Children's Participation and Citizenship in a Global Age: Empowerment, Tokenism or Discriminatory Disciplining?

Hanne Warming, Department of Society and Globalization, Roskilde University

1 Children's participation and citizenship in a global age: empowerment, tokenism or discriminatory disciplining?

For over a decade now we have witnessed a burgeoning interest in the promotion of children's participation and active citizenship, not least in the areas of social policy, social work practice and research. Thus, Hill talks about a "participatory climate, which helps promote and has been fortified by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child" (Hill, 2006: 71), and West (1999) suggests that there is a growing commitment to the empowerment of children. However, these two important agendas - a commitment to children's rights and combating the unjust silencing of children's voices – have also largely diverted our attention from other more disciplining agendas for children's participation. The last decades have been characterized by a re-newed governance focus on childhood which constructs children as 'the raw materials' for society's future (Nielsen & Kampmann, 2007). Thus ensuring that children become competent, well-adjusted (future) citizens has moved to the heart of governance strategies for coping with the challenges of globalization (Hart, 2009, and for a concrete example see Regeringen, 2006).

The escalating interest in children's participation and citizenship is reflected in a huge number of publications; however, these mostly deal with practical methodologies designed to foster children's participation and evaluate educational interventions and results from participatory projects which present children's perspectives on social services, education, the local environment, citizenship etc. Only a very few publications, among which Hart (2009) is an inspiring example, endeavor to explore children's participation and citizenship from the perspective of discrimination, disciplining and distrust, which is the aim of this article.

This aim is inspired by children's voices in different research projects. During recent years, an increasing number of studies in the field of social work with children have included interviews with children. In many of these studies the issues of discrimination, disciplining and distrust keep turning up in the shape of some children's experiences of a distanced `know-all attitude´ among social workers and of being categorized, diagnosed, controlled and blamed, rather than involved, listened to, understood and supported. These children tell about how, as a consequence, social work fails to provide responsive support, and some children report how they, in resignation, turn their back on adult society (Thomas & O'Kane 1999, Dalrymple 2003, Bo & Warming 2003, Warming 2005 & 2006). Though not necessary representative of children as such, these children's stories address a serious problem, namely a group of children experiences mutual distrust in relation to social workers, and that this distrust has negative consequences for the children's participation and sense of citizenship.

In this article, I explore the generative dynamics of children's participation and citizenship in social policy and practice, focusing on the risk of discrimination and disciplining. The article consists of the following three main parts: 1) Participation, 2) Rights and 3) Identity, each dealing with an important dimension of children's citizenship, followed by a conclusion. Part one begins by exploring client children's frustrations at their limited participation in decision making, this is approached by employing Hart's Ladder of Participation and Bourdieu's theorization of power dynamics. In part 2, I explore children's citizenship rights, using Marshall's tripartite conceptualization, namely civil rights, political rights and social rights, supplemented by a discussion of the right to care and cultural rights. In part 3, the article looks at identity, which is theorized through Delanty's conceptualization of citizenship as a learning process. The article concludes that social policy and practice are essential to client children's participation and citizenship, and draws attention to: a) How (mis)recognition and power combine to shape children's participation and citizenship as empowerment, tokenism or discriminatory disciplining, respectively, and b) how prevailing tendencies in social work and policy tend to push in the direction of discriminatory disciplining.

The article draws on illustrative examples from three different research projects involving children and youth as informants and co-researchers: One about child consultation in the Department for Divorce and Custody and two about foster care. The main method of these projects involved qualitative open ended interviews with children. In the project about child consultation, these interviews were supplemented by interview with parents and the consulters (see Warming, 2002). Likewise in the one project about foster care, the child interviews were supplemented by the professionals' notes on their work with the children and open ended interviews (see Warming et.al., 2003), while in the other project about foster care, the child interviews were supplemented by a 10 week lasting web-based forum for foster children's experiences and points of view on social work practice (see Warming, 2006).

2   Participation

I think that children should have more of a say in things. I mean, they shouldn't have too much say, but it is the children who are involved and who know what things are like, and despite that, they actually don't have a say. I think it's too bad!!!

Boy in foster care, 12 years old

This boy is talking about children's influence over decisions that affect their lives. Influence over such decisions is what Roger Hart identified as *the* fundamental right of citizenship (Hart, 1992: 5) in his well-known work in the field of child and youth studies: "Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship". Although this right is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and despite a widespread `participatory climate´ this boy's account reflects a quite widespread experience of disempowerment among children in contact with the social services (reported e.g. in Dalrymple, 2003; Hallet et al., 2003; Aubrey & Dahl, 2006; Warming, 2006; Larsen, 2009a; Klyvø, 2010).

The paradoxical coexistence of a `participatory climate´ alongside a widespread inattention to children's right to influence decisions about their lives has been addressed by Nick Lee (1999) as an ambiguity between two views of children in adult institutions: as *beings* or *becomings* . The former view regards children as active, competent agents, while the latter regards them as not yet competent, passive objects for adults' actions. This ambiguity is also evident in the UN Convention, which emphasizes children's right to speak

for themselves, but then immediately makes this right conditional upon age and maturity. Thus the silencing of children's voices often goes hand in hand with, and is justified by, a view of children as vulnerable 'becomings' in need of protection from adults rather than as active and competent "beings" (Lee 1999).

