood, and although it is not compulsory, it is compulsory for the local government to arrange child-care service for all children. Preschools are discussed in Sweden in terms of both labour-market policy and children’s rights. During the last decade the reform that brought the preschool into the educational system changed the way childcare was arranged. According to the Act on Preschool Education from 1998, all children from the age of one whose parents are working or studying have a right to this service. In addition, all four- and five-year-olds are able to attend pre-school free of charge three hours a day during the school year. The law stipulates that municipalities are obliged to offer this service, but that parents are free to decide if their children are to take part or not. We can see by this that the idea brought forward by the kindergarten teachers in the 1930s and 40s – that preschool is in the best interest of the child – has prevailed over the idea of the preschool as a nursery arrangement, vital to labour-market policy (Holmlund 2003). However, since women in Sweden are part of working life and families need child-care services, preschools are also part of the labour-market policy.

This raises the question how the two tasks can be combined: on the one hand, to be a preparation for school and a part of life-long learning; and on the other hand, to provide care for young children when their parents are at work. In a sense this duo-task has been under discussion since the 1970s, but the situation is different today because there is now a
curriculum and the preschool has become part of the regular school system. The reform has meant a victory in the struggle to professionalise preschool teachers. They can more easily agitate for higher wages and they are given credit for their professional skills. But because they are expected to take care of a large group of very young children from early morning to late afternoon, it is difficult to argue that this is a kind of school. During the 1990s, before the reform was implemented, Sweden suffered a financial crisis, with the result that the local governments cut back the subsidy to the preschools. The current arrangement is that the state government initiates laws pertaining to the preschool which the local governments are expected to implement, but do not always have the necessary funds to do so.

Preschool is intended to be a stimulating place where children can develop and learn, but where they also are taken care of while living their daily life. Already in the 1970s, the name preschool was used for both all-day and half-day institutions. The intention was to emphasise that the care of young children has an important pedagogical aspect. The 1998 Act on Preschool Education underscores this complexity of the mission in terms of combining education and care, conceptualised as educare. However, there is a risk that we end up in a ‘schoolification’ of the preschool. According to an evaluation report from the Swedish Agency for Education (2004), some preschools have adopted the regular school’s practice of measuring and evaluating the children. The tendency to evaluate competence can result in a focus on education at the expense of care. We have, on the one hand, heavy cutbacks in subsidies, and on the other hand a favouring of the instrumental side of the preschool, a situation which Mayall has described in the case of Britain where nursery schools are being converted into nursery classes in the regular school (Mayall 2002: 174).

An important question today is: Why do we emphasise children’s competence? And what risks do we run when we emphasise learning and not care in preschool? Teachers’ struggle for acceptance of their professionality of their role is an important trade union issue. But professionalism does not mean that we should emphasise only the becoming aspect (Qvortrup 1994) and the ‘child as project’ aspect (Halldén 1991); it also means to take care of the child as being and in doing so not only the competent being. In a discussion on how ‘child’ and ‘adult’ are constituted as difference, Christensen and Prout refer to Jenks’ and the argument that ‘the modern family enabled the state to invest in children, constituting them not as beings but as “promising” material for the future’ (Christensen & Prout 2005: 44). The risk I can see in the preschool discourse on educare is that the underlying image of the child is the ‘child as
project’. Not the being child and not the becoming child of developmental psychology, but a child that can be formed and fashioned in relation to the demands of a competitive society.

