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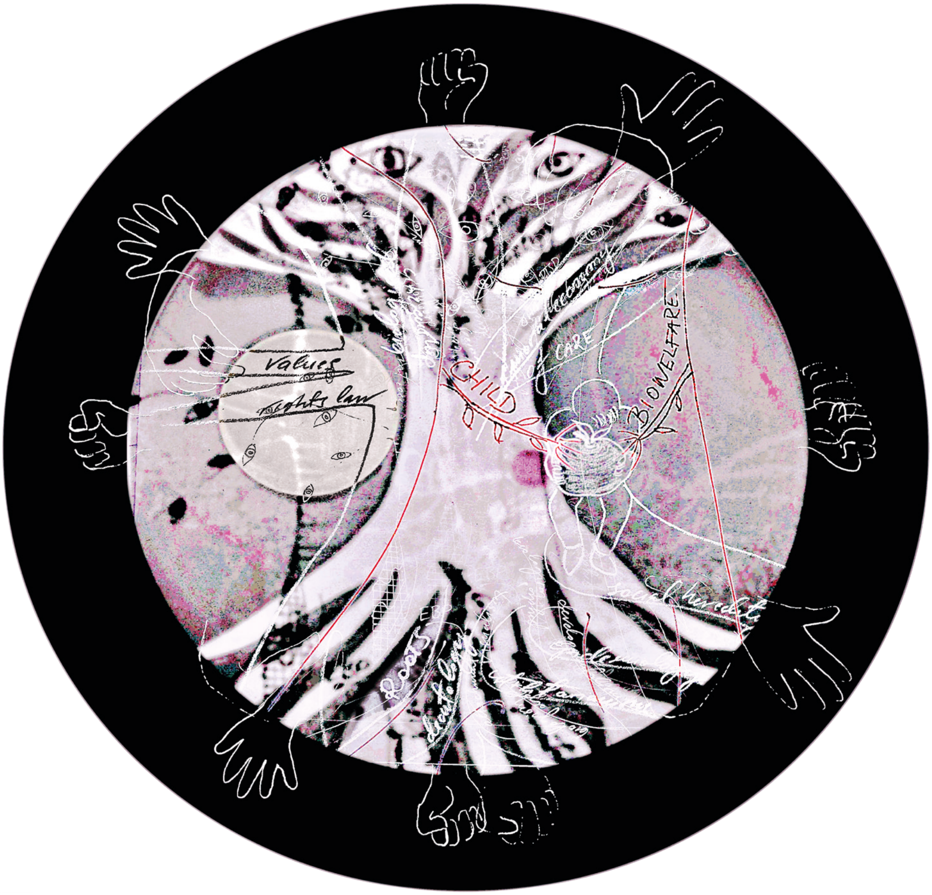
Child (Bio)Welfare and Beyond

Intersecting Injustices in Childhoods and Swedish Child Welfare

Zlatana Knezevic



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School of Health, Care and Social Welfare

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Zlatana Knezevic

Akademisk avhandling

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MÄLARDALEN UNIVERSITY
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Abstract

The current thesis discusses how tools for analysing power are developed predominately for adults, and thus remain underdeveloped in terms of understanding injustices related to age, ethnicity/race and gender in childhoods. The overall ambition of this dissertation is to inscribe a discourse of intersecting social injustices as relevant for childhoods and child welfare, and by interlinking postcolonial, feminist, and critical childhood studies. The dissertation is set empirically within the policy and practice of Swedish child welfare, here exemplified by the assessment framework *Barns Behov i Centrum* (BBIC). It aims to explore how Swedish child welfare, as a field of knowledge, modes of knowing and knowing subjects, constitutes an arena for claims and responses to intersecting social justice issues.

The material consists of BBIC primers and selected samples from, a total of 283 case reports from a Swedish social service agency. The case reports address assessments of children (0-12 years of age). This dissertation is based on four qualitative studies using discourse analysis, as well as analysis inspired by thematic and case-study methodology. Two studies focus on child welfare discourses in BBIC documents involving social problems and violence, and two studies are based on child welfare case reports.

Studies I-II address child welfare policy and practice by analysing the conditions required for children to participate, in terms of children's moral status and in terms of status of 'evidencing' needs for protection. Studies III-IV explore this further from the perspective of intersecting and embodied social injustices in childhoods. Together, the studies interconnect child welfare as a field of knowledge, modes of knowing and knowers with child welfare as a moral arena for claims to rights, recognition, and social justice.

The synthesised findings point to child biowelfare, in which justice discourses are largely absent. Biowelfare is informed by a mode of knowing and 'evidencing' risks to children's health and development, which are confined to scientific predicting-believing, seeing-believing by professionals and a moral economy of care, all of which constrain the idea that injustices are structural and intersecting. Biowelfare primarily responds to children as 'speaking' biological bodies, rather than as voices of justice. In this sense, injustices of an epistemological nature are interconnected with social injustices. When issues of justice are mobilised in case reports and policy, they come across as rather 'unjust', primarily confined to the sphere of the family home of racialised children and not connected to 'general' children. In addition to intersections of age, ethnicity/race and gender, class and health are fundamental to recognition and protection in biowelfare. Finally, the dissertation indicates the need for a moral economy which responds to intersecting social injustices such as racial, gender-based and ageist violence in childhoods, and violations of children's bodily integrity.

Key words: biowelfare, child protection, child welfare, critical childhood studies, critical social work, embodiment, epistemic injustice, epistemology, feminist theory, intersectionality, justice subjectivity, moral economy, moral subjectivity, participation, postcolonial theory, poststructural social work, social justice, violence

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To Katarina and Gabriel

List of Papers

This thesis is based on the following papers, which are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals.

- I Knezevic, Zlatana (2017) Amoral, im/moral and dis/loyal: Children's moral status in child welfare. *Childhood, 24*(4), 470–484.
- II Knezevic, Zlatana (2020) Speaking Bodies – Silenced Voices: Child Welfare and the Knowledge Culture of 'Evidencing'. *Submitted.*
- III Knezevic, Zlatana & Eriksson, Maria & Heikkilä, Mia (2019) De/gendering Violence and Racialising Blame in Swedish Child Welfare – What Has Childhood Got to Do with It? *Submitted*.
- IV Knezevic, Zlatana (2020) A Cry for Care but not Justice: Embodied Vulnerabilities and the Moral Economy of Child Welfare. *Affilia, 35*(2), 231–245.

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Contents

Abbreviations

abbrv.	abbreviation
BBIC	Barns Behov i Centrum
CYPA	Care of Young Persons Act (sv. Lag med särskilda bestämmelser om vård av unga, LVU)
EBP	Evidence-Based Practice
ICS	Integrated Children’s System
IFSW	International Federation of Social Workers
NBHW	National Board of Health and Welfare (sv. Socialstyrelsen)
SFS	The Swedish Code of Statutes (sv Svensk författningssamling)
SSA	(Swedish) Social Service Act
sv.	Swedish language code
transl.	translation
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
vs.	versus

Prologue: Emergence of a Dissertation – from the Outsider within to In-Betweeness

Sometimes feminist ideas and areas of interest are met with resistance in university environments and minimized as less than serious scholarly research. [---] Though feminist ethnographers (like other feminist researchers) may experience resistance within the academy regarding the legitimacy of their research, feminists are likely to agree that such resistance indicates the importance and necessity of their research rather than be discouraged by it. Such resistance might even make for a fascinating ethnographic problem! (Buch & Staller, 2007, p. 195).

Being less supported might also mean being willing to travel on unstable grounds even if (or perhaps because) our aim is to find support. (Ahmed, 2014, p. 20)

While a number of aspects have shaped the dissertation in its current form, I would nevertheless claim that the main one has been my position between two fields. As I am relatively new to my field, there were always recurring questions at the back of my mind, such as ‘What is social work?’, ‘What is child welfare?’

As noted by others, the positionality, or in this case the (inter)disciplinary perspectives from which a field is addressed, influences the topics chosen and how they are approached (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; Buch & Staller, 2007; Haraway 1988; Mulinari, 2005; Pringle, 2016; Rosenberg, 2007). This dissertation emerged from an encounter between the field of social work and child welfare on the one hand, and my background in gender studies on the other, which finally led me to critical childhood studies. During this process, some of the dominant ways of thinking in a field are disputed when they are reflected through the other, or fail to be reflected at all. The role of knowledge and disciplines comes to the fore in this process, as do the similarities, and especially the differences between the fields.

The above quotations highlight some important aspects of positionality and reflexivity, and of being inside/outside the field. This has long been a debate among scholars who find themselves in dialogue with different disciplines (Mulinari 2005; Rönnblom, 2014). The position of the insider-outsider is not given. It is co-created in the very context in which the research is conducted.

I was new. I was reminded that I was new, over and over again. During my doctoral studies, I was a visiting scholar at departments of social work at other universities where the approach was almost the opposite, in the sense that my outsider contribution was met with appreciation because of the *different* (other) perspectives I brought into the field. The experience made me shift towards embracing the *in-betweenness* (Wekker, 2009, p. 57).

This dissertation is as a critical intervention and a way of making the field more my own. It is nevertheless also a critical expression of awareness that the ‘old’ field is no longer sufficient in terms of understanding the areas I am now trying to grasp or pose questions about. A number of terms beginning with re-, e.g. reconsidering, reconceptualising and rewriting, become necessary strategies in this process, as do concepts such as unlearning. Texts can ‘speak’, and this text, while not driven by it, is nevertheless a response to many years of opposition to this research being ‘political’, ‘normative’ and ‘too theoretical’. It responds to this by incorporating a moral dimension into the analysis. This helps to show that it is not possible to be atheoretical, at least not in the frameworks within which this dissertation is written. Neither can there be value-free or non-normative knowledge. Not even in social work or child welfare, and not even in research on health and welfare.

BBIC and children exposed to violence

The dissertation is based within a larger research project, ‘BBIC and children exposed to partner violence’. During the writing process, the phrase ‘children exposed to violence’ was adopted as a fixed point of orientation, to avoid what otherwise seemed to be a number of different possibilities and pathways. Another fixed point was the empirical context, i.e. the assessment framework *BBIC* (sv. abbrv. ‘Barns Behov i Centrum’, i.e. ‘Children’s Needs in Focus’), and especially the material consisting of policy documents and written child welfare (assessment) case reports.

Two thoughts ran in parallel through approximately the first half of the project in terms of how the dissertation would develop. The first was an understanding that my main research would be ethnographic, and that the analysis would be based on interviews with children who have been exposed to violence and in contact with the Swedish child welfare services. This led me to delve into research on violence as well as research on children’s participation. It also made me reflect on interviewing as a method and helped me ‘think like an ethnographer’.

The second idea pointed towards a study with comparative elements, focusing on the Swedish BBIC and the British Integrated Children’s System (ICS). This led me to investigate comparative research more thoroughly, and deepened my previous interest in knowledge production. None of these ideas became a reality for a number of different reasons.[1] They have nonetheless shaped the dissertation in different ways.

Throughout the process, there was an interest in expanding the research project. Initially, I was fascinated by policy 'transfer', and how the Swedish BBIC was inspired by the ICS and had 'adapted' it to Swedish legislation and praxis. Working from a comparative point of view, I was asking the question: 'What are the commonalities and differences between the ICS and BBIC?' Eventually, other questions emerged, such as, 'What was the reason the English and Welsh child welfare system was chosen, and not those of other countries?' 'Why had ideas been imported from other countries at all?' Finally, I was interested in investigating what had made this transfer possible in the first place. This meant the 'context' of the study expanded and the 'map' was redrawn. I was no longer interested in geographical boundaries but geopolitical ones, as well as wider questions of production, distribution, circulation and conception of knowledge in child welfare.

The concept of 'violence' was also expanded over time, from the broader label 'violence in intimate relationships' (including child abuse and children exposed to and/or witnessing violence) to an interest in violations of children's bodily integrity and violence at a symbolic level.

