

Chapter 2

Toddler's Relationships: A Matter of Sharing Worlds

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Abstract How do young children experience, express and value their relationships? This chapter is about the emergence of young children's concern for their relationships and the value of sharing worlds with others. The interaction between (1–3 years) children in preschool, drawn from different studies of morality, constitutes the empirical basis. In the discussion, it is claimed that the children's commitment to share worlds with peers emerges early in life. The sense of belonging is not a question of a reflected concern for others; rather, it is a matter of the children's very existence and part of the everyday life in preschool.

Keywords Children • Relationships • Values • Preschool • Belonging • Shared life-worlds

2.1 Introduction

How do young children experience, express and value their relationships? This chapter is about the emergence of young children's concern for their relationships and the value of sharing worlds with others. This is also about children's emerging concern for moral values. Moral values are socially constructed. They are positive or negative qualities (good and bad, right and wrong) that children express and experience in their own and in other children's behaviour, acts and attitudes (Johansson 1999). Such values concern, for example, the value of well-being and the value of rights. Questions on what such values can signify, how they become visible to children and how they are communicated in the children's bodily interaction will be posed. The theoretical frame for the study is based on the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1962, 1964) theory of intersubjectivity

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where the body is central for communication and understanding of others. Morality is understood with reference to the Danish philosopher Knud Løgstrup (1994, pp. 41–55, 83–84,) who describes our relationship with others as given and built on trust. This given relationship imposes a demand, a moral responsibility for the other. The interaction between (1–3 years) children in preschool, drawn from different studies of morality (Johansson 1999, 2001, 2007a, 2011a, b), constitutes the empirical basis. In the discussion, it is claimed that the children's commitment to share worlds with peers emerges early in life. The sense of belonging is not a question of a reflected concern for others; rather, it is a matter of the children's very existence and part of the everyday life in preschool. The life-world in preschool is based on community and characterised by common play and other collective activities created by the children (Johansson 2007a; Greve 2009; Løkken 2011). Everyday when children arrive in preschool they encounter the existential question whether or not they will be included in community with others. Being included in collective activities with peers seems to facilitate a value of importance for the children: the value of sharing worlds with others (Johansson 1999, 2007a, 2011a, b). Children express a taken for granted right to share worlds with others, a right which they protect and defend in different ways. In this chapter the emergence of young children's concern for community, in sharing worlds with others and expressing solidarity with peers, will be outlined. Initially the theoretical point of departure will be outlined: the life-world theory.

2.2 The Life-World

The theory of the life-world developed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) serves as ontology for how to understand the value of sharing worlds and belonging communicated in interplay between young children in preschool. What then is the life-world?

From the theory by Merleau-Ponty (1962, pp. 327–334) we learn that the life-world is related to the child as a perceiving body subject (Løkken 2011) who is inseparable from, and in interaction with, the world. The life-world is the world where we live our life and the world that we take for granted. The life-world is both subjective and objective. It is the world we are directed towards, and at the same time, it is the world that resides inside us. The pedagogue and philosopher Jan Bengtsson formulates the ambiguity of the life-world like this:

... the life-world is neither an objective world in itself, nor a subjective world, but something in between. Ambiguity is a necessary feature of intertwinement. World and life are interdependent in the sense that life is always worldly and the world is always what it is for a human being. Thus the world is open and uncompleted to the same extent as life. (Bengtsson 2013, p. 6)

This also means that human life is intersubjective, and we are always entangled in relations with other people, with culture, history and society (Merleau-Ponty 1962). As human beings we are (inter)related and (inter)dependent on each other and the

world. According to the theory of ethics described by Knud Løgstrup (1994), we are given to each other. Power is always present in human relations. We are enmeshed in a relation of dependence and responsibility for the other. Our life is always in the hands of the other. This relationship is, however, not based on rationality and logic. Instead it is a concrete lived and intersubjective relationship out of which values and norms for the common life emerge.

How then can we understand the young child's expressions for values and more specific the value of sharing worlds with others? And how can children interpret and give meaning to each other's intersubjective and bodily actions?

