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## The Problems with Using the Concept of 'Citizenship' in Early Years Policy

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**ABSTRACT** Early years policy increasingly uses the concept of 'citizenship' in relation to children in Australia and worldwide. This concept is used as a taken-for-granted idea; however, there is no singularly agreed-upon answer to the question of what 'citizenship' means when used in relation to children, and what practical considerations it carries both for policymaking and for implementation. This article introduces theoretical ideas of 'citizenship' from the field of political theory in order to begin a discussion on how we imagine and might imagine children as citizens in policy discourses. Some conceptualisations of children as citizens are also discussed and questioned as starting points to consider in regard to the use of the notion of children as citizens in policy and practice.

### Introduction

'Citizenship' has become a buzzword for the early years spectrum, ranging from policy to the care and education of young children. This term appears in policies, pedagogical frameworks (e.g. Fleer et al, 2006), curriculum documents (e.g. Stonehouse, 2001), behaviour management discourses (e.g. Porter, 2003), and code of ethics documents (e.g. Early Childhood Australia, 2006), in various contexts and meanings. 'Citizenship', as a concept utilised in discourses surrounding children, is neither a new idea nor a new strategy. The turn of the twentieth century saw its use in engaging children in the nation-building exercise worldwide (Brennan, 1994; Ailwood, 2004; James & James, 2004; Millei, 2007). The recent use of the concept of 'citizenship' in relation to children appeared concurrently with varied discussions concerning the democratic prospects in wide-ranging fields, such as schooling, public discourses, and policy discourses (Kivisto & Faist, 2007). The United Nations' (1989) *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (the *Convention* hereafter) and its appropriation in social policy and children's services also fuelled the use of this concept and operated on the assumption that there was a legal-political link between citizenship and rights. The assumption that one could not exist without the other contributed to the propagation of the use of the concept of 'citizenship' as it pertains to children.

This article focuses on the uses of the concept of 'citizenship' in early years policy since the turn of the twenty-first century, such as that of the Gallop Labor state government in Western Australia (2001-2005), or the Rudd Labor federal government's (2007-present) policy initiatives in Australia. The concept of 'citizenship' utilised in these policies constitutes children as agentic and active participants of communities, and as willing partners in a future-building enterprise (Millei & Lee, 2007; Millei, 2008). While these discourses related to children's citizenship have the potential to empower children they also deliver a normalising framework that structures a field of possibilities for children's and adults' conduct. Another risk is that if the concept of 'citizenship' is

employed without the explication of its purposes, rather than acting on children's behalf it remains a tokenistic discourse. The use of the concept of children's 'citizenship' appears to be unproblematic in early years policies; however, its use is not neutral at all. The concept itself is rarely questioned or explained, and the assumption of its neutrality serves to cover up a number of problems. This article, therefore, begins the task of outlining some of the understandings of 'citizenship' in political theory. It also considers its use in relation to other public discourses in order to highlight the complex discourses, power relations and positions it constitutes.

The Rudd government embarked on a so-called education revolution after its election in 2007 (Rudd & Macklin, 2007). The early years education and services occupy a priority position in this reform. This positioning is similar to the international field (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005) in that most developed countries have claimed some kind of urgency in addressing issues and policies around the early years. Service provisions for young children moved up on policy agendas in most of the countries belonging to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) since the 1990s (OECD, 2001). This interest in the early years has been coupled with an increased investment in this sector. In Australia, global discourses, mixed with local initiatives, created the possibilities for the birth of various programs and agendas for the early years, such as: the proposal of a national curriculum framework; integrated services that centre around the school and include health and social services; the revisions of the regulatory and accreditation frameworks for child care and related services; the increase in the numbers of four-year-trained teachers in the sector; and the extension of affordable services (Government of Western Australia, 2004; Commonwealth of Australia, 2007; Rudd & Macklin, 2007; Early Childhood Development Sub-group, 2008).