Thus, during the years-long process many changes occurred both externally and internally. This dissertation has been finalised shortly after the outbreak of the Covid-19 (corona virus) pandemic. In such times, problematisations of symptom- and care-orientated child (bio)welfare can easily be misread as problematisations of caring in general, medical expertise, etc. While this dissertation shows examples in which such an orientation becomes problematic *in the context studied here* it is important to stress that this dissertation is in no way critical to care as such. The dissertation may seem untimely. Perhaps this is precisely what is needed in times when a pandemic virus tends to overshadow all other issues in the media.

Zlatana Knezevic,
16th April 2020, Malmö

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[1] Access to child-welfare case reports proved time-consuming and difficult. Access was granted half way through my doctoral studies. The idea of interviewing children was ultimately abandoned, after the realisation that it would be difficult (even if I gained access) to collect and analyse this material within the time that remained.

1. Introduction

Children are often located at the heart of 'the societal'. Political projects, policies and programmes often project desired improvements on future generations, which are symbolised by children. Childhoods also feature in mainstream theories on human socialisation and transformation, and therefore in theorisation of societal change (Berns, 2001; Bojer, 2000; Castañeda, 2002; Formark & Bränström Öhman, 2013). At the same time, children are largely depoliticised and generally disconnected from societal structures and spheres of public decision making, including analyses of power and injustices (Burman, 2017; Mayall, 2000; Wall, 2011). Scholars from a wide range of fields problematise how 'the child' as an idea figures in these contexts, and not as actual children.

As well as being absent from conventional moral and political philosophy (Bojer, 2000), children are also largely absent from social movements which have historically played an important role in advocacy for social justice (Sedgwick, 1991; Thompson, 2002). In many countries, including Sweden, recognition that children have universal rights coexists with the idea that they are less experienced, immature, 'underage' and therefore less than, below, and not yet quite equal to adult citizens (Alanen, 1988; James *et al.*, 1998; Lister, 2007; Wall, 2011).

Children, in other words, bring social justice issues to a head, embodying the limitations but also the opportunities for contemporary ideals of social justice. In the light of all this, it may therefore seem rather radical to ask questions about social justice in childhoods. It is nevertheless a question which needs to be asked. Posing additional questions about *intersecting injustices* in childhoods acknowledges that the conceptualisation of 'the child', or those who have universal children's rights, does not encompass all children. This applies in particular to children and childhoods which do not live up to dominant ideas about how children ought to be or to live, and who do not qualify *as children, girls, boys,* etc. (Eriksson, 2009; Graham, 2007; Ringrose & Renold, 2010; Sundhall, 2012; Walkerdine, 2000). Because of intersecting inequalities linked to age, ethnicity/race, gender, class, health/able-bodiedness and sexuality, some young people do not feature in representations of the promised equal future to come (Muñoz, 2009).

This doctoral dissertation is an exploration of the limitations and opportunities for social justice in childhoods, focusing in particular on intersecting (in)justices. It focuses on child welfare, thereby highlighting a context at the heart of diverse debates on social justice. On the one hand, it addresses social justice for those considered the least advantaged, ‘the most vulnerable’, namely ‘vulnerable’ children (Graham, 2007; Johansson & Höjer, 2012; Parton, 1996, 2014; Sallnäs *et al.*, 2010, p. 5). On the other hand, issues of social justice are discussed in a context which is commonly depicted as a pioneer in child-friendliness and gender equality: the welfare state of Sweden (Bruno, 2016; Cedersund & Brunnberg, 2013; Formark & Bränström Öhman, 2013; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2013; Pringle, 2016).

Today, child welfare policy stipulates that children in contact with social services should have the same opportunities as other children in society (NBHW, 2018). However, the opposite is often the case, and children in care are worse off than their peers (Andresen *et al.*, 2011; Berlin *et al.*, 2011; Brännström *et al.*, 2017; Cleaver *et al.*, 2004; Léveillé & Chamberland, 2010; Levin, 1998). This discrepancy between rhetoric and practice is a dominant theme, to the extent that the disadvantaged and vulnerable, when they are faring well, are described as doing so ‘against all odds’ (Claezon, 1996; Lönnroth, 1990).

As a response to these critiques, in particular those concerning health inequalities in childhoods and poor health of children in care, in 2006 the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW) launched the assessment framework *BBIC* (sv. *Barns Behov i Centrum*, abbrv. ‘Children’s Needs in Focus’). In this dissertation, responses to health issues (children’s biowelfare) are discussed in a broader context of limitations and opportunities for understanding, managing and prioritising injustices in childhoods (children’s welfare).

BBIC is a nationally used framework in child welfare for assessing children at risk of harm, along with their needs (NBHW, 2006, 2013, 2015b, 2018). Influenced by a rhetoric of equal opportunity, as well as children’s right to participation and more recently legal certainty, a standardised framework for assessment implies that every child within the welfare state is assessed in a similar manner, regardless of the municipality they belong to, and irrespective of which social worker conducts the assessment. I situate BBIC within the ongoing debate about and *child-centrism* (Gilbert *et al.*, 2011b; Johansson & Ponnert, 2015), which is commensurate with ‘Children’s Needs in Focus’ in BBIC. The increased attention paid to children, their needs and rights, reflects also discussions about incorporating children’s rights into Swedish national legislation (Commission of Inquiry 2016:19).

I also situate BBIC within the ongoing debate about *scientification* or ‘knowledge-based’ social work (Hydén, 2008; Marthinsen, 2016; Svanevie, 2011). The dissertation is based on the assumption that the initiation, development and implementation of BBIC did not take place in a vacuum, but that it needs to be understood as a process of knowledge (re)production and with a specific disciplinary embeddedness. A guiding underlying assumption in

Swedish child welfare, also explored in this dissertation, involves a cross-fertilisation between an increased emphasis on scientific knowledge and ‘evidence’, and, corresponding developments towards a greater focus on children’s needs and rights. These and other intersections between knowledge and issues of social justice form the focal point for this dissertation and its four studies in terms of exploring intersecting social justice issues in childhoods.

Last, but definitely not least, the dissertation discusses how different forms of injustice in childhoods are enabled and constrained through notions of age, ethnicity/race and gender, but also class and health. It considers the role played by these axes of power in terms of how intersecting social injustices are reinforced, differentiated or left entirely without response. In this way, the present dissertation is inspired by, and seeks to develop, critical social work scholarship by interlinking critical childhood studies and poststructural, postcolonial and feminist contributions.

Aim of the Dissertation

The overall aim of this dissertation is to inscribe a discourse of intersecting social (in)justices related to age, ethnicity/race and gender, as well as class and health, onto childhoods and the field of child welfare. The present dissertation is located within the triad of postcolonial, feminist and critical childhood studies. Empirically, the study examines BBIC – the Swedish child welfare and the assessment framework – as an instance of child welfare policies and practices. The aim is to explore how Swedish child welfare, as a field of knowledge, modes of knowing and knowing subjects, constitutes an arena for claims and responses to intersecting injustices.

This aim is achieved through the following sub-aims:

- (i) to examine the discursive locations of childhoods and positions of children in child welfare policy in relation to intersecting social justice issues (Study I; III);
- (ii) to examine responses to intersecting and embodied social injustices in childhoods in child welfare practice (II; IV);
- (iii) to map out the linkages between epistemic and social (in)justice, as well as how these bear on children’s claims to justice (Studies I–IV).

This rest of this chapter constitutes the backbone of the dissertation and starts by situating the dissertation more broadly within scholarly debates. This first part of the chapter addresses the place of childhoods in studies and debates of social justice, at the same time proposing the need for interdisciplinary approaches to the problem at hand. From there, I situate the dissertation within three debates in the field and present some empirical research relevant to the study. The chapter concludes with three sections which discuss my approaches to intersecting injustices.

Together, chapters 2 and 3 constitute the critical epistemology and methodology of the dissertation. Firstly, central theoretical concepts in the dissertation are presented. Chapter 3 discusses methodology, material, as well as ethical and methodological issues.

Like the introduction, chapter 4 provides a background to the context of the study, in this case focusing particularly on child welfare social work.

Chapter 5 summarises the four studies and finally, chapter 6 discusses the findings and draws conclusions.

‘Where are the children?’ Intersecting (In)justices and Childhoods

‘Where are the children?’ Barrie Thorne asked feminists in 1987 (Thorne, 1987). Claudia Castañeda (2001) similarly asked who counts as a feminist subject, illustrating how feminist and poststructuralist theories on subjectivity exclude children. In 1991 in the US context, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick posed critical questions about gender-nonconforming youth after homosexuality had been removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM III). She writes how ‘“Gender Identity Disorder of Childhood” appears to have attracted virtually no outside attention – nor even to have been perceived as part of the same conceptual shift’ (Sedgwick, 1991, p. 20). In one of her articles, Mekada Graham draws similar conclusions in relation to the exclusion and invisibility of black children. She discusses, more precisely, ‘the silencing and marginalization of black children in the wider society and the lack of qualitative research that documents their experiences’ (2007, p. 1306; see also Muñoz, 2009).

These discussions took place separately, yet they mirror debates between different fields and critical scholars which address a wide range of issues involving social justice. These and other contributions deal with concepts commonly applied to adults, yet they are less prominent in relation to childhoods. Examples worth mentioning include citizenship (Lister, 2007), subjectivity (Burman, 2008, 2017; Castañeda, 2001, 2002; Walkerdine, 2000) and access to discourses of justice and power (e.g. Eriksson, 2003, 2009, 2010; Thorne, 1987). The above accounts, alongside others discussed in this dissertation, acknowledge that, in spite of separation through disciplinary divides, separate policies and legislation, children nevertheless share various forms of marginalisation with other marginalised groups in society (Graham, 2007; Lister, 2007; Murris, 2013; Pringle, 2011; Sedgwick, 1991; Sundhall, 2012; Thorne, 1987; valentine, 2011). These accounts also point to the need for academics, policy-makers, and activists in social movements to include children, and not treat them as a homogenous group.

As policy researchers, historians and others show, children are kept outside of ‘adult’ domains where politics and issues involving justice are ‘taking place’. Children are also commonly excluded from discourses on (gender) equality. This is an important consideration, given that this dissertation addresses issues such as gender-based violence and violations against children. Excluding children from these discourses illustrates how freedom from gender-based violence (commonly referred to as violence by men against women) has only recently been reframed in policy to read ‘… and children’ (Bruno, 2016; Dahlkild-Öhman, 2011; Eriksson, 2003; 2010; Eriksson *et al.*, 2007; Humphreys & Stanley, 2006). In the case of children,[2] the prevailing discourses on risk focus less on freedom from violence by the father and more on how the absence of the biological father has a negative impact on children’s gender identity and development into adulthood (Dahlkild-Öhman, 2011; Eriksson, 2003; Eriksson & Näsman, 2008; Lundqvist & Roman, 2009). Previous research discusses ‘a profound separation in the discourses of child abuse and woman abuse which underpins structural and organisational barriers to an integrated response to the issue’ (Humphreys & Stanley, 2006, p. 9). Thus, in response to this as an issue of power, justice and inequality, (understandings of violence against) children are separated from (understandings of violence against) mothers (Dahlkild-Öhman, 2011; Eriksson, 2010; Humphreys & Stanley, 2006).

The aforementioned debate exemplifies what have been called above ‘separation through disciplinary divides’ and separate policy domains for children and adults. This dissertation addresses these divides as elements in different moral economies, claiming that child welfare is more a *moral economy of care* than of justice. The moral economy of care, in turn, is discussed here as a response common to *biowelfare,* an (umbrella) term borrowed from Aihwa Ong (2006, p. 212). While biowelfarist approaches are not viewed as inherently in opposition to justice, I nevertheless argue that some of the injustices addressed in this dissertation cannot be resolved with biowelfare.

