

'Children on the move are children first'

A Critical Analysis of Position Papers on Children on the Move from the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children

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Abstract

With children on the move at the forefront of policy-making and research in Europe in recent years, it has been argued that children's rights are increasingly encroached upon through tighter immigration controls and inconsistent policy interventions. The European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC) is an institution that aims to address children's rights violations at a regional level throughout Europe, meaning that it should in its promotion of core children's rights ensure a balance is reached between provision, participation and protection in addressing policy problems relating to children on the move. Through a discourse analysis this thesis critically examines how problems are represented in ENOCs position statements, and how ENOC represent and construct children and childhood in relation to children on the move. Our analysis indicated that the statements were predominantly based within a rights-based approach, especially where longer-term strategies were promoted. This reveals that ENOCs emphasis on the need for children's rights to take precedence over state sovereignty, that children's rights to participation and non-discrimination is accentuated over child protection perspectives, and that the recognition of the heterogeneity of the experiences of children on the move is endorsed. However, whilst ENOC seeks to move away from stereotypical notions of the migrant child, by promoting their agency and heterogeneity, children on the move are also represented in isolation in the position papers. Disassociated from family and adult migrants, children on the move are constructed as victims, vulnerable, dependent and in need of special care and assistance. In this light, their construction conveys a notion of complexity, however, it is also evident that their vulnerability is fostered in order to receive the protection and support they are entitled to, whether at a regional, European or international level.

Key words: Children on the Move, European Network of Ombudspersons for Children, Discourse analysis, Children's rights, Migration

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Introduction

Children on the move are a particularly at-risk group to face rightlessness. Despite the existence of global human rights conventions protecting the rights of this group, children on the move can face rightlessness because they do not fit within the set categories of citizenship of a certain state (Bhabha 2009, p.419). Though children on the move are in theory entitled to special rights and protection in accordance with for example the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Bhabha (2009, p.423; p.431) argues that there are discrepancies between the rights of children on the move in theory and in practice, which leads to different forms of rights violations. One of the reasons for this is that children on the move are not always considered to be ‘children’, when they do not fit within Western norms of childhood of vulnerability and dependency (Crawley 2011, p.1181; White et al 2011, p.1161; p.1163). Furthermore, a display of agency by children on the move risks undermining their right to protection (Crawley 2011, p.1181) making the tension between right to participation and right to protection particularly visible in the context of children on the move.

In recent years, policy-makers and academics have become increasingly interested in children on the move in Europe. In 2015, there were over 5 million migrant children living in Europe (UNICEF 2016, p.98). In the same year, about 1 in 3 of all asylum-seekers in Europe were children (UNICEF 2016, p.100). Despite a strong civil society movement advocating for equal rights of children on the move in Europe, many states have revised their policies and implemented limitations on children’s rights and access to services based on a child’s migratory status (UNICEF 2016, p.104). Consequently, children on the move often end up in the intersection between the interest of the state to control borders, and the universal rights of children as mandated in, for example, the UNCRC (Eastmond and Ascher 2011, p.1195). This is also emphasised by Bhabha (2001, p.293) who argues that there are inconsistencies in state policy interventions, with immigration control concerns on the one hand, and welfare protection concerns on the other. In addition, there is a developing trend where asylum is not a *right*, but a compassionate action from the destination state (Fassin 2005, p.371; Boyden and Hart 2007, p.237). In this perspective, children on the move have to be requalified as victims to be deserving of support, or they will be constructed and treated as threats to state sovereignty (Doná and Veale 2011, p.1278). These two stereotypical constructions of children on the move are argued to be an implication of the failure to recognise the wide-

ranging variations of experiences and identities of children on the move (Boyden and Hart 2007, p.243; Hedlund and Cederborg 2015, p.248; Crawley 2011, p.1181). Indeed, these constructions can also be perceived as contributing to a tension between participation and protection rights.

According to Ensor (2010, p.26) and Boyden and Hart (2007, p.240), the UNCRC is a highly relevant instrument in addressing the situation for children on the move. The UNCRC contains rights to provision, protection and participation and a 'good' practice working to promote children's rights should arguably balance these three categories. An institution that addresses children's rights violations on a regional level through the provisions of the UNCRC is the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children. The European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC) consists of 42 independent children's ombudspersons, or 'independent children's rights institutions' (ICRIs) in 34 European countries (enoc.eu, 2018) and carries out work "to promote and safeguard children's rights and to work on strategies for the fullest possible implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child" (enoc.eu, 2018; Thomas et al, 2011, p.433; Gran 2011, p.236). Each year, ENOC publishes a 'Position Statement' where they relay their collective views and solutions on specific children's rights issues. ENOC has published four position statements relating to children on the move, where they outline children's rights problems, and the actions that should be taken to resolve them.

To our knowledge, there is no critical research on how children's rights, children and childhood are constructed and represented in ENOC documents. According to Reynaert et al (2012, p.159), there is an overall lack of critical research regarding how children's rights are dominantly constructed, meaning that we cannot know "which constructions of children's rights might be beneficial for children and which constructions might produce opposite effects". Therefore, based on the above problematisations of the situation for children on the move, the lack of critical children's rights research, and ENOCs goal "to work on strategies for the fullest possible implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child" (ENOC Statutes, 2012, p.1), it is interesting to critically analyse how problems are represented in the position statements, and how the position statements represent and construct children and childhood in relation to children on the move.

Aim and Research Questions

The aim of our study is to critically analyse problem representations in ENOCs position statements relating to children on the move in order to elucidate how ENOC represents and constructs children on the move, their needs and children's rights.

- How are children's rights problems represented in ENOCs position statements relating to children on the move?
- What assumptions and presuppositions underlie the representations of problems?
- How are children on the move conceptualised within the problem representations in the position statements?
- What is left unproblematised or omitted in the problem representations and the conceptualisations of children on the move?

The position statements are similar in structure to a global policy document (Milner 2014, p.480) with problem representations and 'solutions' to the representations. Due to this structure, and our aim to explore representations and constructions found in policy problems relating to children on the move from a social constructionist perspective, a suitable method of analysis for the purpose of this study is Bacchi's (2009) critical policy analysis method 'What's the Problem Represented to be' (WPR). This method will allow us to distinguish problem representations, systematically explore the underlying assumptions and presuppositions and explore what is not being problematised.

Background and Definitions

This section begins by defining the term 'Children on the Move' and this is then followed by an overview of the organisation ENOC.

Children on the Move

We are generally using the term 'children on the move' or on occasion 'migrant child' for the purpose of this study. The term 'children on the move' and 'child migrant' is broader than for example 'refugee', 'asylum-seeker' or 'unaccompanied minor' and attempts to reflect the variety of situations, experiences and backgrounds of children on the move. This is also the general term used by organisations such as the UNHCR and UNICEF and is used by ENOC

in their latest 2013 Position Statement on Children on the Move. The term children on the move includes all categories of child migrants in all different situations and contexts, including for example refugee children, children migrating for other purposes, unaccompanied minors and children travelling with their family.

As mentioned in the introduction, many European states have revised policies and implemented limitations on children's rights and access to services based on a child's migration status (UNICEF 2016, p.104). Children on the move have to be recognised both as children and as asylum-seekers to qualify for special rights in the destination country (O'Connell Davidson and Farrow 2007, p.47). According to O'Connell Davidson and Farrow (2007, p.47), age disputes have become increasingly common (in 2007) leading to the practice of age assessments to determine childhood. These are often inexact and can also be very intrusive for the child (O'Connell Davidson and Farrow 2007, p.47).

O'Connell Davidson and Farrow (2007, p.11) argue that children on the move can be in a particular position of vulnerability due to three factors: immigration regime in the destination country; poor economic situation and labour market in the destination country; and xenophobia and discrimination. UNICEF (2016, p.40) list some of the issues children on the move can face, including legal status, statelessness, language barriers, limited social networks, violence from the state, psychological and social effects on children's mental health, and trafficking for child labour and sexual exploitation.

A particularly controversial aspect of children on the move in Europe is the use of detention centres "for it apparently contravenes both UN and national children's right legislation" (O'Connell Davidson and Farrow 2007, p.41). As with other issues, there is a lack of data on the use of detention for children on the move between 2006 and 2013. Children also face the risk of deportation if they are with their family. In most European countries in 2007, unaccompanied minors were allowed to stay until they reached the age of 18 but could then be deported. This can make children less able to or unwilling to integrate fully into a country (O'Connell Davidson and Farrow 2007, p.42).

ENOC: European Network of Ombudspersons for Children – A brief background

ENOC was established in Norway in 1997 and at that time comprised of an initial group of 10 Independent Children’s Rights Institutions (ICRIs). By today it has grown to include 42 institutions in 34 countries within the Council of Europe, 23 of which are European Union Countries (enoc.eu). Membership to ENOC is limited to the 47 member states of the Council of Europe. On a logistical and operational level, it is interesting to note that ENOC is based in offices offered to it by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg whilst its operation is partially funded by the European Commission (European Union) (enoc.eu). Meaning that ENOC holds some value in being able to connect the institutions, policies and structures of the European Union (Imanian, 2016, p.62). The rest of this section will further clarify the role and structures of ICRIs and ENOC and the interplay of these, with each other and within the wider context of their interaction with the Council of Europe, the European Union and the UN General Committee.

ENOC defines itself on its website as a “not-for-profit association of independent children’s rights institutions” (ICRIs). Its mandate is to facilitate the promotion and protection of the rights of children, as formulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child” (enoc.eu). It goes on to state: “ENOC wants to establish links and share information and strategies with independent children’s rights institutions – children’s ombudspersons, commissioners for children, or focal points on children’s rights in national human rights institutions or general ombudsman offices” (enoc.eu). Thus, at a national level an ICRI, according to Thomas et al (2011, p.431) and Gran (2011, p.219) is an independent institution that has duties and powers to monitor, promote and protect the rights of children. Some are known as ‘Children’s Commissioners’ and others ‘Children’s Ombudspersons’, with these terms now considered interchangeable (Gran, 2011, p.224). As ENOC (enoc.eu) points out, the remit and priorities of ICRIs will vary across countries, however, all institutions focus on the principles of the UNCRC and its implementation at a national or regional level (Thomas et al, 2011, p.431). In addition, common across all ICRIs is a fundamental aim that requires them to advocate for children and young people at a policy level with the promotion of children’s participation being a central part of this (Thomas, 2011, p.281).