The general intention of this heightened attention is to increase investment into the early years to provide access to quality early learning for 'all Australian children' (Rudd & Macklin, 2007, p. 3). Thus, the emphasis has shifted from the availability of *care* for working parents' children to providing early *learning* experiences. The federal Australian Labor Party (ALP) states that while the rationale of care remains important, the reform will also ensure 'the provision of age-appropriate play-based care and an early learning and care environment that seeks to equip a young child for a life of learning' (Rudd & Macklin, 2007, p. 9). Despite these claims, the overarching underlying principle for the investment into early learning is based on human capital theory that seeks to produce a future productive citizenry (Millei, 2008). As the ALP maintains: with higher investment, 'Australia will enjoy the economic benefits of higher quality human capital' (Rudd & Macklin, 2007, p. 9). The ALP uses research from cost-benefit analyses of early education (such as Barnett & Escobar, 1987; Heckman, 1999; Barnett & Hustedt, 2003; Cunha & Heckman, 2006; Currie & Blau, 2006) and brain research (for example Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000) to underpin the necessity of the increased funding of the sector.

Thus, for reasons of the heightened importance of the early years and the increased use of the concept of 'citizenship' in policy documents, this article sets out to problematise the use of the concept of 'citizenship' for children in the Australian policy field. 'Citizenship' appears in these policies as taken for granted and its possible meanings or the practical considerations related to its use are almost never discussed (Millei, 2008). This article contributes to filling this gap in the literature by engaging in a discussion about some understandings of 'citizenship' according to political theory. It also aims to raise awareness of some of the im/possibilities of children's participation carried by different definitions that are embedded in policy discourses.

The article first explores the concept of 'citizenship' as it is utilised in political theory and aligns those concepts with a textual analysis of examples from the current policy scene in Australia. This analysis highlights this concept's different uses and the ways in which each understanding maps out a field of possibilities for children's participation. It also sheds light on the inherent danger of using a general and unquestioned concept of 'citizenship' that might close down democratic possibilities and processes. Using the concept of 'citizen' for the child as an unproblematic notion considers democracy as a completed project by proposing that children and adults are the same kinds of citizens and relationships are subsequently 'democratised'. This assumption is a dangerous one since it encourages a kind of complacency that stops any attempt at positive change and cancels the need for any real democratic reform.

This is an important work since the concept of 'citizenship' and its related ideas, such as the constitution of the 'citizen', 'a citizen's rights' and so on, all have a history and an intellectual

baggage that shape interpretations and implementations of current policy discourses. It is only by unpacking that baggage that we can outline those uses of these ideas that might benefit children.

### **Liberal Ideas of Citizenship**

There are a number of different ways in which citizenship has been thought about and enacted in the past, with a broad range of interpretations (Kivisto & Faist, 2007). For the purposes of this article and in the interests of brevity, we discuss only a few. We delineate some of the main strands of citizenship theory by selecting those that appear in recent Australian policies regarding the early years. In our discussion we are not positing liberal views of citizenship against cosmopolitan, as against multiculturalism and so on. Neither is this a comprehensive treatment of the political problem of what constitutes the contested concept of 'citizenship'. Here, we operate on two intertwined assumptions: first, we assume that we are highlighting some of the more commonly used understandings of citizenship in the Australian context; and second, we seek to discuss the liberal-democratic terms for the most part since Australia is assumed by most participants to be a liberal-democratic state.

#### *Classical Liberalism and the Idea of the Citizen*

Our first port of call is the European Enlightenment. There are multiple understandings of 'the' Enlightenment and there are also multiple 'Enlightenments'. Here, we intend to demonstrate that liberal-democratic ideas informing present notions of citizenship are firmly grounded in the original modern discussions of liberalism as well as the modern notion of democracy. For us, this means that we use a history of ideas approach to examine liberalism as it develops in revolutionary England in the 1600s, revolutionary France and the United States in the 1700s, and how thinkers such as Locke, John Stuart Mill, Rousseau, and their eventual American counterparts Jefferson, Washington, and others considered to be the founders of the liberal democratic ideals of modern nation-states formulated ideas about citizens (Arblaster, 1984). For us, the Enlightenment is grounded in this debate surrounding liberal ideas that acted in opposition to monarchies, hierarchies, and religion, and posited the equal moral worth of all human beings as the most important normative consideration.