There is an intertwined relationship of subject and body, says Merleau-Ponty (1962, pp. 77–92, 136–147). The body is central for our existence in the world, for our communication and for our understandings of others. Our body is present in everything we experience and do. It is impossible for us to leave the body and pick it up later, as we can do with a bicycle, writes Bengtsson (2013, p. 6). The body is always with us and, as such, is our access to the world. "Instead of saying that I have a body it could be said that I am my body." (Bengtsson 2013, p. 6). It is through the body we are able to perceive and understand each other.

Body and mind constitute an undivided unity in which the body is subject and the mind is embodied. Mental life is expressed in the body and bodily movements are mental. (Bengtsson 2013, p. 8)

The other's actions embrace a particular meaning for us and allow us to understand something about his/her life. This meaning is not something hidden behind the actions; it is experienced in the other person's bodily movements, his/her posture, emotional expressions, gestures and words. It constitutes a particular world of meaning which is intertwined with the meanings of the specific surrounding of particular things and other people, place, time and history (Merleau-Ponty 1962, pp. 77–89; Bengtsson 2013; Johansson and Løkken 2013).

Learning from this theory allows us to understand the child as an embodied subject in constant communication with other people and with the world. The child's body forms a union of meaning through senses, thoughts, emotions, language and motor actions. The child is able to understand and communicate with others through his/her bodily existence in the world. There are, however, always limitations for our understandings, since we cannot be the other, writes Merleau-Ponty (1962). There is both familiarity and strangeness when trying to understand the other (Bengtsson 2013), and there are at all times parts of the other (and ourselves) that we cannot reach nor understand. This means that even the very young child has the ability to experience and express values for community and solidarity through his or her body, through gestures, words, emotions and posture. At the same time, such values are conveyed to the child; things and people make references to the use and purpose of various phenomena in the world. As researchers we can understand the worlds of meaning expressed and created by the children in interactions with things and peers in the context of preschool. This is not an easy process, and there are many ambiguities and difficulties in gaining access to children's life-worlds. We see a further example of this in the work of White (Chap. 9, this volume) where she discusses the

‘work of the eye’ in infant research to uncover the mystery of intersubjectivity in infants’ world. Yet observing children’s interactions can lead us to new interpretations taking into account previous and present as well as following events and understandings. We are already situated in an interpreted world, and both the children and researcher are embedded in their different life-worlds. Thus it can be said that the value of sharing worlds with peers grows out of inseparable relationships between children rather than being the result of an autonomous subject’s evolving logical reasoning (Johansson 1999, 2001, 2007b). As researchers and pedagogues, we are always part of these worlds. In Chap. 3, Li et al. have explored how three babies from different family cultures make sense of their social given situation through family events which further emphasises that young babies are able to offer their emotional expression through the creative acts with their parents.

Let us now look at the youngest children’s initial discovery and defence of their right to share worlds with others. The base for the discussion is two investigations of morality among children (aged 1–3 years) in different day care contexts in Sweden and Australia (Johansson 1999, 2009). The aim was to create knowledge about the children’s lived experiences of values and norms concerning treatment of, and behaviour towards, each other in their everyday life-world of day care. The Swedish toddler group comprises 16 children and four teachers, and the Australian toddler group comprises 12 children and three teachers. The Swedish children’s interplay was video recorded for a period of 6 months during two semesters, and the Australian children’s interplay was video recorded for 3 months during one semester. In total approximately 40 h of video observations were sampled. The results from these studies showed that children defend and value their own and others’ rights and care for others’ well-being (Johansson 1999, 2009, 2011a, manuscript).

In this analyses we will study how the value of others’ well-being and sharing worlds with others manifests itself in the children’s interactions. The samples for this analysis have been selected from the two studies of children’s morality referred to above (Johansson 1999, Johansson, manuscript). The choice of video observations of children’s interplay was based on a quest for variation in order to identify and illuminate various dimensions of children’s relationships. In this study we have also a certain interest in following the life-worlds of the youngest children between 1 and 2 years. The interactions presented in this text serve as illustrative examples of how the children relate to the value of sharing worlds with each other.

