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## **Paper for DISCOURSE STUDIES**

### **“Cheaters and Stalkers”: Accusations in a Classroom**

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## **“Cheaters and Stalkers”: Accusations in a Classroom**

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### **Abstract**

This paper explores accusations as collaboratively accomplished in classroom peer interactions in the absence of a teacher. The analysis shows how the children use local classroom rules and teacher authority as resources and warrants to invoke multi-layered moral orders and identities, and hold one child accountable through accusations about their behavior. The accused children are categorized in a duplicative way with morally degrading descriptions and as out-group members. This paper argues that understanding children's accusations requires understanding of how such interactions compose and reflect the school context that is co-produced through the implementation of accountable ways in which to behave.

### **Keywords**

Accusations, moral orders, accountability, participation framework, classroom interaction, conversation analysis, membership categorization analysis

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### **Author biography**

Kreetta Niemi is a doctoral student at the Department of Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. She is working on her doctoral dissertation which deals with children's morality as interactional achievement. In her work she applies conversation analysis and membership categorization analysis to investigate practices and methods through which children organize their interactions in the classroom.

Dr Amanda Bateman is a senior lecturer in early childhood education in the Faculty of Education at the University of Waikato, New Zealand. Amanda's research uses conversation analysis (CA) and membership categorization analysis (MCA) to investigate the resources used by children in the co-construction of social organisation with peers and teachers.

Amanda has lead projects including teacher and child interactions to investigate how the New Zealand early childhood curriculum is implemented; an international study into the affects of the Christchurch earthquake on preschool children, and a current project investigating children's storytelling in early childhood education in New Zealand.

## **Introduction**

Studies in conversation analysis and discursive psychology have explored how participants employ moral action in their everyday conduct interdependently with others (e.g., Drew, 1998; Sterponi, 2003). The constitution of action, events, and ‘facts’ are inherently moral, whether these moral features are explicitly topicalized and made the focus in situ, or whether they remain resources, present but unnoticed organizing properties of talk and action (Jayyusi, 1991: 242). Local moral order is constructed via the organization of agreement and disagreement, and treating behavior as socially appropriate or inappropriate (e.g. Bergmann, 1998; Drew, 1998; Sneijder and Te Molder, 2005).

Studies focusing on how children’s moral work is achieved in and through interactions have, for example, delineated how children create social hierarchies and peer exclusions (Evaldsson, 2007; Goodwin, 1990, 2002, 2006; Svahn and Evaldsson, 2011), resolve disputes (Church, 2009), claim ownerships of play ideas (Theobald, 2013), and invoke and create rules to govern participants’ conduct in make-believe activities (Sidnell, 2011) or in the use of play objects (Cobb-Moore, Danby and Farrell, 2008). Although children’s accusations concerning each other’s behavior are frequently used in their everyday interactions, their use has received little systematic attention (however, see Goodwin, 1990: 190–210).

## **Accusations in interactions**

Accusations, at least towards one another, are particularly delicate or problematic assessments bringing morality to the fore (e.g., Jayyusi, 1991: 241). The allocation of an accusation is a collaborative achievement, which ascribes responsibility for an unsatisfactory event(s) to a particular person or group (Turowetz and Maynard, 2010: 511). Existing

research suggests that the accusation/blaming comprises two parts. In the first part, the problematic incident is proclaimed where, typically, this utterance lacks the actor-agent involved in the event, such as “It blew up”; subsequently, an attribution of responsibility and a blamed actor is referenced with such utterances as “Whadju do to it?” (Pomerantz, 1978). According to Pomerantz (1978), there is a sequence to blaming and accusation where an accusation needs a warrant; the person attributing an accusation must be able to offer a reason for why the other person deserves the attributed accusation.

Compared to complaints, which may be made to seek a recipient’s affiliation, accusations generally draw and make relevant a denial or some type of counter (Atkinson & Drew, 1979; Pomerantz, 1978). Denial is pivotal in constructing the preceding turns as an accusation and, at the same time, offering a redescription of premises (Antaki, 1994: 59). To deny an accusation, the facts from which the accusation was constructed need to be addressed (Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Buttny, 1993).

