Mellan könsspecifika förväntningar och ett neutralt kunskapsideal
Att förhålla sig till betydelser av kön som barnpsykolog i Sverige

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Akademisk avhandling

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Rektor vid Umeå universitet för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen framläggs till offentligt förvar i bt102, Beteendevetarhuset torsdagen den 15 oktober, kl. 13:15. Avhandlingen kommer att förvaras på svenska.

Between gender-specific expectations and an ideal of neutral knowledge: Swedish child psychologists' efforts to attend to their clients' gender

By exploring the meanings that psychologists working in child- and youth psychiatry, schools, and in the developmental field give differences between girls and boys this thesis has aimed to identify obstacles against, and possibilities for more inclusive ways to understand and theorize the psychological development of children and young people. Such inclusive ways would contribute to an understanding of how children’s psychological functioning is related to the societal context in which they live their life, as well as to strategies for psychotherapy. Eleven interviews with psychologists working with child and adolescent interventions in Sweden, and three Swedish textbooks on developmental psychology were analysed. The analyses were informed by constructionist and discourse-psychological approaches. The analyses point to how child psychologists’ ideals regarding legitimate therapeutic knowledge impact their thinking about whether, and how, to counteract gender stereotypes through therapy.

Efforts to promote gender equality that are based in an ideal of neutral knowledge seemed to lead to a focus on “equal treatment” and to work to conceal the asymmetries in valuation and freedom of action of girls and boys. Efforts to promote gender equality that are based in an ideal of justice as the outcome seemed to open possibilities to maintain attention on injustice and power issues related to gender. The results show that the possibilities to include cultural and social meaning of gender in psychotherapy with children and young people seem to be closely related to professional ideals regarding legitimate therapeutic knowledge. The extent to which the psychologists had been given analytical tools to reflect on connections between the various problems of the girls and boys they treated, and patterns of gendered power and subordination in society was also important. That kind of tools, based in feminist theory and gender studies, were to a large extent missing in the interviews and the developmental psychology textbooks that were analysed.

Keywords
Developmental psychology, psychotherapy, gender, gender equality, Swedish psychologists, feminist theory

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