There are other ways to conceptualise the Enlightenment, and there are other considerations, such as how German Idealism and the Kantian world view changed European notions of Enlightenment, how the Russian Enlightenment was stunted, and how the Scottish Enlightenment flourished. For us, the Enlightenment signals a shift in the debate, and a shift in the emphasis of the constitution of the person. As such we are primarily concerned with the way in which liberalism, liberal-democratic views, and modern nation-states in the 1700s and 1800s began to use these ideas. If we are limiting our discussion to Australia, and we are establishing the roots of current usage of liberal-democratic terminology in an assumedly liberal-democratic nation-state, then the use of the Enlightenment as a term delineating these considerations is helpful (Stokes, 1994; Gray, 1995).

During the Enlightenment, European concepts of 'citizens' as individuals and the 'citizenry' as a political body constituting groups of people provided a way in which to take the classical Greco-Roman idea further than the right to vote and observe the Senate being composed of representative political leaders. Learned liberals such as Locke, Mill and Rousseau sought to use classical ideas from ancient Greece and Rome in order to justify their concerns with liberty, as well as to emphasise a firm historical connection with a civilised Europe. In the Enlightenment version of republicanism, citizenship was premised on the idea of property ownership within a defined territory that naturally delivered rights to individuals. These rights were primarily the right of self-governance and to further one's interests, naturally tied to the property ownership, within a given city-state. This view developed into early modern versions of rights-based citizenships in revolutionary England, France and the United States.

Here, the development of liberal concepts of citizens and citizenship were tied to more sophisticated versions of natural rights theory that assumed that all 'men' were imbued with an equal moral worth upon their birth and that this liberty from external corruption was to be maintained. In the post-World War Two period, classical liberalism remained a potent force in the

discussions around citizenship in liberal-democratic states. Many of those discussions maintained a centrality of little government intervention, coupled with an inalienable right to private property, thus maintaining the public/private divide in a very specific manner. To be 'liberal' and democratic meant that governments had to be limited in their capacities to engage with private citizens, and that the property of those citizens was under their individual jurisdiction and could not be broached by the state (Arblaster, 1984). Thus, using this classical liberal notion of 'citizens' and 'citizenship' in regards to children is problematic, since children of any 'type' or 'kind' cannot own property and cannot cast a vote on how the prevailing authorities will deal with the circumstances surrounding their private property.

### *Rights Discourses*

In liberal theories of all kinds, private property plays a significant role. In the debate about what might constitute 'their own property' for private citizens in liberal-democratic states, the idea of individual rights has risen to prominence in the post-World War Two period. This is of course a long process, that begins with the advent of English Liberalism, and develops through the suffragettes and the anti-slavery movement in the 1800s and continues throughout the 1900s. This followed on from significant historical events, including the development and establishment of constitutional approaches to liberal democracies and the strengthening of their legal-political approaches to defining what citizens might be able to do. Property remained a focal point, for example, as did the question of whether this might include other people, such as wives, children, slaves, and servants. It is here that the 'rights agenda' was attached to citizens so that the guarantees expanded to suffrage, property ownership, and a universalised capacity to run for public office and to participate fully in the institutions developed in a given society.