Let us first shortly look at the process of transcription and analyses. Initially the video observations were transcribed to text. This is a hermeneutic interpreting process (Ricoeur 1988), aiming to respectfully reconstruct and describe the life-worlds of the children, in terms of their meanings and intentions for interactions in the context of preschool (Johansson 2011b; van Manen 1990). This means for the researcher to encounter “children’s life-worlds with your own, trying to understand the on-going communication *and* to uphold a certain necessary distance as a researcher” (Johansson 2011b, p. 47). The analyses of the described interactions intersected between questions like: How is a shared world constituted between children? How can the value of shared worlds become visible for the children? What kind of meanings and actions characterises their shared worlds?

The children's interactions are understood as their voices. These voices are intertwined in a given context and interconnected with preschool as a cultural and social world. Thereby the researcher is able to say something about intersubjective moral worlds created by the children, worlds that also encompass a meaning beyond the children's intentions with their interplay (Ricoeur 1988, pp. 29–77). The researcher is trying to recreate what children's actions can inform about moral values and, in this case, the value of sharing worlds with others.

Let us now study how sharing worlds with others manifests itself in the children's interplay. Initially a short introduction of the children's desire to create and share worlds with peers is outlined.

2.3 Shared Life-Worlds: Worthy to Be Defended

The children in both the toddler groups showed in many ways their desire to take part together with peers in everything that happened in preschool (Johansson 2011b, 2009; Johansson and Berthelsen 2014). They were eager both to create and share worlds with peers. This could mean to create a play together, to read a book side by side, hiding together under a table, standing side by side in front of the washtub, having a bath together, waiting together to go out, etc. Of importance is that the children experienced that they were *together*, that they created or shared something with each other. Often a child showed interest for an ongoing play or an activity between peers. The child could stop and look, ask for permission to join or could just jump into the play. The children involved in the play at hand were absorbed in creating something together which they regarded remarkable, valuable and indeed important, well worthy to defend. They showed that their interplay and the worlds they created together belonged to them and had a value. They defended their shared worlds, through physical and psychological means and arguments hindering others to join (Johansson 1999, 2011b, 2009).

2.3.1 *Creating Shared Life-Worlds*

The first example is chosen from the Australian study. The children are playing outside. Two of the girls create a world together, playing around a tree:

Lisette (2:1) and Ayla (1:8) are playing around some trees in the preschool yard. Some small bells are hanging on a branch in one of the trees. The branches are many, they are wide and tightly woven together. "My", says Lisette and pushes herself between the branches close beside the bells. She touches the bells and they ring. Her voice sounds playful. "My", says Ayla while forcing her self between the branches and touching the bells. The bells ring. The girls continue walking between the branches touching the bell saying "My". They sound delighted. Their voices are light. They smile. They continue their play, pushing each other through the tight branches and ringing the bells. They seem both absorbed by the play.

This situation illustrates how a world of shared meaning is constituted between the two girls through their play. They “sign” a shared and wordless agreement for playing together. Both girls seem to agree upon how to play, and they seem to immediately be in their specific world of play. Together they create a moral agreement based on a common tone, expressing light voices and bodily movements, and they intersect rhythmically with each other. It is likely that the children experience and value a shared world and that this world is important to them.

2.3.2 *Shared Life-Worlds: Defence and Threats*

Now we will turn to the Swedish toddler group and two of the youngest children creating a shared lived room together. In a similar way like the girls above, they take turns, and they follow each other in an intersubjective play, tuning in to each other’s bodily expressions like in a dance (Rasmussen 1996; Schütz 1972; Stern 2004). Similar to the children above, they “sign” a taken for granted agreement about reciprocity, about playing together. In this common world created by these children, the right to the things and the play becomes shared.