Below, a 10 year old boy who has been to a child consultation at the `Statsforvaltningen´ (The Department for Divorce and Custody, a state agency), describes his experience of being overlooked:

"What wasn't okay was that they didn't back me up. I talked with them, and that was okay, but they didn't do anything afterwards."

The professional expert who talked with this boy claimed that the consultation had enabled the boy's participation, since he had contributed information that could be used in taking decisions about the case. The boy, on the other hand, regarded the consultation as window-dressing, as at the end of the day his views had not been taken into account. Thus, rather than enacting his right to influence, the boy's participation merely served to inform and legitimise the expert's decision. The lesson to be learned here is that there are different kinds of participation, and that not all of them involve influence over decision-making.

2.1 Conceptualizing the different kinds of participation

Hart addresses the qualitative differences in participation in his hierarchical `Ladder of Young People's Participation´, where he distinguishes between the following eight rungs (Hart, 1992):

1. Manipulation: (mis)use of children to support adults' points of view, pretending that these mirror the children's points of view.

2. Decoration: Use of children to bolster a cause without pretending that the cause is inspired by children.

3. Tokenism: Children seemingly have a voice, but in fact have little or no influence.

4. Assigned but informed: Children have a meaningful (rather than 'decorative') role.

5. Consulted and informed: Children give advice to projects or programs and volunteer as advisers after the project, and their role has been explained to them.

6. Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people: Adult-initiated programs and projects in which children are involved in decision-making.

7. Initiated and directed by young people: Child-initiated and directed programs and projects in which adults play a supportive role.

8. Initiated by young people, shared decisions with adults: Child-initiated and directed programs and projects in which decision-making is shared between children and adults.

The first three, Hart explains, are faked and not real participation, and even on the fourth rung children's involvement in defining influence is severely limited. The consultation with the boy quoted above may be categorized as somewhere between rungs three and four. It appears that very few children have experience of the seventh and eighth rungs (Hart, 1992: 14; Warming, 2003 & 2006; Erikson, 2009), and that some children's experiences do not even qualify to be on Hart's participation ladder since they are shaped by 'know-all' adults, surveillance, diagnosis, discipline and control. The latter particularly is a salient feature in cases where children are identified as vulnerable (Aubrey & Dahl, 2006; Warming, 2006; Erikson, 2009), and/or if they have a minority background (Larsen, 2009a; Vitus Andersen, 2005; Gale & Vitus, 2009). In the following, we will examine the generative dynamics of these features, starting with an empirical example.

2.2 Governmental colonisation of client children's participation

Kasper is a 17 year old boy who desperately wants to move to his own place. According to his case worker, this is out of the question, since Kasper is far too immature and thus unable to take care of himself. Kasper has a long history in care with many disrupted and unsuccessful placements in foster families and residential homes. He realizes that moving out to live on his own will be a great challenge, and that he will need professional adult supervision, but insists that he cannot stand living in residential homes and foster families any longer. In Kasper's words:

"If only they would just give me a chance – but they say: 'Look what a mess your room is!' and then they use that as proof that I won't be able to make it on my own. But I never had a chance! All my life there has been somebody keeping an eye on me, and telling me what I was like. It makes me so angry. I wish it could be like when I'm talking with you. When I'm talking to you, I'm able to explain things – put things in the right way – but when I'm talking with them, I always end up getting angry and aggressive, and then they say: 'There, you see!' And they use that as another argument for not giving me a chance!"

Kasper's account of his relationship with the social worker describes a negative power relationship which disempowers him, and makes him angry and aggressive as a consequence of the controlling and judgmental attitude of the social worker, who keeps him under surveillance and categorizes him as not worth `giving a chance´. The message from the case worker is that Kasper has not qualified for participation. If he wants influence, he must discipline himself in accordance with norms for behavior appropriate of a grown-up well-adjusted citizen. Thus in this case, participation is turned into a means of disciplining and controlling, i.e. a governmental instrument. In other words, participation is colonized by governmental agendas. In the following, I will argue that this is not a single case – an exception to the rule, but rather the rule as related to fundamental generative (power) dynamics of children's participation in the field of social work and beyond.

2.3 The generative (power) dynamics of children's participation

As mentioned earlier, very few children have experiences of the seventh and eighth rungs on Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation, which are the truly empowering rungs. I suggest that this tentatively can be explained by what Leena Alanen (2001) has termed the generational order taking inspiration from Pierre Bourdieu's relational approach to the social(ly constructed) reality. The term reveals childhood as a socially constructed structural position in the social order rather than (just) a life phase.