Children are only recently being thought about as individual members of nations, societies or communities. As Qvortrup (1994) argues, children were regarded as part of families rather than individuals in their own right, whose lives were strongly entangled with families. Since the *Convention* (UN, 1989) and the emergence of the new sociology of childhood (James & Prout, 1997; Mayall, 2002), this notion started to change slowly. The *Convention* singled out children as a distinct group and 'their rights [were] considered separately from those of human beings generally' (Moss & Petrie, 2002, p. 104). In this discursive context moral and philosophical discourses connected and children's freedom, self-determination, equality and citizenship mapped out a field in which adults were considered capable of oppressing and exploiting children (Moss & Petrie, 2002). This discourse constituted children as a minority group that can be placed in emancipatory frameworks.

Thinking about children as agentic individuals and ratifying their rights contributed to understanding children as autonomous, strong and capable individuals and also to the conceptualisation of children as citizens. While in earlier policy discourses, the idea of 'citizenship' was not considered in relation to children's present membership in communities due to their perceived immaturity and inability to define and express what is good for them, recently children are understood as more akin to adults, and therefore as capable of taking up this position. As Turner (1986) explains, '[t]he movement of citizenship is from the particular to the universal, since particular definitions of persons for the purpose of exclusion appear increasingly irrational and incongruent with the basis of the modern polity' (p. 135). A good example for this discourse is the Rudd government's consultation paper (Early Childhood Development Sub-group, 2008), in which children are portrayed as 'competent and strong' with 'unique capabilities', and 'represent their thinking and learning in many ways' (p. 39). The document further develops this position with the following statement: 'children are able to form opinions and express and respect ideas. They are also able to develop a connection to their country and a sense of place within it and a sense of agency' (p. 36).

Rights discourses also contributed to the consideration of childhood as a '*structural* site that is occupied by "children" as a *collectivity*' (James & Prout, 1997, p. 14). This site's membership, however, is constantly changing. As James & Prout (1997) argue further, in political discourses the issues related to all children or the child as an individual are often conflated and that can cause the effect that 'principles such as "best interests" – which are, in fact, structural and culturally specific and refer to the collectivity of children – can be applied, unproblematically and always, to *the*

(individual) *child*' (p. 15, emphasis in original). Consequently, principles, such as the 'best interests of the child', might stand for children collectively (James & Prout, 1997) and can supersede or might act against individual children's or groups of children's rights.

The *Convention* and specifically Article 28 states: 'State Parties recognize the right of the child to education.' Education thus appears as a right of children. A policy document in Western Australia, 'Children First' (Government of Western Australia, 2004) ('Children First' hereafter), substituted 'play' for 'education', stating that children 'have the right to play' (p. 2). This conceptual shift might have been produced by the conflation of at least two discourses - first, the rights discourse regarding education; and second, discourses regarding the importance of 'play' in the early years (Ailwood, 2002; Wyness, 2006). In another example, the Rudd government proposes 'to make learning a right for all Australian children' (Rudd & Macklin, 2007, p. 10). Both of these statements resonate with the *Convention* and conceptualise 'play' or 'learning' as a right of children. These terms are used here unproblematically and interchangeably with children's rights to education expressed in the *Convention*.

'Education' is associated with schooling or other formal institutions, and appears as a right of the child according to the *Convention*. 'Play' or 'learning' is carried out by the child and these activities might also be located in environments outside of formal institutions, such as the family or playground. Due to this shift, 'education' is broadened to all facets of children's lives, and 'play' gained a strong educative focus. 'Play' and 'learning' also appear reconceptualised, due to this blending of discourses, as a duty. Play thus becomes a normative concern. The conflation of these discourses has the potential to produce a regulatory discourse in which 'play' and 'learning' are considered as the duty of the child in all situations and environments. It also shifts the emphasis from the provision of education, a government duty, to the learning of the child, a children's duty. Consequently, since children cannot learn in all environments, and they do not choose their environments, we are left with a significant problem due to this kind of 'slippage' of terms with children's participation. Other discourses, such as the one that constitutes children's learning as investment, contribute significantly to the problematic nature of this 'slippage'. We return to this idea below.