In terms of the establishment and structure of ICRI, and in order to gain full membership in ENOC, its government must be a member of the Council of Europe. In addition, the ICRI must be established via parliamentary legislation and the legislative provisions must indicate: that the ICRI is independent; it is not limited in its function of promoting and protecting children's rights; and that it specifies the process of appointing new officials and their length of term (Gran, 2011, p.221-p.222). National legislation must also specify two functions of an ICRI – (1) to protect children's rights; and (2) to promote children's rights (Gran, 2011, p.221-p.222)¹. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (the "UN Committee") has been integral to the establishment and promotion of ICRI² (Thomas, et al 2011, p.431). Moreover, given the role of Commissioners to report to the UN Committee on children's rights issues at a national level, ICRI through this process consider themselves the domestic eyes and ears of the UNCRC, and in turn the UN Committee views them as part of the "machinery for government accountability" (Rees and Williams, 2016, p.411, p.414). ICRI are therefore at an interesting intersection between having to advise, influence and persuade the governments through which they were appointed and, potentially, having to take an oppositional stance through their role as human rights monitors on the international stage (Rees and Williams, 2016, p.430).

Thus, in the context described above, it is evident that ENOC finds itself straddling three treaty systems: The European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations (Rees and Williams, 2016, p.420). However, as Thomas et al (2011, p.448) argue, ENOC, as an association of independent equals, is able to exercise an "open method of coordination" in areas where there has been no prior supra-national competence. Thus, there has been a growing trend amongst Commissioners to work together, bilaterally but also more importantly through ENOC, in order to pursue common concerns (Thomas, 2011, p.287). Finally, as Alasuutari et al (2016, p.62) discuss, ENOC can best be understood as an accumulation of authority, with actors involved at both a domestic and supra-national organisational level influencing the politics of policymaking through an exchange of

¹ An ICRI can become an associate member of ENOC if it does not fulfil a criterion (Gran, 2011, p.222)

² In 2002 the Committee adopted General Comment No. 2 titled: "The role of independent national human rights institutions in the protection and promotion of the rights of the child". It states amongst other provisions: "It is the view of the Committee that every State needs an independent human rights institution with responsibility for promoting and protecting children's rights. The Committee's principal concern is that the institution, whatever its form, should be able, independently and effectively, to monitor, promote and protect children's rights...." (CRC General comment no.2, retrieved from, CRIN, 16.05.2018).

information, the codifying of rules and standards, and collection of comparative data. However, despite Alasuutari's (2016) positioning of ENOC as operating at a supra-national organisational level, it is important to note that ENOC's actual influence or impact on European regional policy on children on the move is unknown.

Prior Research

Introduction and Selection Process

The research field relating to children on the move and children's rights is relatively extensive, but as with children's rights in general the majority of these studies are not approached from a critical perspective (Reynaert et al (2012, p.159). As mentioned in the introduction to this study, our aim is to analyse problem representations in position statements relating to children on the move and children's rights. In doing so, we are approaching our data from a perspective of social constructionism, which is also the epistemological basis of our method of analysis, WPR. This will be elaborated further in the method section, but is important to mention here as this theoretical approach has guided our selection of prior research. With these points in mind, the criteria for the inclusion of studies in our prior research were the following: 1) dealt mainly with representations of children on the move; 2) at least partly a constructivist approach; 3) a focus on migration from the majority world to the minority world (mainly Europe); 4) related to discourse on migration or children rights in migration. Firstly, we looked at Oxford Bibliographies: Childhood Studies and the article on Migration (editor Charles Watters). Secondly, we searched for abstracts on Unisearch using different combinations of the following search words: 'children' 'child', 'children on the move', 'migration' 'rights', 'Europe', 'representations', 'policy', 'asylum', 'unaccompanied', 'refugee'. Furthermore, we went through all articles in the Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, Journal of Refugee Studies and the Journal of International Migration with the search word 'child'. The next section describes the three themes which emerged in the research literature on children on the move: Children on the Move, Universal Children's Rights and State Sovereignty; The Boundaries of Childhood; and Prevailing Constructions of Children on the Move.

Children on the Move, Universal Children's Rights and State Sovereignty

Within our overview of prior research, there is a described tension between universal children's rights, children on the move and state sovereignty. Eastmond and Ascher (2011, p.1195) observe, in their research looking at the interplay between government policy and practice, and refugee children's welfare, and the ambiguous construction of refugee children, that children on the move are often caught in the intersection between the interest of the state to control borders, and the universal rights of children prescribed by the UNCRC. A similar argument is emphasised by Bhabha (2001, p.293), who argues that there are inconsistencies in state policy interventions, with immigration control concerns on the one hand and welfare protection concerns on the other.

According to the UNCRC, all children should enjoy a certain set of rights regardless of their origin or circumstance. However, the role and status of the UNCRC in addressing issues relating to children on the move somewhat differs between the different studies. For example, Ensor (2010, p.26) lists the UNCRC as the "most important instrument in establishing international standards of protection and care for children in all circumstances, including migrant children". Boyden and Hart (2007, p.240) instead describe the UNCRC as "intended to provide a practical tool to ensure that the rights of refugee and asylum-seeking children are fully upheld, thereby countering the shortcomings of other legal instruments". However, Bhabha (2009, p.410, p.422; p.432), who in her article examines the obstacles to children's rights enforcement across a range of jurisdictions and contexts, argues that universal children's rights can be somewhat toothless in addressing rights violations.

In addition, according to the UNCRC, it is the state that is assigned responsibility for upholding rights (Boyden and Hart 2007, p.237). This becomes problematic because of the close relationship between rights and citizenship. Boyden and Hart (2007, p.242) argue that through the immigration control procedures of a state, children on the move can easily be excluded from citizenship and from 'belonging' in the country in which they arrive in. Consequently, this raises the question over who holds responsibility for upholding universal children's rights for children on the move, who do not 'belong' to the state they are in (Boyden and Hart 2007, p.242). Furthermore, core children's rights principles such as the 'best interest of the child' is used by legislators and other decision-makers to suit their political interests (Hedlund and Cederborg 2015, p.247; Eastmond and Ascher 2011, p.1186).

Bhabha (2009, p.423; p.431), summarises this, by arguing that there are a range of discrepancies between the rights of children on the move in theory and in practice, which inevitably leads to different forms of violations of these rights (Bhabha 2009, p.423; p.431).

Finally, Fassin (2005, p.371) argues that there has been a shift in European politics from the right to asylum, to asylum as a charitable or compassionate action. Boyden and Hart (2007, p.237) echo this argument, with the explanation that the growing opinion of children on the move as “encroaching on sovereign assets” means that any support to this group of children will be offered as a charitable act. Fassin (2005, p.366), whose study comprised of an in-depth political discourse analysis on how the French approach to migration has changed, refers to this as the 'politics of pity', arguing that it has become increasingly common to grant asylum on humanitarian rather than political grounds.

The Boundaries of Childhood

Within the field of child studies, the nature of childhood is usually considered socially and culturally constructed, which means that the definition of a ‘child’ and of ‘childhood’ will vary depending on the cultural, social and historical context. According to Crawley (2011, p.1171), this perspective is largely absent in the policies and practices of the immigration and asylum process in the minority world. In this section, we will discuss prior research relating to Western notions of children and childhood and the implications of applying these on children on the move from a non-Western context.

Western Notions of Childhood

From a constructionist perspective, inherent assumptions about the nature of childhood contribute to how children are constructed in a particular context. In the context of migration, there is agreement across several studies that the dominating notions of children on the move are predominantly constructed through Western conceptualisations of childhood (White et al, 2011; Crawley, 2011, Watters, 2008; and Pruitt et al 2018). Crawley (2011, p.1174), whose research explores the experiences of separated asylum-seeking children and the implications of dominant understandings of ‘childhood’ in the UK asylum system, argues that the Western norms and values associated with childhood are those which are bound both culturally and historically with social and economic preoccupations of promoting a “safe, happy, protected, carefree and educationally focussed childhood”. This means that children are constructed as

both physically and emotionally dependent on adults (Crawley 2011, p.1174). Moreover, the Western notion of childhood is conceptualised “as a time of innocence, vulnerability and dependence, contributing to essentialised notions of ideal innocent childhoods and of the child as being in need of protection” (White et al, 2011, p.1161). In addition, White et al (2011, p.1161) write, in their study which looked at children’s roles in transnational migration, that the ideal of Western childhood is constructed as being stable with a degree of residential fixity. It is argued, that children on the move disrupt this ideal of residential fixity and are therefore rendered out of place and problematic (White et al 2011, p.1161; p.1163). A combination of these factors, according to Crawley (2011, p.1181), means that inevitably, children on move can have their status as a ‘child’ questioned (Crawley 2011, p.1181).

Finally, Pruitt et al (2018, p.694) argue, in their research which brings together feminist critiques of gender, conflict and migration within literature on the role and representation of children and youth in conflict and migration, that the UNCRC is informed by Western notions of childhood. In relation to the discrepancies between Western childhood norms and the variety of childhood norms in the majority world described above, the dominating position of the UNCRC in addressing issues relating to children on the move from a non-Western context arguably becomes problematic. For example, Watters (2008, p.2, p.22), whose research is informed by the accounts of refugee children seeking to cross borders into the industrialised world, criticises the universalisation of Western norms and values which impose developmental trajectories and specific notions of childhood on those children who culturally and socially may not fit these moulds (Watters, 2008, p. 22). It is therefore questionable as to how appropriate policy suggestions generated within a specific Western social and cultural milieu are to the plight of children on the move from around the world (Watters, 2008, p.23).