According to Bourdieu, the position of a social group in the social order is a result of historical (power) struggles over visions and divisions (Bourdieu, 1998). Divisions include the distribution of goods as well as social constructions established through relational definitions. Regarding the generational order: The definition of children as incompetent, irresponsible, vulnerable *becomings* in contrast to adults as competent, responsible, robust *beings*. Following this approach, the ambiguity addressed by Lee (1999) between a *becoming* view which results in the silencing of children's voices, and a *being* view which results in a participatory climate, must be explained as the result of ongoing struggles. These have to do both with challenges to, and the tenacity of, relational definitions of children and adults. Historically, the *becoming* view on children has constituted a doxa, i.e. a taken for granted socially constructed 'truth' in most fields concerned with children, for example child and family social policy. For decades, this doxa has informed the perceptual categories of agents in the field, and has thus been integrated into legislation, practice and research through habitual dispositions and institutional pathways. Because the *becoming* view of children is so deeply rooted, the serious and persistent challenges from proponents of the *being* view result in ambiguity rather than fundamental changes.

Though the generational order can explain the general rule that few children have experiences with the highest rungs on Hart's Ladder of Participation, it does not provide us the an understanding of the shaping dynamics which explain why this is more often the case, when the children are identified as vulnerable or of a minority background. To grasp this, we have to examine other forces which are at play in social work, which intersect with the generational order in the shaping of children's participation. These are: a) What I will term the unhappy marriage between New Public Management (NPM) and the new governance approach to children as the raw-material for future society's ability to cope with challenges of globalisation, and b) other relational positions.

2.4 The unhappy marriage between the new governance approach to children and NPM

Since the 1980s, the public sector throughout the world a set of changes for the purpose of economic effectiveness, also called the NPM wave. Despite widespread criticism of the NPM strategy and proclamations of its decline or even death (Dunleaby et.al., 2006), studies in the field of social work with children show that NPM is still a salient feature, for example in the form of market logics dominated thinking (Höjer and Forkby, 2010) and of performance management, i.e. demands for documentation based on performance indicators, measurable aims and outcomes (Munro, 2010). When these features melt together with (marry) the new governance approach to children, there arises an imminent risk of the transformation of the (measurable) aims of social work with children from the child's well-being as such towards the best possible processing of the raw material of society's future. Risk assessment then becomes an issue of the identification of barriers to the child becoming a competent, disciplined and well-adjusted future citizen and working force, rather than of the child's quality of life, here and now.

In the light of the existence of such structuring logics in social work, we can interpret the way in which the social worker responds to Kasper as follows: The focus of her concerns regarding Kasper is his mal-adjustedness. Therefore, she wants him to stay in a place, where someone can keep an eye on him or, even better, discipline him. The fact that Kasper does not like to be there, and cannot not stand living in residential homes and foster care any longer, i.e. his point of view and experienced quality of life are not relevant information for her

decision. Much less so than other characteristics of NPM, such as the valorisation of evidence-based knowledge over everyday life experience and practice-based knowledge and time pressure (Smith, 2001; Ruch, 2005), which support the not listening attitude of the social worker. Everyday life experience and practice-based knowledge are categorized as 'meaning', i.e. as non-knowledge, in contrast to scientific evidence based *real* knowledge. Thus, children's and other clients' – and professionals' practice based – knowledge (cultural capital, to use Bourdieu's vocabulary) is dramatically devalued. With regard to time, the economic rationale of effectiveness and the demands for documentation in the field of social work have reduced the time that social workers can spend with each client, as each social worker has more clients and spends an increasing amount of their time doing paperwork. Thus there is neither incentive nor time to engage in `risky´ experiments of meeting Kasper's deep desire to live on his own. What the social worker needs is a categorisation of Kasper, a risk assessment of whether and how he might fail to become a well-adjusted future citizen, based on which she can take evidence-based action to meet this risk.

Though the case worker does need to talk with Kasper, as in Denmark this is an important performance indicator, there are no structural incentives to listen and provide responsive social support. This is not to claim that social workers never listen to children – there are several examples of them doing so (e.g. in Bo & Warming, 2003; Warming, 2005). The point is that when they do, it is in defiance of the structural incentives. In the following, I will expand on why this is particularly salient regarding some groups of children.

2.5 The intersection between the generational order and other relational positions

Social work with children is practiced at the intersection of multiple relational positions, some of them coming from the field of social work itself, while others are 'imported' from other fields. Historically, in the Danish case, these fields have primarily been childhood and family, but increasingly they also include the field of the integration of immigrants and refugees.

The field of childhood and the field of social work share an ambiguity, and ongoing struggles, between rationales of control, discipline, care, recognition and empowerment. Despite high ideals about recognition and empowerment among many professionals in both fields, the influence of powerful state logics in the form of the new governance interest in childhood and NPM mean that the dominant rationales in these fields tilt towards control and discipline rather than recognition and empowerment, especially in the case of already underprivileged children and youth (Coussée et al., 2009). Further, similar to the generational order division between children and adults, the field of social work operates on the basis of a division between clients as objects of assistance, discipline and control; and professionals as the authorities that administer assistance, discipline and control. Likewise, the field of care constructs people in need of care as unable to exert choice and control, in contrast to their caregivers (Kröger, 2009; Morris, 1997).