Olle (1:6) and Anna (1:5) are playing with a horse made of foam and covered by cloth. The horse is soft and big enough to sit comfortable on, and the children in the toddler group often sit and jump with the horse. Now Anna is sitting still on the horse. Olle stands in front of the horse, and he starts slowly leaning aside looking at Anna on the horse. Anna sees his face turn up beside her, and she leans slowly aside towards Olle. She looks at him. They smile at each other. The children’s faces are close and they start leaning to and fro in a rhythmic peekaboo play, slowly following each other’s movements. They smile and laugh. They appear excited. This bodily to-and-fro play continues for a while, both children following each others movements, looking close at each other while smiling and laughing. There is joy and laughter around them in the big room, where all the children from the toddler group have been gathered for play. But Anna and Olle are absorbed in their intimate play.

After a while Anna climbs down from the horse. Olle moves, probably with the intention to climb on the horse, but he is hindered by Tobias (1:8) who has been watching the children’s play while sitting on a chair behind them. Now Tobias climbs down. He quickly runs to the horse, climbs up and jumps away. Olle stands still a few seconds but then he runs after Tobias. He tries to catch the horse from Tobias, while protesting loudly. Anna goes to the chair and climbs up.

This intersubjective world of play created by the children in this interaction flows and emerges without words. The children seem to know how to play and how to follow each other’s bodily movements. Each child’s movement becomes part of the other’s movement, and the emotions expressed by the children create a unity of cheerfulness (Merleau-Ponty 1964). The content of the play world seems shared, and the joy experienced by the children is evident in laughter and smiling. Closeness is constituted between the children both literally and emotionally. But the shared world of play created by the children is suddenly interrupted and concealed. The play between Olle and Anna on the horse probably inspires Tobias, and he captures

the horse. Olle expresses his disagreement loudly and tries to stop Tobias, while Anna climbs on the chair.

How can this be interpreted? It can be difficult to decide whether it is the right to a shared world that is in the forefront for the children. Perhaps the right to play with the horse is most important from Olle's point of view? And how can we understand the fact that Anna chooses to leave? Perhaps she is finished playing with the horse? My interpretation is that she leaves because Tobias interferes. Anna is new in the group, and her strategy is often to avoid acting in similar situations. I have observed her waiving her rights when other children make claims to toys she is playing with. Instead she looks for alternatives, goes away, finds another toy to play with, etc. Anna can also look at the adults, complaining with a low tone of voice or pointing at the person who has taken the toy from her. Perhaps its because she is new in the group. Perhaps Anna does not regard herself as someone with possibilities to interfere. Rather she seems to trust in the teachers to help.¹

Still a reasonable interpretation is that the two children playing together experience that their play is valuable and joyful and something important. Situations like this can be significant in children's early experiences of moral values because of their shared interplay. We can imagine how the value of creating shared worlds emerges in these collective experiences. The shared play, the common joy and the reciprocal bodily movements altogether create a valuable whole for the children, a world of shared meanings. Yet sharing this world also implies a moral agreement between the children on how to interact. The children show respect for each other, give each other room in the play and they take turns. They seem to show concern for each others' well-being. There is no need (or possibility) for them to verbalise how and what to do; their sense of how to interplay is imbued in their lived bodies and the context of play.

Implied is also a moral expectation towards the other peers, to respect their shared world. But the situation turns out differently. Both Olle and Anna appeared to be deeply involved in this world, jointly and happily focussing on each other and the horse. We can imagine how the children experience themselves being interrupted and hindered by Tobias, in creating this attractive shared world. This specific experience of losing their shared world and being victims of someone else's aspirations of their world may be as important for the value of shared worlds to emerge and that it is worthy for them to defend.

Even if the children in the next situation appear to prioritise their personal part of the play, one of the children expresses an emerging idea of the value of shared worlds. This interaction appears 4 months later. We can follow how Björn defends his play with Olle when Sebastian makes claims to join:

Olle (1.10) is kneeling in front of a small table playing with some wooden blocks. Björn (2.1) is close watching. He touches the blocks. "Look theeere" he says eagerly. Olle looks at him. He places the blocks that Björn points at on the block-board. The blocks roll down on the floor. Olle tries to capture them but fails. He looks up smiling. Björn looks at the

¹This can also be interpreted in terms of gender but is outside the scope of this chapter.

blocks on the floor and starts to pick them up. Olle continues to play with blocks on the table. Björn continues to give Olle blocks. Both boys are concentrated.

