

## Social Policy, Pedagogy and Children

Heinz Sünker

*Department of Social Sciences, Wuppertal University, 42119 Wuppertal, Germany*

*Tel: ++49-202-439-2295 Fax: -2431 E-mail: suenker@uni-wuppertal.de*

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**ABSTRACT** The basic problem in the conceptualization of a social policy for children is the question of their rights to specific patterns of life that would remove naturalistic conception of a deficiency of child as compared to the adults. This not only emphasises children's right to sharing social services, but also foregrounds the question of their subjectivity, which has by and large remained neglected in research in children's culture. Since the question of subjectivity has immense pedagogical importance, the paper tries to negotiate both social policy and pedagogy.

### INTRODUCTION

Contemporary discourses in the field of social policy deal with the problem of social cohesion and social integration especially with respect to the younger generations (see Stephens, 1995; Sünker, 1998). There is a shift in these discourses that is affecting pedagogical discourses, too, because what is brought to the fore now is the question of social control in a new shape.

In his basic contributions to the issue of prevention and societal development, Robert Castel (1983; see Castel, Castel, and Lovell, 1982) has drawn attention to the fact that social control, as the conception of steering groups of the population, is the new meaning of prevention today. Briefly, this means the substitution of "dangerousness" by "risk". The chance to integrate individuals into society is thought of as a technical problem in a technical sense. Like Chorover (1979) has also shown, certain sciences are interested in the power of behavior control - this is meant to be the basis of integration into society without any resistance (see Sünker, 1984, pp. 230-232). It is easy to show some connections or relations between this discussion and the discussion about "childhood" and "children" especially "children at risk" with some key words:

"pedagogization", "therapeutization",

"medicalization", and increasing juridical importance (see Wambach, 1981); one can add eugenics (see Beck, 1988), screening, and predictors of behavior disorder already in the case of infants (Hellerich, 1983). At the same time - against a manichaeistic view of the world and societal development - it is necessary to relate these discussions to professional conceptualizations in the field policy for children, child services, and child welfare extending to the debate about alternatives to compulsory, custodial child care.

Here are some key words to describe the ambiguity: empowerment versus social engineering; social support versus social control (see van Krieken, 1986; Cochran, 1987; Heyns, 1987; Bardy, 1988).

These considerations contain the question of the design space and the leeway of professional action in social services; a question against the background of a general criticism of professional action including the hypothesis that action in this society can always only be action in a functional manner with regard to the means and aims of this society, that is, to the power structure of this society.

Therefore I would like to quote from a text from 1980 that determines the conditions and consequences of professional social educational action in dealing with children and adolescents on the basis of perceiving society as a welfare state:

"It makes an essential difference whether youth welfare deals with people as potential deviants, or whether it sees itself as an institution to support and enable people to change disadvantaged and problematic conditions of life. In the first case, interventions are aimed at an early correction of individual behavior; in the other case, at the correction of concrete circumstances of life. In the first case, there is already a controlling and disciplinary effect, and thus, also

a specific difference in power between professionals and the people concerned, while in the second case, the expert works in the service of groups that he considers to be able to help themselves in principle." (Jugendbericht, 1980: 190; translated).

Even if the authors of the Jugendbericht acknowledge at the same time that their call for "progressive forms of action" (in contrast to the classic repressive forms) has not yet been complied with, it is nevertheless important to know that there are further answers in case of the question about the success of socialization processes in the context of actual social conditions and contradictions. A foundation for that is the first paragraph of the West German youth welfare act that states: "Each German child has the right to be educated to physical, emotional, and social competence". At the same time, this formulation builds a certain relation of tension to Article 6, Paragraph 2 of the West German constitution that states: "The care and education of children is both a natural right and the primary duty of parents. The community of the state watches over their activities."

Hence, the children's sharing in services by the state is restricted in favor of the family by the constitution: The right to education, which should be claimed by children and which must be filled concretely, is therefore first of all a problem of education within the family and a problem of family structures as well. Accordingly, it is not the relation between the social construct "child-hood" and the rights of children that is made topical, but more that the children are subject to the parental relation of power. Although "parental power" was changed to "parental care" in the reformation of parental custody on January 1st 1980, so that the child is at least no longer presented *prima facie* as the object of parental heteronomy, the relation between parents and children is actually still seen in a naturalistic way and not as a socially formed relationship. In this way, problems in the relation between children and parents are defined by the legally vague term "child benefit" (Kindeswohl). This term of child benefit builds the basis of legal proceedings and procedures, for example, in matters relating to family problems or guardianship. These can refer to:

regulations of custody and visits in case of divorce; interventions in case of abuse of parental care; adoption procedures; and so forth (see Simitis et al., 1979). With regard to questions about a policy for children, it is especially unfortunate that the legal handling of the term child benefit primarily considers the physical-material conditions of children's lives and only secondarily deals with the emotional dimension of child benefit (Simitis et al., 1979: 30-32).