Building Blocks for an Interdisciplinary Framework

In 2011, Keith Pringle’s contribution to the anthology *Social Work and Child Welfare Politics: Through Nordic Lenses* (2011) gives three guidelines for future welfare research, which he considers limited so far. The first addresses the need for alternative methods. In this regard, Pringle suggests *intersectional*

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[2] While all children may be exposed to violence, child sexual abuse in the context of intimate (family) relations primarily involves men abusing their daughters and step-daughters. Physical violence, however, may be more severe when it comes to violence against boys (Eriksson *et al.*, 2007).

and other analyses for understanding complex relations of power and intersections between multiple dimensions of social exclusion and disadvantage. Intersectionality can be defined as a theory of power based on the understanding that different axes of power intersect with each other in complex and contradictory ways. These axes include age, class, ethnicity/race, gender, health/able-bodiedness, religion, sexuality, etc. (Crenshaw, 1991; McCall, 2005; de los Reyes & Mulinari, 2005). Intersectionality emerged from black feminism and has been employed to problematise the homogenous category of 'woman' (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991). In other words, intersectionality has been developed to analyse power and difference in the adult world, and this is the main way in which intersectionality has been used in social work and child welfare research (e.g. Mattsson, 2005, 2014; e.g. Mehrotra, 2010; e.g. Sawyer, 2012, but see Gruber, 2007; Krumer-Nevo & Komem, 2015; see also Sixtensson, 2018, on adolescents). This dissertation argues that this adult-centredness has also contributed to some of the challenges involved in analysing intersecting injustices within child welfare and in relation to childhoods and children in the age group 0–12 that this dissertation mostly focuses on (Study II; IV).

The other guideline proposed by Pringle addresses alternative research questions within welfare research. As Pringle writes, welfare research has traditionally been devoted to areas surrounding poverty alleviation, labour and production, while less attention has been paid to issues surrounding bodily integrity and citizenship (Pringle, 2011, p. 162; see also Wilson, 2002). In discussing this focus, Graham (2007) links it to a pre-occupation with class at the expense of other axes of power.

Thirdly, Pringle calls for a more explicit service-user perspective in research, including a children's perspective. This dissertation responds to the calls by putting forth age, ethnicity/race and gender as important axes of power and difference in childhoods, and to address the status of children and child service users.

The above calls serve as building blocks for an *interdisciplinary* dissertation. The accounts in the previous section suggest that if there are weak links between children and social justice discourses in terms of equality or intersecting injustices, the reasons for this are not only to be found in the field of social work and child welfare. They are equally connected with contemporary adult-centric knowledge production in critical scholarship on social justice issues, equality and intersectionality.

Interdisciplinarity in this dissertation is used in 'epistemic disobedience' – to paraphrase Walter D. Mignolo – to disciplinary boundaries and disciplines in isolation, which fail to acknowledge complex matters that shape lives (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; Gröndahl, 2007; McClintock, 1995; Mignolo, 2009; de los Reyes & Gröndahl, 2007; Wekker, 2009). It represents a critical engagement with core aspects of disciplines, such as their concepts, canons, classifications, methods and boundaries as well as a discipline's objects of inquiry (Mignolo, 2009; Wekker, 2009).

Thus, in addressing intersecting social justice issues in childhoods in the context of child welfare policy and practice, several fields, disciplines and schools of thought are at play: those influencing social justice debates, and those associated with childhoods and child welfare. While the empirical contributions primarily derive from the field of social work and child welfare, the theoretical debates also link to other disciplines, schools of thought and fields of inquiry. This is in alignment with the aim of the dissertation, which is situated empirically in the field of social work and child welfare. It is theoretically in dialogue with social work, gender studies, postcolonial theory and critical childhood studies, as well as anthropology and political philosophy. The following sections are an effort to situate the dissertation within some central debates of relevance to this dissertation and its aims.

Three Centrisms: Knowledge, Child, Justice

In this dissertation, the emergence of BBIC is situated within the ongoing debate about *scientification* (Marthinsen, 2016) or *knowledge centrism*, which generally reflects contemporary 'knowledge society' (Abi-Rached & Rose, 2014; Cetina, 2007). This takes place in parallel with *child-centrism* (Gilbert *et al.*, 2011b; Johansson & Ponnert, 2015; see also Skivenes, 2011). These two centrisms are discussed in the following sections in relation to what is called a 'turn' towards social justice in social work.

Knowledge Centrism

Although it is often presented as such, scientification or knowledge centrism is not new in the field of social work and child welfare. Nor is scientific knowledge a novel idea in the quest for social justice. In fact, it goes back to the Enlightenment, which has been described as providing the prevailing framework for ethics in social work (Gray & Webb, 2010; Reisch, 2002). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, according to Michael Reisch (2002), Western aims in terms of social justice were to be achieved through science. Enlightenment, universal truths and secularism are characteristic key words for this period in history. These ideas were also influential in the formation of modern institutions and welfare states, and were contemporary with the European colonial period. While equality of rights, opportunity and outcomes was the subject of debate, this was not envisioned for all. From Plato to Aristotle and eventually Hobbes, Reisch discusses how, if philosophers on social justice paid attention to equality at all, it was conceptualised quite differently to today, where it has come to mean equality between all human beings (Jaggar, 2000; Reisch, 2002).

In the aftermath of World War II, critical scholars and philosophers known today as poststructuralists expressed a more sceptical view of knowledge production and knowledge-producing institutions. They did not consider them to have been involved in a quest for improvement and an equal society, but instead as structures and processes in support of colonialism, genocide and various forms of injustice (Essed, 1996; Gröndahl, 2007, p. 26; McClintock, 1995; Mignolo, 2009). Alongside a critical response to mainstream research, in particular 'the positivist-empiricist and rationality-centred emphases of social work research and epistemology' (Reisch, 2002, pp. 347–348; see Taylor & White, 2001), poststructuralists also criticise modernist ideas about linear progress. Thus, for poststructuralists, the concept of social justice is also viewed as a modernist idea, hence should be viewed with caution (Brown, 2012; see also Pease, 2002).

Presented above are two different forms of knowledge centrism which will recur throughout this dissertation. One involves a belief that apparently value-neutral positivist-empiricist knowledge can make the world a better place. The other is more sceptical, but still places knowledge at the centre of the analysis.

This dissertation is aligned with the latter approach and follows concepts based on the ideas of the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1974, 1975, 2002). Drawing on Foucauldian interlinkage of knowledge-power, this dissertation elaborates yet another dimension in the interrelationship: morality. Here, morality is defined more broadly than legislation, codes of conduct and other explicit ethical guidelines, i.e. ethics. While mainstream research often considers epistemology, or the theory of knowledge, to be detached from moral philosophy and moral issues in general, critical epistemologies acknowledge that they are inseparable. This acknowledges that epistemologies in general and, in this case, the discipline of social work and child welfare, are 'moralist' and never value-free (cf. Haraway, 1988; Herz *et al.*, 2012; White, 1998b). I discuss this at length in the next chapter.

Power is not considered to be exercised in a simple top-down manner. For the context in question, this means that: '[Social workers] in social work institutions occupy positions of power in relation to the "clients"', however, 'they are also embedded within and negotiate some of the same implicit and intersectional power hierarchies that the "clients" they work with are subjected to' (Sawyer, 2012, pp. 163–164).

Knowledge issues are an important subject of inquiry, because in the context in question, science has historically played a significant role in welfare reform and in disseminating knowledge to the population (Hübner, 2016; Lundqvist & Roman, 2009). However, Åsa Lundqvist and Christine Roman (2009) also note that this no longer applies to the social sciences. It appears that critical social science researchers have moved away from being policy-makers and 'social engineers', and have assumed a renewed role as critical voices in public opinion, merging the concerns of activists and social movements with concerns of the state. This therefore generates a question about which sciences are involved in the scientification of child welfare social work. I address this below in relation to BBIC (see also chapter 4).

Evidence-Based Practice

BBIC has previously been associated with evidence-based practice (EBP) (Herz, 2016; Ponnert & Johansson, 2018; Svanevie, 2011). The EBP movement, in turn, has been linked to a wider neoliberal transformation of social work, which is said to mirror other shifts within the field such as a reduced focus on values and more on '*technical* process' (Ferguson, 2009, p. 92). This description resembles some contemporary descriptions of BBIC. Assessment frameworks like BBIC are primarily discussed as methods, or as products of a development towards an 'increased formalization and documentation' (Matscheck & Berg Eklundh, 2015, p. 208; Ponnert & Johansson, 2018). BBIC is described as involving an absence of 'hard law' and legal regulations for child welfare, leading authors such as Lina Ponnert and Susanna Johansson to the conclusion that:

> BBIC is thus primarily a system and tool for gathering and sorting information that needs to be combined and carried out in accordance with the legal rules and procedures that govern the investigative child-protection work, and can be seen as an illustrative example of standardization. (2018, p. 2028).

In this dissertation, BBIC is approached less as a method or procedure, and more as a value-based framework involving normative 'scientific discourses'. It is also considered to support modes of knowing and 'evidencing', as well as certain ideas about knowing subjects. In the section 'Equality and Differentiation', I discuss how BBIC can be seen more broadly as a moral framework.

While EBP in child welfare more generally involves interventions and effective methods and/or 'what works' solutions (Akademikerförbundet SSR, 2015b; Herz, 2016; Hydén, 2008; Ferguson, 2009; Ferguson & Lavalette, 2006), EBP in BBIC is primarily concerned with the multiple forms or 'sources' of knowledge that professionals need to take into account. Study II describes the division and asymmetry between three forms: scientific knowledge, professional experience and service-user perspectives. Social workers are recommended to consider all three sources when they are assessing children.

The increased emphasis on knowledge-based social work has led some researchers to examine how social workers draw on science in their work or how they view EBP (Bergmark & Lundström, 2011; Svanevie, 2011) but also the role and meaning of professional expertise (Iversen & Heggen, 2016; see also Enell & Denvall, 2017; Hübner, 2016). Studies I and II, however, raise the issue of the status of child service user perspective. Both studies address children's epistemic and moral status which I in this dissertation discuss in relation to social justice claims more broadly.

Children in Focus

BBIC is the Swedish abbreviation for 'Children's Needs in Focus', and therefore part of an 'emerging trend' in child welfare, the third of three 'orientations': a *family service orientation*, a *child protection orientation* and a so-called *child-focus orientation* (Gilbert *et al.*, 2011b). Neil Gilbert and colleagues describe the orientation as having a greater focus on children but also in dialogue with the social-investment model, a neoliberal model where employment features as the solution to all problems.

In this dissertation, child focus is discussed in two ways, in relation to needs (chapter 4) and to rights. According to the most recently published and updated BBIC document (NBHW, 2018), the aim and purpose of BBIC includes strengthening 'the child's participation [sv. *delaktighet*] and influence' (NBHW, 2018, p. 8). Children's participation in BBIC adheres to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). The first two of nine principles outlined in BBIC emphasise children's participation (NBHW, 2018, pp. 13–14). The first principle states that children's rights are a point of departure for BBIC, and the second states that the guiding principle is children's best interests. Equal opportunities for every child are also mentioned, and legal certainty appears in later updates of the framework text.[3] The term social justice, however, is absent.

Rights-Based Approaches in Child Welfare

Recent years have seen a greater emphasis on rights. According to some commentators, these developments point to increased juridification (Ponnert & Johansson, 2018; Skivenes, 2011). As mentioned above, Sweden is one of the countries which is incorporating the UNCRC into national law. In particular, the right to participation is brought to the fore in child welfare research dealing specifically with children. Child welfare research considers participation to have 'therapeutic value', as well as being a right (Cater, 2014; Eriksson, 2009). Issues of wellbeing are taken into account in relation to how children express uncertainty, anxiety and discomfort about the future planned for them by social workers. In alignment with this, participation is considered to improve children's self-esteem and sense of control (van Bijleveld *et al.*, 2015; McLeod, 2006; Pölkki *et al.*, 2012).