Sebastian (1.9) comes along. He looks a while at the boys playing. Then he takes a block from the table and offers it to Olle, stretching it out towards him. Björn is looking for blocks crawling four feet on the floor behind Sebastian. Now he takes hold of Sebastian's sweater and pulls. Sebastian turns around looking at Björn, seemingly surprised. Björn forces himself past Sebastian (Björn is bigger than Sebastian). Björn hands out two blocks to Olle. But Olle complains with an angry tone of voice and a frowning face. He shakes his head and slaps Björn's hand. But Björn insists, again he reaches out his hand offering Olle the blocks. This time Olle takes one block and puts it in the box. Then he takes another. Every time Olle takes a block Björn says with a light and friendly tone of voice: "Taaah". Sebastian remains behind Björn, looking and still holding the block in his hand. He leaves. Olle and Björn continue their play. Sebastian returns. Again he reaches out for the block, but Olle makes no effort to take it. He continues to play with the blocks. Sebastian leaves.

From this interaction we can follow how Olle and Björn create an agreement on a shared play. They seem to agree on their different roles and how to proceed: Olle builds and Björn picks the blocks from the floor and hands it over to Olle. The light tone of voice and the thank you from Björn when he delivers the blocks to Olle signify a moral agreement built on respect and concern for the rules of the play they have agreed upon, with gestures, tone of voice and posture. The boys seem both focused and serious. They smile. This is before Sebastian arrives.

Sebastian is inspired by the other children's play and shows with his being that he is concerned to join. But Björn holds another idea. He distinctly expresses that he possesses priority to and thereby the right to the play with Olle. Björn hinders Sebastian when he tries to commute. He is determined and continues himself to hand out blocks to Olle, showing clearly with his whole existence that *he* is the one to do this. Olle appears to switch between his interest for the play together with Björn and his wish to play himself. Yet Olle accepts Björn's intentions to take turns and he becomes involved in the play. Sebastian does not insist in joining even if he remains interested. His strategy is to wait; he leaves and he returns. When he finally offers the block to Olle, he is ignored. Now Sebastian refrains from his aspirations to participate.

Perhaps the activity is in the forefront for both Olle and Björn. Nevertheless it is clear that Sebastian is not allowed to participate in their play. Björn is more distinct and active than Olle in defending their shared play.

This situation illustrates young children's initial experience and defence of the value of sharing worlds with peers. One important condition for this value to become visible is the children's common activity. Their sharing and creating of meaning and that they actually do construct something together makes the value visible and worthy to defend. The fact that Björn defends his play with Olle is clear. More difficult thing is to state that the world he shares with Olle is in the priority and in forefront for him. Yet it is likely to believe that children's experiences of similar situations create the very basis for the discovery of sharing worlds with others. We can also follow how moral agreements and disagreements can come to live in the different interactions. Inside their shared world, children seem to build their interplay on a

concern for the other and their community, but outside (towards Sebastian) this shared world, such agreements seem inapplicable.

2.4 Shared Life-Worlds: Sympathy

The children also make personal choices or preferences when sharing worlds with peers. They hold high the right to share worlds, but prefer to choose with whom they want to share the world and being together with someone the children appreciate is important. In the next situation we can follow how Tobias rejects Sebastian, but accepts Anna to be together with him on the slide.

Tobias (2.1) climbs up on the slide. Sebastian (1.7) looks at him, seemingly interested. But Tobias stretches his arm out in an avoiding gesture. "Bang" (bang) he says, shakes his head and objects firmly: "No". But Sebastian continues climbing the stairs. Now Tobias tries to stop him through pushing his foot towards Sebastian's chest and face. Sebastian holds back, stops and looks at Tobias. Tobias watches Sebastian. Sebastian leaves.