To weave this idea further, rights discourses mixing with pedagogical and curricular discourses might also lead to the assumption that children have an innate desire to learn (Fendler, 2001; Millei, 2007). The Early Years Learning Framework is a new national curriculum document for four-year-olds that was introduced by the Rudd government in July 2009. This document combines rights discourses with assumptions about children's learning. As the consultation paper (Early Childhood Development Sub-group, 2008) leading up to the devising of this document states, children have 'positive and robust dispositions ... towards learning' (p. 39).

Rights discourses coupled with the types of discourses that consider an innate desire for learning create avenues to enable this desire of the 'young citizen' to be satisfied. Considering 'learning' and 'play' as children's duty and maintaining the idea of an inner desire for learning lead us to the following questions: Are those children who show less willingness or capability and/or more difficulties in learning considered as citizens who are unable to fulfill their duties and therefore become 'second-class citizens'? Or perhaps these children will not be considered as citizens at all. Are those children who are disengaged from curriculum and pedagogy, and therefore unable to learn or do not wish to learn what is taught, considered as citizens? Even more provoking, are those children who do not desire, or who are unable, to participate in the so-called productive citizenship to secure the future prosperity of the state labelled as having learning difficulties? Which causes the other and why? Which comes first and how?

Discourses that engage children in learning as an investment for the future are quite prominent globally. In the Australian Government's document entitled *New Directions for Early Childhood Education* (Rudd & Macklin, 2007), this standpoint is outlined clearly:

Investing more in human capital formation and investing it earlier leads to increased educational attainment and labour force participation, with higher levels of productivity. ... Australia will face a new set of economic and social challenges in coming decades, and it will need a workforce with higher productivity and participation. Early childhood learning and care are a major part of meeting this challenge. (p. 3)

Overall, the government's interest is to produce productive citizens for the future economy (Rudd & Macklin, 2007). Human capital theory provides a strong rationality and justification for the state's investment in the early years (Millei, 2007). In the discursive context of human capital theory, the use of the concept of children's 'citizenship' gains a distinct understanding.

Human capital theory first emerged during the post-World War Two period. During this time, arguments strengthened about the role of education in increasing economic productivity globally (Marginson, 1993). Human capital theorists assumed a direct causal relationship between investment in education and the productivity of labour, and between labour productivity and individual earnings. It was assumed that investing in education brought economic benefits and growth. Human capital theory appeared parallel in Australian educational discourses with an 'explicit shift from a focus on education as moral training and cultural conservation to a focus on the production of expertise – skilled human capital – for scientific, geopolitical and economic competitiveness' (Luke, 1997, p. 5). Human capital theory, regardless of the fact that it was based on counterfeit empirical research (Marginson, 1997), resulted in increased federal levels of activity in the early years.

As a result of increased globalisation and the growing strength of multinational companies to govern the world economy, education, and within that the early years, became a key in maintaining the competitiveness of national economies both internationally and nationally (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). In spite of human capital theory's ineffectiveness to raise economic productivity being proved during the 1970s' economic recession (Marginson, 1993), the usefulness of the theory to underpin strategic investments by governments did not cease. Investment in the early years - that is, the production of a flexible and lifelong learner future workforce - is thought to guarantee 'the social and economic functioning of society into the future' (Commonwealth of Australia, 2007, p. 4). In its recent format, human capital theory links economic productivity with human capital in terms of intellect, creativity (as a basis for innovation) and entrepreneurship as it appears in the 'Backing Australia's Ability' policy (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001).