The intersecting logics of these different fields can explain why children, who are in contact with the social authorities, positioned as simultaneously child and client, both in need of care, more often than other children are overruled. Rather than neutralizing one another, these two positions intersect in a negative and disempowering way: The client child is not only positioned as a child, but as a deviant and maybe less mature child compared to other children with a higher risk of not becoming a future well-adjusted citizen. Similar negative dynamics are at play when one or more of these fields intersect with the field of immigrants and refugees, as children with such a background are constructed as a certain group of

children especially at risk of not becoming well-adjusted future citizens (Vitus Andersen, 2005; Gale & Vitus ,2009; Larsen, 2009a and Larsen, 2009b).

2.6 The impact of power relations among different adult agents

We will now turn to a related power issue regarding client children's underprivileged position in regard to participation. This issue was raised by a child who actually experienced being involved and heard by some adults - but not those in the most powerful positions:

"Those people who have the most say are the ones who talk and listen least to children. That's wrong and it's really bad."
Boy in foster care, 12 years old

By saying this, the boy addresses a very important feature that contributes to children's modest influence on decision-making in social work practice. Namely that children's participation is not only constrained by their formal status as `being under age´ and by being socially constructed as incompetent, vulnerable, care-needing immature becomings, but also by the unequal power relations among different adult agents engaged in the field of social work, also documented in Bo & Warming (2003) and Klyvø (2010).

According to Bourdieu, people's views, including their dispositions towards particular ways of acting, correlate with their position in social space. This is partly because they are in this position as a result of their habitual dispositions, and partly because they socialize – and are forced to do so if they do not wish to exclude themselves - through internalizing the logic of the field. 'Street level social workers' in close contact with children are often more habitually disposed to talking and listening to them than those who spend most of their time at their desk doing administrative paperwork and management. The power relations among different agents in the field are therefore decisive for children's influence over decision-making.

Several critical analyses of developments in the public sector (e.g. Ejersbo & Greve, 2005; Hjort, 2006), and in the field of social policy and social work more specifically (Bourdieu, 1999a & b; Smith, 2001; Ruch, 2005), have shown that one consequence of NPM has been the disempowerment of street level social workers who are in close contact with clients and children. This disempowerment adds a further dimension to client children's already underprivileged position.

2.7 Client children's participation: empowerment, tokenism or discriminatory disciplining?

I have now argued that the structural forces in social work predominantly shape client children's participation as tokenism and discriminative disciplining. In this light it is not surprising that some children experience a distanced `know-all´ attitude among social workers, and to be categorized, diagnosed, controlled and blamed, rather than involved, listened to, understood and supported. Quite the opposite, it is much more surprising that I, in my empirical research, have met other client children – actually quite many – who do experience being listened to, understood and supported (see Bo & Warming, 2003; Warming, 2006). In line with a post-structuralist line of thought, I suggest that this is due to their being many – sometimes mutually conflicting discourses - circulating, thus constructing the different fields as complex and contested social spaces. I will here point to the general participatory climate and the commitment to empower children and youth, including social pedagogical discourses emphasizing the importance of responsivity and recognition, as

'counter-structures' that might motivate some social workers to act in defiance of the more discriminatory and disciplining structural incentives.

3   Citizenship rights: beyond participation

Full citizenship comprises more rights than just the right of participation. Thus, to examine the status and shaping dynamics of client children's full citizenship we need to include other rights. To do this, the article uses Thomas Humphrey Marshall's classic tripartite definition of citizenship rights: civil rights, political rights and social rights (Marshall, 1950), supplemented by the right to care.

Marshall's main concern was class-based inequality. Like everybody else in the scientific field at that time, he missed a generational order perspective, since he regarded children's exclusion from citizenship rights as natural. Despite this and other critiques of his theory (for example failing to take account of cultural rights and the right to care (Cockburn, 2005)), his conceptualisation of citizenship rights constitutes a helpful conceptual framework for systematic exploration of children's citizenship rights. Thus, in the following we will use Marshall's conceptual framework, supplemented by the idea of the right to care, to explore how social policy and social work practice shape client children's citizen rights. Later we will return to the cultural dimension of citizenship, including cultural rights.

Often rights are treated as a pure formal and legal issue, however as legislation has to be interpreted and practiced, it is appropriate to included the authorities' way of administrate children's rights, and children's possibilities of realizing their formal rights.

3.1   Civil Rights

Civil rights include equal treatment before the law, rights of contract and property, and freedom from constraint by the state. Children's civil rights are not totally excluded from this definition, but they are very restricted compared to adults'. Cockburn, writing about British childhood in 1998, illustrates this:

"Children cannot own property and are excluded from legal decision-making about 'the family home'. Children are either under the direct responsibility of their parents, or, in exceptional circumstances, the state, as in the detection or suspicion of abuse or where people are placed in the position of *in loco parentis.*"

(Cockburn, 1998: 101)

In Denmark, 12 years later, although children do have the right to have a say in legal and social work decision-making about 'the family home', in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, this right is moderated in terms of age and maturity. Moreover, as argued earlier, in practice it seems to be further moderated if children are client children or have a minority background, identified as especially being at risk of not becoming well-adjusted future citizens.