The Importance of Age

In Western notions of childhood, the boundaries of childhood are usually considered within a clear chronological meaning which is directly related to biological stages and expectations of characteristics and behaviours suitable for a particular age (Crawley, 2011, p.1174). Due to the dominant position of age as a determiner for the boundaries of childhood, the importance of age and the ascribed expectations of characteristics and behaviour are at the forefront of the discussion of children’s rights in migration in a European context. Being under the age of 18 means that asylum-seekers and refugees are, at least in theory, entitled to special

protections that adults cannot access. Thus, age assessments are a core aspect of national immigration systems in Europe. The concept of age relates closely to the concept of development, where chronological age is linked to individual capacity (Hart, 2006, p.7, cited in Ensor, 2010, p.19). The developmental view on childhood is a dominating notion in the minority world, but this is not necessarily the case in the majority world which becomes problematic for children on the move from a non-Western context who might not live up to the expected developmental characteristics in connection with age. There is agreement across several studies over the imposition of developmental trajectories as a mechanism for judging children from non-Western cultures (Watters 2008, p.22; White et al 2011, p.1161; Pruitt et al 2018, p.694; Ensor 2010, p.19).

Hedlund and Cederborg (2015), who looked at legislators' perceptions of unaccompanied minors in a Swedish context, emphasise other aspects of the relationship between age and asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors. They argue that when age cannot be easily established, legislators draw on the perceived trustworthiness and credibility of the child in their judgments (2015, p.244). The questioning of age, therefore, extends to questioning the child's other perceived personality traits. Furthermore, a distinction raised in Pruitt et al's (2018) study highlights the representations and understandings, and quite often dichotomous positions, of the categories of 'children' and 'youth' that can be found within migration policies. According to the United Nations "youth" is defined as those who are between 15 and 24 years of age (Pruitt et al, 2018, p.693). This means that many "youth", partly by virtue of age, only just fall outside the mould of childhood. The differences in notions relating to 'youth' on the move versus 'children' on the move will be discussed further below.

Prevailing Conceptualisations of Children on the Move

The Relationship Between Agency and Protection

Closely connected to the application of Western norms of childhood on children on the move from non-Western contexts, discussed above, is the tension between children on the move accessing rights and their exhibition of agency. Crawley (2011, p.1181) contends, in her observation of the experiences of unaccompanied minors in the UK immigration system, that there is the concept of the 'unchildlike child' which gives rise to the notion of the child who does not fit with the way childhood is commonly perceived. The 'unchildlike child' is therefore one, according to Crawley (2011, p.1181) who, whether through forced

circumstances or voluntary participation, is pushed into situations where “the agency they exhibit undermines their access to protection and rights as children”. The tension between participation rights and rights to protection, therefore, becomes particularly visible in the context of children on the move as they are described as mutually exclusive in this context.

The tension between participation and protection rights is also discernible in the conceptualisation of children on the move as either “child objects” or “child subjects” as discussed by Zetterqvist Nelson (2017). Zetterqvist Nelson (2017, p.328) provides a historical perspective on the evacuations of war children during WWII which enables a reflection on, and comparison to, the current situation of refugee children into European countries today. According to Zetterqvist Nelson (2017, p. 338), the construct ‘child object’ can be understood as children on the move being constructed as lacking in agency and their voices seldom recognised. They are therefore predominantly considered fragile objects in need of care and special protection (Zetterqvist Nelson, 2017, p. 344). In contrast, the concept of the child subject is the image of children on the move as beings in their own right (Zetterqvist Nelson 2017, p.388). In line with Crawley (2011, p.1181), Zetterqvist Nelson (2017, p.344) also argues that the view of children as agential child subjects often construes children on the move as being a problem or a dilemma. Thus, as Zetterqvist Nelson notes, in Europe today children are on the move alone rather than being *moved* by adults, which means that when their construction in the European policy context becomes aligned with being an ‘object’ it is in direct contrast to their actual status as agential child subjects (Zetterqvist Nelson, 2017, p.344). Hence, what these studies illustrate is the way children on the move are constructed in varied ways by stakeholders in order to achieve different outcomes.

In relation to the construction of children on the move as objects rather than subjects, Hedlund and Cederborg (2015, p.248) and Crawley (2011, p.1181) argue that the understanding of childhood from a Western perspective fails to take into consideration the wide-ranging variations of experiences and identities of children within the immigration process, including their own expertise over their situation. This leads to highly stereotypical conceptualisations of children on the move, commonly referred to as either ‘victims’ or ‘threats’ (Boyden and Hart 2007, p.243) which will be discussed further below.

Stereotypical Conceptualisations of Children on the Move

As discussed above, children on the move do not always fit the mould of Western norms for

childhood, which leads to the questioning of children's credibility and legitimacy in the immigration process. In addition, the relationship between universal rights and children on the move becomes complicated when states do not recognise children on the move as 'real' children or as 'belonging' to the state. Nevertheless, research shows that stereotypical conceptualisations of children on the move are at play in these intersections between credibility and legitimacy and rights entitlements. Fassin (2005, p.387), for example, argues that children can be "requalified" for support through discourses of vulnerability. These discourses serve to requalify people on the move as victims in a migration climate which is becoming increasingly hostile towards people on the move (Fassin 2005, p.375; p.387). Therefore, humanitarian reasons, such as illness or trauma, can requalify migrants perceived as 'illegals' to victims deserving of sympathy (Fassin 2005, p.387).

The trauma discourse and psychological approaches occupy a dominant position in studies of migrant children, which results in the promotion of the notion of the vulnerable child in academia, children's rights organisations and the general public (Ensor 2010, p.22). Ensor (2010, p.16), for example, examines the prevailing discourses of childhood and migration that frame the way migrant children are viewed in research, practice, and policy, and observes that the trauma discourse assumes that children on the move are traumatised as a result of what they have experienced (Ensor 2010, p.20). Thus, within this discourse, children in migration are constructed as a homogenous group of 'victims' where the main focus is on the trauma itself, and not on the child's individual circumstances or needs (Ensor 2010, p.21). According to Doná and Veale (2011, p.1282), in the UK and Ireland asylum-seeking context, the psychological discourse is used on behalf of, or by children on the move, to protect their needs and rights as children when they fall outside of systems of national rights and entitlement. Within this discourse, children on the move are labelled as mentally ill, 'traumatised' or suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, by social workers and counsellors working on their cases in the asylum system in order to postpone or avoid compulsory deportation (Doná and Veale, 2011, p.1284).

Clark-Kazak observes that this is also the case within reports of the main international regulatory body for refugees, the UNHCR, where children, and in particular girls, are described and depicted as vulnerable (Clark-Kazak 2009, p.302; p.313). Clark-Kazak's (2009) findings are from a longitudinal quantitative and qualitative analysis of textual and visual references to age in UNHCR's annual appeals and reports published between 1999 and

2009. However, Doná and Veale (2011, p.1273), in their study focussing on the existence of common divergent discourses that emerge in their research on children forced to move from contexts in the global North and South, including Rwanda, Uganda, Ireland and the UK, reach a different conclusion. In contrast to Clark-Kazak, they conclude that when children do not fit the mould of Western norms of childhood or are unable to be requalified as ‘victims’ of trauma they become threats or perpetrators (Doná and Veale 2011, p.1278) in need of re-education, detention or deportation (Doná and Veale, p.1281).

The notion of the 'illegal' migrant who is a threat to the state is also a highly prevalent discourse for children on the move (Doná and Veale 2011, pp.1277-1278; Hedlund and Cederborg 2015; p.245). As described above, Boyden and Hart (2007, p.243), in their review of four articles on forced migration and the experiences of children on the move in the UK, Norway, and East Africa, argue that the reason for these two stereotypical conceptualisations of children on the move, victim or threat, is based on the lived experiences of children on the move being mostly overlooked. Thus, Boyden and Hart’s (2007) findings also accentuate the role of institutions in “creating or mediating the challenges of displacement” (2007, p.238). Hedlund and Cederborg (2015, p.248), in a Swedish context, and Crawley (2011, p.1181), observing the UK asylum system, also concur with this observation.

Representing children as victims is also described as having negative implications. Firstly, Ensor (2010, p.21) argues that it fails to acknowledge that children on the move are a heterogenous group with highly different experiences and individualised needs. Moreover, Boyden and Hart (2007, p.245) observe that children need to display victimhood and incapacity to receive full protection, meaning that the resourcefulness of children who have fled conflict or other adverse circumstances is purposefully overlooked or simply not acknowledged. According to Boyden and Hart (2007, p.245), this increases the risk for divergence between the approach adopted by agencies, and the lived experiences and individual needs of children. In sum, it can be argued that the resourcefulness of children on the move can be understood as standing in the way of their representation as victims.

Secondly, Doná and Veale (2011, p.1274) are critical against the trauma and victim discourse, as it places the experiences of children on the move outside of the political discourse of rights in favour of a humanitarian approach. Furthermore, Doná and Veale argue that instead of promoting the right to freedom of movement, children are being pathologised under the psychological/trauma discourse (2011, p.1285). Lastly, Clark-Kazak (2009, p.318)

argues that when vulnerability is ascribed to an entire category such as children, women and the elderly, it makes them into an 'issue' or a 'priority' as a category alongside inanimate topics such as health or education. As mentioned above, this observation is made in an analysis of UNHCR's annual appeals and reports and the representations of refugee children found within them. Clark-Kazak notes that through this process of representation, a 'category' is ascribed a specific set of needs, and services are mainstreamed to tackle this 'issue' (2009, p.318). According to Clark-Kazak (2009), this contributes to the dehumanisation of these groups, as it ignores the underlying power relations based on gender, social age and class which contribute to the "complex reality of dynamic vulnerability in shifting relationships and contexts" (2009, p.318).