Children’s lives in preschool and the metaphors of childhood in the preschool context

Returning to the question I posed at the beginning of this paper, i.e. on the role of preschools in the construction of Swedish childhood of today, I argue in this paper that preschool is characterised as a domain between the private and the public. The institution is state organised and state supported, but it is closely linked to the private lives of children and their parents. Mayall has accounted for the importance of the negotiations between paid and unpaid women that take place in an intermediate domain, as ‘an arena where state/public interests and family/private interests intersect’ (Mayall 2001: 11). As we showed in our study on the changing preschool, the institution is influenced by the children, their parents and by the pedagogical staff. Children eat, sleep and play; they go to the toilet or have their nappies changed. Childcare is to a great extent about the body. This puts preschool staff in an intimate relationship to the children under their care, and because of this, also to their parents. The suitability of clothes, acceptable hygiene and appropriate language are aspects of private life that are open to exposure in preschool. The preschool can be described as an intermediate domain, where negotiations takes place and where processes of ‘doing preschool’ and ‘doing childhood’ are in motion. According to this perspective, the institution is not only a place where we can find examples of the institutionalised modern childhood, but also a place where young children live part of their daily lives, and where (unpaid) parents and (paid) staff meet. A child perspective on preschool entails accounting for the intersection between the interests of children, their parents and the preschool teachers. It also involves accounting for children’s peer relationships and the child culture that is created there. Our understanding of the meaning of preschool must be informed by an analysis of the ideas favoured among the adults who are mandated to act in the best interest of the child. But it must also be informed by studies of children’s experiences.

A child perspective is not the same as child centeredness. John Gillis comments that the child centeredness of our time is adult-created and that we must make a distinction between the time of childhood as an adult creation and children’s lived time. ‘The time of childhood is an adult creation, representing that which adults yearn for but cannot have, namely their lost childhood’ (Gillis 2003: 151). Metaphors such as ‘child as being’ or ‘child as project’ are created in relation to the symbolic meaning of childhood in society. When parents or
preschool staff look upon children as being, it is in relation to the idea that childhood is linked to innocence, whereas the ‘child as project’ idea is related to children’s potentiality and the importance of investing in them. The study by Markström (2005), which focuses on how the preschool is formed by negotiations, shows how both parents and staff regard the preschool as being in the best interest of the child. Parents and preschool staff give contradictory images when talking about the children; on the one hand, there is the child as being, i.e. the child who is innocent and needs to remain being a child; on the other hand, there is the child as project, i.e. the child who has to learn to qualify for a life in various institutions in the future. From the adult’s point of view, children need to attend preschool and they need to learn to qualify. In this sense we can argue that childhood is indeed institutionalised. There are specific institutions meant for children, and the children need to be there.

The ideas of the child’s best interest and the cultural meanings of childhood provide a background to children’s lives and a patterning of the time of childhood. If, however, we take the children’s standpoint, it is not certain that they experience their childhood as institutionalised. The temporality of childhood is discussed by James, Jenks and Prout in their book Theorizing Childhood; they argue that we must distinguish between the time of childhood and the time for children. The time of childhood is characterised by ‘the ways in which childhood, as a discrete period in the life course, is embedded within the social fabric’, while time for children is understood as ‘children’s experience of and participation in the temporal rhythms of childhood through which they live their lives’ (James, Jenks & Prout 1998: 61). In our project on the changing preschool, we acknowledged the importance of peers. Children are occupied with forming relationships and exploring their position relative to other children. Activities that adults often regard as individual, such as children’s use of picture-books and their art activities, are in fact part of children’s peer culture. It is also obvious in the ethnographies by Simonsson (2004) and Ånggård (2005) that, often, children transform the artefacts and activities they are presented with into a child culture of their own.

Given the fact that preschool is a space where children live much of their daily life, we must try to understand the processes of ‘doing childhood’ that occur in this space and, when doing so, to take the child perspective. Taking the child perspective means to study children’s social life, their peer relationships and child culture. It also means to take into consideration the way children are perceived and treated, i.e. the ideas on the time of childhood held by parents and professionals. I have argued that preschool, as such a space, is constructed by its actors,
children, parents and preschool staff. Both the time of childhood and the time for children are important if we are to understand the processes of negotiation that occur in the preschool. Children need to be in a relationship to be social and to develop trust, and this entails the need to acknowledge the aspect of being as well as the aspect of becoming.

References


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