Previous research on how accusations are accomplished by children in their interactions is found in studies by Goodwin (1990) and Evaldsson (2007). In Goodwin’s study (1990), children formulated and elaborated their accusations as reports learned through a third party in a so-called (s)he-said-that-you-said-that-I scenario. Responses to the accusations were typically various forms of denials. In Evaldsson’s (2007) study, pre-adolescent girls accused one member of being accountable for causing trouble, complaining, exploiting others, lying, talking behind people’s backs, being disloyal, etc. The children also used moral descriptions of good and bad friends and the accusations and complaints were made in the offender’s presence (Evaldsson, 2007).

Peer exclusion and hierarchies have also been explored from an ethnomethodological perspective that demonstrates how children create peer exclusion through co-producing hierarchies. Bateman, for example, describes children’s use of the collective pro-terms *we*

and *us* to explicate affiliation and exclusion in peer interactions (Bateman, 2012), as well as using primary school playground huts as places for exclusion and inclusion (Bateman, 2011). Sheldon (1996) provides an example of play where two girls exclude a third girl in spite of the latter playing the role of a pretend character relevant to the ongoing action and logic of play. Griswold's (2007) findings indicated that children accomplish subordination and authority through talk and body positions in role-play, and authority was seen to be ratified by participants voluntarily positioning themselves as subordinate.

## **Methodology**

This study explores how children's accusations are collaboratively accomplished in classroom peer interaction in the absence of a teacher. The present study represents an ethnomethodological approach to the study of children during their everyday school activities in which video-recorded episodes and their transcriptions were examined. The analysis is based on two video-recorded data sets: one focusing on classroom detention and the other on recess. The theoretical and methodological frameworks from which the analysis is drawn are from conversation analysis (CA) and membership categorization analysis (MCA) combined with Sacks' (1989) paper on "Accountable Actions." CA examines talk and interaction by focusing on how interactional practices are produced and made relevant to the participants themselves. These can be uncovered by studying the sequential organization of talk, that is the way in which actions and utterances are ordered (e.g., Schegloff, 2007).

MCA focuses on how participants accomplish everyday activities by using and making sense of categories of themselves and others, places, or activities (e.g. Baker, 1997; Hester and Eglin, 1997). These shared categories form a part of the cultural resources through which understanding society is constructed. With MCA it is possible to reveal how participants exploit membership and non-membership to explicate affiliations and exclusions,

and construct situated identities (e.g., Antaki and Widdicombe, 2008). Sacks' notion of category-bound actions, rights, and obligations not only points out the moral features of category concepts, but also provides moral accountability for certain actions or omissions (Jayyusi, 1991: 240).

## **Observations**

This paper explores children's accusations as observed in naturally occurring primary school classroom peer interactions. The observations reveal: (a) how accusations are sequentially organized and what kinds of interactional resources are employed: (b) what is counted as blameworthy action, and how the attribution of responsibility is performed; and (c) how local situated identities and multi-layered moral orders are produced in classroom peer interaction inside of an institutional school context.

The analysis focuses on two extended episodes that are drawn from a larger study of a corpus of 26 hours of video-recorded primary school classroom interaction in Finland. Besides video-recordings, the data gathering included ethnographic memos and teacher interviews to provide contextual details of the settings. The first extract includes six children from the third grade (aged 9–10 years). The episode is drawn from a 'homework detention', commonly called 'laiskanläksy' in Finnish, roughly translated as "homework of the lazy one." It is a period where a group of children had to stay after school in order to complete a previously assigned homework. One child, Pate, has completed his homework during the school day instead of waiting for the after school period, and he now waits for the teacher's permission to go home.<sup>1</sup> The teacher is in the corridor having a discussion with another teacher, and is expected to enter the classroom at any moment. The second extract is between four fourth graders (10–11 years) from a classroom recess that takes place indoors in the

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<sup>1</sup> This information is based on the ethnographic observations by the first author.



classroom after a physical education (PE) class. One of them is accused by the others of not having had a shower after the PE class, which the others perceive as being against the guidelines set by the teacher mandating showering after PE class. The episodes are from different classrooms, but because they include similar conversational features, they are presented in parallel in the analysis. A list of transcription conventions used in the excerpts is provided as an appendix 1.