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[3] Legal certainty is also mentioned as a specific aim in the 2013 version of BBIC: 'contribute to improved quality and legal certainty through national standardisation in assessment, planning and follow-up.' (NBHW, 2006, p. 16; 2013, p. 17, my transl.). Unlike in the 2015/2018 documents, legal certainty is not explicitly linked to children (cf. NBHW, 2015b, 2018).

This section will discuss previous research which adopts a rights-based approach, i.e. referring explicitly or implicitly to children's rights. The so-called three P's of children's rights – participation, protection and provision – are recurring themes in child welfare research.

Participation, Agency and the Competent Child

Since the radical recognition of the agentic knowledgeable child was introduced in childhood studies (also called 'new sociology of childhood', see James *et al*., 1998), children's agency has gained more visibility in society and research, including social work and child welfare. Among the wide range of frameworks adopted in public discourse, participation has come to stand for voice and agency which, in turn, have become one of the main aspects of discussion on the rights of children. This is guided by Article 12 of the UNCRC, which stipulates children's right to voice their opinions and to be listened to by adults (UNCRC, 1989).

The theme of participation is widely discussed in relation to institutional contexts and/or interaction. The latter focuses on knowledge not only as something someone can have, but also as something which can be enabled by interaction, for instance by giving information to children about available options or how certain procedures work (Iversen, 2013; McLeod, 2006; Pölkki *et al.*, 2012; see also NBHW, 2018). In a similar vein, children can be deprived of necessary information, which in itself limits their possibilities and potential to be knowledgeable in institutional interactions. Thus, some research adds complexity to what is otherwise seen as the increased participatory status of children in relation to their knowledge, which accumulates with age, and their cognitive development (Aubrey & Dahl, 2006; Eriksson, 2009; Iversen, 2012, 2013, 2014; Sundhall, 2008). This is reinforced by UNCRC, which views participation in relation to age and maturity (Lee, 1999; Wells, 2011).

Previous research has focused extensively on how children's age and maturity have been assessed in different contexts. For instance, in her analysis of family law social work reports, Jeanette Sundhall (2008) shows that children below the age of three are mainly observed and depicted as objects.

David Matscheck and Lotta Berg Eklundh (2015) draw similar conclusions in their examination of children's participation in the context of BBIC. They show that, after the introduction of the BBIC assessment framework, the focus shifted from parents in the case of younger children, to both children and parents, or children only. This supports what is known as increased child-centrism in child welfare (Pösö, 2011; Skivenes, 2011), including in Sweden (Gilbert *et al.*, 2011b). Child-centrism, interpreted along the lines of Matscheck and Berg Eklundh, implies an increase in interviewing children, but also an increase in observation, the latter especially prominent in terms of younger children. It notes that the younger the child, the less she participates. Scholars also indicate that professionals may still understand participation as listening to children rather than enabling their participation in decision-making, particularly in relation to children below the age of 13. In response to a question '[a]s to where [children's] voices were heard' almost half the respondents, i.e. social workers, mentioned 'through observing the child' (Matscheck & Berg Eklundh, 2015, p. 206).

However, observation and objectification are not necessarily related to age, as Sundhall (2008) shows. Older children as well as those who feature strongly in case reports[4], may be objectified, according to Sundhall. While there may be children who are taken seriously, seen as knowledgeable and therefore considered 'competent subjects', Sundhall identifies the position of incompetent subjects, and discusses objects with voice and objects without voice, who are not considered 'competent' (see also Eriksson, 2009). I discuss similar practices of objectification in Study II. The metaphors of *voice* (Sundhall, 2008) and *body* are used to capture these nuances and give a more multi-layered perspective on conditions for participation in child welfare contexts.

Sundhall's research about objectified children can be linked to Allison McLeod's study (2006) about child welfare responses to children's wishes. Research shows that social workers' views of participation are not shared by the children they are dealing with. Children's stories are often believed, though there may be exceptions to this. This is demonstrated by the fact that social workers listen to them, as McLeod (2006) shows. McLeod illustrates the gap between 'listening to children' and 'hearing children', and how the latter is typically constrained. However, she shows how credibility is most questioned in a case involving an autistic child with obsessive behaviour, which indicates a close interrelation between trustworthiness and what I here broadly call health.

Research confirms that the idea of children being agentic-competent subjects is not easily aligned with children in vulnerable positions in child welfare (Eriksson, 2009, Eriksson & Näsman, 2008; Sundhall, 2012). A study by Maria Eriksson (2009) highlights differentiations between children and the positions they can embody in a victim-competent actor dichotomy, by linking her findings to gender and age. Eriksson shows that agency is masculine-coded in a general sense, and is associated with dominance, control and violence, but also adultness. Victimhood instead evokes associations with the opposite of agentic. This creates a tension between being a victim and being protected, and at the same time being perceived as a competent child. Eriksson's contribution is showing how age alone is insufficient as an analytical category for power relations in childhoods. In this study, boys' stories are less likely to be validated, especially when the subject in question does not fulfil expectations about what a boy should be like, what a child should be like or what a victim should be like. The position of the child in this context is one of an 'invisible victim' or 'unprotected victim', which is also the case when children express

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[4] I use the term 'child welfare assessment reports' and 'case reports' interchangeably.

a concern about risks. Competence simply does not help a boy to feel that he has been heard. Hence, while the positions of 'protected victims', 'invisible victims' or 'unprotected victims' are more available to some children, it is more difficult to embody the position of 'victims with rights to participation', according to Eriksson. It becomes a challenge to approach children simultaneously as victims in need of *protection* and actors with the right to *participation* (van Bijleveld *et al.*, 2014, 2015; Eriksson, 2009; Eriksson & Näsman, 2008). When they demonstrate knowledge and ability, children are seen as less childlike and less as victims. At the same time, it is from the position of victim that children are allowed to speak and express themselves in the child welfare context (Eriksson, 2009; Eriksson & Näsman, 2008). This tension is touched upon in Studies II and IV. Study II discusses how children assessed as being in need of protection, i.e. recognised as vulnerable, are primarily children whose bodies 'speak' immaturity and developmental harm. On the basis of this, the study emphasises that health/illness is central to the analysis of biowelfarist responses, in terms of recognition as well as participation.

A contribution which breaks with the common idea that knowledgeability is linked to privilege, i.e. that higher societal status equals greater participation, is researched by Jennifer A. Reich (2010). Reich links participation to skills in interaction, which are gained through experience with authorities. As Reich (2010) shows in the US context, children who have previous experience of interventions have better resources and are more equipped to use the state to suit their own agenda. Reich points out that children who are commonly seen as socially disadvantaged, in other words 'children from low-income communities and communities of color' (Reich, 2010, p. 430), are those who have acquired knowledge about state agencies, and this gives them better negotiating skills. Encounters with social workers act as negotiations towards knowledge, where children learn how to mobilise state power for their own needs. Reich's study indicates that children's power involves skills and knowledge of what is expected. These negotiations consist of various strategies such as choosing what to tell and what to emphasise during the interviews, and involve children adopting the language of the state agents when they narrate their stories. It means giving a child's perspective and framing it as a 'child perspective'. Depending on what they want, children use this strategically to contest or to affirm social workers' versions with their own 'competing knowledges' (Reich, 2010).

However, the negotiation sketched by Reich is not easily carried out if the social worker's authority overrules a child's wish (Iversen, 2013; McLeod, 2006) or a child's perception of risk or fear (Eriksson, 2009; Iversen, 2013, 2014). A similar critique can be directed at the idea of the calculating child. In analysing how 'apathetic' asylum-seeking children are constructed in Commission Inquiries in Sweden, Richard Ek (2008) problematises the notion of the calculating child asylum seeker, which sees these children as being capable of manipulating their surroundings for their own or their family's interest, i.e. to be granted a residence permit. Ek's example shows that some children's participation is problematised and rendered immoral.

With reference to social services in the US, Ong (2003) discusses how girls from ethnic minorities are *given* more agency in decision-making than their peers from the ethnic majority. Her analysis outlines how girls' participation status in institutional settings is tightly interwoven with gender and ethnicity in intersection, but also how the parents are stereotyped by social workers as culturally incompetent and traditional. A situation which could, from one point of view, be seen as increased participation and agency of children, could from another be approached as control and unfair treatment of parents. Ong's analysis, in contrast to that of Reich, locates participation not in children's agency (and experience), but in the institutional context that allows or constraints it.

These two contributions add complexity to what would otherwise be a glorification of participation (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Together, they illustrate different ways in which children's participation could also be understood as a process of racialisation, but linked to gendering, classicism and adultism, as well as neoliberal ideas of individualism (Raby, 2014). Thus, their research analyses power in childhoods and adulthoods contextually and structurally. Complex and structural relations of power in childhoods cannot be reduced to adult frameworks, but can nevertheless be related to adulthood in a number of ways. Research may therefore also discuss kinship and how constructions of children and parents are interconnected (Bruno, 2015; Eriksson, 2003, 2009; Ong, 2003).

Studies I, II and IV in this dissertation represent efforts to deal with the issues and contradictory ways of portraying children discussed by previous research. These studies suggest that competency (also referred to as *epistemic status*) is insufficient in terms of grasping how children are portrayed, and they discuss some ways in which knowledgeability and morality are interconnected. These combinations not only enable a better understanding of this aforementioned tension, but also help to highlight the nuances of different positions and the power relations they mirror.

Domains for Children's Participation

As noted above, research on children's competence and participation is extensive, but it rarely discusses explicitly where this competence is directed. The above research indicates that child welfare responses to children's competence are explored in relation to violence, parenting and risk. Moreover, this involves analyses of children's epistemic access to the past, the present and the future. McLeod's study suggests that children's status as knowing subjects is questioned in relation to the future, i.e. in terms of wishes and decision-making, as claims to knowledge about the future are more available to professionals. This dissertation addresses and develops these findings in a number of ways. Study II provides some explanations as to why the future is reserved for professional knowledge, and shows how an orientation towards the future constrains children's participatory status. As discussed in the previous section, however, not even children's experiences (of the past) are always taken seriously when they are expressed by children (Eriksson, 2009; Sundhall, 2008, 2012).

In the context of child welfare assessment reports in a Welsh setting, Jane Thomas and Sally Holland (2010) show that there is an inconsistency in the areas to which children's views are reported. In research about BBIC, it remains rather unclear which specific domains are targeted in terms of children's participation. However, Elin Hultman (2013) and Hultman and Ann-Christin Cederborg (2014) raise the issue of children's epistemic access to health, which they show is constrained. Moreover, the prevailing approach to BBIC as a working method, as discussed above, seems to generate more focus on how it is used than on what enables or constrains the participation of children *within* the framework. This is precisely what this dissertation aims to do, namely to analyse BBIC less as a method and more as an exemplification of a knowledge culture (Study II) and a moral economy (Study IV). Thus, participation of children becomes less a matter of method or practitioners' intentions and more a matter of the prevailing modes of knowing in child welfare, the knowledge that is sought after in assessments and the field's knowing subjects (Study II; see also Study IV). In this way, I interrogate the relationship between knowledge-centrism and child-centrism in child welfare social work.

Protection

According to the Swedish Social Services Act 2001:453 (SSA), (sv. *Socialtjänstlagen, SoL*), the municipal authorities, i.e. the Social Services Board, are responsible for the welfare and protection of residents, including children. Protection from violence is therefore a right, as is participation. Social services initiate an investigation, according to the provisions of the Act to investigate a child's need for protection and support (SSA 2001:453, § 11). The Care of Young Persons Act (CYPA 1990:52, sv. *Lag med särskilda bestämmelser om vård av unga, LVU*) regulates compulsory care. Compulsory care can involve immediate out-of-home placements and temporary decisions, but also more permanent solutions in terms of foster care or institutional care. In the context of compulsory care, the municipal Social Services Board applies to the County Administrative Court (for an overview, see Leviner, 2014; Östberg, 2010). In this case, the latter constitutes the decision-making authority, while the former suggests a decision in the form of a written assessment by a social worker or a number of social workers. Studies II and IV focus on the processes involved before a court decision takes place, and examine the social worker's written assessments/recommendations.

