AN ORDINARY SCHOOL CHILD
Agency and Authority in Children’s Schooling

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This ethnographic study looks at the children’s participation and positioning in a Swedish mainstream school class. It is based on a year’s fieldwork where the researcher participated in the children’s activities. In analysing the children’s positioning the concept of generation is used together with positioning theory.

The study shows that the children’s positioning in school occurs within two relationships. One is the student–staff relationship related to the school setting, and the other is a general child–adult relationship. It was found that the two relationships interact and reinforce one another, and that in relation to this the children are positioned both as professional pupils and as vulnerable and incomplete children.

In both the generational and the institutional relationship the children are positioned as subordinate. This does not mean that the children are without the power to act; instead, both staff and children continually position the children as both competent and active. The staff do so within both the generationally ordered child–adult relationship and the student–staff relationship, while the children in the study class are found to be active in their positioning, in their participation and in their schooling.

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