These situations place children within two frames and participant roles. First, they are within an institutional school context in a classroom, where in both cases, the teacher could arrive at any time. Second, in the absence of the teacher, the children also have an opportunity to maintain their own peer culture and relationships (see e.g., Danby and Baker, 2001).

## **Analysis and results**

### *Accusations and denials of wrongdoing against local classroom rules*

In the first set of examples, one of the children becomes accused of breaching a local teacher-set classroom rule. In both cases, the accused persons deny having done what they are accused of.

Excerpt 1a (homework detention)

1 Pate: MÄ oon valmis meneen kotiin.((--))

**1 Pate: I'm ready to go home. ((--))**

2 Iida: \$\*Sä olit aika nopee. \* \$

**2 Iida: \$\*You were pretty fast\*\$.**

3 Eino: Sä oot HUIJannut meitä.

**3 Eino: You have been CHEATING us.**

4 Pate: Mitenn: ni?

**4 Pate: How:so?**

5 Eino: Sää teit ne koulupäivä- aikana.

**5 Eino: You did them during the school day.**

In this extract, Pate announces to Iida that he is ready to go home (line 1), indicating that he is 'ready' but does not immediately leave because the classroom rules dictates that he has to wait for the teacher's permission to do so. Iida looks at Pate's exercise book and with her response makes it observable that Pate has already done his homework. Her turn (line 2) is not semantically moral, but her 'rascally' tone of voice and smiling indicates that she is making an accusation about Pate's activity that is observable to others, as evidenced by Eino in his next turn at talk (line 3)

Eino, who has been following Pate and Iida, makes a conclusion on the basis of Iida's turn and produces an implicit accusation to Pate (line 3) that contains several implications. First, by describing Pate's work as cheating, Eino takes the authority to control Pate and issues discipline, "it is not only possible to claim that a violation has occurred, but also that the target knows it and is accountable in a very strong way for its occurrence" (Goodwin, 2006: 43–44). Second, categorizing some action as cheating is moral work and there are cultural expectations for certain actions based on that category (Hester and Eglin, 1997). When Pate is accused of cheating, the others are positioned as being honest, or well-behaved, with respect to the classroom rules. Third, the cheating has been done towards the others. By using the word *us*, Eino invokes the polarized categories *you* and *us*, which is an initiation of exclusion (see also Bateman, 2011). With the use of *us*, Pate's activity is not only a breach of classroom rules, but also indicates that the cheating was done against the others. By including

the other parties, Eino argues that his accusation is supported by others. Thus, Eino establishes a group position, and he is heard as speaking for the group of others against Pate (Goffman, 1981).

Immediately after the accusation, Pate expresses disagreement with Eino's accusation (line 4). As discussed, accusations generally make relevant a denial or some type of counter, and the recipient of the offence is expected to respond as if it were untrue (Svahn and Evaldsson, 2011). With the direct and strong statement of disagreement concerning the accusation, Pate creates a 'reality analysis' (Hester & Francis, 1997), which might invite more people to join the discussion.

Excerpt 1b (classroom break)

1 Anni: Miten sää oot ehtiny jo #tänne#?

1 Anni: **How come you are already #here#? ((in classroom))**

2 Emma: OOT SÄÄ #käyny suihkussa#!

2 Emma: **DID YOU #take a shower#!**

3 Roosa: Kävin.

3 Roosa: **I did.**

4 Anni: Et voinu käydä.

4 Anni: **You couldn't have done that.**

5 Roosa: Kävimmä.

5 Roosa: **I did.**

6 Anni: Et voi:nu käydä koska Siiri oli eka joka meni suihkuun. Ja sitte

7 mä. Sä et oo käyny suihkussa. (0.5) Ope sano että kaikkien

8 pitää käydä suihkussa.