Now Anna (1.5) comes up to the slide. She leans and puts her arms on the top of the stairs. Her face is close to Tobias'. He shakes his head. She watches him intensively and climbs up. He looks at her. Both are quiet. Tobias slides down and runs to and fro. Anna sits down on the top of the slide. She gazes at him. When Tobias climbs up again, she moves aside a little. Tobias sits down beside her. He looks at her for a while. Then he gently pats her cheek several times. Tobias hand rests steady but softly on Anna's cheek. He looks out in the room. Anna is still and quiet. Again Tobias looks at Anna and again he pats her cheek. For a short while both children are still, sitting on the top of the slide side by side. Tobias' hand remains on Anna's cheek. Then she takes off and slides down. Tobias follows her. They both leave.

Tobias defends the right to the slide. He rejects Sebastian and shows in many ways that he is determined to resist Sebastian on the slide. He "bangs" at him, shakes his head and hinders Sebastian with his foot to climb the slide. Sebastian understands the message and gives in. Anna on the other hand seems not to care about the fact that Tobias initially rejects her through shaking his head. She climbs up to him and Tobias accepts. Also in this interplay we can follow how the children create a silent moral agreement on how to interact. When Tobias has gone down on the slide and is on his way up again Anna gives room for him to sit beside her. And he both understands and accepts her wordless invitation. Tobias shows care for Anna; he caresses her. They remain still together. Their interplay is silent but the intersubjectivity and shared meanings between the children seem taken for granted. Tobias prefers Anna to play with him. Perhaps Tobias in this situation experiences that Anna chooses him? In their short interplay, it seems that they have developed a silent understanding on shared sympathy. Rather than playing they seem to exist together, remaining still and side by side on the slide. Their bodies form a whole and intimate shared world where verbal communications seem unneeded.

Children's creations of shared worlds are not always full of joy; power and exclusion processes are part of these lived encounters as we will notice in the next example.

2.5 Shared Life-Worlds: Difference and Similarity

The value of shared worlds can also be defended and confirmed through psychological strategies. Children can exclude others from their communities through on the one hand ascribing differences to the other *and* on the other hand indicating similarity with each other. In this way the value of shared worlds becomes confirmed and manifested; the child outside the shared world is (made) different than the children inside the shared world. Closeness and intimacy as well as power are involved in these processes. In the next situation, we will turn to the older children in the Swedish toddler group:

Emma (2.10) and Karin (2.10) are playing with the swings outside. They twist the swings, let loose and run away. "Help", they shout enthusiastically. They laugh. When Per (3.3) arrives outside the fence, Emma clarifies the girls' shared world: "It's us now!" she says. Per stops. He leans over the fence and watches the girls' play. Eventually the girls turn around gazing at Per and say something. Per laughs. Now and then he comments.

After a while Emma invites Per to the play: "Can you twist me", she asks. "Yes", Per agrees. He steps forward and starts swinging Emma. Karin swings much higher and she invites the others: "Look, do as me!" she says invitingly. The play continues. Per and Emma talk together. "I am big", says Emma. "I am also big", adds Per. Emma turns to Karin. "You are small", she says. Karin stops and objects resolutely: "No I am big!" She shows pointing across her body. "Karin not big", says Emma to Per. "But I am also big!" says Karin, more determined now. "No, I am big", insists Emma. "And I am big", continues Per. The discussion continues: Emma and Per argue that Karin is small and Karin resists indignant. Now Karin stands on the swing. "You cannot stand swinging", she says with a challenging tone of voice. "Yes I can" protests Per. Leaning close to Emma Per says confidentially with a low tone of voice: "She is small." But Karin objects again: "No I am big!" But Per shouts: "No I am toooo!" His voice is strong. "I am not small. I am this tall and big", Per draws his hand across his body.

Now Emma and Per talk together with low voices. Standing close. Karin stands on her swing. The other two children continue their play. Per suggests they shift and Emma climbs down and swings Per. They do not talk with Karin.

The children's interest in sharing worlds can change quickly and can include different persons. Initially Emma defends the girls' right to their shared world. "It's us now", she informs Per. With these words she marks that he is not involved and that the girls share something together. Later Emma expands their play world, first of all to herself: She invites Per to swing her. Karin seems to accept to share their world with Per. She turns to the others inviting them to stand on the swing like her: "Do as me", she says.

