Childhood interaction

Establishing, maintaining and changing the moral order

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Sociality in childhood interaction

While Garfinkel has stressed the morality of social knowledge, using his breaching experiments, many studies in conversation analysis have shown in what ways social norms – and participants' knowledge of them – shape their practices and actions in sequence organization (cf. Stivers et al., 2011). This special issue aims to further explore the in-situ accomplishment of moral social order while focusing on interactions with children, building on work that acknowledges children's social competencies in co-constructing their own social worlds (Corsaro, 1985, 1997; Danby & Theobald, 2012).

There is a history of conversation analytically inspired research on childhood interaction studying the co-construction and maintenance of social

order among peers, e.g. in everyday interactions (cf. Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2007 for an overview), and in institutional settings (for example Danby & Baker, 2000). A collection of papers exploring morality and knowledge through the application of conversation analysis has offered insight into the complexities of taking a moral stance in everyday conversation (Stivers, Mondada and Steensig, 2011), with some specific orientation to the work of children (Kidwell, 2011; Sidnell, 2011a, 2011b). Within this area of research, embodiment has gained increasing attention as a resource in childhood interactions, revealing the interactive work accomplished by the use of touch, gesture and body orientation for changes in participation rights and obligations (Goodwin & Cekaite, 2013; Cekaite, 2015). Other studies in adult–child interactions using membership categorization analysis (MCA) have demonstrated how young children might gain the status of ‘half members’ or ‘good-enough members’ (Forrester & Reason, 2006; Forrester, 2007; Hutchby, 2005), when the culturally bound, dynamic categories ‘child’ and ‘adult’, being part of the ‘stage-of-life’ device (Atkinson, 1980), are made interactionally relevant. As half-members, children may not be held fully morally accountable for their actions; exploring adults’ practices to bring about expectations about children’s social conduct provides insights into the hidden moral grounds of social interaction. These studies lay a strong foundation for further investigation of the local and moral nature of young children’s sequential, action-related knowledge in social situations.

This special issue builds on these prior works to further explore the ways in which the moral order of an ongoing interaction is established, shifted, or negotiated, with a specific focus on young children. The six articles share ethnomethodology as their theoretical and methodological foundation, thereby adopting a socio-constructionist viewpoint on socialization, and approaching morality as an ongoing practical achievement. They address the issue of how local moral order is negotiated, established, and maintained during courses of interaction and provide in-depth, microanalysis of empirical research, mapping children’s moral work in interactions with each other, as well as with adults, to reveal the process of orderly sequence organization. Together the articles make visible and argue for recognition of children’s social and moral competencies in their ability to make moral decisions and to articulate these moral positions to others in embodied and competent ways. They also reveal how caregivers guide children towards interactional and cultural norms of appropriate conduct, thus shedding light onto different socialization practices as loci of meaningful social and

moral knowledge. The collection thus provides new empirical insights into children's and adults' methods of displaying and distributing relevant social knowledge. It may help us to understand better not only how socialization is managed as an organizational task in interaction but also how the 'seen but unnoticed' social knowledge (Garfinkel, 1967) is brought about and made public in ongoing interaction.

Within this shared theoretical and thematic focus, several thematic strands can be identified, which the special issue's contributions attend to. One focus is on how children are guided by adults into norms of social conduct through embodied practices (*Bateman & Roberts; Björk-Willén; Holm Kvist; Kern*); another is on how the children use their own social and interactional competence to resist, or re-negotiate such norms among each other, and with adults present in the situation (*Bateman & Roberts; Björk-Willén; Kemp & Kyratzis*). These articles demonstrate through their fine-grained analysis the many ways children may perform as competent moral actors in interaction; additionally, they suggest pretend-play to be an important practice to transform existing norms, to show resistance (*Bateman & Roberts*), and to use them for their own purposes (*Björk-Willén; Holm Kvist*). Another thematic strand emphasizes the children's competence to establish and maintain interactive order among peers (*Kemp & Kyratzis; Heller*). It is shown how peers, acting as moral agents, establish friendship rules and enact them during pretend play (*Kemp & Kyratzis*), and build epistemic and moral orders while dealing with controversial questions among each other (*Heller*).