### CHILDHOOD AND CHILDREN'S LIVING CONDITIONS

"The history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awake. The further back in history one goes, the lower the level of child care, the more likely children are to be killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorized, and sexually abused. It is our task here to see how much of this childhood history can be recaptured from the evidence that remains to us." (de Mause, 1975: 1).

It is not only knowledge about the tension in legal policy between parental rights, the family principle, and child benefit that meanwhile has asserted itself against the optimism of evolution theory and social history expressed in this famous first sentence of de Mause's book. Moreover, even the insights into the contradictoriness of being a child today have grown: societalization intrudes into the lifeworlds of families and small systems; the social disadvantages; material poverty and emotional problems as consequences of the poverty and wealth of children's lifeworlds have initiated a discussion in childhood research during the past few years that takes childhood as a social phase of life. This goes beyond the technical reductions of the experts and strives to overcome limited sociopolitical claims of children with the help of a comprehensive understanding of childhood focusing on the children's conditions and life patterns (see Pfeffer/Behera, 1996).

This approach also implies some criticism of the few given considerations on a conceptualization of social policy for children, most of which argue along the lines of control-theory or family policy, that is, following the common

subordination of children to the family principle (Lüscher, 1984; Kaufmann, 1984). This reduction to family policy is both certainly largely due to the state of socialization theory policy (see Alanen, 1988; Geulen, 1987) and political positions (see Damon, 1995). Nevertheless, theoretical approaches based on the concept of childhood as well as historical research on childhood should give the insight that childhood is a sociohistorical and sociocultural product (see Ariès, 1962). Available empirical surveys on conditions and quality of children's lives (Lang, 1985) or on children's everyday lives and family environment (Engelbert, 1986) have also clearly shown that a social policy for children has not yet been realized in West Germany. Instead, they have made it obvious that it is necessary to obtain more exact knowledge about the children's patterns of life that should be seen as a mediation between the conditions and the events of their lives. This could then make it possible to explain and even realize more far-reaching conceptualizations of a social policy for children. Beside the topic of violence against children and the sexual abuse of children (Honig, 1986), which has received increasing attention in West Germany during recent years, research on the situations and patterns of children's lives, which always must be thought of in their relation to the family or society in general, would have to take into account the factors of conditions and the indicators of strain in these lives. There is, however, the problem of relating, in a rather general way, noticeable indicators of privilege and disadvantage to each other so that concrete and also theoretically relevant results are produced. Among other things, it will be a matter of such factors of conditions and indicators of strain of children's lives that contain social and biographical references: social place of childhood, ecology, institutions dealing with childhood (e.g., family, nursery school, school, the media, social ecology, and nowadays genetic engineering); among the indicators of strain: social disadvantages, family situation (e.g., working conditions/unemployment, relationship between parents, problems of separation as well as divorce, illness, death, size of family, living conditions, social or peer-group relations).

In this respect, a basic problem in the concep-

tualization of a social policy for children is the question about the children's right to specific patterns of life that would remove naturalistic conceptions of a deficiency of children as children - in contrast to the status of adults (see Mason, 1994; Zelizer, 1985). On the one hand, this implies the right of sharing in social services that I have mentioned at the beginning of my considerations. On the other hand, the basic question about subjectivity, the constitution of the subject (Sünker, 1989), is made topical; a question that has only been dealt with marginally in the previous discussion of childhood within the framework of approaches of research on children's culture (Hengst, 1985).

Taking this into consideration, my opinion is that the question on the conditions of a constitution of subjectivity has to be the social theoretical basis of dealing with the topics "childhood" and "child welfare". Correspondingly, I think we should come to an agreement on what we are talking about in the context of "childhood and prevention". To put it more exactly: It is a matter of settling the question of what the preconditions are for "risky situations"; the reason for intervening in a child's life with measures of prevention (see Castel, 1983). Thus, we must first of all investigate the character of processes of societalization of a certain social formation within which the situation of being a child, growing up, or certain stages of growing up may possibly become risky.