Furthermore, the trauma discourse can make children who do not fit dominant notions of victimhood invisible (Doná and Veale 2011, p.1283). Indeed, the discourse of the invisible or visible child is discussed by Doná and Veale (2011) as emphasising the circumstances in which states decide who within these categories of children on the move is rendered visible or invisible and by extension, whether children on the move are treated differently or equally to citizens of the nation-state (Doná and Veale, 2011, p.1282). By doing so, White et al (2011, p.1166) argue that it reveals the gaps and inconsistencies within the immigration systems of nation-states since they are obviously driven by certain social and political notions of childhood. Highlighting, therefore, which categories of 'visible' children are considered worthy of attention within policies regarding children on the move (Doná and Veale, 2011, p.1281; White et al, 2011, p.1166).

The stereotypical notions of children on the move also intersect with age and gender. Pruitt et al (2018, p.694) illustrate how in circumstances when young persons - 'children' - are described as vulnerable, innocent and passive victims, then it is childlike characteristics which are emphasised and coded as feminine. Conversely, when young people apparently exhibit risky behaviours, then Pruitt et al argue that it is the term 'youth' that takes precedent with associated masculine connotations rendering them a threat (Pruitt et al, 2018, p. 694). What is also highlighted within these representations of 'children' and 'youth' in Pruitt et al's article is the fact that terms such as "refugee children" become degendered and infantilized and associated with innocent victims (2018, p.701). Whereas, a term such as "migrant" is largely associated with youth, meaning, young men and deemed a risk (Pruitt et al, 2018, p.701).

Summary of Prior Research

The overview of prior research above has outlined and discussed the effects of dominating notions of children and childhood and the strategies applied by stakeholders and the children's rights sector to negotiate the position of children on the move within the context of national immigration systems and international children's rights treaties. A common thread in one area of research is the rights of children on the move in the immigration process. For example, it is argued that children on the move are caught in the intersection between the interest of the state to control borders, and universal children's rights (Eastmond and Ascher, 2011; Bhabha 2001). In addition, where it is argued that there has been a shift from the right to asylum, to asylum as a charitable action (Fassin, 2005; and Boyden and Hart, 2007), it can also be understood as a language adjustment at policy level in circumstances where increasing attempts are being made by states to control their borders. Thus, whilst it is acknowledged by some that the UNCRC is considered an important document of rights for children on the move (Boyden and Hart, 2007), it is also argued that it is toothless in addressing rights violations (Bhabha, 2009), it is manipulated to further political interests (Hedlund and Cederborg, 2015), and it is based on Western childhood norms (Pruitt et al, 2018; Watters, 2008).

Indeed, research has found that Western notions of childhood prevail over children on the move such as innocence, vulnerability, a dependence on adults, a need for protection and residential fixity (Crawley, 2011; White et al, 2011; and Watters, 2008). Where they do not fit into these discourses they are rendered a problem, out of place and their status as children questioned (Crawley, 2011; and White et al, 2011). The impact of age and developmental notions of childhood have also been found in research to play a significant role on the position of children on the move in a European context (Crawley, 2011; Ensor, 2010; Watters, 2008; White et al, 2011; Pruitt et al, 2018; and Hedlund and Cederborg, 2015).

It is evident, from the empirical studies summarised above, that the implications for children on the move, caught between universal rights, immigration control and the boundaries of childhood, are diverse and contrasting. For example, it has been found that where agency is displayed, children on the move are at risk of undermining their protection rights and their status as children questioned (Crawley, 2011). Moreover, the discourse of child subject or child object is at play in emphasising the tension between protection and participation rights for children on the move (Zetterqvist Nelson, 2017). Indeed, for several authors it is the lack

of acknowledgement within policy and immigration processes over the heterogeneity of experiences and identities of children on the move which gives rise to their dominant constructions within discourses of victimhood, trauma/psychological and threat (Hedlund and Cederborg, 2015; Boyden and Hart, 2007; Fassin, 2005; Ensor, 2010; Doná and Veale, Clark-Kazak, 2009). This means that children on the move are constructed and requalified by different stakeholders as either being in need of care and protection or seen as a threat to state sovereignty (Pruitt et al, 2018). Thus, in the context of this study, whilst it is assumed that an organisation like ENOC strives for outcomes for children on the move that are fully compatible with the UNCRC, it is not self-evident if and how this will be reflected in the position papers.

For the purpose of this study, we have been informed by the different tensions and prevalent constructions of children on the move, but we have also endeavoured to be open to alternative constructions, tensions and nuances given how narrow the research field of critical studies on children's rights in migration is.

Method

Data collection

Each year at their annual General Meeting, ENOC members propose and select a specific children's rights issue to focus on during the year (enoc.eu). At the end of their General Meeting, ENOC issues a position statement on the selected topic, with support from an 'independent external expert'. Their website does not clarify the background or source of its external experts. They state that their position statements "reflect ENOC members experience" but also young people's feedback on the issues selected. Our interpretation is that 'ENOC members' experiences' is a reference to their individual observations on "promising" practices on preserving the rights, needs and well-being of children and young people within their respective countries (enoc.eu). In addition, ENOCs website also provides in its description of its General Meeting, that ENOC members are able to expose the failures of any State to guarantee children and young people's rights (enoc.eu). Again, this description on their website, also provides a picture of the 'experiences' of the individual members which might feed into the position statements.

In relation to ENOCs view on the role they envisage the position papers playing, as mentioned in the background section, their website states that they see the production of the statements as being a process which develops and empowers ENOC members' knowledge on "all aspects (causes, consequences, practices, etc.) defining specific issues impacting on the realisation of children's rights" (enoc.eu). They also state that the statements have a wider use within the context of the information being disseminated across NGOs, national and European institutions (enoc.eu).

ENOC have released four position papers relating to children on the move:

- Title: Urgent help required for Syrian children in refugee camps to avoid humanitarian catastrophe (2013), will be referred to as "PS Syrian children" (1 page).
- Title: Children on the Move: Children First (2013), will be referred to as "PS Children First" (5 pages).
- Title: European Network of Ombudspersons for Children Statement on the E.U. 'Return' Directive (2008), will be referred to as "PS Return Directive" (2 pages).
- Title: Statement on State Obligations for the Treatment of Unaccompanied Children (2006), will be referred to as "PS Unaccompanied Children" (5 pages).

The key words for inclusion of data was "children on the move", "children in migration", "refugees and unaccompanied children". The position statements are openly available to download from ENOC's website.

ENOC has other documents on their website relating to children on the move. Some of these documents, including ENOC Open Letters³, ENOC Regional Meeting Recommendations⁴ and ENOC Press Release⁵ would also have been suitable for our analysis, but we chose to exclude these as it was not possible to conduct an in-depth policy analysis of that number of documents within the scope of this thesis due to the density of the position statements. The excluded documents also cross-refer to the position statements. We are, therefore, satisfied that our chosen data can represent relevant proposed solutions, recommendations or

³ Urgent call regarding the protection of the rights of unaccompanied children on the move in Europe (2016); Safety and fundamental rights are at stake for children on the move (2016); and ENOC calls for action to stop repeated human tragedies in the Mediterranean (2015)

⁴ Safeguarding and protecting the rights of children on the move: The challenge of social inclusion (2017)

⁵ European Ombudspersons for Children raise alarm: unacceptable safety risks for children on the move (2016)

actions which might only be raised or mentioned in other organisational documents on the ENOC website. ENOC has also published reports and conference minutes relating to children on the move. However, these are not suitable for policy analysis as they do not primarily propose solutions, recommendations or actions.

Theoretical Perspective

As described in the prior research section, we are approaching our data from a social constructionist perspective. As a theoretical perspective, social constructionism can be understood as a way of exploring the ways in which ‘reality’ is negotiated through people’s interactions with each other and through sets of discourses (James and James, 2012, p.116). Thus, when ideas of children and childhood are found in discourses and representations of different societies, social constructionism provides an understanding of how these may impact on children’s everyday lives and experiences (James and James, 2012, p.117). This study and the research background in which our study is positioned, is therefore an attempt to understand policy perspectives, within a European context, on children on the move and their rights, providing in turn a reflection on the interplay and impact of the existence of particular conceptualisations and ideals of children and childhood.

Method for Analysis

In line with our social constructionist approach, we have been inspired by Bacchi’s (2009) policy analysis approach, ‘What’s the problem represented to be?’ (WPR) to analyse our data. As implied by the name of this analytical approach, this method is concerned with representations of problems, suggesting an epistemological social constructionist approach. The way a particular problem and its solutions are represented is underpinned by cultural values and it is the aim of WPR to “uncover the (...) thought that lies behind specific problem representations” (Bacchi 2009, p.5). On this basis, by having a theoretical starting point within social constructionism, social phenomena are understood as “continually being accomplished by social actors” (Bryman, 2016, p.29).

Bacchi’s (2009) WPR analysis is intended to be applied to policy documents. ENOCs position statements are not necessarily an ‘actual’ policy document. However, in comparison to a global refugee policy, which is described as a “formal statement of, and proposed course

of action in response to, a problem relating to protection, solutions or assistance for refugees or other populations of concern to the global refugee regime” (Milner 2014, p.480), there are significant similarities with ENOCs position statements. Similarly, to a global refugee policy, the position statements are structured as a formal statement which outlines a children’s rights problem(s) and propose an action(s) to solve the problem which makes them suitable for WPR analysis.

However, Milner’s (2014, p.480) definition of global refugee policy also includes that the issues and the solutions are discussed and approved by governing structures and decision-making bodies. In the case of ENOC, the position statements cannot be said to be a regional refugee policy as it lacks the approval of governing structures within, for example, the Council of Europe or the European Union. It is also important to note that the position statements are not prescriptive. Rather, the position statements seem to function as an effort to raise an issue on the policy agenda, or to advocate change to existing policies (Betsill and Corell 2001 in Milner 2014, p.481). Furthermore, since there is no funding involved in implementing the solutions, it is difficult to discern what ENOC’s priorities are, which adds a level of complexity to the analysis. Therefore, we are not fully applying WPR, but use a WPR-inspired approach to interrogate the problem representations to gain knowledge on how children on the move, their needs and children’s rights are represented in the position statements.