**6 Anni: You couldn't have done that because Siiri was the first one who  
7 went to the shower. And then I did. You haven't done that. (0.5) The  
8 teacher said that everyone has to have a shower.**

In this encounter, Anni initiates the episode with her question to Roosa (line 1), which is observable and reportable to the others that there might be something extraordinary or accountable in Roosa's action. This is oriented to by Emma, who seeks further information about Roosa's early arrival in the classroom. The creaky tone of voice marks that Emma's question is not just a question, but implies something accountable against local moral order (line 2). Usually, questions signaling moral wrongdoings are responded to with accounts, such as statements that explain the reasons or justifications for a behavior (Scott and Lyman, 1968), and aim to mitigate or deny the associated moral charge (e.g., Sterponi, 2003). However, Roosa's reply (line 3) does not include any account; it only denies what is previously implied. It is not accepted by Anni who challenges Roosa again (line 4). Anni's turn is a direct opposite to Roosa's and, similarly with the previous example, a 'reality analysis' (Hester and Francis, 1997) is established.

Roosa repeats her denial (line 5). As discussed, to deny an accusation, the facts from which the accusation was constructed need to be addressed (Atkinson and Drew, 1979). When facts substantiating any counter arguments are not provided by the accused, it is more obvious that the denial becomes overruled. Anni makes her refusal to accept Roosa's position as truth (line 6) by offering an explicit account for why Roosa is not being honest through orienting to the sequential pattern of actions that occurred. As in the previous example, the claim is justified and a warrant provided (line 6). Anni supports her claim through asserting her epistemic rights (Heritage and Raymond, 2005), displaying evidence-based knowledge

about who has been in the shower. This turn also invokes the teacher's authority, which will be discussed next.

### *Invoking teacher's authority and orienting to epistemic rights*

In the following excerpts, causations of disobedience to the local rules are invoked as the children threaten the accused peers with teachers' punishments. Teachers, as absent third parties, are referred to by the children as having the authority to administer consequences for those who break school rules. The consequences of actions is also discussed by Sacks (1989) which explores how adults go about teaching rules to children through Class I and Class II. In Class I, the consequences flow naturally from the action, "if you stick your hands in fire, they get burned," whereas in Class II, the consequences can be something that you can get away with, "somebody has to do something to you for you to get the negative consequence" (Sacks, 1989: 327).

Excerpt 2a (continuation of Excerpt 1a)

- 6 Eino: Jos Ari ois oikee ilkee nii se voi päättää et sää joudut kumittaan  
7 kaiken ja tekeen ne kaikki uuestaan. Koska se o huijausta  
8 jos tekee ne koulupäivä- aikana.
- 6 Eino: If Ari<sup>2</sup> ((looks at the teacher's desk and walks to Pate's desk))  
7 was really mean, then he could decide to make you erase  
8 all and do all over again. ((Gazes at Aapo.))  
9 Because it is cheating to do them during the school day.**
- 10 Aapo: ↑Teit sää koulussa ne?

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<sup>2</sup> Ari is the teacher of the class.

**10 Aapo:** ↑**Did you do them during the school day?**

11 Eino: [Teki]

**11 Eino:** [**He did!** ]

12 Pate: [EN!]=

**12 Pate:** [**NO!**]=

**13 Iida:** =**Teki se mä näin!**

13 Iida: = Yes he did I saw!

On lines 6-7, Eino completes his accusation and makes a veiled threat by using the conditional ‘if and then’ form as used in threats to suggest that ‘if’ you do an action ‘then’ you must suffer the consequences (e.g., Church and Hester, 2012). The threat is veiled in the sense that Eino does not explicitly identify the specific person who will tell the teacher. Using the conditional ‘if’ also implies that the consequences are not exactly predefined. In this case, it seems that Eino is able to utilize or even push the Class I and Class II system. By using the word ‘if,’ Eino’s threat makes the consequences conditional and dependent on the teacher’s current state. In that sense, the threat is of the Class II type; however, with his turn, Eino tries to build his threat as a Class I type.

In addition, Eino employs the local classroom rules as a warrant with which to accuse Pate of wrongdoing (line 8). In stating this, Eino implies that the offence has not only been committed against the peer group in detention (the *us* launched in the previous excerpt), but also against the usual classroom order. He reinforces the teacher’s authority as the person who can give a concrete punishment if a rule has been broken. Thus, there can be several moral orders in the classroom, and now two are invoked: the local classrooms in which the teacher is the authority, and the moral order of peers. In both orders, Pate’s moral position within the group is now downgraded.