In the recent social theoretical debate, the changes of social developments and the changes in the processes of societalization have been given increasing attention, primarily with regard to the categories of "society of risks" (Beck, 1986) and "society of uncertainties" (Evers and Nowotny, 1987). In a special way, the title of a publication by Wambach "Der Mensch als Risiko. Zur Logik von Prävention und Früherkennung" (Man as Risk. On the Logic of Prevention and Early Diagnosis) (1983) is related to our considerations.

All these analyses discuss on a general and sometimes also on a somewhat more concrete level the effects of more recent forms of societalization on the conditions and patterns of life (differentiated according to specific classes or cultures) within the corresponding types of society.

The form of constitution of subjectivity primarily as "individualization", which is due to the capitalistic form of societalization, was analysed in its effects on family structures and relations and in its consequences for the relation to children in particular by Beck (1986):

"With the process of individualization within the family ... the social relations and the quality of relations to the child are also changing. ... The child becomes the *last remaining, permanent and inexchangeable primary relation*. Partners come and go, the child remains. ... As relations break up between the sexes, the child gains a monopoly character for a viable togetherness, for the experience of emotions in the to and fro of creatures, which otherwise is becoming increasingly rare and dubious. In the child, an anachronistic social experience is cultivated and celebrated that is exactly improbable and longed for in the process of individualization. The pampering of the children, the 'production of childhood' that children - these poor, overloved creatures - are provided with, and the ugly fighting over the children during and after divorce are some of the signs of this." (p. 193; translated).

#### SOCIAL THEORY, SUBJECTIVITY, AND THE COLONIZATION PROCESS

A general frame of reference for an analysis of these processes is built by a critical social theory that analyzes the conditions and forms of "Vergesellschaftung" of the members of a certain society, asks the question on the power of integration within a social formation, and, at the same time, on its patterns of legitimacy and its production of loyalty. It also deals with the conditions of the constitution of subjectivity, a question that is connected with the problems of societalization.

The articles on "colonization of space and time" by Henry Lefebvre (1972, 1972a) and on "colonization of the lifeworld" by Jürgen Habermas (1981) presented basic elements of such problems. They first of all aimed at what they label as pathologies in the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld or as a deformation of everyday life; they also deal with the differently shaped resistance of subjects to these problems that negate subjectivity. In this way, they gener-

ally refer to considerations that were previously modeled by Marx in the concept of the transition from formal to real subsumption of living work capacity by capital, and in his specific presentation of the contradictory structure of the relation between capital and work. Accordingly, the main points are the question of the form of integration into capitalist society, the consequences for the members of the bourgeois, capitalist society in their relationship to each other and to both internal and external nature, the social and individual costs, and also the emancipatory potentials of historic processes.

Within a framework of a formulation of a theory of historic processes oriented toward practical philosophy, it can be stressed that up to now the processes of man's increasing and decreasing realization of human potential have balanced each other in history. What corresponds to this process on the level of individual existence in late capitalism is an increase in the degree of alienation that finds its extreme expression in "second degree alienation", that is, in the alienation from alienation (Lefebvre, 1975: 347) and thus in the disappearance of a consciousness of alienation (Lefebvre, 1972: 83 and 134).

In his undertaking of a "criticism of everyday life", Lefebvre develops a theory of subjectivity and a theory of modernity. Within this framework, the concept of colonization is of a systematical status resulting from his opinion of the present state of the capitalist formation of society as a "bureaucratic society of controlled consumption" (1972). Viewed against a systematically presented historical development of the deformation of everyday life into ordinariness, this society becomes "the social place of highly developed exploitation and carefully controlled passivity" (Lefebvre, 1972a: 149), so that strategies of a social dealing with the ordinariness, with the people living in it, with associated objectives and reasons can be identified.

Even if Lefebvre's interest and objective can be connected to the content of Habermas's statements on communicative rationality as the constitutive condition of reason, freedom, and subjectivity, Lefebvre - just to fill this perspective materialistically in his analysis - goes decisively beyond Habermas's deductions that lie in his substantial limitation to problems of the symbolic

reproduction of the lifeworld. He develops a concept of the "reproduction of conditions of production" (Lefebvre, 1974) and links it with his opinion that the criticism of everyday life includes the criticism of political economy (1973: 262).