Neither do children enjoy full freedom from state constraints, as they have a legal duty to receive schooling, which in Denmark during the last decade has tended to include a duty to attend day care institutions in the case of ethnic minority children. The latter is a consequence of the combination of the new governance approach to childhood and a (discursive) construction of ethnic minority parents as not being so competent at promoting children's well-adjustedness and linguistic competences (Larsen 2009b).

In cases where the child is categorized as at serious risk, and the state (municipality) has taken over responsibility for the child, the authorities can intervene in his/her private life, for example control the child's correspondence with family and friends. Albeit the legitimacy of the latter has been questioned by a civil society organisation called 'Børns Vilkår'[1] (Dahlin, 2010). The example is interesting, because it illustrates how client children's civil rights are an object for debate and struggles over legal interpretation and legitimate social work practice regarding balancing general civil rights with rationales of protection, discipline and control: How much discrimination is legitimate?

Altogether children's civil rights are very restricted compared to adult – a fact which is particularly salient with regard to children identified as at risk.

3.2 Political rights

Political rights include the right to vote, the right of association and the right to participate in the central organs of government. Children's legal status as 'under age' is a juridical objectification of the generational order which positions children as non-political subjects with no political rights either to vote or to participate in organs of government, e.g. governing bodies for public institutions in e.g. schools, daycare institutions and residential homes. Pupils' councils are an exception; however these are often of limited influence and, as pointed out by Wyness (2009), they are less likely to represent, and even less to include, disadvantaged and socially excluded groups of children and young people, such as client children.

Thus on paper, disadvantaged and socially excluded children have the same (limited) political rights as other children, but in practice they are severely limited, because these children only very rarely join pupils' councils and because their views are often not very well represented in these bodies. Joining such bodies demands a kind of disciplining in itself, as these often work based on the principles of adult governing bodies – and these principles fit very badly with the habitus of disadvantaged and socially excluded children. Realizing these children's political rights - which is an essential task for a social policy that aims at empower client children as full citizens - would demand a revolution of the working principles of pupils' councils as well as of governing bodies that at present do not include children.

Similar to civil rights, children's political rights are also very restricted compared to adults' and particularly the political rights (as realized) of disadvantaged and socially excluded children.

3.3 Social rights

With regard to social rights, children's status is more complicated and ambiguous. Marshall argued that children did possess social rights, and pointed to the right to education, social services and a minimum of economic welfare and security. Despite the importance of these rights, which are also inscribed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Marshall's standpoint can be refuted on several counts. This has to do with the fact that children's right to education has its downside.

---

[1]   'Children's Welfare' in English.

First, this is because schooling, as argued by Qvortup (1994), can also be seen as children's unpaid work; a forced contribution to future society. Thus schooling constitutes an example of how governance interests in childhood colonize rights and convert them into discipline and responsibilities.

Second, the right to education is, in practice, a very unequally distributed right, as schooling predominantly reproduce and legitimize rather than equalizes social inequalities (Collins, 2009; Bernstein, 2003; Bourdieu & Champagne, 1999).

Third, the fact that children's civil status disqualifies them from the right to own property and receiving their own social benefits renders them dependent on their adult cares. This includes all children, however the effect is diverse depending on the good will, competences and resources of the adults, which the child is dependent on. In a European perspective, the risk of poverty among children is, in general, higher than among the population as a whole. Despite the fact that Denmark together with Germany, Estonia, Cyprus, Slovenia and Finland constitute exceptions from this general tendency (TÁRKI, 2010), an increasing number of Danish children live in relatively poor families suffering from material privation with negative consequences for the children's health and social life (Deding & Gerstoft, 2009).

Altogether, children do have social rights in form of the right to schooling (which is not only a right, but also a duty) and a minimum of economic welfare and security, however in practice these rights are very unequally distributed thus having serious drawbacks for children from families on low incomes and having a low level of education.

3.4   The right to care

Cockburn (2005) argues that the citizen rights identified by Marshall must be supplemented with the right to care. Based on 'the feminist ethic of care' (Gilligan, 1998), he defines children's right to care as comprising both the right to give and receive care (Cockburn, 1998). Ostensibly, the importance of including this right in a child-oriented conceptualisation of citizenship seems unproblematic and self-evident. However, care and control are intertwined in the construction of the individual in need of care as 'unable to exert choice and control' (Kröger, 2009; Morris 1997) as well as in the definition of – and the right to define – needs (Cockburn, 1998). Very often, in response to children's accounts of being overruled and met with a know-it-all attitude, their caregivers argue that this overruling is in the best interest of the child, i.e that it is actually a caring action. The outcome of the right to care, which is arguably inscribed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, thus often curtails client children's influence and civil rights.