With the next turn, Eino gazes at Aapo, which works as an invitation for Aapo to join the discussion or seek an affirmation (Tiitinen and Ruusuvuori, 2014) but Aapo attends to doing homework at school as the primary concern (line 10),; Aapo then formulates a question that still gives Pate an opportunity to defend himself against the accusation. In addition, Aapo brings out a moral order in which an offence has to be based on ‘real’ incidents. A most fundamental kind of knowing is that which is based on what someone sees or experiences (Kidwell, 2011: 257) and this is used here as a resource. Pate responds to this question at the same time as Eino, although the replies to Aapo’s query are opposite yes- and no-particles, suggesting that Eino shifts the participation framework (Goffman, 1981) by self-selecting to talk on behalf of Pate. The access to knowledge affects the participation framework because, by regarding the knowledge participants have, they can take on the authority to talk on behalf of others. This aspect of taking authority to talk on behalf of someone else is an interesting feature of this conversation and will be discussed in more detail in the excerpts 3a-b.

Iida makes an evidential justification to Eino’s accusation (line 13) and, in addition to Pate, Iida also holds the epistemic evidence-based knowledge (Heritage and Raymond, 2005) and first hand access to the topic, because she has seen Pate doing it (her turn on line 2 (1a) directly refers to that). Thus, Iida presents herself as an ‘eye witness,’ displaying alignment to the others who are against Pate, and bringing forth knowledge which is hard to refute.

#### Excerpt 2b

6 Anni: Et voi:nu käydä koska Siiri oli eka joka meni suihkuun. Ja  
7 sitte mä. Sä et oo käyny suihkussa. (0.5) Ope sano että  
8 kaikkien pitää käydä suihkussa.

**6 Anni: You couldn’t have done that because Siiri was the first one who**

7            **went to the shower. And then I did. You haven't done that. (0.5) The**  
8            **teacher said that everyone has to have a shower.**

9 Emma:    EI OO voinu käyä, e- ei se hiukset ei oo yhtää märät.

9 Emma:    *((Gazes at Anni and then Leena))*. **She couldn't have her**  
10           **hair is no- not wet at all.**

11 Leena:    Ni!

11 Leena:    **Right!**

12 Anni:    Pitäiskö mun mennä kertomaan susta.

12 Anni:    **Should I go and tell on you.**

13 Roosa:    Kävimmä (.) suihkussa.

13 Roosa:    **I did take (.) a shower.**

14 Anni     Se voi antaa rastin.

14 Anni:    **She (= teacher)) might give you a cross.<sup>3</sup>**

In this example, Anni does not accept Roosa's claim of having taken a shower. Anni displays her evidence-based knowledge of being the second one to take a shower and, thus, positions herself as an 'eye witness.' She, therefore, presents herself as being more knowledgeable about the event than those who did not witness the events, thereby overruling Roosa's claim that she did take a shower (observation 1b, line 4). Anni also justifies her accusation by giving a warrant of the teacher's order (lines 7-8). With this Roosa is accused of breaching both a teacher-advised rule, and a local classroom order, and the teacher's authority as a more powerful authority is invoked.

On line 9, Emma, like Anni on line 6, refers to epistemic rights. Emma's claim challenges the believability of Roosa's claim and acts as evidence-based knowledge to

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<sup>3</sup> Based on the ethnographic memos, a cross is a kind of sanction children can receive for disobedience, breaking rules, or neglecting school tasks. A student receiving a cross needs to show it to his or her parent(s).



support the accusation (see Heritage and Raymond, 2005). This knowledge is physically observable, dry hair that everyone can see, thus everybody has equal access and epistemic rights to the situation. As in excerpt 2a, a reality analysis (Hester and Francis, 1997) of the situation is presented as a ‘fact’ that is tangible in the stance of making an acceptable accusation.