Insisting on the necessity of a theory of societal labor (1977, Vol. I, p. 140), Lefebvre can make the role of the economy in the process of social reproduction a central theme (1972, pp. 266-267, p.177, Vol.III, p.159). He combines this with discussions on the "political meaning" of the criticism of political economy and its object (1969, p. 14, 1975, pp. 114-115), ending in the conclusion that the analysis of the economic basis only allows the realization of the basic structure of a society, but that it does not yet lead to insights into how it actually works (1977, Vol.III, p.153).

This also includes the acquisition of a theoretical approach and apparatus to help define processes of producing and reproducing social conditions in contrast to the production of things. Based on this approach, Lefebvre justifies his intention to open up the definitions of the term "capital", as they were categorically understood by Marx, toward their underlying real historical processes and movements. This means that limitations arising from the object of criticism of political economy, which is the capitalistic society, must be surmounted, because economic thinking and an enclosed, limited understanding of production in a materialistic sense enjoys some priority in this society. A conception of production as "production of man by man himself, by means of diverse works in the course of history" (1975: 114-115) not only builds the background but also opens up a perspective to qualify the state of "modernity" as a historical product of social practices and, by this, its transitional character (1977, Vol.III, p.164).

Lefebvre's reference to Marx's concept of the production paradigm within which the unity of a double process of work and reproduction of social relations is described, emphasizes - in contrast to the way this is done in Habermas's separation of the material from the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld - the mediation between the practical relations of people to nature that is projected into the image of a reconcilia-

tion between man and nature by Lefebvre and Adorno and the historically changing production of relationships among human beings.

A conscious production of social relations is first of all opposed by attempts of the capital to reach totality that are reconstructed by Lefebvre for the different historical stages of this movement for accomplishment and in its consequences on appearances at the surface of societies without disregarding those constitutive circumstances of the conditions of capital that are established deep in the structure. This approach enables Lefebvre to classify the actual movement for accomplishment and consolidation of the conditions of capital that has the image of a self-realization movement, basically as access to subjectivity in the form of access to space and time.

Thus, with a historical-systematic intention, Lefebvre's theories of modernity, of the urban, of the cumulative and noncumulative processes - and associated types of time - and of ordinariness overlap: Hence the stages and processes of development in both human history and the history of capitalism become the object of analysis. The subsumption movement of the capitalization process takes place without the latter disappearing in it, by means of a double process in the modern world: the process of complexity and homogenization.

"What matters to us is to see the unity of the double process and perhaps to realize its inner conflicts. The homogenization, i.e., the mimesis, is hidden in the complexity. Nevertheless, it is not inconceivable that one day the qualitative complexity will be the winner over the world of the homogeneous where the differences are only fictitious." (Lefebvre, 1975: 266; translated).

Now, what is decisive is to analyze into which different shapes and forms this process of complexity and homogenization, which characterizes modernity, splits up and can be split up in order to see how the attempt is made to realize the aim of this subsumption process, the conditioning of the individual (1977, Vol.III, p. 169) and the negation of subjectivity: Hidden in the process of the "Vergesellschaftung of society" there is a dialectical movement:

"Totality or rather totalization; individualization (or the "personalization" that has started

in individualism - and also failed, by the way); finally, particularization which has been aggravated into segregation by means of a very efficient analysis of the functions of groups and occupations. This triple movement contains a variety of contradictions." (1977, Vol. III, p. 166; translated).

This process that traces back uniformation with its essential consequences to processes of separation like cutting up the coherence of life into work, private life, and leisure time (1972, pp. 86-88, 1978, pp. 254-256; see Süunker, 1984, pp. 23-25), finds its final stage of development in the access to ordinariness that covers up the process of uniformation from above, and this suppresses the differences because it is even more extensively cut up than work is (1978: 146).

Owing to this form of totalization of society that splits up into the triple movement of societalization, particularization, and individualization (1978: 326 and 340), there is a decisive limitation of constitutional conditions of subjectivity and competence of acting: "Attitudes' have taken the place of autonomous occupations" (1972: 243). What this decisive development builds up complementary to the one that comprehends the conditions of existence of members of this society, is an importance that lies in the fact that "the ordinary in modern world ... has ceased to be a 'subject' (full of potential subjectivity) in order to become an 'object' (of social organization)" (1972: 88).

This puts in concrete terms what Marx has defined on the level of a categorical differentiation of the term capital for the position of work and of living work capacity: Work as the general productive force of wealth, as subjectivity, is reduced to the purpose of being an element of the capital (see Marx, 1972: 205).