Bacchi’s WPR approach is a form of discourse analysis informed by a Foucauldian approach. The WPR approach does not assume that there is a set of ‘difficulties’ which sparks a ‘response’ from governments (Foucault 1984, pp.4-5, cited in Bacchi 2009, p.31), but instead provides a forum for a critical interrogation of *assumed* ‘problems’ (Bacchi 2009, p.31). Bacchi (2009, p.35) clarifies that within the WPR approach, discourses are considered socially produced forms of knowledge “that set limits upon what it is possible to think, write or speak about a ‘given social object of practice’”. Consequently, approaching the policy documents through Bacchi’s framework of discourse analysis enables a tangible examination of the problem representations relating to children on the move within ENOC’s position statements.

Breaking down the WPR questions

WPR consists of six analytical questions, of which we will focus on three (Bacchi 2009, p.2):

- What is the ‘problem’ represented to be in a specific policy?
- What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the ‘problem’?
- What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences?
Can the ‘problem’ be thought about differently?

The goal of the first WPR question (What is the ‘problem’ represented to be in a specific policy?) is to "identify implied problem representations in specific policies" (Bacchi 2009, p.4). According to Bacchi (2009, p.2), it is possible to analyse how a specific issue is being thought about based on what is proposed as a policy intervention. Instead of seeing policies as 'problem solvers', a WPR approach entails working backwards to analyse and understand how a specific 'problem' is constructed and represented (Bacchi 2009, p.3). A policy can contain more than one problem representation which can conflict and contradict each other (Bacchi 2009, p.4). We have approached this question through a set of sub-questions:

- What is the dominant problem said to be?
- What are the causes of the problems said to be?
- What are the solutions to the problem?
- What are other problems said to be?
- What are the causes of other problems said to be?
- What are the solutions to the other problems?
- Who is ascribed responsibility for the problem(s)?
- Who is ascribed responsibility for solving the problem(s)?
- Based on the actions or solutions proposed, what is the implicit representation of the problem?

The second WPR question (What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the ‘problem’?) aims to identify the assumptions and presuppositions that "lodge within problem representations" and to uncover the assumed thought that lies behind them (Bacchi 2008, p.5). This question is closely connected to discourse analysis and aims to “dig deeper into the ways in which meaning is created through particular language uses” (Bacchi 2009,

p.7). As mentioned above, Bacchi (2009, p.7) suggests identifying and interrogating the binaries, key concepts and categories which can be distinguished within a policy and therefore elucidating the deep-seated cultural values and assumptions underlying the problem representations relating to children on the move.

A binary assumes a mutually exclusive relationship between two concepts, where one is preferred over the other (Bacchi 2009, p.7). Key concepts are “abstract labels that are relatively open-ended” (Bacchi 2009, p.7) and there is room for discussion on its definitions and meanings, in particular from a political perspective. Categories in WPR mainly relate to constructed categories of people, and the aim is to analyse how these categories “function to give particular meanings to problem representations” (Bacchi 2009, p.8). As we are particularly interested in representations of children on the move, we have approached this question through a set of sub-questions:

- Which key concepts are present in the problem representation?
- How are these key concepts defined?
- What categories of children are present?
- What notions of children and childhood can be distinguished within these categories?
- Which binaries can be distinguished in the problem representation?
- Which binary is privileged in the text?
- What presuppositions or assumptions underlie the problem representation (relating to prior research)?
- What presuppositions underlie the representations of the solution to the problem?

The final question includes what is left unproblematic in the problem representations, where the silences are and if the problem can be thought about differently. This question does not have a set of sub-questions but will be informed by the analysis of the two previous WPR questions, and to some extent guided by the themes distinguished in our prior research.

Ethical considerations

The chosen data material is publicly available and there were no stated site policy prohibitions on its use. Moreover, the material is factual, non-sensitive, and intended for use

by the public (Pace and Livingston, cited in Bryman, 2016, p.139). Therefore, we could see no reason to seek explicit consent from ENOC in order to analyse its documents.

Results and Analysis

Overview of Position Statements

We have analysed four position statements relating to children on the move: PS Syrian Children (2013), PS Children First (2013), PS Return Directive (2008) and PS Unaccompanied Children (2006). All statements contain one or several ‘problems’, one or several addressees (problem solvers), a target group (children) and one or several solutions to the problem. PS Children First and PS Unaccompanied Children are more comprehensive and detailed than PS Syrian Children and PS Return Directive. PS Syrian Children and PS Children First are released the same year.

The first step in our analysis is to identify the target group of the position statements, and who or which institution or agency is the addressee. The table below provides an overview of the explicitly stated addressees and the explicitly stated target group for each position statement:

Position Statement	Addressee	Target Group
PS Syrian Children	European and international community	Millions of Syrian children in refugee camps
PS Children First	Governments of member states and institutions within Council of Europe; European Commission	Children on the move ⁶
PS Return Directive	National governments	Foreign minors, especially those who are unaccompanied
PS Unaccompanied Children	Governments of all member-states	Unaccompanied children or unaccompanied minors

⁶ ““Children on the move” covers all children who migrate from their country of origin to and within the territory of a European country in search of survival, security, improved standards of living, education, economic opportunities, protection from exploitation and abuse, family reunification, or a combination of these factors. They may travel with their family, or independently, or with non-family members. They may be seeking asylum, victims of trafficking, or undocumented migrants. The status of children on the move may differ at various stages on their journey and they may encounter many differing situations of vulnerability”. (PS Children First 2013, p.1)

As illustrated above, all position statements are addressed to national governments in Europe, EU or globally. PS Children First also calls regional bodies, such as the Council of Europe and the European Commission, to action. It is, however, important to note that it is not known how and to whom the position statements have been disseminated, apart from the statements being made available online. The target group for the position statements varies between each statement. Only PS Children First and PS Unaccompanied Children have stated definitions for the target group, where the former uses the broader term “children on the move”, which includes children on the move in many different circumstances. PS Unaccompanied Children focusses solely on unaccompanied children, defined as “All persons under 18 years of age who are outside their country of origin unaccompanied by an adult responsible for them (whether by law or custom), and for as long as they are not effectively taken into the care of such a person” (PS Unaccompanied Children 2006, p.1).

WPR: What is the ‘problem’ represented to be in a specific policy?

In this section, we will present both the stated and the implicit problem representations. The latter has been deduced through analysing the proposed actions and solutions to the problem, including who is ascribed responsibility for taking action and solving the problem.

Stated Problem Representation in Position Statements

Firstly, the explicitly stated problem in PS Syrian Children (2013, p.1) is that “Millions of Syrian children are currently suffering from terrible hardship in refugee camps”. The stated reason for this hardship is that the basic needs of children in the form of food, water, shelter and sanitation are not being met. Another stated reason for the suffering and terrible hardship is that the UNHCR are only partly able to deliver the help that is required. This could also be seen as another problem representation. Secondly, the stated problem in PS Children First (2013, p.1) is that there is a deep concern regarding the position of “children on the move” in “European countries”. The problem is also represented as notable deficiencies in “European, national and local policies in responding to the needs and interests of “children on the move”” (PS Children First 2013, p.1). In addition, migration policies are specifically problematised as being too focussed on "border controls and action against irregular migration" (PS Children First 2013, p.2). The other problem they raise in the statement is the

impact of the economic crisis. However, even if this may be impacting on the public budgets of member states, ENOC suggests that this should not affect their obligations in responding to the needs and interests of children on the move.

The stated problem representation in PS Return Directive (2008, p.1) is that “ENOC are concerned about the recent agreement reached by the European Parliament and the Council of EU”. The stated reason for concern is that the Directive provides grounds for the violation of children’s rights in the form of possible detention and deportation of minors, the downgrading of children’s condition and absolute right to protection, the lack of access to education in detention, and empty references to the UNCRC. Lastly, the stated problem representation in PS Unaccompanied Children (2006, p.1) is said to be that many children are “unaccompanied” or “separated” from their families and suffer from a lack of care. Moreover, the problem is represented as children being forced to move from their country of origin and in doing so become separated from their families. PS Unaccompanied Children (2006, p.1) also raises the issue of “serious shortcomings both in legislation and administrative practices in most countries regarding the treatment of unaccompanied children”.

In summary, there are two main categories of explicit problem representations. Firstly, there are problem representations which are to do with the circumstances under which children live while on the move, for example the hardship of the refugee camps or being unaccompanied. Secondly, there is a category of problem representations which are to do with hostile child migration policies, such as a focus on border control, or the EU Directive on detention and deportation.

Implied Problem Representations: Themes

Lack of Prioritisation and Adherence to Children’s Rights

In all position statements, the overarching stated problem is that governments, mostly in Europe, are not adhering to and prioritising children’s rights. In PS Children First and PS Unaccompanied Children, the lack of rights awareness and promotion of rights relates to the implied problem representation that European states are not in compliance with the UNCRC, in particular regarding children’s right to participation (PS Children First 2013, p.2; PS Unaccompanied Children 2006, p.1, p.2).

In PS Return Directive there is also an implicit criticism towards regional immigration policy dominating over children's rights. The Return Directive has been agreed by the European Parliament and the Council of EU (PS Return Directive 2008, p.2), suggesting that representatives from the member states have agreed to a Directive which violates children's rights (according to the position statement). The implied concern here relates to the tension between state sovereignty versus children's rights and welfare (Eastmond and Ascher 2011, p.1195; Bhabha 2001, p.293), where there is a concern that the former will have precedence over respecting children's rights.

Underpinning the above problem representations is the implicit problem representation that children on the move are not considered children, and therefore they are not granted special rights and entitlements. In PS Children First, this assumption is indicated through repeating that "Children on the move are children first" (PS Children First 2013, p.1). The reiteration of this statement indicates that there are conflicting notions of children on the move which do not recognise children on the move as children. This representation is also present in PS Return Directive, where it is both implied and stated that a failure to recognise children on the move as a distinct group with specific needs will lead to the downgrading of their condition and "absolute right to protection" (PS Return Directive 2008, p.1). Indeed, by adopting the provisions of the Directive, there is an implied criticism that the specific needs of foreign minors or unaccompanied children will be made invisible in regional policy.