In everyday life and social work practice with children, the clash between care, influence and civil rights is often regarded as a natural and insoluble dilemma where influence is typically subordinated to care. However, the Bourdieu-inspired power perspective outlined above allows us to illuminate one important effect of children's – and especially client children's - unprivileged position in the social order, namely the social construction of client children as incompetent and unable to exert choice and control. A change in the logic of these fields with the intent to represent children as knowledgeable, competent co-producers of their own and others' welfare would pave the way for solving this dilemma. However, this would demand changes in the superior field of power, as the influence from the logics of this field in the form of the unhappy marriage between the new governance approach to children and NPM work against changes towards responsive social work of this kind.

Children have a right to care, but this right has its drawback, as the generational order implies a construction of a seemingly natural and insoluble dilemma between care and influence where the latter is typically subordinated to the former. This affects children in general; however it reaches its peak regarding children in contact with social authorities due to the intersecting logics in the field of social work with children at risk.

3.5   Cultural rights

Cultural rights address the right to practice one's own culture, and not to be discriminated because of culture. These are rights that are inscribed in Unite Nations Agreements on Human Rights as in the convention on the rights of the child. However, these legal documents seem either to have assumed children's culture to be identical with their parent's culture or to subordinate children's cultural rights to parent's rights to decide for their children. There are no legal documents that ensure children's cultural rights when they conflict with parent's preferences, for example the child's right to practice another religion than the parents' or not to follow certain religious rules.

By contrast, there are a lot of examples of the overruling of the parents preference when these are regarded as conflicting with the government's?? interest in childhood. One example is when ethnic minority children are placed in foster care. Very often these children are placed in an ethnic majority foster family, who do not speak the mother tongue of the child and do not recognize the norms and values (including religious) of the child and its family. Some case workers recognize this as being problematic, but argue that they are not able to find better matching competent foster families, whereas other case workers argue that it is better for the integration (read assimilation) of the child to be placed in an ethnic majority family (Larsen, 2009a).

Formally, children have cultural rights, but these are both legally and in practice subordinated to parent's rights to decide for their children as well as the governance interest in childhood.

3.6   Children's rights: empowerment, tokenism or discriminatory disciplining?

Although children's rights, in a historical perspective, have improved, they are still very restricted compared to adults', and particularity in practice regarding children from families with few resources, children in contact with social authorities and ethnic minority children. Thus in a 'here and now perspective', the realized rights of these children tend towards tokenism, discrimination and disciplining rather than empowerment.

In the following we will turn our attention to the consequences of discrimination and disciplining for children's citizenship identity.

4   Cultural citizenship: Citizenship as identity

Gerald Delanty addresses citizenship identity, the subjective feeling of belonging and identification with a given society, through the concept of cultural citizenship (Delanty, 2003). According to Delanty, cultural citizenship flourishes – or is damaged – in and through everyday practices. Thus children's (as well as other people's) citizen identity is a continuous learning process rooted in participation in the social practices of a given community, regarding client children e.g. in the day care institution, in the school, and in interactions with social workers.

On the face of it, this perspective on citizenship is similar to – and nicely goes hand in hand with - the ideas in the new politics of childhood governance that seek to educate and discipline children and youths to be good citizens. Yet Delanty (2003) is very critical to the disciplining colonisation – or with his own concept 'governmentalization' - of citizenship as a learning process, as the governmentalization reduces cultural citizenship to 'a cognitive competence', ignoring the subjective feeling of belonging (Delanty 2003: 599). Stella Hart echoes this in her critique of governmental programmes aimed at fostering young people as citizens deemed appropriate to join adult society. She argues that such programs, in which the learning process is characterized by discrimination, lecturing and control risk to alienate children and youth form the community in question. By contrast, the promotion of inclusive, empowering citizen identity demands processes characterized by equality and mutual trust and respect (Hart, 2009).

4.1 The discursive shaping of citizen identity

Beside the ignoring of the emotional dimension of citizenship identity, and in continued lack of attention to the significance of characteristics of the leaning process, governmentalization does not recognise that citizenship as a process of learning and identity formation is not an isolated phenomenon. As flourished – or damaged – in and though everyday practices, it takes place everywhere and as a never ending process, conditioned by cultural discourses and shaped through face to face interactions in which "individual life stories are connected with wider cultural discourses" (Delanty, 2002: 65).

Cultural discourses are produced, reproduced and re-interpreted everywhere: in the media, in policy documents, in professional practices and in intimate relations in the family and among friends. Depending on the logic of the field in question, they can be more or less recognizing and inclusive or discriminatory, and this has an enormous impact on the shaping of children's citizen identity. This is evident in children's accounts of social workers who interpret their wishes and views in the light of wider cultural discourses on for example `social heritage´ or `Muslim culture´, and therefore meet them with mistrust and a `know-all´ attitude. Some of the older children, in particular, recount how this erodes their trust in adults and adult society, so that they end up turning their backs on them in resignation:

"You can't trust the municipality (local authority) at all. They write down everything you say, and they twist it, so it fits into their fucked up ideas. Then if they make a mistake (they think that) it's your mistake, because they can't make mistakes!!! (..) There really aren't any adults you can trust and who you can go to for help, because everyone has to report to the people higher up in the system!!! And the adults always think that what you do and say is because of the problems you faced as a baby".

