Boy’s underachievement and oppositional behavior in school has for a long time been the target of various public debates. As noted by several gender scholars (c.f. Epstein et al 1998; Francis, 2006; Griffin, 2000), the relation drawn between gender and school achievement is often portrayed as constituting a crisis in education. Moreover, the category of “rowdy boys” is often taken for granted in dominant public discourses on the subject: the category is used to explain rule breaking activities and disciplinary problems in classrooms. Yet, it is precisely this category that needs to be deconstructed. In light of the above, the following study takes as its point of departure Judith Butler’s (1990) call for reversing the relation between deeds and identity in order to critically discuss dominant conceptions of the crisis of boys in school. More specifically, drawing on ethnographic data and naturally occurring talk, collected from two fieldworks in Swedish secondary schools, this paper explores how the influential theory of boys’ anti-school culture, can be interpreted as a master narrative that is being reproduced but also contradicted and subverted in small stories (Bamberg 2006; Georgakopoulou 2007), jointly constructed by students and teachers, in local school contexts.

References

Keywords: ”anti school culture”, ”small stories”, ”masculinity”.