The CYPA is activated when the care needed cannot be given on a voluntary basis (through the SSA). In principle, this means that one or both of the custodians, or a minor over the age of 15, disagree with the care recommended by social services. In other words, children below this age who are in care are taken out of the equation when consent or disagreement is required, as the specific definition of care in this case involves whether care is voluntary or compulsory. However, consent and disagreement are ambiguous concepts also when it comes to guardians and older children. Not only do child welfare agencies decide when and what care is needed, but also whether consent by the parents (or a minor over the age of 15 and below the age of 20) is to be trusted or not. This can be viewed as one of the many ways in which social services are granted a role of moral authority (Ponnert, 2007). Moreover, in this sense provision becomes inseparable from issues of participation.

The SSA is discussed as ‘a frame law’ entailing values and principles, i.e. democracy, solidarity and equality. Social services focus primarily on voluntary aid, which takes into consideration two core values for social work: self-determination and the integrity of those receiving help (Gray & Webb, 2010; McGrath Morris, 2002; Ponnert, 2007). However, researchers provide a complex picture of how these values are fulfilled. The client is not only the child but also the child’s parents, the very people from whom the child may need protection. At the same time, protecting, i.e. removing a child from his or her parent/s, can be perceived as violating the parents’ integrity and self-determination. This puts social services in a position of negotiating conflicting interests and rights (Eriksson, 2003; Heimer & Palme, 2016; Leviner, 2014; Ponnert, 2007).

Children’s right to freedom from violence is often mentioned in child welfare[5], which specifically works within a context of protection. For instance, some research shows that children are not granted the protection they need from violence. This omission is reflected in a number of aspects of the child-investigation process, from professionals’ reluctance to report (Wiklund, 2006) and social workers’ handling of referrals (Cocozza *et al.*, 2007) to a reluctance to provide protection for children (Linell, 2017; Ponnert, 2007; Östberg, 2010). In approaching the theme of protection, child welfare research sometimes also highlights what children are protected from (Östberg, 2010). However, if this research addresses violence, this tends to be confined to violence in the home/by parents. On the other hand, as I discuss in chapter 4, historical analyses provide descriptions of how the objective of child protection has changed over the years. From being a non-issue, violence against children in the home, i.e. child abuse, is now a common theme in research, policy and legislation (Andresen *et al.*, 2011; Pettersson, 2001; Spratt *et al.*, 2015).

Sweden is usually associated with a family-support orientation and contrasted with child protection practices in other countries, such as the UK and

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[5] By child welfare, I mean social services work with children regardless of whether it falls under SSA or CYPA. In the British context, for instance, compulsory care would instead be called child protection.

Australia (Gilbert *et al.*, 2011a). Where the Swedish arrangements imply preventive practice, the others are considered more protective. Child protection concerns are therefore located within family dynamics in a family-support orientation, while child-protection oriented practice targets parents' harmful behaviour (Gilbert *et al.*, 2011a; Leviner, 2014; Parton, 2014). According to Pernilla Leviner (2014), this can explain why coercive care, which involves placing children outside the home and removing them from their parents, takes place earlier in the investigation process in child protection-oriented countries than it does in a country like Sweden. Francesca Östberg (2010) and Leviner seem to suggest that child welfare in Sweden operates through a reactive logic. The patterns of intervention point to cases where there has already been abuse (Leviner, 2014; Linell, 2017; Ponnert, 2007; Östberg, 2010).

This is also examined in Study II and IV. The studies take as their point of departure the Parental Code in Swedish civil law, which recognises all forms of violence (SFS 1949:381; see especially the amendment SFS 1983:47). I approach child welfare assessments less as points in postponed interventions which focus on 'reactive outcomes' (e.g. Cocozza & Hort, 2011; Leviner, 2004, p. 217; Östberg, 2010). Instead, it explores the aforementioned tendencies in relation to the possibilities and constraints involved in protecting children from *certain forms* of injustice, while overlooking others (Study II; IV).

Previous research seems to offer a rather contradictory picture of the social services on the one hand, and the court on the other, as both are said to base their judgements on different logics, even if both are influenced by therapeutic approaches (Leviner, 2014; Ponnert, 2007). According to Ponnert, there is a tension between the laws on voluntary care (SSA 2001:453) and compulsory care (CYPA 1990:52). As Ponnert states, '[c]ompulsory care is a measure that in a way manifests values contradictory to those expressed in the Social Services Act' (Ponnert, 2007, p. 284). In this regard, different 'institutional logics and norms' become visible. According to Ponnert (2007, p. 284; see also Leviner, 2014), where social services are 'generally seeking "welfare"', the court is generally seeking "justice"'.

Leviner (2014) has touched on similar issues, highlighting a number of weaknesses in the legislative frameworks. Leviner asks 'Are there legal impediments making it difficult to more appropriately respond to a child's right to be protected from a harmful home environment?' (2014, p. 207). She provides an example of an answer to this question in the courts, noting that 'The Supreme Administrative Court has pointed out that the prevailing risk must be substantial, close or imminent […] and may not concern remote or hypothetical postulations' (Leviner, 2014, p. 213). This poses challenges in situations where there is no tangible 'evidence', for instance in the form of a conviction for a crime.

However, Susan White (1998b) offers a critical response to a similar debate about legalism (juridification) vs. psychological science. Rather than seeing them as opposites, she argues that they are intertwined:

> […] it is difficult to see how the 'psy' complex can possibly be waning. Rather, the 'psy' sciences make possible the 'evidence' on which legalism is based, defining the needs of 'the child as a bundle of needs', providing the normative yardsticks against which 'the child as victim' is identified, and (via developmentalism) deciding which children are bestowed with the right to autonomous decision making. If child-care work has become consumed by legalism, it is psycho-legalism. (White, 1998b, p. 284).

Study II considers this opposition/interconnection in relation to forms of 'evidencing', or performative practices of knowing and truth making in child welfare case reports. Thus, Study II and IV problematise the distinctions made between what is commonly known as 'welfare' (involving social work practice) and 'justice', which involves the courts (Eriksson, 2010; Leviner, 2014; Ponnert. 2007; White, 1998b). In this dissertation, what have previously been depicted as tensions between 'welfare' and 'justice' are rephrased as care vs. justice (Study IV). This rephrasing and juxtaposition is a strategic move which is intended to ascribe another meaning to welfare. To put this in a different way, some previous research which uses the term tends to associate welfare with what this study calls *bio*welfare. In making a distinction between welfare and biowelfare, the aim is to develop a new way of understanding welfare – as less informed by psychobiologism. This forms the basis of the discussion in the section 'Health & Welfare = Biowelfare', in chapter 2.

Provision

Research sometimes claims, for instance, that greater participation by children in contact with child welfare agencies makes the services better and helps to provide more responsive interventions (van Bijleveld *et al*., 2014, 2015).

However, other research points in the other direction, and explores how services and welfare responses influence participation. For instance, Solberg's (2007) informants, i.e. children who have been exposed to violence, break away from the dominant narrative about violence being underreported due to stigma and children's loyalty (see also Study I). Instead, her informants disclose violence when they think that this disclosure will lead to concrete improvements. From this point of view, the considerable underreporting associated with domestic violence (Eriksson *et al*., 2007; Wendt Höjer, 2002) has more to do with child welfare responses than with the exposed children themselves.

In her study about the gap between children's conceptualisation of being heard and social workers' ideas about what it means to listen to children, McLeod (2006) shows how this gap mirrors service provision. For social workers, listening to children is an end in itself and is not necessarily linked to delivering services in accordance with children's wishes (Aubrey & Dahl, 2006; van Bijleveld *et al*., 2014, 2015; McLeod, 2006; Pölkki *et al.* 2012). In her study, children sought empowerment and concrete solutions to their problems, but were offered therapy. As one of the informants expresses it:

> All the lady wanted to do was talk . . . She was trying to help and it made me feel good knowing someone cared. But you don't solve a problem by talking about it. Something's got to be done! (child informant, cited in McLeod, 2006, p. 49).

This focus on concrete solutions to situations in which children need protection is touched on in Study IV (see also chapter 3, 'Levels of Recognition'). In this dissertation, I also argue that the sole focus on issues of procedures, participation and distributional justice in terms of access to services leaves existing measures unexamined or taken for granted (but see Aubrey & Dahl, 2006; Roberts, 2017; Östberg, 2010, for exceptions). Thus, this dissertation addresses additional dimensions involving the 'protective' solutions on offer once needs are confirmed. It therefore draws together protection and provision, which are considered two separate themes and rights. Here, protection is not to be reduced to 'child protection' as a domain, meaning out-of-home placements (although it can overlap with this domain) and, often, compulsory care.

Some studies, including transnational analyses, investigate disproportionalities and the issue of which children are taken into care (Barn, 2007; Chand, 2000; Cocozza & Hort, 2011; Katz & Connolly, 2019; Lundström, 1993; Lundström & Sallnäs, 2003). These studies usually point to the overrepresentation of children from ethnic/racial minorities (Chand, 2000; Katz & Connolly, 2019; Morton et al., 2011). From the perspective of intersecting injustices, the findings of such studies are usually too complex to be reduced to a single 'variable'. Instead, they point to intersections of ethnicity/race and class (Chand, 2000), as well as age, and gender (Lundström & Sallnäs, 2003; Hamreby, 2004; Morton et al., 2011).

A Social Justice 'Turn'? Social Work and Social Justice

Within the fields of social work and child welfare, research explicitly calls for an orientation towards social justice (Ferguson, 2008, 2009; Herz, 2012, 2016; Herz & Johansson, 2011). This commonly takes place within discussions of broader ethical issues in relation to the present day, where ethical practices are considered to be under threat (Ferguson, 2008, 2009; Gray, 2010; Gray & Webb, 2010). This 'moral turn'[6] could also be related to renewed adherence to certain values in social work, such as those mentioned by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) in its definition of the profession and the academic discipline (Ferguson & Lavalette, 2006; IFSW, 2014): social justice, human rights and respect for diversities and empowerment.

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[6] Also called 'the ethical turn', or 'the normative turn' (e.g. Fassin, 2012b, 2014; e.g. Gray & Webb, 2010; Olson, 2018).

> Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels. (IFSW, 2014).

While social justice features prominently in this international description of social work, at the time of writing, social justice is rather downplayed by the Swedish Trade Union for Professionals in the field of social sciences (sv. *Akademikerförbundet SSR*). Under the heading 'Social Justice' in *Ethics in Social Work. A code of conduct and ethical behaviour for social workers* (2015), it notes the following:

> *Another important value in social work is justice, or rather, social justice.* Internationally, this holds a central place in social work, *but is not as prominent in a country like Sweden*, the reason being that *fair-mindedness is seen as a norm that should routinely impact on legislation*. Justice then foremost becomes a political issue. [---] The concept of social justice in social work can thus be seen as a combination of the equality and the needs principles, but can also refer to justice in terms of compensation. (Akademikerförbundet SSR, 2015a, p. 8, emphasis added; see also 2015b, p. 19)

Addressing social justice as a 'norm' in Sweden risks it being interpreted as so established that it holds a less central place than it does internationally. Discussions of social justice 'in a country like Sweden' can be linked to previous research showing how the national image, more specifically the image of Sweden as a fair-minded, equal and child-friendly welfare state, can be an obstacle in tackling injustices (Brunnberg & Pećnik, 2007; Eliassi, 2017; Formark & Bränström Öhman, 2013; Križ & Skivenes, 2010, 2015; Pringle, 2016). Some commentators discuss how images like these are used as a way of developing hierarchies and exclusion *per se*, particularly in referring to those who are not considered to belong to 'a country like Sweden' (Bruno, 2015, 2016; Eriksson, 2003; Pringle, 2010, 2016; de los Reyes, 2005). In this dissertation, Studies III and IV address these processes as processes of racialised othering in gendered contexts (Essed, 1996).

