

## ABSTRACT

**Title:** Gender patterns in classroom interactions. Observations and interviews concerning students' interactions with teachers in grade nine of the comprehensive school.

**Language:** Swedish.

**Keywords:** Student-teacher interactions, gender, social orientation, resistance.

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The over-riding purpose of this thesis is to study gender patterns in classroom interactions. There are two components to this, namely a) to study girls' and boys' contacts with teachers in the classroom and b) to study how teachers and male and female students perceive one another, and how they perceive gender differences in student-teacher contacts in the class as well as in the school at large. Two perspectives concerned with gender differences in social orientation and social positions respectively are the points of departure for analyzing the data.

Observations of classroom interactions were carried out in seven classes in grade nine. Students from three of the observed classes and their teachers were interviewed. Teachers' and students' perceptions of each other and gender differences have been related to gender patterns observed in the classrooms.

The results suggest that the conditions for teacher-student interactions in the classroom are more likely to suit boys' social orientation and thus provide for male rather than female interests. Boys have more frequent teacher-interactions in five out of seven classes, while the reverse gender pattern is found in two classes. Gender differences also vary between subjects and different kinds of interaction. Comparisons between the classes where girls and boys respectively have the more prominent position suggest that their dominance in the classroom has gender-specific characteristics, both in respect of content and ways of relating to class-mates. Gender differences in behaviour corresponding to social orientations are also found in teachers' and students' descriptions of student-teacher relations. On the whole, those descriptions indicate that girls are more oriented towards personal contacts with teachers, while boys are more oriented towards teachers as professionals.

Interviews with teachers show that whereas boys are always identified as individuals, the publicly active girls are more likely to be identified as groups. Such girls are considered highly visible as a group, but teachers picture them only vaguely as individuals. Thus, it might be added to previous findings regarding the anonymity of quiet girls, that even girls who are outspoken and frequently initiate contact with teachers seem less likely than boys to be viewed as individuals.

Girls usually appear to have less influence on the classroom process than boys have. To some extent, however, they seem to be able to benefit from gender-related expectations of accommodation; both teachers and girls assume teachers to be more indulgent towards girls. Girls themselves also think that they can create strategies, which appear to draw on expectations of accommodation, by exaggerating and refining the role of "the good pupil" in order to gain influence and attention from teachers. It is argued that students' various strategies for gaining control are to be seen as resistance to subordination and, furthermore, that girls' and boys' resistance in school differ, both in content and form, because of differences in social positions and social orientations.