Furthermore, there is implicit criticism against other agencies not taking responsibility for the protection of children's right to survival and development: "The refugee camps do not have enough food, water, shelter and sanitation to deal with the basic needs of the children who are living there" (PS Syrian Children 2013, p.1). The responsibility to uphold these rights are arguably ascribed to states. For example, in PS Syrian Children, the proposed actions, "the need to take quick and decisive humanitarian action to prevent the pending humanitarian catastrophe" and; "to accept as many Syrian refugee children as possible" (PS Syrian Children 2013, p.1), imply that the European and international communities are failing to assist in meeting the basic needs of the Syrian children in the refugee camps.

Lack of Child-Friendly and Specialised Reception Structures and Provisions

In PS Children First and PS Unaccompanied Children, the implied problem representation also criticises the lack of child-friendly and specialised reception structures and provisions. For example, children are not able to access education and health provisions, reception centres do not provide for the specific needs of children, children are placed together with adults, and staff working with children on the move are not trained to a sufficient level. As illustrated in the following excerpts: Staff need to be trained properly to “respect children’s rights, understanding these children’s particular communication and cultural needs and able to respond appropriately to signs of fear or distress” (PS Children First 2013, p.2; and duplicated with nearly the exact same words in PS Unaccompanied Children 2006, p.4).

Finally, implicit in the problem representations in both PS Unaccompanied Children and PS Children First is the inadequacy of processing mechanisms for children on the move, which means that access to health, educational, vocational and social entitlements are restricted. These implicit criticisms can be summarised as follows: age assessment procedures are being used inappropriately; the procedures for appeal are ineffective; the process of residency permits is inadequate; and children on the move are not currently accessing education, vocational training and health provisions on an equal basis to those within the receiving state. In relation to the residency permit process, there is an implied criticism that children on the move are not provided with the necessary stability granted through a residence permit which would enable them to integrate “into the hosting society” through accessing “appropriate educational and welfare placements” (PS Unaccompanied Children, p.4). By extension, it is further implied that the increased uncertainty over their status and whether they can access ongoing support through inadequate processing mechanisms impacts on a “child’s well-being” (PS Unaccompanied Children, p.4).

The Criminalisation of Children on the Move

PS Children First explicitly criticises detention practices. As detention arguably connotes being ‘locked up’, this criticism relates to an implicit problem representation that children are being treated like criminals. Criticism against criminalising children on the move is also stated explicitly:

“ENOC stresses its concern about policies aiming at criminalising migration and underlines that in this regard, “children on the move” should never be subject to criminal procedure for reasons solely related to their immigration status”. (PS Children First, p.4)

The problem representation of children being treated as criminals also exists in PS Unaccompanied Children. This is illustrated implicitly through the solution to the problem representation which states that “unaccompanied children should not be prosecuted for illegal entry to the country or detained solely because of their immigration status” (Unaccompanied Children 2006, p.1). Furthermore, it is implied that unaccompanied minors are being deported and expelled incorrectly (Unaccompanied Children 2006, p.3).

On a similar note, there is also an implicit problem representation relating to the emanating rhetoric at a regional immigration policy level within EU member states that children are viewed as “threats”, which is indicated through their direct criticism of detention and deportation practices: “the directive allows detention and forced deportation (‘removal’) of minors or unaccompanied minors” (PS Return Directive 2008, p.1).

The implied problem representations in the position statements can therefore be summarised in three categories. Firstly, there are implied problem representations which point towards non-compliance with UNCRC rights within European countries and the international community in relation to children on the move. This indicates a concern over the dominance of regional immigration policy over children’s rights and demonstrating the tension between on the one hand state sovereignty, and on the other children’s rights and welfare. The second category of implied problem representations point towards the special needs and entitlements of children, emphasising that children on the move must be considered as children first. Finally, the third category of implied problem representations concerns the criminalisation of children on the move through reference to detention and deportation practices.

WPR: What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem'?

The Rights-Based Approach

Universal application

As discussed above, one theme of the implicit problem representations relates to a lack of prioritisation and adherence to children's rights among national governments. One of the overarching underpinnings of the position statements is that children's rights are universal in the sense that all children have rights based on the fact that they are children (defined as under 18 years old). This includes children on the move, as reiterated through the statement 'Children on the move are children first' (PS Children First 2013, p.1). Children on the move should therefore have access to special protections and entitlements which is also explicitly stated in for example PS Return Directive (2008, p.1), where children on the move are described as "bearers of specific rights deriving from international conventions". This highlights that there is a distinction between children on the move having both universal rights and special rights, which children who are not on the move do not have. In PS Unaccompanied Children, this assumption is channelled through the obligation of the state towards children based on their ratification of the UNCRC "especially Article 2, on respecting and ensuring the rights of all children without discrimination of any kind" (PS Unaccompanied Children 2006, p.1).

Thus, the actions assigned to national governments and regional bodies are generally motivated in the position statements through references to children's rights, which gives rise to a rights-based approach to problems facing children on the move. PS Children First, PS Unaccompanied Children and PS Return Directive are all positioned within a rights-based approach. Within this rights-based approach, there is an assumption that children are individual rights holders who are equally entitled to access the rights of children within the receiving jurisdiction (PS Children First 2013; PS Unaccompanied Children 2006). For example, this includes accessing "education and health services" (PS Children First 2013, p.2) and access to "education, vocational training and health provisions, on an equal basis to other children within the jurisdiction of the state" (Unaccompanied Children 2006, p.4). By extension, an assumption is made that by accessing rights entitlements, children on the move achieve a sense of belonging in the receiving country. For example, "giving access to all of

these rights is crucial for the integration of children in the receiving society” (PS Children First 2013, p.2) and “integration into the hosting society should be facilitated” (PS Unaccompanied Children, p.4). This particular emphasis in PS Children First and PS Unaccompanied Children highlights how rights are closely related to citizenship.

As mentioned above, underlying the three position statements is the assumption that the UNCRC can be applied universally, and its provisions are adequate in addressing issues for children on the move. However, according to our prior research, this is not particularly straightforward for children on the move, as they are often caught in the intersection between the interest of the state to control borders and the universality of children's rights (Eastmond and Ascher 2011, p.1195). Unsurprisingly, it is clear in all statements that universal children's rights for children on the move prevail over state sovereignty, and this complexity identified in prior research is not at all acknowledged in the position statements. Furthermore, the underlying assumption, as discussed in the previous paragraph and in prior research, of the close connection between rights, entitlements and citizenship arguably contributes to establishing the division between ‘belonging’ and ‘not belonging’ in the destination country (Boyden and Hart 2007, p.242). Those who are excluded from such entitlements can easily be excluded from citizenship and belonging (Boyden and Hart 2007, p.242).

The Applicability of Rights

Thus, from the discussion above it is evident that the position papers make reference to the provisions of the UNCRC⁷, and also official documents from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child⁸ or the Dublin II and III Regulations. The rest of this section discusses some of the specific references to these rights (both implied and explicit) and whether certain rights are more prominent than others. The core principles of the Convention are discerned within PS Children First, PS Return Directive and PS Unaccompanied Children, both

⁷ PS Children First 2013: “The key principles in this regard as set out in the UNCRC are: children’s right to non- discrimination; children’s right to have their best interests treated as a primary consideration in all actions and decisions affecting them; children’s right to life, survival and development; and children’s right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them and to have their views taken into account in accordance with their age and maturity”. (2013, p.2)

⁸ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No.6 (2005) on the treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin” and the “Report of the 2012 Day of General Discussion of the Committee on “the rights of all children in the context of international migration”

explicitly and implicitly – namely, Article 12 (participation); Article 3 (best interests); and Article 2 (non-discrimination). Also tied in with these core principles within the position statements are implicit references to Article 6 (survival and development) – PS Children First also explicitly mentions this article (2013, p.2). The protection rights, which could only be distinguished implicitly in the three position statements, include the following: Article 4 (protection of rights), Article 19 (protection from all forms of violence), Article 20 (special protection - children deprived of family environment), Article 22 (Refugee children – right to special protection and help).

However, what is of note is the prominence of some rights over others within these position statements. In PS Children First and PS Unaccompanied Children there is more emphasis throughout both these statements on the participation rights of children on the move than there is to specific protection rights. Within the rights-based approach, children on the move can be understood as active participants in realising their rights and, therefore, both statements emphasise the involvement of children on the move in the decision-making processes and that they are kept informed. Whilst references are made implicitly to protection rights, it is the repetition of the rights-based language found in Article 12 of the UNCRC throughout the position statements that make it more prominent. Such as the following examples found in PS Children First (2013, pp.2-3): “the right of “children on the move” to express their views freely should be ensured, in all relevant procedures and decision-making processes”; “children should be provided with specific and comprehensive information on their rights; “child should be fully informed about the process of age assessment”; “child’s views should be given due weight in accordance with his/her age and maturity and informed consent...”; and “the guardian should have the authority to represent the child in all decision-making processes, if the child gives his/her consent”. Similar phrases, and to the same extent, can be found in PS Unaccompanied Children (2006, p.2-4).

Arguably, this observation may be expected given that ENOCs membership is made up of ICRI, who have as a fundamental aim a requirement to advocate on behalf of children and young people at a policy level with the promotion of children’s participation being a central part of this (Thomas, 2011, p.281). PS Return Directive on the other hand only refers to participation rights within a footnote reference to provisions surrounding assisted voluntary repatriation of unaccompanied children (PS Return Directive 2008, p.2) and PS Syrian Children is completely silent in this regard.

The prominence of Article 12 within PS Children First and PS Unaccompanied Children can also be explained by the provisions of these documents envisaging a longer-term intervention and setting of standards through their provisions rather than the immediate action demanded by the terms of PS Return Directive and PS Syrian Children.