Though they are drawn on in moves towards a more just society, different and positively charged values and 'ethics' can simultaneously 'become[] both a marketable commodity and a service industry in [their] own right', as pointed out by Nikolas Rose and Carlos Novas (2005, p. 457). For instance, guiding views which help discern the just from the unfair, and the good from the bad, have also been closely associated with economics (Chatterjee, 2004; Lundqvist, 1998; Lundqvist, 2011; Lundqvist & Roman, 2009). In economics, childhood injustices are seen in terms of costs. These arguments derive from the way social injustices, such as poverty in childhoods, lead to issues of a structural nature in adulthood, or ‘costly life-time trajectories’ (Spratt *et al.*, 2015, p. 1513). Children’s needs, as well as equality and child-friendliness, may be used as a target to fulfil the aims of the neoliberal social-investment state (Dobrowolsky, 2002; Formark & Bränström Öhman, 2013; Lundqvist & Roman, 2009; see also chapter 4; Foucault, 2014).

Thus, approaches to social justice are full of tensions and contradictions, illustrating the many ways in which justice-related rhetoric is used, oriented, and according to some, misused. According to Reisch:

> As it has been for millennia, the concept of social justice is now used as a rationale for maintaining the status quo, promoting far-reaching social reforms, and justifying revolutionary action. (Reisch, 2002, p. 343)

In this sense, a variety of debates have emerged, some advocating more emphasis on ethics in general, and others advocating specific values and rights. A third debate turns to the ‘ethical’ itself, in terms of how it is conceptualised or applied in the variety of contexts where it is used.

Unlike Enlightenment ideas and conventional moral philosophy, the concept of social justice today involves, but is not based on, issues such as discrimination and oppression (Reisch, 2002). As Neil Thompson notes (2002), social justice work today includes a coalition with social movements, such as feminist organisations and civil rights groups which offer alternatives to individualist ‘charitable perspectives’ on social welfare (Reisch, 2002; Thompson, 2002). Even though, as noted above, social movements are led primarily by adults, and the social change and social justice debates which stem from these movements do not always take children into consideration (e.g. Sedgwick, 1991), their approach to social justice issues is in many ways in alignment with critical scholarship and the ideas in this dissertation. Areas worth mentioning include the sub-fields of *anti-oppressive practice* (Dominelli, 2002, Mattsson, 2014; Pringle, 1998), *anti-discriminatory* social work (Dominelli, 2010; Thompson, 2002), *critical multi-cultural practice* (Nipperess & Williams, 2019), *critical social work* (Herz, 2012, 2016; Herz & Johansson, 2011), *anti-racist practice* (Dominelli, 2010; Graham, 2007; Pringle, 2010), etc. Other approaches in alignment with this dissertation are feminist, postcolonial, and poststructuralist social work (Brown, 2012; Graham, 2007; Mehrotra, 2010; Pease, 2002; Sawyer, 2012; Wahab *et al.*, 2015; Wikström, 2014).

One of the challenges between and within these approaches lies in how to deal with modernist concepts and understandings which inform the field and profession of social work (Brown, 2012; Cedersund & Brunnberg, 2013; Fahlgren, 2009). Another involves how structural and individual approaches can be integrated. Social work practice is often carried out at the individual and family level (see Dominelli, 2002, 2009; Herz & Johansson, 2011, 2012;

McGrath Morris, 2002; Wilson, 2002). As Patricia McGrath Morris points out, however, '[t]raditionally, social justice has been more easily integrated into macro practice through its social change models of community organizing, advocacy, and social welfare policies' (2002, p. 366). It has been more challenging to integrate social justice at micro levels. This has meant a 'split in practice' and 'justice-therapy tension' (Wakefield, 1988, cited in McGrath Morris, 2002, p. 366), and has led to efforts to reconcile these issues and/or incorporate different levels of analysis (Dominelli, 2002, 2009; Healy, 2016, on 'bio-psycho-social framework'; Herz, 2016; Herz & Johansson, 2011, Herz *et al*, 2012; Nipperess & Williams, 2019). For instance, Marcus Herz (2016) and Herz and colleagues (2012) discuss the importance of incorporating structural, positional and individual – alternatively structural, positional and relational – levels of analysis (Herz, 2016). Social justice means moving beyond individualised and psychologised approaches in social work and instead to considering structural perspectives but also contextual and positional factors. The approach, as Herz puts it, implies 'knowledge of structures and curiosity for individuals' (2016, p. 164, my transl.).

Following Stefano Moroni (2019), a distinction can be made between social justice as a concept and the meanings ascribed to it (conceptions of social justice). Research and treaties, as discussed above, commonly describe social work as a field based on social justice *as a concept.* Many commentators suggest, almost as a mantra, that '[t]he concept of social justice is deeply rooted in social work' (IFSW, 2014; McGrath Morris, 2002, p. 365; see also Ferguson, 2008, 2009; Herz, 2012, 2016). In this dissertation, I refer to this as social justice discourse/discourse of social justice. However, a variety of *conceptions* of the term emerge when the practice is considered in the light of its many contradictions and ethical dilemmas, as choices pertaining to the moral (Fahlgren, 2009; Gray & Webb, 2010; Jönsson, 2014a; Osmo & Landau, 2006; Ponnert, 2007). In this case, possible ethical dilemmas and contradictions link not to whether social justice is important, but rather to the precise meanings ascribed to it (McGrath Morris, 2002; Moroni, 2019; Reisch, 2002). This is referred to as discourse/s *on* social justice (chapter 3).

A poststructuralist response, far from being relativist, entails its own political positioning and ethical discussions (Bauman, 1993, on 'postmodern ethics'; Butler, 1992). It also introduces themes of difference, and novel approaches to power and the subject (Brown, 2012). The poststructuralist response which informs this dissertation questions the division drawn between, on the one hand, the technical rational, and on the other hand, the moral/ethical (see also Taylor & White, 2001). It considers a stronger emphasis on social justice to be insufficient, and critically interrogates the meanings ascribed to it. By bringing intersecting injustices to the fore, this dissertation does not simply ask, 'Where are the children?' in relation to social justice, but also which children, if any, are mentioned, and how.

Equality and Differentiations

Social work has been discussed in terms of what is claimed to be a practice informed by distance and objectivity. Interestingly, Siv Fahlgren (2009) illustrates how objectivity and distance relate to conceptions of equality in child welfare and protection practices. Objectivity and distance inform both the conventional understanding of justice (i.e. law) and positivist science (Clement, 1996; Haraway, 1988; Sevenhuijsen, 1998).

Similar concerns are raised in relation to BBIC as a standardised framework which enables children to be assessed equally. It makes it possible to approach children in similar ways, regardless of municipality of residence or the social worker/s who happen/s to be responsible for conducting an investigation. However, this is problematised by Ponnert and Johansson in relation to both standardisation and juridification:

> One problem with predictability and transparency as ideals in social work, which comes with standardisation as well as juridification, is that these ideals do not correspond with the basic idea of welfare, that people are different and accordingly have different needs. (2018, p. 2032).

The question, however, is what ‘the basic idea of welfare’ is, and whether the principle of equal-as-the-same is undermining it. There is extensive research on understanding equality in terms of sameness vs. difference, and this is common to areas beyond child welfare social work research. For instance, Claire Clement (1996) has written about welfare states having to tackle the ‘equality-difference debate’, i.e. how to respond equally to difference. She distinguishes between the ‘equal treatment’ approach and the ‘special treatment’ approach (1996, p. 103), which differ on an ontological level in terms of the question of difference. The first approach has the potential to problematise what I refer to here as *differentiation and othering*. It questions the idea that people are essentially different, which also destabilises the concept of different treatment for different people. This aligns well with the hegemonic discourse of (gender) equality in Sweden, discussed in Study III, which is based on treating equals in the same way (Wikström, 2014).

Social work and child welfare also respond in ways resembling equal treatment, when they work to normalise or to promote equal opportunity and offer universal services (Fahlgren, 2009; Parton, 1996; Sawyer, 2012; Skivenes, 2001; Wilson, 2002). However, there is even differentiation within this equal-treatment approach. Research shows how apparently equal-treatment approaches are informed by gendered, racialised and classed relations of power because they fail to acknowledge difference and unequal conditions (Nipperess & Williams, 2019; Sawyer, 2012; Schlytter, 1999). This may also mean exclusion and stigmatisation of those that do not fit into ‘imaginary sameness’ (Gullestad, 2002; Nipperess & Williams, 2019). For instance, Marie Gullestad

(2002) problematises 'imagniary sameness' as an idea emerging from the relationship between egalitarianism, racism and nationalism in the Nordic countries. She argues how it produces 'ethnification of national identity' while at the same time racialising difference.

However, also the special-treatment approach has been problematised:

> Behind this approach is the recognition that treating everyone equally in an institution designed with only certain people in mind can harm those whose lives differ from the people for whom the institutions were designed. In a context of inequality, equal treatment can perpetuate inequality. However, as equal treatment advocates point out, special treatment does the same thing: Identifying people as different and in need of special accommodations contributes to their inequality. (Clement, 1996, p. 103).

Social work and child welfare deal with marginalised and vulnerable people who are also often labelled as different and whose difference is viewed in negative terms (and given special treatment) (Fahlgren, 2009; Sawyer, 2012). Social work and social services, as noted in the introduction, have historically focused precisely on what have been considered 'the most vulnerable groups' (Parton, 1996, 2014; Sallnäs *et al.*, 2010, p. 5). According to critical commentators, social work, like anthropology, has traditionally highlighted vulnerability and simultaneously focused on 'the other', either the presumptive 'other' or those already excluded from the norm (Mulinari, 2009; Parton, 1996, 2014). This focus on 'the other' also implies processes of othering based on divisions between 'the other' and the norm, whether 'other' families (Dahlstedt & Lozic, 2017; Mulinari, 2009; Pringle, 2016), 'the other' of the Nordic child (cf. Andersen *et al.*, 2011) or the universal child's 'other' (Walkerdine, 2000; Woodhead, 1999). A common critique in terms of institutions and other actors employing a paternalistic logic of 'protection' or philanthropic 'saving' involves the processes of marginalisation often implied by these logics (Levin, 1998; Young, 2003). This has led to critical responses towards social work as a discipline (see Mulinari, 2009).

BBIC primers refer to children's rights, and draw on childhood as a universal concept. At the same time, some of the research BBIC draws on contextualises social problems in relation to what could be named a wide range of 'institutionalized categories' (Fahlgren, 2009; Herz, 2016; Sawyer, 2012, pp. 157–158). At first glance, BBIC offers its own approach to intersecting injustices by addressing the so-called 'complex', 'multiple' and 'co-occurring' social problems in an individual's life, such as substance abuse, violence, mental illness etc. (Bunting *et al.*, 2017; Cleaver *et al.*, 2004; e.g. NBHW, 2018, pp. 21, 84: sv. *multipel utsatthet*, *komplex problematik*; Study III). 'Factors' such as gender, sexuality ('sexual minority', 'bisexuality', etc.) and ethnicity/race, my transl.) are also mentioned, which gives the impression of childhoods as pluralistic (NBHW, 2015a, pp. 33–39). Yet, as discussed in Study III, these vulnerabilities in childhoods link to individual-, family- and community-level analyses.

Thus, special-treatment approaches may point to differences while not recognising differentiations due to multiple structural relations of power (Bunting *et al.*, 2017; Wilson, 2002). Another example of this is discussed by Katrin Križ and Marit Skivenes (2010, 2015). Their findings from a comparative project show how Norwegian social workers emphasise cultural differences while at the same time being relatively blind to discrimination and racism compared to their counterparts in England, and the US (Križ & Skivenes, 2010, 2015).

In other words, pinpointing 'cultural differences' or differences between genders is not the same as acknowledging racist structures, white privilege and gender inequality, and how this, in turn, takes different forms in different childhoods and in relation to age, class, migration status, nationality, religion, etc. (e.g. Brah, 1993; Gruber, 2007: Lee & Fernandez, 2019).