Roosa’s act of noncompliance to school rules and subsequent denial of such an act is nominated by Anni (line 12) as a valid reason for telling the teacher about the transgression. Anni’s query (line 12) invokes the teacher’s authority through a question. In effect, she makes a veiled threat, proposing that if she tells the teacher, consequences will follow. Telling as a social practice is a tool to manage interactional trouble, and pre-telling announcements, “*I’m going to tell on you,*” have been used to give the accused children an opportunity to change their actions in dispute situations (Theobald, 2009: 100). Telling is usually frowned upon because it endangers the social cohesion of peer groups and subjects children to the intrusion of adult authority (García-Sánchez, 2012: 395). However, in this case, the teacher is absent and the question on line 12 indicates that the ‘teller’ is threatening to go somewhere, perhaps to the teachers’ office to tell the teacher, but the teacher is not necessarily called to be involved in the action at hand.

Roosa tries to dispute the accusation and evade the threat (line 13), but this turn is not accepted as, on line 14, Anni continues with her threat by offering more information of the possible consequences involved if the teacher were told and became aware of Roosa’s wrongdoing. Compared to the previous example (2a), the consequences are more precisely delineated, because in this particular class there is an explicit system that children get crosses for wrongdoings, therefore these are real consequences as in Class I (Sacks, 1989).

### ***Constituting lesser participation status***

As the previous examples indicate, in both cases there was a shift in the participation framework (Goffman, 1981), which is organized as the others against one. In the following extracts, it can be seen how the group of ‘other’ children take on the authority to talk on behalf of the children singled out by referring to the accused individuals in the third person, identifying them as being less than full members of the group.

Excerpt 3a (continuation of Excerpt 2a)

14 Eino: Se teki ne koulupäivän aikanahh.

**14 Eino: He<sup>4</sup> did them during the school dayhh.**

15 Iiro: Nii tekee!

**15 Iiro: ((points at Pate)) YES he does!**

16 Eino: Se teki ne koulupäivä aikana.

**16 Eino: He did them during the school day.**

17 Pate: #Mä en tee tällä hetkellä mitään Iiro. #

**17 Pate: #At the moment I am doing nothing Iiro#.**

18 Eino: Ei ni, mutta se on jo tehny ne koulupäivän aikana.

**18 Eino: That is true, but he had already done them during the school day.**

19 Iida: Se teki ne koulupäivä aikana.

**19 Iida: ((Looks at Iiro)) He did them during the school day.**

20 Iiro: Nii oo.hh. Sää huijaat!

**20 Iiro: Yes he is.hh You are cheating!**

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<sup>4</sup> In Finnish, the word ‘it’ is frequently used in colloquial talk instead of the pronoun (s)he which in Finnish is not gender specific.

Eino takes the authority to reply on behalf of Pate, and makes Pate's status lesser by referring to Pate in the third person singular 'he did' (lines 14, 16, and 18). Eino, Iiro, and previously Iida talk about Pate in his presence and then turn addressed to him (line 20); Pate is being switched between the object and the subject of the discussion. This restricts Pate's speaking rights as not having equal status in the conversation, as he becomes less than a full member of the group (Danby and Baker, 2001; Payne and Ridge, 1985). Thus, Pate becomes excluded.

On line 15, Iiro accuses Pate using the present tense, and emphasizes his verbal action with a physical gesture as he points to Pate. Pate denies this accusation (line 17). While in his previous turns, Pate denied having completed his homework assignments during the school day, he now denies doing his homework 'at the moment,' making real-time significant in his denial of the accusation. That denial is accepted, but with a tag to the utterance where Eino specifies that the occurrence of the breach is still evident, and Iida supports this by repeating what was already said about the wrongdoing being committed, 'during the school day' (line 19). Following these turns, Iiro also explicitly treats Pate's activity as 'cheating' (line 20), and the accusation is collaboratively achieved by the present children.

