



## **Changing Behaviors or Behavioral Change?**

A study of moral development and transbehavioral processes  
in juvenile institutional care

av

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### **Akademisk avhandling**

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## Abstract

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Institutional care for juveniles has in recent decades undergone a shift from relying on the clinician's experience, towards using evidence-based treatment methods building on empirical research. One positive consequence is the improved possibility to evaluate and empirically test treatment methods. On the other hand, there is a risk of relying too much on the specific treatment methods and sessions, in a context where juveniles spend twenty-four hours a day. This thesis investigates individual prerequisites for change in terms of moral development from a human developmental perspective. It also looks at institutional factors, such as how staff members work to prevent negative peer cultures from developing and interfering with treatment, and how well-functioning staff groups are created to contribute to a positive treatment climate. The aim was to explore the fundamental prerequisites for long-term human behavioral change in a treatment context. To explore this, two main questions were posed that partly embrace the concept of change: *What are the main obstacles to human growth in relation to how treatment is performed by the institutions in the studies? And, is it possible, with a point of departure in the treatment essentials outlined in research, to expand the use of core treatment targets (criminogenic needs) to include the whole individual and to enhance individual treatment progress when designing treatment programs?* Empirical data consist of interviews (n=39), questionnaires (n=102), and observations (120 hours). Results show that most staff have a low level of education and diverging views on how to conduct the specific treatment program used at the institution. Furthermore, staff lack strategies to prevent negative peer cultures from developing, which partly can be explained by their having a diffuse leadership orientation. This in turn also negatively affects the interactions with the juveniles. Social interactions are discussed from a transbehavioral perspective, with moral development and emotion regulation as possible common features in juveniles displaying problem behaviors.

*Keywords:* Moral development, Juvenile, Institution, Staff, Groups, Peer culture, Transdiagnostics, Transbehavioral treatment, Rituals.

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