Children are constituted as citizen partners in this future-building exercise and as life-long learner entrepreneurs in recent policy discourses on the early years (Millei, 2007). The state's interest is to produce these future 'smart, productive citizens' (Rudd & Macklin, 2007, p. 3). 'Children First' starts with the following statement: 'Children are our future' (Government of Western Australia, 2004, p. 1). Their early learning is the foundation not only for the development of healthy, competent and confident learners but also for the 'social, economic and political fabric of the next generation' (p. 3). Here, the child is constituted as a learner and early learning not only creates an environment for the learner to uphold his or her rights to learning, but seamlessly align this with the nation's interests. Further, it also changes the notion of the 'citizen' as one who must now guarantee to produce something for the state and its future. This type of participation attached to 'citizenship' and rights discourses engages children learners in learning as their duty and responsibility, thus become normalising and regulating. In this discursive assemblage children's present is denied completely. Their importance lies in the future. In these discourses children's citizenship is a means to an end rather than a guarantee for particular liberties, their future acting as a guarantee for prosperity very much like a medieval-era guild would view the productive capacity of the children of its members.

#### *Communitarian Ideas and Citizenship*

Communitarian concepts of 'citizenship' emphasise duties and obligations above and beyond notions of liberty. MacIntyre's (1984) work on communitarianism is a well-known touchstone for this kind of thinking about citizenship. His analysis was one that, among other things, was an attempt to discuss citizenship outside of the traditional divide within liberalism, between liberty and equality, together with the traditional divide between liberal individualism and socialist collectivism. From this perspective, communitarian ideas meant that citizens were to participate in a somewhat different way in terms of enacting their citizenship in a given community. MacIntyre developed ideas about duty and obligation much more fully than modern liberal versions did. MacIntyre claimed that citizens could realise all aspects of their lives related to freedom and equality through reciprocal arrangements in the form of duties they must perform in order to be

considered citizens as well as through particular kinds of obligations that were assumed as a result of being members of a given social, political and economic community. These duties and obligations would then outweigh liberal ideas of individualism, accumulation of capital without participation in the community, and freedom without consequences for the collectivity of the community.

MacIntyre's work and subsequent communitarian approaches are similar to early versions of republicanism that developed in the Enlightenment and are attempts at bringing together the needs of collectivities, or, to paraphrase Polanyi's (1957) work on political economy, a 're-embedding' of the economic into the social so that collective use of a capitalist system of exchange exists simultaneously with democracy within a social framework. This is still not the same as socialism, but might be akin to a kind of social democracy, the distinction being that socialism as a political ideology eschews competitive political parties and parliamentary democracy, and seeks to dismantle capitalism as a system of production, whereas social democracy is an ideology that seeks to reform capitalism and can accept competing political parties within parliamentary democracy. Both socialism and social democracy, like communitarianism, will place emphasis on collective problems and solutions, as opposed to liberalism, which is grounded in the fundamental principle of freedom of the individual.

Therefore, the type of community and the nature of collective problems have a crucial importance in understanding citizenship and freedom. References to children as citizens – indeed, citizens in general – in contemporary policy documents frame people as living in 'communities' of all kinds without defining what those communities might constitute. For example, 'Children First' draws on the adage 'it takes a village to raise the child' when it refers to children as part of 'communities in which they live' (Government of Western Australia, 2004, p. 5), and Early Childhood Australia's (ECA's) (2006) Code of Ethics calls for recognising 'children as active citizens participating in different communities, such as family, children's services and school' (p. 3). Simply attaching a label to the word 'community' is not a definition. Referring to the community where children live, the learning community, the community of a school or child care, the Aboriginal community, the migrant community, the community of a profession, and the like does not constitute a collectivity with duties and obligations until they can be demonstrated to function as such. Consequently, the idea that children can act as citizens in a communitarian version of the notion of 'citizenship' is problematic.