Requalification through Humanitarianism

Though the right to survival is indicated in PS Syrian Children, a rights-based approach is arguably absent in contrast to the other position statements. For example, this is indicated by the lack of reference to any legal mechanisms or documents to back up the appeal. Instead, PS Syrian Children connotes a sense of appeal to altruism, suggesting a humanitarianism rather than rights-based approach. The “Syrian children” are described through their basic needs for survival, such as food, water, shelter and sanitation and there are no nuances in the description of the children, as exemplified in the following examples: “seeing the appalling situation of the Syrian children” or “millions of Syrian children are currently suffering” (PS Syrian Children 2013). They are represented as ageless and genderless victims (Pruitt et al, 2018, p.701) dependent on intervention from the international and European community for survival.

As Doná and Veale (2011, p.1274) argue, representing children on the move as victims places the experiences of children on the move outside of the political discourse in favour of a humanitarian approach. Focussing on the grave situation of the children in PS Syrian Children removes them from the political discourse of asylum seeking and immigration control. This gives rise instead to the politics of pity (Fassin 2005, p.366) and the need for national governments to accept these children on charitable or compassionate grounds. The humanitarian discourse is only a dominant notion in PS Syrian Children which is worded very differently to other position statements. It is short (only 1 page) and it conveys a sense of urgency through a number of pejorative adjectives such as “suffering”, “appalling”, “terrible”, “dramatic”, “humanitarian” and demands “quick and decisive action” in its appeal to the European and international community. This appears to contrast with ENOC’s rights-based agenda in favour of achieving an immediate positive outcome for Syrian children through appealing to altruism and humanitarianism.

Victimhood and Vulnerability

As discussed in the section on problem representations, an overarching problem is that children on the move are not considered children. As argued by Boyden and Hart (2007, p.243), there are two stereotypical constructions of children on the move where they are considered either as ‘threats’ or ‘victims’. As discussed above, children on the move are stereotypically constructed as a homogenous group of victims in *PS Syrian Children*. According to our prior research, this has several implications. For example, the child becomes a ‘child object’ in this view, leading to constructions of children as lacking in agency and being considered fragile objects in need of care and special protection (Zetterqvist Nelson, 2017, p. 344), which is not necessarily a construction of the child in a right-based approach. It is however important to note that representing Syrian children in refugee camps as homogenous victims serves the child-saving agenda as it renders children on the move visible as a category worthy of help (Doná and Veale 2011, p.1283). Arguably, the humanitarian discourse relates to Western notions of childhood as described by White et al (2011, p.1161) “as a time of innocence, vulnerability and dependence, contributing to essentialised notions of ideal innocent childhoods and of the child as being in need of protection”. The children on the move in *PS Syrian Children* are therefore requalified as victims who are worthy of support (Fassin 2005, p.366; p.387) through the lens of Western conceptualisations of childhood.

The construction of children on the move as victims does not dominate in the other position statements, but there are representations of children in existence which give rise to underlying assumptions over their vulnerability. These are however more nuanced. In *PS Children First* and *PS Unaccompanied Children* the notion of the vulnerable child is evident in the provisions that refer to children being in need of significant support from adults. Such as guardians and trained personnel to ensure their rights, care needs, and welfare provisions are met, as illustrated in the following example: “immediately after the arrival of any unaccompanied/separated child, a skilled independent guardian should be appointed to support, advise and protect him/her” (*PS Children First*, p.3). Children on the move are also represented as particularly vulnerable when they are separated from family and this is made clear in the following explicit statement within *PS Children First*:

““children on the move” should benefit from specific attention and enhanced protection given their vulnerability, particularly those separated from their family and unaccompanied” (PS Children First, p.5).

This emphasis on the representation of vulnerability through the notion of the dependent child, underlines how provisions for children on the move rely on adult intermediaries for children to access their rights. This also relates to Western notions of childhood as a time of dependency (White et al, 2011, p.1161). In contrast, it is presupposed in PS Unaccompanied Children that children are particularly vulnerable from a perceived threat of adult migrants: “placement in reception centres separately from adults” (PS Unaccompanied Children 2006, p.2). Thus, where adults from the destination states are represented as having the ability to “ensure the necessary rights, welfare and care needs of the child are properly safeguarded” (Unaccompanied Children 2006, p.3), adult migrants are represented as a threat to children on the move.

Heterogeneity of experiences

The victim and vulnerability discourses stand in direct contrast to the notion of children on the move as criminals or threats to the state, which is one of the implicit problem representations discussed in previous sections. However, it appears as if the underlying assumptions of the representation of the problem promotes an alternative perspective, mainly that of recognising the heterogeneity of children’s experiences. As Boyden and Hart (2007, p.243) argue, recognition of the individual experiences of children on the move would contribute to moving away from more stereotypical notions of children on the move, which is arguably an underlying presupposition of several of the position statements. According to prior research, this is a relatively rare stance to take, since the heterogeneity of experiences of children on the move is invariably overlooked (Hedlund and Cederborg 2015, p.248; Crawley 2011, p.1181). An acknowledgement of the individual experiences of children is explicitly stated and promoted in PS Children First, PS Unaccompanied Children and in the PS Return Directive. For example, PS Children First recognises the heterogeneity of the child on the move in the following statement: “ENOC understands that the circumstances in which “children on the move” find themselves and the challenges they face are diverse and complex” (PS Children First 2013, p.1). Further highlighting the representation of the child as a subject, as it is recognised that their lived experiences must be taken into account.

However, an interesting sub-theme which we have distinguished in the data relating to the recognition of heterogeneity is that children on the move are ‘complex’ in the sense that they are assumed to be in need of specialised care, assistance and have specialised needs. These ‘complex’ children have to be dealt with by personnel and professionals with a range of special skills which require training:

“Personnel dealing with “children on the move” (law enforcement authorities, judicial authorities, interviewers, interpreters, social and youth workers, health professionals, guardians, legal representatives, police officers and border guards, amongst others) should be properly trained to respect children’s rights, understanding these children’s particular communication and cultural needs and able to respond appropriately to signs of fear or distress.” (PS Children First 2013, p.2)

This call for action assumes that children are a group with distinct needs which require special training. Moreover, there is an assumption that they have both specific communication and cultural needs, which further adds to the notion of complexity of children on the move. Another aspect of this constructed complexity is the construction of children as unquantified and unknown:

“Thorough examination of the conditions of entry as well as a confidential formal register of personal data should ensure protection from various forms of exploitations and assist the member states to have clearer quantitative and qualitative picture of the presence of unaccompanied children within their borders”. (PS Unaccompanied Children 2006, p.2).

The notion of the ‘complex’ child is not a theme that we have encountered in our prior research.

WPR: What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the ‘problem’ be thought about differently?

Applying Bacchi’s (2009) question about what is left unproblematic in the problem representations – if there are silences or whether the ‘problem’ could be thought about differently – that arise in relation to children on the move in ENOC’s position statements,

gives rise to a number of observations which can be summarised under the following headings: The Applicability of UNCRC Provisions; and The Child in Isolation. These will each be discussed separately below.

The Applicability of UNCRC Provisions

As mentioned above, in considering the silences or omissions that occur in the Position Statements in relation to children on the move, there are several which arise around the notion of children participating in decision making processes. Whilst this is a direct reference to the provisions of Article 12 UNCRC, the observation made in relation to PS Children First, PS Return Directive and PS Unaccompanied Children is how broad and ambiguous the application of the term “age and maturity” becomes when deciding whether the views of a child should be taken into account when contemplating what is in their best interest. Thus, whilst importance is attributed to the age and maturity of the child, what is omitted is any discussion on how to establish whether a child is mature enough.

Given the Europe wide context of the position statements, what is therefore left unproblematised is the fact that assumptions over age and maturity will not only vary across member states but also that the heterogeneity of experiences of children on the move encountered in receiving countries will impact on perceptions of their age and maturity. As Watters (2008, p.22) and Ensor (2010, p.19) remark, it is the minority world developmental view of childhood that will be applied in judging the age and maturity of children on the move, meaning that many of the views of children from non-Western contexts will, for example, be deemed inappropriate for their age group. Thus, the applicability of the UNCRC is called into question in the way that any weight given to the views of children on the move are always going to be reliant on adults, firstly in accessing the right to participate and then whether their views are considered credible or not based on minority world assumptions of age and maturity.

The provisions of PS Return Directive and its criticism of the empty use of ‘best interests’ principle also highlights how its use can be misinterpreted and used for political purposes as discussed in Hedlund and Cederborg (2015, p.247). What has not been explicitly problematised therefore, is the broad use of terminology from the UNCRC found within migration policies (such as the EU Return Directive) as an empty nod to a rights-based

approach. As Bhabha (2009, p.423; p.431) states, there are a range of discrepancies between the rights of children on the move in theory and in practice, which inevitably leads to different forms of violations of these rights.

The Child in Isolation

Across all four position statements is an underlying notion of ‘the child in isolation’. In varying degrees, therefore, within each statement children on the move and their status/interaction/position with their families is not being problematised. Instead, in these position statements it is the state, the European or international community, or UNHCR that usurps the role of the parent/family as ultimate protector of the needs and rights of children on the move, serving to emphasise notions of vulnerability and victimhood.

In PS Syrian Children, for example, children are mentioned in isolation. There is no mention of their families, siblings or significant others. It represents the issue as if the refugee camps’ sole occupants are children. The only protector of children’s basic rights to provision is the international and European community and the UNHCR. The appeal also only relates to states receiving more Syrian children, not more Syrian refugees. In the context of the child-saving approach of this statement, the omission of a familial context to the Syrian children and a portrayal of them in isolation perhaps gains the attention and support they require.