The practices and actions under investigation are diverse, ranging from crying (*Holm Kvist*) to apologies (*Björk-Willén*), walks in the woods (*Bateman & Roberts*), game explanations (*Kern*), pretend play (*Kemp & Kyratzis*) and collaborative reasoning (*Heller*). According to the state-of-the-art in interaction analysis, all papers address multimodality, focusing on the various embodied ways in which practices and actions are constituted in interaction. Body position, posture, gaze, and touch are included in these analyses, demonstrating how participants use talk and their bodies to establish an embodied participation framework (Goodwin, 2000) in which collaborative meaning-making is accomplished. It is also shown how adults employ embodied resources such as touch and gaze to guide children into appropriate ways of conduct, thereby converting features of 'unnoticed' social knowledge into noticeable and thus observably relevant features of social knowledge in interaction.

Finally, the collection covers a range of ages of children, from preschool age to sixth-grade students, providing an international focus, with research grounded in New Zealand, America, Germany, and Sweden.

The contributions to the volume

Malva Holm Kvist looks at conflict situations with crying children, showing that children's crying is designed as an interactional resource, and used for specific social purposes. She finds that adults respond differently to children's crying; they may sooth them, or intervene in a conflict. By describing educators' affective and moral stances towards crying as embodied practice, she shows how emotional socialization and moral order are constituted *in situ*.

Using the same set of data as *Malva Holm Kvist*, *Polly Björk-Willén* focuses on apologies as embodied practices. Drawing on Goffman's work on the structure of apologies, she shows how adults establish ritual frames to manage the children's conflicts, and to make them apologize to each other. Within this framework, the reference to a general moral order that may include social norms about the practice of doing an apology plays an important part. This may be seen as a ritually created space where moral knowledge is observably brought into public. However, in peer play children may transform the practice of apologies to address real-world conflicts while changing them to fit their needs.

This theme also plays an important role in the contribution by *Amanda Bateman* and *Peri Roberts* about how children transform moral norms enforced by adults so that they can resist them without openly breaching them. A single case analysis of a bush walk in New Zealand with preschoolers is presented. While children and teachers accomplish moral work as a joint project through attending to the rule of making a promise to the Māori god Tāne Mahuta upon entering the forest, the children also act as independent moral agents when creating rules that allows them to waive their promises. The empirical findings are enriched through a discussion of moral philosophy. The authors argue that the children exhibit a grasp of complex moral concepts and behaviours that may track more sophisticated ideas from moral philosophy.

While embodiment plays a role in all papers, *Friederike Kern* specifically looks at touch as a resource to correct children's bodily conduct while some other conversational action is going on. She demonstrates how

caregivers regularly use touch as manual guidance to correct children's body position or bodily conduct. The parents make observable efforts to establish and keep an F-Formation (Kendon 1990) as a prerequisite for joint attention and mutual meaning-building, and simultaneously reveal their orientation towards solving the practical problem of organizing the children's co-presence and 'accessibility' (Goffman, 1967) as participants. At the same time, the parents display their orientation towards what they understand as appropriate bodily behaviour in a semi-public situation, in which cameras and, in part, research assistants are present.

Jacqueline Kemp and *Amy Kyratzis* examine the long-term construction and negotiation of a local moral order among a group of friends in preschool. Their focus is on person and action descriptions and assessments, which the boys employ to build their own moral universe by displaying to them as negative or positive category-bound conduct. For the expression of stances towards positive or negative category-bound conduct embodiment is widely used. Especially, the children move their bodies towards or away from each other to display alignment or disalignment towards ongoing talk and actions.

Vivien Heller takes a slightly different stance at morality, exploring how sixth-graders establish mutual epistemic responsibility when dealing with a given problem scenario. Focus is on the resources children employ to create an epistemic order, in which all participants are jointly responsible for solving the problem. Heller shows how children use gaze to signal their epistemic stance towards a proposal, simultaneously monitoring how it is perceived by their co-participants. The collaborative construction of knowledge is embedded in a social and epistemic order that is continuously subject to negotiation and change.

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