One of the key points that MacIntyre and subsequent communitarians have made is that this 'system' of duties and obligations is meant to be part of a demonstrable civic empowerment. For communitarians, there is a virtue in the 'good life' and an essential part of that good life is the political life. This is, of course, MacIntyre's revisiting of the Aristotelian view that participation in politics, and here he means the politics of the community, is the normatively correct path. The question remains, however, as to how we actually go about empowering and developing the political lives of children when they are not able to participate fully in political life in the same ways as adults in any given community apparatuses. They have neither the legal status nor the administrative capacity to do so. The fundamentals of a good political life, so essential to communitarian theory, are inaccessible to children, especially in institutional settings. It must also be said that one of the core ideas of communitarianism is the virtue of the political life as equated with the good life. This is a key normative aspect of the good communitarian citizen, but is absent from the discourse on children as citizens since children are rarely politicised citizens with the capacity to act politically.

#### *Moving beyond the Nation-State*

There is at least one other fundamental definitional component to the concept of 'citizenship' that appears commonly in early years policy discourses: the nation-state. Liberals, social-democrats, and communitarians have all developed their ideas from within the confines of the nation-state. Citizens are members of political communities that might not begin nationally, but they must necessarily end there. In the modern period, the status of citizenship allows individuals to access their rights and to actively complete their duties and obligations. In many cases, concepts of globalised citizens, global citizens, or cosmopolitan citizens have included a discussion about

moving beyond the nation-state reinforced by a kind of Kantian world view (Bauböck, 2002) emphasising universal normative concepts. In this context, we are referring to a particular kind of German Idealism, as delineated by Kant, in which there is a kind of 'world government' brought together by morality and reason.

Broadly speaking, a Kantian citizen is a world citizen, a cosmopolitan who has the capacity to enact their rights anywhere in the world, or at the very least in a plurality of spaces beyond the nation-state of their birth. Here, one of the most important points is that there are concerns that touch all human beings, and that these concerns are not bound by national borders. Global citizens would share concerns, perhaps about the environment, poverty, freedom from violence, and so on, but not in a Marxian sense in which a class antagonism develops and there is a revolution desired in order to overthrow world capitalism. In the case of this Kantian approach and what later became versions of liberal-institutionalism, individuals form associations that go beyond their nation-state and seek to develop cooperative initiatives based on this voluntary association. In some cases, these associations are based on working through the nation-state to go beyond it: for example, representing one's own national identity through an inter-governmental organisation like the United Nations. In other cases, individuals might form associations that involve organisations subverting their own nation-state and working for some kind of socio-political change. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) delivering food aid, medical care, disaster relief, and so on might well involve an ethical stance that goes beyond a national citizen identity and instead focuses on global civil society.

For example, ECA's (2006) Code of Ethics states that early childhood workers facilitate the understanding of children themselves as 'global citizens with shared responsibilities to the environment and humanity' (p. 3). This idea returns in the Rudd government's consultation paper (Early Childhood Development Sub-group, 2008, p. 44). But again, where are the children? The rights-based approach has some merit in that a charter for the rights of the child is part of precisely this approach. It is a move towards a global citizenry of children, a kind of cosmopolitan civic culture of childhood. Unlike adult versions of this idea, children cannot activate these rights on their own. Furthermore, they are constituted as global citizens in order to act upon a shared issue, shared problem, shared area of concern. Thus, these issues do not arise as their own community's concerns but are rather assigned by the prevailing authorities so that they must now think of themselves as 'global citizens'.

There is much more to this in terms of the extensions of communitarian ideas into cosmopolitanism (Vertovec & Cohen, 2002) in which individuals can conceive of themselves as citizens of the world rather than of a nation-state with borders and limitations on daily practices. For example, while adults might have the capacity to think of themselves as cosmopolitan, they can only do so with the material conditions and the administrative/legal capacity that is manipulable and that children cannot possibly have. Children cannot obtain passports on their own, they cannot obtain work permits for a variety of countries, and they cannot travel around the world at their own discretion. Global citizenry means that people can do all of these things and have the capacity to move beyond their national borders. First, if 'global citizenship' is understood by early childhood policy documents according to this definition of the concept, then the use of the term 'global citizen' is applied in a very loose way. Second, if the normative position is taken up that children should be concerned with the global environment, then children's global participation in this issue is possible, but mostly through a kind of regulated freedom.