Thus, in the light of all this, the notion of 'the basic idea of welfare' seems far more ambivalent than the concept presented by Ponnert and Johansson. In exploring intersecting social injustices, there is no easy alignment with either the equal-treatment or the special-treatment approach. However, I note above how both approaches may overlook structural and intersecting injustices. This dissertation touches on how policy and practice approach the ideal of treating children equally. In this sense, it is problematising special treatment, i.e. othering, pathologising, stigmatising. The dissertation also critically discusses approaches to equality in terms of sameness, i.e. *the* childhood and not childhoods, as they are closely associated with eurocentrism, ethnocentrism, universalism and depoliticisation (Burman, 2017; Essed, 1996; Herz, 2012, 2016). I continue this discussion below where I also propose an approach to intersecting injustices.

Towards an Analytical Approach

The arrangement of the chapter situates this dissertation in what I identify to be three coexisting debates, or centrisms: knowledge centrism, child centrism and social justice centrism. This is to show that the questions I pose have been previously posed within the field of social work and child welfare. The contributions outlined above do not cover all the important aspects which need to be addressed. The chapter nevertheless captures some possible ways of addressing intersecting social justice for children and/or social justice in childhoods, as well as within the realm of social work and more specifically Swedish child welfare research, policy and practice.

The following three sections summarise the chapter and position the research. The sections are responses to calls by Pringle (2011), whose observations have been points of inspiration and guidance for this dissertation in a number of ways.

‘Which childhoods’? Intersecting…

The dissertation adopts a poststructuralist intersectional approach, which highlights childhoods rather than actual children. In the interests of clarity, the childhoods addressed involve individuals below the age of 18, though definitions of who is considered a child are noted in analyses of intersecting social injustices in childhoods (Eriksson, 2009; Graham, 2007; Muñoz, 2009). Empirically, however, in the studies on child welfare practice, references to children denote individuals below the age of 13.

The proposed approach emphasises power relations rather than identities and expands the analysis beyond (marginalised) groups (Brah, 1993; cf. Choo & Ferree, 2010; McCall, 2005; Mehrotra, 2010; Sawyer, 2012). Given that children are commonly reduced to the social group of ‘children’ (Näsman, 2012; Sundhall, 2012), the concepts of identity and (marginalised) social group alone cannot capture the scope of intersecting injustices in this dissertation (Burman, 2008, 2017; Graham, 2007). The scope of analysis focuses on *intersecting* social injustices which, in line with responses to the above-mentioned calls, include forms of injustice involving embodiment and axes of power such as age, ethnicity/race and gender which ‘come into existence *in and through* relation to each other (McClintock, 1995, p. 5, emphasis in original). This dissertation therefore approaches adultism, racism and sexism as forms of injustice which already intersect and are differently configured in different childhoods (cf. Brah 1993; cf. Essed, 1996; cf. McClintock, 1995).

As shown above, some previous research within the field of child welfare contest the homogenous category of ‘the child’. Although researchers do not always use the term intersectionality, they critically highlight differentiation within childhoods. Scholars who have implicitly or explicitly employed an intersectional perspective in their empirical research on child welfare contexts and other institutional settings discuss age, gender and kinship, or kinship in intersection with ethnicity/race (Bruno, 2015, 2016; Eriksson, 2003, 2009; Ong, 2003), but also age and health/able-bodiedness (McLeod, 2006; Sundhall, 2008, 2012). I present above a fragment of empirical research which focuses on the context of child welfare and which in different ways analyses children’s status in this context. This fragment nevertheless shows that some axes of power and difference, such as sexuality, are more absent than others in studies of young childhoods, i.e. the age group 0–12. Ethnicity/race is more often linked to parents than directly to children (but see Lee & Fernandez, 2019, for an exception). However, analyses of these axes of power, in particular ethnicity/race, can be found in other social work research or other fields that address adulthoods (Mattsson, 2005; 2014; Sawyer, 2012), but also adolescence (Gruber, 2007; Sixtensson, 2018).

While some contributions can be read as intersectional, the relative absence of racialised and gendered injustices in childhoods is remarkable for research which is otherwise nuanced in terms of the various epistemic positions children may or may not occupy. This relative absence is also remarkable considering the critical ‘anti-’ approaches within social work research mentioned above. Child welfare research, while having a long history of focusing on differentiations of childhoods in terms of disproportionalities in child welfare, is often disconnected from the analytical framework of intersectionality itself. Age, ethnicity/race and gender as axes of power may for instance be analysed separately, or used as ‘variables’ (e.g. Aytar, 2013; e.g. Berlin *et al.*, 2011). This also means that except from ‘categories’ such as gender and age, intersectional and other analyses of children tend to be reduced to the identities and statuses of parents, parents’ educational levels and incomes (but see Fernqvist, 2013, for an exception). This leads me to the next section.

… Embodied…

The previous section mentioned Pringle’s (2011) interrogation of the research questions in welfare research, and how welfare research has traditionally concentrated on areas surrounding poverty alleviation, labour and production, with less attention paid to issues surrounding bodily integrity and citizenship (Pringle, 2011, p. 162; see also Graham, 2007; Pringle, 2010; Wilson, 2002). From the perspective of intersecting injustices, such a focus foregrounds adulthood and class issues, as Graham (2007) notes. A similar critique is directed at social justice theories more generally. For instance, the feminist political theorist Iris Marion Young (1990) claims that distributive justice tends to focus on these very ‘distributive’ goods mentioned by Pringle, but fails to account for power and difference. The response of the present dissertation to these critiques has led to an exploration of social justice issues in relation to embodied vulnerabilities (Study IV). Embodied vulnerabilities is also a concept that helps to sustain the focus on how childhoods embody and are embedded in intersecting relations of power without reducing these processes to adulthoods, as touched on above. This dissertation also brings together child welfare as a ‘body’ of knowledge and the bodies objectified by it, or embodying it, as I will discuss in the next chapter.

Embodied injustices are not a common subject in child welfare research (Pringle, 2010, 2011), nor has the body of the child been granted an established place in critical studies on childhoods (Fingerson, 2011). Laura Fingerson draws on Tolman’s argument about how young people, primarily girls, often lack a language and spaces to express sexual desire, agency, pleasure and their relationship with their own body. This, according to Fingerson, can lead to inequality in terms of interaction. With the absence of the child’s body from critical analyses of embodiment, resistance as expressed through the body also becomes less visible as a political protest in childhoods (cf. Ahmed, 2014; e.g. Butler, 2016; e.g. Puggioni, 2014). This could also mean that ways of understanding the body as a battleground for (in)justice, which I focus on in this dissertation, are less intelligible when it comes to the child's body.

… Social Injustices in Childhoods

The third and final call by Pringle (2011) indicates a need to focus more on the service-user perspective, including children as service users. This dissertation does not claim to provide (authentic) perspectives of children. Instead, it primarily studies discursive locations of, and responses to, children and childhoods.

The contribution of this dissertation to the 'service-user perspective' proposed above lies in the shift from a participation discourse of competence to *justice agency,* i.e. a perspective where children are seen as subjects of justice (chapter 2, 'Moral Subjectivity'). As shown, although research on children's participation is extensive in child welfare literature, including work on children as knowledgeable subjects and social actors, specific explorations of children as knowledgeable about the societal, i.e. subjects of social justice, their access to social justice discourses and the location of childhoods in these discourses are absent.

As discussed, a distinct discourse on social justice is absent in child welfare research, but the concept is nevertheless highly advocated. Also, there is some recurrent discussion of a number of interrelated aspects which can be associated with the term. Previous research has been quite successful in conceptualising social justice and intersecting injustices in terms of rights, focusing in particular on rights to participation and protection. However, the rights-based approach, which this dissertation shares to some extent, involves limitations. This dissertation shares a critique of human rights and needs frameworks as depoliticised, universalist, eurocentric and ethnocentric constructions (Burman, 2017; Herz, 2012, 2016; Woodhead, 1999). In other words, this dissertation is not simply another contribution to the considerable research which suggests that rights and resources are there for the taking. Instead, it discusses obstacles to accessing rights and resources, and how these rights and resources actually mirror these obstacles. Furthermore, this dissertation problematises approaches with a sole focus on equality without discussing power, or on children's participation without addressing adult authority and the complex relations of power linked to gender, ethnicity/race, etc. These approaches contribute to a view, which takes these inequalities and power relations for granted, or sees them as natural and therefore beyond issues of social justice.

The focus in terms of social justice in this dissertation is on discourses of the social, on understandings of 'just' and, where possible, their nexus. The aim is to fill an empirical and theoretical gap in an otherwise largely absent discussion on social justice issues in child welfare research in relation to children. The concept of *social* justice has the potential to challenge the apparently apolitical, and to uphold an analysis of social change – a key term in social work. In this dissertation, *social* justice, unlike the solitary word justice, denotes structural ethico-political levels of analysis. By adopting a poststructuralist and critical perspective, and an explorative rather than pre-defined approach to social justice, this dissertation touches on how different and even contradictory sets of ideas and values commonly associated with (social) justice issues are mobilised in child welfare policy and practice in different contexts. Thus, apart from making use of some concepts of social justice which derive from social movements, and as an umbrella term to acknowledge structural relations of power, anti-discrimination and equality issues, this dissertation takes an exploratory approach. However, this does not prevent it from offering some guidelines.

The next chapter will present some other central theoretical concepts associated with knowledge and morality.

2. Bodi(es) of Knowledge

The previous chapter briefly introduced critical poststructural epistemology and influences from feminist and postcolonial studies, as well as critical childhood studies and social work scholarship. As a theory of knowledge, an epistemology 'delineates a set of assumptions about the social world and about who can be a knowing subject and what can be known' (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 5). For instance, Foucault used *episteme* to distinguish what can be said or known in a given era (1974). With the deconstruction of the universal subject, poststructural and postcolonial feminists, and those working in the field of critical childhood studies, not only ask about *what* knowledge consists of but also *who* features in conceptions of knowledge and knowledgeability (Alcoff, 1996, Spivak, 1988), including in Foucault's own writings (Castañeda, 2001, 2002; Mignolo, 2009; Spivak, 1999). For instance, Donna Haraway's 'situated knowledges' bring knowledge production to the fore as an embodied enterprise, and challenge forms of knowledge which appear to be neutral, disembodied and objective as if they emanate from nowhere and from no*body* (Haraway, 1988, p. 581; see also Mignolo, 2009). This dissertation, similarly, brings together a body of knowledge and the bodies objectified by it, or embodying it. In this chapter, a number of concepts are discussed which are used to capture this interconnection.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part relates to Foucault's notion of episteme (field of knowledge, mode/s of knowing and knowing subjects), while the second discusses child welfare as a moral arena in relation to Foucault's biopower (Foucault, 2002, 2014). In this way, the chapter addresses child (bio)welfare in relation to knowledge and morality.

Injustices – In, through and across Knowledge

> The power of guns, whips and shackles, while always implicated in discourse and representation, is not reducible to the 'violence of the letter.' (McClintock, 1995, p. 16)

What at a first glance appear to be indirect and non-physical violations of knowledge production that emerged during colonialism and modernity, i.e.

othering through hierarchising classificatory schemes, distortion and objectification, at the same time legitimise violence in a more physical sense. As Anne McClintock's quotation above suggests, textual power/violence is closely interwoven with violence in a more material sense of the term. Indeed, various experiments to 'improve' knowledge have led to physical and other forms of violation and human suffering, suggesting that knowledge has sometimes even been produced under these material conditions and effects (McClintock, 1995). Furthermore, many of these examples indicate that the objects of these violations have often been marginalised people who are protected by research ethics and ethical committees today (Nikku, 2001; Rabinow, 2005).

Epistemological violence, therefore, also involves research which directly or indirectly legitimises violence, but in some cases it has also denoted violence which mainstream or, from a feminist point of view, 'malestream', knowledge ignores, devalues and renders invisible (e.g. Walby, 2013).