The programming of ordinariness as a mechanism of power, and privatism as a form of existence of the members of the late capitalistic society complement one another. In its connection to privatism, ordinariness, which is in fact cut up into pieces though it is equipped with an appearance of unity, leads to passivity, to nonparticipation (Lefebvre, 1975, pp. 120-122, 1974, p. 102, 1972a, p.195, 1978, p.146).

Detailed studies on the structure and content of privatism lead Lefebvre to the opinion

that this privatism builds the basis or the end of an advancement of the individual and must not be mistaken for the realization of the individual because it rather arises from the substitution of subjectivity by some subjectivism. (Lefebvre, 1973, p.30, 1978, p.246).

Alternatives that serve to prevent this negative development arise from a practice that has to be developed both individually and socially and that is founded in a new form of thinking and acting and their unity: The basics of this are, on the one hand, a loss of meaning that comes along with the totalizing building of a system, and thus a substantial inability to integrate, and, on the other hand, what Lefebvre characterizes as the project of the "total human being": it is the human being as an individual who has recognized himself:

"The 'real acquisition' of humanity through humanity itself, the acquisition of nature - and also the inner nature of humanity, too - by the social being, and thus the return of the human to itself with all the 'wealth of development', so that this wealth will develop again in everyday practice, will eventually take place, become reality." (1978, p.358; translated).

## PERSPECTIVES

Even Hegel - to remain within the specifically German tradition - has already analyzed in his "Philosophie des Rechts" (philosophy of right) the interrelations between the members of the bourgeois society as being externally and particularistic. In contrast to that, Marx spoke of the "association of free individuals" in his "Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie" (Foundations of the critique of political economy). Taking into account the previous considerations, the consequences of this external connection are becoming increasingly obvious today. A concept of "children at risk" that is based on the foregoing analyses has to center on the relation between subjectivity and social orientation. The future of the "individual" and the social system, as it is established in capitalistic societies, is tied together in an inverse relationship: If the "individual" should survive, the social system has to be changed and vice versa. Some corresponding approaches and topics can

be found in the debates by Postman (1982), Hengst (1981), and Wambach (1981; see Castel, Castel, and Lovell, 1982).

Processes of individualization taking the shape of subjectivism, individualism, and privatism also lead to consequences for the social figuration of "childhood". The individualization of the social status "child" is backed up by processes of differentiating family relationships (e.g., families without fathers/mothers, new partners of the parents), so that children experience very different social settings. This leads to a pluralization of biographies and to the disappearance of the foundations of the concept of "normal life" as it is determined by the welfare state as a starting point for measures of prevention and intervention. This, however, does not effect a pluralization of chances in life for everybody, but essentially promotes the segregation of society, which in turn - as the analyses of Lefebvre have shown - lays the foundation for improved social control and social disciplining of potential subjects.

In this way, the aim of an enlightened modern age, the autonomy of everybody's practical life on the basis of universal principles (justice, freedom, equality), is counteracted. At the same time, it is becoming clear that today the attack on autonomy, the functionalization and conditionalization of individuals - if it is meant to be successful - has to start off with a colonization of childhood.

It is my opinion that the social theoretical and social political discussion about prevention - especially with regard to "children at risk" - has to go back to the history of childhood in the bourgeois world and try to learn something from these processes. Based on ethnographic or civilization-theoretical arguments, some studies within the current German research in the field analyze the social determination and construction of children's lives, of being a child, as well as images of childhood by concepts derived from the history of childhood. They analyze the philanthropic discourse on childhood that includes the support as well as the control of children as the process of "Pädagogisierung" ("pedagogization") of childhood. This process aims at a specific qualification of the members of a social class to take part in social life, that is, de facto to

take part in economic competition (Richter, 1987; Wild, 1987).

In the context of an ideology-critical destruction of what can be decoded as "possessive individualism" (MacPherson, 1962), it is obvious that egoism, privatism, and the welfare of all have always excluded each other; but nowadays the consequences of this process of "Vergesellschaftung" have left traces in everybody's life. That is why childhood, the social cultural product of working on the "fact of development" in the first phase of human existence (Bernfeld, 1967: 51), should not be linked as a function to the predominant social conditions today. Perhaps, it is only by means of strengthening the independence of children's lives - of their subjectivity - and by taking seriously everybody's rational talents, that one may succeed in structuring pedagogical, familial, and generally social acting in such a way that today's decisive risk "future" becomes workable as a problem of a just world. Therefore, the pedagogical is political.

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