Excerpt 3b

9 Emma: EI OO voinu käyä, e- ei se hiukset ei oo yhtää märät.

**9 Emma:** ((*Gazes at Anni and then Leena*)). **She couldn't have her  
10 hair is no- not wet at all.**

11 Leena: Ni!

**11 Leena: Right!**

12 Anni: Pitäiskö mun mennä kertomaan susta.

- 12 Anni: Should I go and tell on you.**
- 13 Roosa: Kävimmä (.) suihkussa.
- 13 Roosa: I did take (.) a shower.**
- 14 Anni Se voi antaa rastin.
- 14 Anni: She (= teacher)) might give you a cross.**
- 15 (1.8)**
- 16 Anni: Tai sitte sä kävit jossain poikien vessassa.
- 17 Hahhah. (0.5.) Hiippari!
- 16 Anni: Or then you went to some boys' bathroom.**
- 17 Hahhhhaah. Stalker!**
- 18 ((Others except Roosa are laughing.))**
- 19 Emma: Ahhhaah. Sää Roosa kävit luksusvessassa hiipparina.
- 20 Hahahhahh.Paitsi että sua ei päästetä enää sisää.
- 19 Emma: Hahhhahha. You Roosa went to a luxury bathroom as a stalker.**
- 20 Hahhahha. Besides that you are not allowed to be in there anymore.**

The same phenomenon occurs in this episode, where Roosa is also being switched between the object and subject of the discussion, which constitutes a lesser participant status for her. This is achieved as the other girls negotiate their evidence-based knowledge against Roosa (lines 9-10) and Anni continues with the threat of telling a more authoritative other, the teacher (line 12). Roosa does not give in to the continued accusation or its consequences, but instead, she reiterates her stance that she did take a shower (line 13) but, once again, her peers do not respond to this as an acceptable denial.

There is a pause (line 15) before Anni self-selects to speak again, and in doing so, suggests that Roosa may only be telling the truth if she had taken a shower in the boys'

bathroom, as this would provide a legitimate reason for why the other girls had not seen her shower. Although this could offer Roosa a possible way out of being identified as a liar, by agreeing to take part in these actions Roosa will be categorized as a 'stalker' (lines 17 & 19). The social reinforcement of negative stigma through the categorization of people indicates that the application of such negative categories work to organize members of society; if a person belonging to a category deviates from the norm in some way they become noticeably different and are 'marked out' (Hester, 1998: 139). The exclusion of children by their peers is, therefore, noticeable as a co-construction of social order that is achieved through reciprocal interactions between members of a group (Goodwin, 2006).

### *Escalation of person descriptor and excluding*

These excerpts demonstrate how children accuse their peers of moral wrong doings, where the identities of the accused are (temporarily) negatively stigmatized. In Pate's case, his cheating action is escalated into him being identified as a 'cheater,' and in the second case, the accused child Roosa is excluded from shared play and categorized as a 'stalker' due to her actions. As Goffman (1963; 1990) has stated, culturally dominant categorization, which is mainly linked to negative characterizations, can be defined as a stigmatised identity (see also Hester, 1998). It can be presumed that once they are categorized as cheaters/stalkers, they are likely to act in the same way in other situations (Goffman, 1963; 1990).

Excerpt 4 a (continuation of excerpt 3a)

21 Eino: Tossa matematiikan tunnin aikana sää teit ne.

**21 Eino: During the maths you did them.**

22 Iiro: Sää oo:t huijari Pate.

**22 Iiro:**      **You a:re a cheater Pate!**

23 Pate:      En oo!

**23 Pate:**      **No I am not!**

24 Iiro:      EI oo reilua!

**24 Iiro:**      **It is NOT fair!**

25 Miro:      Niin!

**25 Miro:**      **Indeed!**

In the previous turns (extract 3a), Iiro deemed Pate's action as cheating, and this identified action is now advanced as Iiro goes on to identify Pate with the same negative person descriptor, a 'cheater' (line 22). Through using Pate's name as an address term prior to this labeling, Iiro ensures that he has Pate's attention (Wootton, 1981). Pate responds to his being labeled with the category 'cheater' with another denial (line 23).

Within this situation the moral concept of 'fairness' is then invoked by Iiro (line 24) where 'fairness' carries a semantically moral meaning linked to ethical value; by referring to the fairness of the current situation Iiro topicalizes the morality of the members (e.g., Jayyusi, 1991). Subsequently, Miro, who has not yet said anything, agrees with this in quite a loud voice (line 25), affiliating himself as sharing the same moral stance as Iiro.

