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Työn nimi-Arbetets titel-Title The Cultural Construction of Gender and Care On the Street			
Oppiaine-Läroämne-Subject Social and Cultural Anthropology			
Työn laji-Arbetets art-Level Master's thesis		Aika-Datum-Month and year 2003-12-01	Sivumäärä-Sidantal-Number of pages 118
<p>Tiivistelmä-Referat-Abstract</p> <p>This thesis is an ethnographic account of a group of street boys and girls living in the city of Dhaka. It attempts to explore the “process” dominated by the social and cultural values that construct and shape the lives of the children. Two major aspects of their lives are the focus of my discussion. First, I aim to examine the gender dimension of the street. The second focus is to analyze the discourse of traditional care (family) and alternatives to traditional (NGOs) care from the perspectives of the children. The ethnographic material of this study was gathered through participant observation field research for five months among a group of twenty children. In addition to un-structured, in-depth and life history interviews, going out with the children on the streets was a substantial constituent of the field research.</p> <p>To construct my own arguments, I have followed Fruzzetti’s notion on how the prevailing cultural values determine the gender roles in a society. This study is influenced by Ortner’s approach to the practice theory, and Jeffery and Jeffery’s notions on agency and practice. By regarding street children as subjects, and their actions as practices, I have attempted to examine how they are determined by structures. And how on the other hand, the structure is reconstructed and contested by the subjects and practices. The study therefore demonstrates how the children are positioned in society, and at what level they are able to negotiate their positions as by acting as social agents.</p> <p>The study shows how street girls are treated as “girls” rather than as “children”. The patriarchal values are manifested on the street and create contrasting identities for boys and girls. Street girls are defined according to the cultural construction of girlhood purity in Bangladeshi society. The study opposes the widespread popular trends of labeling street girls as prostitutes and rephrasing sexual exploitation as “survival sex”. Regarding care, street children have a different interpretation and agenda, which is far removed from the agenda of the NGOs and popular street children discourse.</p> <p>The thesis argues that the alternative institutions do not really produce ideologies alternative to the prevailing social values and beliefs. The apparent conflict and inconsistency in the care providing process is demonstrated. This thesis states and questions a steady trend of perceiving street children in different parts of the world as a “global tragedy”, and offering them care with a “global formula”, regardless of their social and cultural diversity.</p>			
Avainsanat-Nyckelord-Keywords gender care street children Dhaka cultural beliefs			
Säilytyspaikka-Förvaringsställe-Where deposited			
Muita tietoja-Övriga uppgifter-Additional information			