Gradually we can follow how Per and Emma create a shared world in which Karin is not included. Rather she is being excluded through a subtle psychological process. Per and Emma establish and signify their community by using similarity and difference as arguments both to include themselves and to exclude Karin. Per and Emma share their similarity together, they are big. Karin is different from them because she is small. Yet they share a moral agreement. All the children show that

they experience it humiliating to be held as small. They appear to sense how they can affect the others' emotional experiences, and they use this knowledge. They use the word small to upset each other's feelings, and they become offended for the same reason. When Karin rejects the others' argumentation, Emma and Per start a whispering dialogue standing close together. They strengthen their community with closeness and confidentiality and the fact that Karin is excluded. In this subtle way, they confirm their shared world.

2.6 Shared Life-Worlds: Part of Young Children's Very Existence

This chapter has analysed how young children can experience, express and value their relationships and shared life-worlds. These worlds often emerge in play, in a situation of "here and now", but can also stretch over time beyond persons and other activities outside the play. We have seen how shared worlds may be visible for the youngest children from their initial play and meaning making together. We can follow how a world of shared meaning is constituted between Lisette and Ayla through their play around some trees on the preschool yard. The girls create a shared and wordless agreement for playing together. We have also seen how the value of shared worlds is confirmed and strengthened by the challenges from children outside. Children can become both indignant and upset when their worlds are challenged. The children outside are expected to respect the shared worlds of others. This is exemplified in the interaction between Olle and Anna where they create a shared world while playing together on the horse and gets interrupted by a peer.

Children's shared worlds have two indispensable dimensions: *The created*; what they do and the *intersubjective encounter*: the doing together. Of significance when creating worlds is that the children *do* and *share* something together. These dimensions are intertwined parts of the same value. The created is about the activity, the projects, the things, but also ideas and meanings shared with others. The intersubjective encounter is about the other and the taken for granted or explicit agreements about the world they share. They experience meaning together. We have seen how the children are absorbed in common activities and how, without words, they seem to tune into each other's embodied and emotional expressions and movements. They seem to be captured in flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1997) experiencing common joy, seriousness and sometimes indignation when their worlds are threatened. They appear to align silent agreements for their interplay while knowing through their bodies how to interact about their common goals and their intersubjective promises. We can also see that children choose whom they want to share worlds with, and they create a certain "we" of togetherness and commitment (Greve 2009). In the interplay on the slide, Tobias seems to prefer to create a world together with Anna, whereas he distinctly rejects Sebastian. Yet the shared worlds are not free from conflicts or power and the persons involved can change from being inside a world to

be excluded. This is illustrated in the interaction between Emma, Per and Karin. Initially Emma and Karin share worlds, but after inviting Per in the play Emma and Per create a world where Karin gradually becomes excluded.

The children's worlds are characterised by the specific tenor they create together. This supports the sociologist Alfred Schütz's (1972, pp. 228–234) idea about worlds as spaces for meaning characterised by a specific tone or style. Meanings and nuances, experiences of self and others, of time and space, are interpreted in a particular way deeply connected with this specific world. Children's play world is such a world, writes Schütz (1972). But the children's worlds are not only restricted to play even if play is the main source for sharing worlds with others. The philosopher Hans Gadamer (1996, pp. 285–307, 1997, pp. 147–155) thought about fusing of horizons which appear when our own perspectives encounter others and fuse to something new and can serve as a metaphor. Together the children create a lived world of their specific meaning and their moral commitments. This does not mean that the children's worlds are always characterised by fusion of horizons or that they are free from power. Intersubjectivity is fragile and the communication can easily break down (Merleau-Ponty 1962, pp. 346–365), as is often shown by the children in these studies. The examples presented in this study illustrate in different ways how the communication between the children can flow even without words, for example, between Lisette and Ayla. The examples also illuminate how easily the communication erodes, for example, when children's worlds are threatened, like in the interplay between Olle and Anna playing with the horse.