Adda, 19 years old

"Children like us really don't trust adults"

Kasper, 15 years old

In accordance with Hart's (2009) findings, these quotations indicate that some children lose their courage to participate in and identify with society, due to the (mutual) mistrust, misrecognition and discrimination with which adults meet especially some children. This, in

turn, shapes these children's identities as outsiders facing discrimination, rather than as citizens with a sense of belonging and mutual commitment.

5 Conclusion

The starting point of this article was the paradox of there being on the one hand: a general participatory climate and a growing commitment to the empowerment of children, and on the other hand the fact that issues of discrimination and mistrust together with the experience of not being listened to and recognized kept turning up in research with children and youth in relation to social work.

During the article, I have exposed how structural forces in social work predominantly shape client children's participation as tokenism and discriminative disciplining, and seriously curtail children's rights. The curtailments of children's participation and citizenship rights in social policy and social work practice must be regarded as mis-recognition and discrimination which, despite good intentions to protect children, are damaging for their self-esteem, trust in and commitment to the basic norm of democratic societies, namely everyone's right to influence decisions that affect their lives.

In the light of the analysis of the structural forces in social work, the negative experiences of the children are not so surprising. It is much more surprising that I in my empirical research also have met quite many children who do experience to be listened to, understood and supported. When social workers act in such empowering ways, they partly do so in defiance of the structural incentives. However, this is only partly as social work with children is a complex and contested social space, influenced by the participatory climate. Thus the analysis of this article does not point towards belittlement of the engagement in children's well being and commitment to the empowerment of children that many social workers have. Rather the opposite, it exposes how difficult conditions are for realizing this commitment.

In conclusion, client children's citizenship, and the initiatives that are accounted for as facilitating their well being and participation, too often tend towards tokenism, if not discriminatory disciplining and exclusion, rather than empowerment, due to political, organisational and discursively shaped power relations and the governance colonisation of children's participation, citizen rights and identity. By extension, we may conclude that the quality of client children's participation and citizenship does not depend exclusively on social workers' good intentions, qualifications and methods. Rather, it requires changes in the intersecting logics of the field of social work with children.

References

Alanen, L. (2001) Childhood as a generational condition: Children's daily life in a central Finland town, in: Alanen, L. and Mayall, B (eds.) Conceptualizing Child – Adult Relations, London & New York, RoutledgeFalmer, 129-143.

Aubrey, C and Dahl, S (2006) Views of Vulnerable children on Their Service Providers and the Relevance of Services they receive, in: British Journal of Social Work, Vol. 36 (1), 21-39.

Bernstein, B (2003) Class, Codes and control, London, Routledge.

Bo, I. G. and Warming, H (2003) Når livet gør ondt, København, Frydenlund.

Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L (1992) An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology, Cambridge and Oxford, Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1996) Symbolsk makt, Oslo, Pax Forlag.

Bourdieu, P. (1998) Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action, Cambridge, Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1999a) The abdication of the state, in: P. Bourdieu et al. The Weight of the World. Social Suffering in Contemporary Society, Cambridge & Oxford, Polity Press, 181-188.

Bourdieu, P. (1999b) An impossible mission, in: P. Bourdieu et al.: The Weight of the World. Social Suffering in Contemporary Society, Cambridge & Oxford, Polity Press, 189-202.

Bourdieu, P and Champagne, P (1999) Outcasts on the inside, in: P. Bourdieu et al.: The Weight of the World. Social Suffering in Contemporary Society, Cambridge & Oxford, Polity Press, 421-426.

Cockburn, T. (1998) Children and citizenship in Britain, in: Childhood 5 (1), 99-117.

Cockburn, T. (2005) Children and the Feminist Ethic of Care, in: Childhood Vol.12(1), 71-89.

Cockburn, T. (2007) Partners in Power: A radically pluralistic form of participative democracy for children and young people, in: Children and Society, 21(6), 446-457.

Collins, J. (2009) Social Reproduction in Classrooms and Schools, in: Annual Review of Anthopology 38, 33-48

Coussée, F; Roets, G and De Bie, M. (2009): Empowering the powerful: Challenging hidden processes of marginalization in youth work policy and practice in Belgium, in: Critical Social Policy 29 (3), 421-442.

Dahlin, U. (2010) Børns Vilkår: Ulovlig brevkontrol i Tårnby, in: Information, www.information.dk/224160

Dalrympe, J. (2003) Professional Advocacy as a Force for Resistance, in: Child Welfare in British Journal of Social Work, 33(8), 1043-1062.

Deding, M. and Gerstoft, F. (2009) Børnefattigdom i Danmark 2002-2006, København, SFI

Delanty, G. (2000) Citizenship in a Global Age, Buckingham, Open University Press.

Delanty, G. (2002) Two Conceptions of Cultural Citizenship: A Review of Recent Literature on Culture and Citizenship, in: The Global Review of Ethnopolitics 1(3), 60-66.

Delanty, G. (2003): Citizenship as a learning process: disciplinary citizenship versus cultural citizenship, in: Lifelong Education 22 (6), 597-605.