Underlying PS Unaccompanied Children is a silence surrounding the background of the “unaccompanied child” – the following extracts highlight this: “all over Europe a growing number of children are forced by various circumstances to move from their country of origin”; “many of these children are “unaccompanied” or “separated” from their families”. These broad statements emphasise the vulnerability of these children in the sense that they are alone and in need of protection. What is not problematised therefore, is the issue of balancing the obligations of protection and child saving against participation and the recognition of the agency and resourcefulness of these children as discussed by Crawley (2011, p.1181). This is despite the fact that PS Unaccompanied Children explicitly states the importance of recognising children’s individual circumstances (Hedlund and Cederborg 2015, p.248; Crawley 2011, p.1181)

In PS Return Directive, PS Unaccompanied Children, the family is only mentioned in the context of children on the move being returned to their families in the country of origin. For example, in PS Return Directive and PS Unaccompanied Children, no mention of children is made in the company of parents, the only reference is the following: “as re-integration into their social environment of origin (family, care institution or other), which should be sought only through assisted voluntary repatriation, and only if this is considered to be in their best interests, after careful assessment including due consideration of their views” (PS Return Directive 2008, p.2, PS Unaccompanied Children, 2006, p.4). In addition, PS Children First states that: “a skilled independent guardian should be appointed to support, advise and protect him/her until he/she is reunited with his/her family” with the guardian “appointed to serve the child’s best interests” (PS Children First 2013, p.3). These excerpts illustrate how the role of the state as protector ultimately decides whether or not it is in the best interests of the child to repatriate or reunite them with their family.

Thus, what is discerned in the observations discussed above in relation to the child in isolation, is the dominance of the status of the child as vulnerable and non-threatening that ultimately relies on the dissociation of the child on the move from adult migrants in order to receive the protection of the receiving state and the international community.

Conclusion

The aim of our study was to critically analyse problem representations in ENOC’s position statements on children on the move using a Bacchi WPR (2009) inspired approach to policy analysis. This provided the framework in which to examine the underlying assumptions and discourses around children on the move within these documents and, therefore, to elucidate how and in what way ENOC navigate opposing conceptualisations of children on the move alongside or within different rights approaches. In relation to our literature review, most of the themes that we distinguished are touched upon at some point in our analysis. However, a few themes are more prominent than others, and we have also identified themes that were not discussed in our review of prior research.

The first intersecting theme between our prior research and our analysis of the position statements is the tension between state sovereignty and universal children’s rights as

discussed by Eastmond and Ascher (2011, p.1195). For example, the analysis of the explicit and implied representations of problems indicate that two of the main problems in the positions statements are 1) a lack of prioritisation and adherence to children's rights; and 2) the criminalisation of children on the move. The position statements are very clear on the precedence of children's rights over state sovereignty, and though the issue of children on the move being caught in the intersection between the interest of the state to control borders and the universality of children's rights is recognised, this is, according to the position statements, 'easily' solved through acknowledging the primacy of the UNCRC. This is for example indicated through reference to the financial situation of States in the position statements, and an indication that the upholding of children's rights should not be affected by limited budgets. This position arguably disregards the complexity of this tension.

Unsurprisingly, all position statements apart from one promote a rights-based approach to issues facing children on the move where children are considered holders of rights.

Children's right to participation and non-discrimination is generally emphasised over child protection perspectives, and recognition of the heterogeneity of the individual experiences of children on the move is promoted. Several authors, in our literature review, promote the recognition of the heterogeneity of experiences, arguing that not doing so risks promoting stereotypical constructions of children on the move as either 'threats' or 'victims' (Hedlund and Cederborg, 2015; Boyden and Hart, 2007; Fassin, 2005; Ensor, 2010; Doná and Veale, Clark-Kazak, 2009). Which gives rise to a divergence between the approach adopted by agencies and the lived experiences and individual needs of children (Boyden and Hart 2007, p.245). Arguably, the position statements aim to challenge these stereotypes to give way for alternative constructions of children on the move by attempting to strike a balance between participation rights and protection rights. Namely, that the agency of children on the move is recognised, whilst at the same time remaining 'worthy' of protection.

However, our analysis also elucidated strong notions of child-saving perspectives in one of the position statements, PS Syrian Children, which fully excludes the rights-based approach in favour of a humanitarian approach and in doing so appealing more to altruistic values.

Thus, PS Syrian Children, in its underlying notion of a homogenous group of child victims, seeks to requalify children on the move for support through a discourse of vulnerability, aligning our study with the observation made by Fassin (2005, p.387). In this view, children

on the move are aligned with the concept of the child as a victim (Ensor 2010, p.16) and as child objects in need of ‘saving’ rather than subjects with agency (Zetterqvist Nelson 2017, p.338; p.388). Consequently, children on the move are made ‘visible’ as a category in their requalification as victims.

It is however important to note that there were differences between the position statements. Where the rights-based approach was prominent in the position statements and a recognition of the heterogeneity of experiences discerned, these statements envisaged a longer-term intervention rather than immediate action. Indeed, in our analysis, it is evident that the two position statements which promote immediate action (PS Syrian Children and PS Return Directive) had less references to children’s agency and participation, rendering children on the move as objects in need of protection rather than subjects (Zetterqvist Nelson 2017, p. 338; p.388) in these statements. In addition, it can be argued that this relates to the tension discussed by Crawley (2011, p.1181), where the agency exhibited by children on the move can undermine their access to protection. Indicating, therefore, that it is considered more effective to approach issues facing children on the move through a humanitarian approach when the situation requires immediate action, rather than a rights-based approach with its focus on participation.

It is evident from our analysis that across all statements, whether they are promoting a rights-based or humanitarian approach, that children on the move are dissociated from their families and significant others in favour of a notion of children in isolation, which further indicates notions of vulnerability. As described in the underlying assumptions and presuppositions, it does appear as if the position statements seek to introduce alternatives to stereotypical views of children on the move. However, the dissociation of the child on the move from adult migrants could arguably be viewed as a strategy to make children seem vulnerable in order to receive the protection and support they are entitled to from the destination country and international community, which ultimately pushes the position statements towards a victim discourse.

However, whilst children on the move are represented in isolation from adult migrants in the position statements, they are nevertheless dependent on adults in the destination country. This is exemplified in the position statements through systems of guardianship and specially trained personnel, constructing children as both physically and emotionally dependent on

adults (Crawley 2011, p.1174). This therefore emphasises the presence of Western notions of childhood through specific representations of child-adult relationships. Moreover, the discussion on the boundaries of childhood and the unchildlike child (Crawley 2011, p.1181) in the prior research is also present in the position statements. Especially where the position statements emphasise that children on the move are children, indicating that there are dominant discourses where children on the move are not recognised as children.

We have also identified that the ambiguity relating to children's maturity, which relates to the boundaries of childhood, is left unproblematised. A child's level of maturity is a condition for accessing rights to participation. Assumptions over age and maturity will undoubtedly vary between member states, and there is also a risk that children on the move will be judged according to Western norms of childhood which might not correspond to their individual circumstances.

Another problem representation relates to a lack of child-friendly and specialised reception structures and provisions. The position statements promote the access to social entitlements by children on the move as a significant aspect of integration, and that children on the move should have the same rights and entitlements as citizen children, as legitimised through universal children's rights. Through this emphasis, we argue that the statements further establish the relationship between access to entitlements and 'belonging' in the destination country. This is consistent with the findings of Boyden and Hart (2007, p.242).

Furthermore, in relation to the lack of child-friendly and specialised reception structures and provisions is the theme of the 'complex' child on the move. Children on the move are constructed as having complex and specific needs which requires personnel and professionals with a range of special skills. This construction of children on the move also relates to the promotion of recognising the heterogeneity of children's experiences and identities, as discussed above. Recognising the heterogeneity of the experiences of children on the move is invariably considered something positive in prior research, since it counteracts issues such as stereotyping. However, a question arises over how states accommodate this recognition of heterogeneity, since some form of categorisation needs to occur to create a functioning system for immigration. This is not problematised in the position statements. Furthermore, our analysis of problem representations in the position statements also point to a potential for tension between children's rights and children's heterogeneous experiences which relates to

Western notions of childhood. As discussed in our literature review, Pruitt et al (2018, p.694) argue that the UNCRC is informed by Western notions of childhood – thus, what takes precedence when children’s heterogeneous experiences and wishes are not in line with the activities attached to childhood from a children’s rights perspective? For example, wanting to work instead of attending education, or a preference to live with a sibling under the age of 18 instead of in foster care.

Comment on Method of Analysis

Further discussion on the suitability of approaching our data through WPR is found in the Methods section. As a final comment on the use of WPR, we discovered that two of the position statements were extremely detailed in the range of problems and solutions on different aspects of issues facing children on the move. Due to the breadth of issues represented in these position statements, it was at times challenging to capture all of the problem representations and their underlying assumptions. In retrospect, it could have been helpful to have used pre-selected themes to structure our analysis. However, as there is no critical research conducted on ENOC documents, we wanted to apply a more inductive approach to capture as many nuances as possible.

From an ethical perspective it was also important to exercise a degree of self-reflexivity in the research process. As Bryman (2016, p.141) argues, personal values intrude on all phases of the research process from the choice of topic to its conclusion. In relation to Bryman’s argument, it is important to mention that our opinions relating to state treatment of children on the move more or less align with the statements made by ENOC in the position papers. We acknowledge that this position could have affected our level of critical thinking in approaching the data. However, we took several measures to promote self-reflexivity in the analytical process. Firstly, our solid literature review helped us understand how our topic can be approached critically, and it also provided an indication of the existence of previous representations of children on the move in other arenas. Secondly, WPR provided us with a critical framework for interrogating our data, which was further expanded through our sub-questions. Lastly, as the thesis is co-authored this process was also facilitated through a continual critical review and discussion of each other’s work, particularly during analysis.

Suggestions for Future Research

The ‘correct’ interpretation of children’s rights is arguably an ongoing discussion in both practice and academia. ENOC and ICRI in general are of interest because they are supposedly in a position where they are ‘best’ qualified to make these interpretations in practice. It would be interesting to explore further how ENOC and ICRI documents are disseminated and taken into consideration on a regional and national level, to further understand their impact on child policy. Furthermore, it would be revealing to delve further into how ENOC negotiate the tension between participation and protection rights, as they should arguably be able to strike this balance. Lastly, it would be insightful to compare ENOC’s statements to similar documents from supervisory mechanisms for children’s rights such as the Committee on the Rights of the Child to further understand what ENOC brings to the table as an institution. We also identified the notion of the ‘complex’ child where consideration for the heterogeneity of experiences is a priority. It would therefore be interesting to further explore how a more individualised approach to immigration and children on the move would look like in practice.

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