### **The General Questions and Discussion**

The ideas of 'citizen' and 'citizenship' remain contested concepts in social and political theory, and to employ them in early years policy discourses without a deep explanation and consideration of the implications of what they might mean is highly problematic. If we are asking children to act as citizens, are they to be liberal citizens with minimal participation limited to voting on some key issues, social democratic citizens participating in the governing of the institutions in which they spend their days, socialist citizens striving for a collective emancipation from capitalism, communitarians working on duties and obligations to and for someone or something termed as a community in which they dwell? Are children limited to specific possibilities because of their

phenotypical appearance as children, their acculturated gender, or their current earning capacity or social status? Can children form labour unions, press governments to change political and social conditions, demand changes from the institutions in which they find themselves, self-organise representative political parties, organise armies for defence of property and territory? All of these are at least possibilities for citizens in all sorts of situations and governments, and some of these we have dealt with and some are to be explored in further research on the topic. Citizenship of any kind is a political practice rather than an administrative status. Children are not yet part of this everyday political practice. We think the question still remains as to whether or not, and through what avenues, children can be part of this everyday political practice, and there is much work to be done in this area.

Another general set of questions that we might ask is what agency the concept of 'citizenship' grants to children and to what extent children's interests are aligned with these forms of agencies. What is the 'good life' for a child? What is the 'good life' for the child in the future as an adult and what is it at present? Is the pursuit of productivity and entrepreneurship the way to bringing them the 'good life'? By focusing on and acknowledging only their future, are not all children shut out from citizenship at the present? Or, coming from another angle, to what extent does considering the child as 'citizen' close down the democratising processes in policymaking and education that are progressing steadily on their way? Surely one of our considerations as pedagogues and/or caregivers is to develop a concern with what is the 'good life' in this context and to continuously debate it. Taking an Aristotelian position, we need to be concerned with what may be a life led in pursuit of the right and the just, as well as with leading a life that is fulfilling. If children experience a world in which they are abstracted from democratic practices through the use of 'citizenship' as a normalising concept, then we have a problem demonstrating this 'good life'.

This article has provoked a profound disquiet in the authors. Our original intention was to help clarify the use and possible misuse of the terminology associated with early childhood policy and practice. We had seen the terms 'citizen', 'global citizen', 'children as citizens', and so on in usage in these policy documents, and then reported in the news media as summaries of policy positions. Our intention was to unpack the intellectual baggage associated with these terms, as one might do when writing a standard social/political theory explication of a given topic. It is quite clear that the use of the term 'citizen' as it generally refers to children is highly problematic. There are a number of different ways in which to interpret the concept of the 'citizen'; some of these ways are not compatible with each other, and we cannot see how they can actually deliver on the structural capacity, in a legal-political manner, to engage children in the liberal project of citizenship in a modern nation-state. Our original problem was definitional in terms of clearing up how to go about employing the term 'citizenship' in policy discourse, and now our problem has become one of creating a way out of this theoretical dead end in which we see no road out.

This brings us to another problem. That is the problem of diversity in citizenship theory. Here we have briefly discussed some aspects of liberal theory, and some aspects of communitarianism. There are myriad other ways in which to think about and apply concepts of 'citizenship', including post-structural critiques, Foucauldian views, conservative and/or republican concepts, and so on. This presents a problem for us in that we are not able to address this complexity in a standard journal article, and we feel that even if we could, the entire project would be another dead end due to the conclusions we make here in the article. That is to say that children, as a social category, simply cannot act as citizens of any kind in the modern nation-state. There is no possible way in which to deliver the capacity to act freely, and this capacity is shrinking even further. Children cannot enjoy institutional freedoms, nor can they enjoy the freedom to organise, nor can they enjoy the freedom to own property, and to extract their labour from the 'learning environment'. For us, this represents a much greater problem or crisis than we had originally envisioned.

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