Föräldraskapande och barnets hälsa
Föreställningar och berättande om barn med eksem

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Akademisk avhandling för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen i pedagogik vid Stockholms universitet som offentligen kommer att försvaras fredagen den 3 februari 2006 kl. 13.00 i William-Olssonsalen, Geovetenskapens hus, Svante Arrhenius väg 8 A.

Abstract
‘Doing Parenthood’ and Child Health. Parents’ understandings and narratives of child eczema

In contemporary ‘risk-society’, people are continuously confronted with issues of risk in health information and discourses about life-styles that will promote good health, and, it is argued, are ‘forced’ to be aware of risks in their everyday lives. This is particularly evident for parents of young children who are struck by illness. They will on the one hand be subject to dominant discourses on child health, and on the other hand make observations of their own child in the context of family life. The over-all aim of this thesis is to explore how parents make sense of the situation they find themselves in when their child is struck by illness. Here, eczema is chosen as an example, an illness which is increasingly common among children in Western countries.

An interview-study of parents of 32 six or seven year old children, who suffer from eczema, was conducted in the Stockholm area. The purpose of the interviews was to identify parental ideas about child eczema, how they understood the genesis, remedies and future development of the condition as well as the children’s own experiences of having eczema, and also the parents’ understandings of how they themselves could have an influence on the child’s situation and finally, the parents’ ways of positioning themselves in relation to dominant discourses on child health, in particular eczema.

The analysis of the parents’ narratives reveals how the parents account for their detailed observations of the child’s eczema, and how they draw on their understandings of the child body as well as shared knowledge about eczema as they try to make sense of the child’s condition. In their narratives, the parents use normalizing strategies as well as strategies to confirm or counter dominant discourses. The parent’s ways of positioning themselves as responsible are discussed in relation to cultural images of the Child and Good Parenting. It is argued that the notion of ‘doing parenthood’ can be one avenue to a better understanding of how parents make sense of their experiences.

Keywords: parents, child health, narrative, positioning, risk, normality.

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