Excerpt 4 b

16 Anni:      Tai sitte sä kävit jossain poikien vessassa.

17              Hahhah. (0.5.) Hiippari!

**16 Anni:**      **Or then you went to some boys' bathroom.**

**17              Hahhhhaah. Stalker!**

- 18            *((Others except Roosa are laughing.))*
- 19 Emma: Ahhhaah. Sää Roosa kävit luksusvessassa hiipparina. Hahah.
- 20            Paitsi että sua ei päästetä enää sisää.
- 19 Emma: **Hahhah. You Roosa went to luxury bathroom as a stalker.**
- 20            **Hahhahha. Besides, that you are not allowed to be in there anymore.**
- 21 Leena: Luksusvessaan ei oteta tollasia sisään.
- 22 Leena: **Those ((like you)) are not allowed in.**

Emma escalates Anni's insult by reiterating the new identity she has been labeled with, a 'stalker' (line 18), indicating that Roosa now has a stigmatized identity (Goffman, 1963, 1990) as a stalker; a stalker who sneaks into a boys' bathroom to shower. As with the prior observation above (extract 4a), Roosa's name is used as an address term to ensure that her attention is captured before her new categorisation is told to her.

According to the ethnographic memos, the girls had talked about having a shared play called 'luxury bathroom' during shower time; now Emma invokes this 'luxury bathroom' as a space from which Roosa's membership is now denied (line 20) and Leena agrees (line 21). In this way, Roosa is not only accused of breaching the teacher-imposed rule, but her action is considered as a breach against group loyalty and Roosa is excluded from the shared play. The boundaries of friendship are constructed and, similar to Evaldsson's study (2007), negative category-bound activities were associated with the category 'bad friend.'

## **Conclusions and discussion**

This article has analysed children's accusations in the classroom context in the absence of teachers, and has demonstrated how children use local classroom rules as warrants to accuse

one member and downgrade his or her moral status from the other members of the group. Accusations were collaborative achievements, and the participation framework was co-produced and re-organized in a systematic way, resulting in one child being excluded and positioned against the others. The accused children were not only categorized as cheaters or stalkers, but also as transgressors of local classroom rules, thus downgrading their position as moral actors and marking them out as deviant to the group (Hester, 1998). These negative categories, ensured with address terms, were used efficiently and competently by the group of children to co-produce the social and moral orders where “children make use of locally relevant and culturally specific categories and category-bound activities to provide negative depictions of those positioned as transgressors” (Goodwin and Kyratzis, 2012: 371). This also corroborates the findings by Cobb-Moore et al. (2008) and Danby and Baker (2001) who have suggested that children are not only competent in employing adult rules, but they use them to accomplish their own agendas. Furthermore, an important aspect of social organization regarding the social exclusion of peers is that the alignment and/or affiliation between members can be as much about excluding a member as it is about solidarity of the majority (Bateman, 2011; Butler, 2008); this social organization practice is evident in both of these examples.

The sequential organization in each of the two observations showed that the accusations were systematically responded to with denials, but without accounts or counter-accusations, as compared to Goodwin’s (1990) or Evaldsson’s (2007) work. Denials were used as a response to accusations, but they failed to gain agreement from others. Through these actions, the children invoked multi-layered moral orders to the fore. As children are constructing their own moral orders in the classroom, they can draw upon and apply rules that have been formulated by teachers. Interestingly, telling the teacher was used as a resource only for those who were doing the accusing, and not for those who were accused of the



wrongdoing. This suggests that teacher support cannot always be seen as a resource to support or defend oneself during exclusion by a group of peers.

Children's behavior, often unseen by their teachers, can be an effective form of social control and exclusion. Indirect bullying, including the exclusion of peers through categorization, can easily go overlooked. In the cases of the present study, the accused children did not necessarily have means to defend themselves, particularly as the majority of the group invoked the teacher as aligning with their moral stance.

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## Appendix 1: Transcription Conventions

The system used to transcribe the interactional data was based on the system developed by Gail Jefferson and described in Psathas (1995). The following features were used in the transcripts:

<u>you</u>	emphasis
NO	greater emphasis
((--))	something inaudible
((gazes))	transcribers description of the talk-in-interaction
\$	smile talk
*	rascally tone
no:	sound extended
#	creak
(.)	pause timed in micro-tenths of a second
↑Did	rising intonation
(0.5)	pause timed in seconds
[ ]	overlap
=	latching between utterances

tha- interrupted word

.hh audible in-breath