Ejersbo, N. and Greve, C. (2005): Modernisering af den offentlige sektor, København, Børsens Forlag.

Eriksson, M. (2009) Girls and boys as victims: social workers approaches to children exposed to violence, in: Child Abuse Review 18 (6), 428-445

Gale, M. and Vitus, K. (2009) Social Problems Work – the Case of Children and Youth in Sociology Compass 3 (5), 737-753.

Gilligan, C. (1998) Hearing the Difference: Theorizing Connection, in: M. Rogers (ed.) Contemporary Feminist Theory: A Text/Reader, Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 341-6

Hallett, C., Murray, C., and Punch, S. (2003) Young People and Welfare: Negotiating Pathways, in: Hallett, C. and Prout A. (eds) Hearing the Voices of Children: Social Policy for a New Century, London, RoutledgeFalmer, 123-138.

Hart, R. A. (1992) Children's Participation. From Tokenism to Citizenship, Florence, Unicef.

Hart, S. (2009) The 'problem' with youth: young people, citizenship and the community, in: Citizenship Studies 13 (6), 641-657.

Hill, M. (2006) Children's Voices on Ways of Hawing a Voice, in: Childhood Vol. 13 (1), 69-89.

Hjort, K. (2006) Moderniseringen af den offentlige sektor, Frederiksberg: Roskilde Universitetsforlag.

Höjer, S. and Forkby, T (2010) Care for Sale: The Influence of New Public Management in Child Protection in Sweeden, in: British Journal of Social Work, doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcq053

Klyvø, L. (2010):

Kröger, T. (2009) Care research and disability studies: Nothing in common? In: Critical Social Policy 29 (3), 398-420.

Larsen, M. (2009a) Børn med etnisk minoritetsbaggrund i familiepleje, København, Videnscenter for Familiepleje, Københavns Kommune.

Larsen, N. B. (2009b) En rigtigt god snak – om reproduktion og overskridelse i dialogmøder mellem minoritetsdanske forældre og majoritetsdanske socialarbejdere, Ph.d. dissertation from Roskilde University.

Lee, N (1999) The Challenge of Childhood: Distribution of Childhood's Ambiguity, in: Adult Institutions in Childhood 6(4), 455-474.

Marshall, T. H. (1992) Citizenship and Social Class, London, Pluto Press.

Qvortrup, J. (1994) Børn halv pris. Nordisk barndom i samfundsperspektiv, Esbjerg, Sydjysk Universitetsforlag.

Morris, J. (1997) Care or Empowerment? A Disability Rights Perspective, in: Social Policy and Administration 31(1), 54–60.

Munro, E. (2010): Learning to Reduce Risk in Child Protection in British Journal of Social Work 40 (4), 1135-1151

Nielsen, H. W. and Kampmann, J. (2007) Children in Command of Time and Space? In: H. Zeiher et.al. (eds.): Flexible Childhood? Exploring Children's Welfare in Time and Space, Odense, University Press of Southern Denmark, 191-214

Regeringen (2006): Fremgang, fornyelse og tryghed. Strategi for Danmark i den globale økonomi – de vigtigste initiativer. www.globalisering.dk

Ruch, G. (2005) Relationship-based practice and reflective practice: holistic approaches to contemporary child care social work, in: Child and Family Social Work. 10, 111-123.

Smith, C. (2001) Trust and Confidence: Possibilities for Social Work in 'High Modernity, in: British Journal of Social Work 31, 287-305.

TARKI (2010) Child poverty and child well-being in the European Union, Report prepared for the DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (Unite E.2) of the European Commission, Budapest.

http://www.tarki.hu/en/research/childpoverty/index.html

Vitus Andersen, K. (2005): Problembørn, pædagoger og perkere – identitet og ambivalens i mødet mellem etniske minoritetsbørn og systemet, Ph.d. dissertation from University of Copenhagen.

Warming, H. (2002) Det er lidt svært - men jeg må jo sige min mening, København, Frydenlund.

Warming, H.; Hansen, I & Nielsen, M. (2003) Lærestykker fra arbejdet med og evaluering af en terapeutisk samtalegruppe for familieplejeanbragte børn, in: Matrix nr. 3.

Warming, H. (2005) Har andre plejebørn det som mig?, København, Frydenlund.

Warming, H. (2006) 'How Can You Know? You're Not a Foster Child': Dilemmas and Possibilitiess of giving Voice to Children in Foster Care, in: Children, Youth and Environments 16 (2).

West, A. (1999) Children's Own Research: Street Children and Care in Britain and Bangladesh ,in: Childhood 6(1), 145-15.

Wyness, M. (2009) Children Representing Children: Participation and the problem of diversity in UK youth councils ,in: Childhood 16 (4), 535-552.

Author´s Address:
Hanne Warming
Associate Professor
Roskilde University
Department of Society and Globalization
Universitetsvej 1, 25.3
DK-4000, Roskilde
Denmark
Tel: ++ 4674-2794
Fax: 4674-3080
Email: hannew@ruc.dk

Social Work & Society