An Anthropological Analysis of Students' Activities during Recess in Relation to the Physical and Organizational Surroundings

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An Anthropological Analysis of Students’ Activities during Recess in Relation to the Physical and Organizational Surroundings

RESULTS

The norms for movement and physical activity among the students in the 5th to the 7th grade are created and influenced crosswise by the different places and spaces that the students stay and move between. The school yard can be compartmentalized in areas on the basis of the activities that are going on, the school yard facilities, the group of students engaged in the activity, the proximity to the school building and the visibility to others.

Focusing on the latter namely the proximity to the school building and the visibility of the area to other students and the teachers on playground duty, the analysis shows:

- Students engaged in PA close to buildings are considered to have high social status.
- Students engaged in PA at the edge of the school ground are by comparison considered to have a lower social status.
- Different social groups are also characterized by diverse activities.
- Groups with low social status are engaged in areas and facilities intended for younger children.

CONCLUSIONS

The anthropological approach to this area of research contributes to an understanding of the associations between the students’ social identities, their physical and organizational surroundings and their patterns of movement i.a. during recess. Further studies will clarify these associations in relation to the transformation from being a child to becoming an adolescent.

PURPOSE

The focal point in this anthropological study is the experience-near perspectives among the students. My PhD. study is part of the SPACE-study and investigates associations between the students’ social identities, their physical and organizational surroundings and their patterns of movement i.a. during recess. The aim is to supplement and contextualise other kinds of knowledge generated in the SPACE study. Theoretically, the PhD. draws upon phenomenological perspectives as well as anthropological theory of children and social relations, social groups and the significance of place and space.

METHODS

The analyses is based upon an anthropological fieldwork among the students from two classes at two different Danish public schools. The fieldwork consists of participant observation during the school day both during periods and recess as well as go-alongs and in depth interviews. All in all I spend 4 months at each school. The fieldwork has been conducted over a three year period making it possible to follow the children from the 5th to the 7th grade – as they transform from being a child to becoming an adolescent. Coding and analyses are conducted using Nvivo.

SPACE – Space for Physical Activity

The aim of the SPACE study is to develop, document, and assess a comprehensive intervention in local school districts that promotes everyday physical activity (PA) among 11-15-year-old adolescents. SPACE (School site, Play Spot, Active transport, Club fitness and Environment) is a multicomponent intervention study to promote PA among adolescents. The study is based on a social ecological framework, which is designed to implement organisational and structural changes in the physical environment. The randomisation and matched pair design produced equivalent groups according to central outcome measures and background variables.

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