Out of the value of shared worlds emerge norms, demands and moral responsibilities. The point of departure for the children is that those who initiate, create and investigate something together have a right to their common project. The children themselves decide the borders of this world. The children take for granted that their shared worlds should be respected. They assume they have a right to define the content, the goals and who will take part. The children outside can get permission to join but can also be excluded. In the interplay between Bjön, Olle and Sebastian, for example, we can follow how Sebastian tries to get permission to join the others' shared world but the others reject. He is not let in. Quietly Sebastian remains with his desire to partake, but in the end he appears to give in. He leaves. The importance is that the decision of who to join is in the hands of the children who "own" the community. The right to share worlds with others both motivates and justifies the children's approaches towards the persons who they experience as threatening or make claims on their worlds. The children protect their worlds using different strategies. They argue for their right; they hinder (literally) the other to join or just push her/him away. They can ignore the other, ask the teachers² for help or just leave the area. They bring their common world to another place. They can use subtle and powerful strategies to exclude and include friends in their communities. Age, gender and sympathy are aspects involved in children's defence and creation of their

²In this presentation the adults are not involved. Extended analyses discussing the role of adults in children's moral learning are to be found in Johansson 2002, 2007a, Johansson et al. 2015 and Emilson and Johansson 2009, for example.

shared worlds. Power is also important: having power can assure entrance into others worlds. Power is also effective when defending shared worlds. In the interaction between Per, Anna and Malin, we can learn how the children use subtle and powerful ways to include and exclude each other. They seem to be aware of how they can affect each other's emotional experiences. In their enmeshing life-worlds, they have probably encapsulated cultural meanings of language, in which "being small" is loaded with negative connotations, while being strong is loaded with positive meanings. The children use this relational and cultural knowledge for both good and bad. Shared power is an experience that may come out as a result of shared worlds. We see another example of this in the work of Quiñones et al. (Chap. 12, this volume). They propose that children learn how to affectively relate to their own wilful intentions while they play with others. It seems that children develop a sense of "together we are strong" when they collectively act resolute to defend their shared worlds. Being strong appears to be an important value for the children.

In the literature, children's defence of common space has been described in different ways, often in terms of power positions, physical or interactive spaces, as children's specific arenas, and their resistances and negotiations (Alvestad 2010; Björk-Willén 2012; Corsaro 2009; Eriksen Ødegaard 2007; Löfdahl and Hägglund 2006; Tullgren 2003). Even if these positions are relevant, the presented studies call for a wider and deeper description to give justice to the children's defence of the worlds they share with others. These studies are based upon an ontological life-world theory perspective where children are regarded as body subjects able to experience and understand each other through their bodily existence in the world (Merleau-Ponty 1962). The philosophical perspective behind a study always steers the investigation, the possible questions and the possible results. In this case the ontology opens for understanding and interpreting the child's bodily being in the world together with others as an existential question. The suggestion here is to interpret children's shared worlds as an existential quality, a physical and psychological field of lived meaning defined by the children themselves. The existential quality refers to a whole; the world's children create with others which are indeed a specific focus in young children's life. The sense of indignation that the children convey when others climb into their worlds also indicate that others intrude into their life, in their life-world. Even if it is likely that the children can be offended by being interrupted by others, the sense of right to their shared world appears significant in their expressions. Children's explicit frustration but also their subtle change of posture from joy to silence when not being allowed into others' worlds illuminates that this is an existential question for them, both for the children owning the world and for the children outside this world.

In sum to create worlds with others is a way of being for children and therefore part of their existence. This way to view children's shared worlds complete previous research decisively. Children's everyday life in their toddler groups is really about finding others to be together with. The message children meet in preschool is that the collective life is important and highly valued. Activities in the main are collective. Play belongs both to everyone and to no one. Everyone should have a right and

opportunity to play with peers. When children have discovered the value of right, they defend and hold on to this value.

Acknowledgement I would like to acknowledge Professor Jan Bengtsson whom has deeply inspired my work in many ways. Professor Jan Bengtsson is unfortunately not with us anymore.

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