In *Can the Subaltern Speak?,* the postcolonial feminist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) refers to the epistemological *violence* of the 'subaltern', by which she means that not being heard, i.e. not being represented, is the problem, not speaking *per se*. Spivak discusses works by major European philosophers who not only tend to exclude 'subalterns' from their discussions, but actively prevent them from occupying positions as fully human subjects, which, in this sense, is a concept confined to the West.

Similar epistemological concerns emerged later on in critical childhood studies. In these accounts, critique is directed towards dehumanising portrayals in research and in relation to children. Critical childhood studies scholars draw on the notion of 'the other' in similar ways as postcolonial and/or feminist researchers, but use it to illustrate representations of the 'child' as the adult 'other' (e.g. Sundhall, 2012). For instance, issues involving epistemological violations in relation to children are discussed in relation to knowledge production, in other words knowledge *about* but not *with* children (McCarry, 2014), as with the role of childhood in ontology and epistemology in research (Alanen, 1988; Burman, 2008, 2017; Castañeda, 2001, 2002; James, 2011, James *et al.*, 1998). Critical childhood studies constitute a response to the way children and childhood (as a stage) are conceptualised as 'human ontology', which makes children an interesting object of research in studies of social change, a central theme for much mainstream research in developmental psychology, sociology (i.e. socialisation theory) (James, 2011). In contrast to this, critical childhood studies emphasise the importance of studying children and childhoods in their own right, and approaching children not as passive objects of change but as actors who themselves can make a difference to the social world (James, 2011).

This dissertation primarily draws on a re-reading of the feminist philosopher Miranda Fricker's *hermeneutical epistemic injustice,* which I use interchangeably with Spivak's concept of epistemological violence. Hermeneutical epistemic injustice issues may, for instance, refer to feminist struggle for recognition of sexual harassment, rape and other violations by finding words for experiences (Fricker, 2007), as well as incorporating these problems into public discourse (Donovan & Hester, 2010; Lundqvist & Roman, 2009) and research (Walby, 2013). Hermeneutical injustice, in the context of childhoods, denotes that which is 'not articulated […] as part of [childhood] experience' (Bauman, 1993, p. 1). This form of epistemic injustice point to the flaws in cultural repertoires involving ideas about what children know, and what they have experienced in the first place.

Other examples can be found in the ontological, epistemological and methodological positioning within the field of research on violence which has made a mark on the terminology used to refer to violence, such as 'men's violence against women', 'domestic violence', 'family violence' and 'sexual violence' (Eriksson *et al.*, 2007; Hearn, 1998; Steen, 2003). Common terminology within the field of research on violence has also been shown to highlight a relative absence in the field of children's exposure to gender-based violence (Eriksson *et al.*, 2007). At first, the scholarship on gender-based violence in intimate relationships granted children the status of witness, and today it is acknowledged that they are subject to violence themselves. This shift towards recognition of children's exposure, and the change in how it is labelled, has implications for the welfare system's response to the problem (Eriksson, 2010; Eriksson *et al.*, 2007), as noted in the previous chapter.

However, researchers from other fields also problematise this recognition. For instance, Steven Angelides (2004) discusses how discourses on risk make it possible to recognise children's exposure to sexual violence, while simultaneously discrediting their sexuality. This dissertation agrees with Angelides in terms of how seeing children as asexual, or vulnerability as interconnected with asexuality, makes it easier to imagine some embodied forms of injustice than others. For instance, this may include child sexual abuse and, to a lesser extent, homophobia.

The present dissertation does not use hermeneutical injustice in a pre-discursive sense. Instead, it understands it as something which may be limited to certain knowledge domains (limited to or excluded from specific discourses), modes of knowing and constructions of knowing subjects. In this dissertation, the boundaries determining which knowledge is possible, and the ways in which it is made knowledgeable, are largely associated with the scope and boundaries of disciplines. Hence, it does not necessarily mean that an experience is unintelligible 'in general', i.e. pre-discursive, but rather that it may be so in certain fields, and for some individuals and groups or situations. In this sense, boundaries produced through *discursive splits* overlap with *disciplinary* *splits*[7], i.e. splits between multiple disciplinary and discursive ways of knowing the world. These include blockages as well as openings in terms of making certain *claims* (un)intelligent, whereas the case is made for issues of intersecting social justice in this work.

Several interlinkages are at play in this focus of this dissertation. It explores the interlinkages between the textual and the material, epistemology and violence as well as between epistemic (in)justice and social (in)justice. These show how child welfare practice involves both textual and practical responses in the way the child welfare agency *responds* when it provides or fails to provide protection (Study II; IV).

Another mentioned form of epistemic injustice is testimonial epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007). Testimonial injustice captures gendered, racialised, classed prejudices of some groups and people (compared to others) as deficient in knowledge, 'literacy' (e.g. 'health literacy'), parenting skills, etc. (Fricker, 2007; Graham, 2007; Murris, 2013; Wilson, 2002). Although the emphasis on testimonies makes testimonial injustice more fruitful in analysing interactional settings, this form of epistemic injustice has nevertheless informed this dissertation. Testimonial epistemic injustice highlights how different subjects are ascribed different levels of epistemic status, i.e. status of knowledgeability. This has been applied in Study I to discern variations in the moral status of different discursive positions in terms of children.

Moral Subjectivity

What new thoughts and ideas does morality introduce that epistemics does not? Is there anything to be gained by distinguishing moral subjectivity from constructions of knowing subjects, moral status from epistemic status, and moral status from moral agency? These questions were considered in the course of writing Study I. This study claims that moral status is interlinked with epistemic status, i.e. status of knowledgeability. An analytical distinction is nevertheless made between the concepts. The position of this dissertation is therefore that, while knowledgeability and moral status are tightly intertwined and often overlap, they can and sometimes need to be distinguished from each other. As well as an analytical strategy of delineation, this distinction also involves a positioning. I argue that *moral subjectivity* (Goldberg, 1993), here encompassing both moral agency (the capacity to act and reason morally) and status (the status of the act and reasoning), is worth examining in its own right, and cannot be reduced to the cognition and rationality often associated with the status of knowing subjects (e.g. Ahmed, 2014; e.g. Bauman, 1993).

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[7] This has been referred to previously as 'the institutional dichotomy' (sv. *institutionella dikotomin* (de los Reyes & Gröndahl, 2007, p. 13).

Previous research shows how state population control has historically been directed at lower and presumably ‘dangerous classes’, whose ‘unruly’ passions could not, it was presumed, be tamed by other means (Collier & Lakoff, 2005, p. 33; McClintock, 1995, p. 5). These ‘unruly passions’, or dangerous classes can be linked to a discourse of antisocial behaviour, and therefore to issues of morality rather than knowledgeability (Ahmed, 2014; McClintock, 1995). For instance, McClintock describes a form of biologisation and medicalisation of the moral in British imperialism, i.e. ‘moral poison’, and the idea that social problems are contagious in the same way as diseases are depicted as central to the threat, as she puts it, to ‘the national body politic’ (Plint; Carlyle, cited in McClintock, 1995, pp. 46–47). As I discuss in chapter 4, morality has been central when it comes to considering approaches to social problems in child welfare (Andresen *et al.,* 2011; cf. Hamreby, 2004; cf. Lundström & Sallnäs, 2003), not only in relation to past approaches but also in relation to the present (Wikström, 2012). This is addressed in Study III, in relation to how violence in some families is associated with certain cultural *values* in child welfare policy.

Furthermore, the dissertation also attempts to address morality more explicitly, as it considers that morality, more than knowledgeability, is linked to social justice issues. Another reason why moral subjectivity is addressed more specifically involves the relative absence of theorising about children’s status in relation to issues of justice. As shown, participation is a common theme within the field, and primarily involves experiences but not articulating issues of justice *per se.* However, this dissertation approaches moral subjectivity as a prerequisite for addressing (in)justice, and therefore uses it interchangeably with *justice subjectivity,* i.e. the ability to discern right from wrong, to make claims in terms of justice or address injustice.[8] I argue that it is one thing to claim that children are competent and can have their say, as many critical childhood researchers today claim. However, it is another thing to claim that this competence goes as far as to enable someone to distinguish right from wrong, and therefore the just from the unjust. Can children have a say about morals, a prerequisite if they themselves are to speak about experiences of injustice?

As discussed in the introduction, some scholarship also discusses moral dimensions of epistemic status, i.e. believability, trustworthiness (Eriksson, 2009; Iversen, 2013; Mayall, 2000; McLeod, 2006; Murris, 2013; Wikström, 2014) or moral worth (Ahmed, 2014; Goldberg, 1993; Ong, 2006). While some of these works equate epistemic status with moral status, there are also contributions that show this relationship to be complex and multi-layered. The distinction between knowledgeability and morality, as Stephen Collier and

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[8] The reason why justice subjectivity is preferred to political subjectivity in this dissertation is that the former is narrower in scope, and hence focuses specifically on claims about justice (see Young, 1990, on political subjectivity).

Andrew Lakoff discuss, creates the possibility of viewing someone as 'good and stupid' or 'bad and smart' (Collier & Lakoff, 2005, p. 27; see also Bauman, 1993). Yet, as Thorne stresses, in terms of children there is the tendency to employ an either-or approach. A protection discourse views children as innocent (good and naïve) victims of adults. A juvenile delinquency discourse instead portrays them as threats to the social order and adult culture, i.e. bad and smart (Brown, 2005; Collier & Lakoff, 2005; Thorne, 1987; see also Study I).

Clara Iversen (2012, 2013) also discusses 'the moral implications' of knowledge, showing how access to another person's thoughts is associated with issues of believability (whether the person in question is perceived as credible and knowledgeable). Her study on interviews involving mentalisation, i.e. children's ability to claim access to someone's thoughts, makes clear how children can present themselves as (non-)knowers when they assess their fathers/perpetrators of violence. In this way, Iversen argues, children distance themselves from the father's (immoral) actions. In a setting where children find reasons to distrust their caregivers, they have difficulty making any claims of knowledge about them in interviews. Hence, in order to position themselves as moral, children may position themselves as unknowing. In this sense, distancing oneself from someone's thoughts means distancing oneself from the morality of that person. This suggests a complex interplay between knowledgeability and morality. Given that similar situations are common for child welfare practice, it is an important aspect to consider, especially with regard to assessments of situations in which children do not make claims of knowledge, assuming Iversen's line of thought is followed. However, even with this refusal, they nevertheless make moral claims about themselves and others. An example is Eriksson's work, which discusses how, in some instances, competent children are not assessed as trustworthy victims (Eriksson, 2009).[9]

The concepts of moral status and agency, which denote various aspects of moral subjectivity here, can easily be read as yet another neoliberal approach that furnishes autonomous agentic subjects with free choice (Raby, 2014; see also Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Put differently, the ideal of participation and the construction of the competent and socially agentic child has also been appropriated by neoliberal rhetoric, which emphasises individual responsibility and self-governance (Raby, 2014). The understanding of agency in this dissertation and in Study I, however, should not be read in the above ways. Instead, moral subjects, in this context, resonate with Sara Ahmed's 'figure of the willful subject' (Ahmed, 2014, p. 17). Feminist scholarship has a long history of theorising resistance in a myriad of ways, for instance, in relation to challenging the *status quo*, or challenging that which is considered to be in the general

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[9] However, I understand Eriksson's accounts to be more about constructions of vulnerability than morality *per se*.

interest. In Ahmed's theorisation of 'willful subjects', 'willfulness' can designate disobedience to the authoritative will of another. For Ahmed, 'willfulness' also means saying 'no', and not being willing to follow what is expected. Those expected to be the most obedient to authorities are the same subjects whose resistance is seen in negative terms (Ahmed, 2014; e.g. Iversen, 2012, 2014). These *are* the 'willful' subjects. For these very reasons, Ahmed writes that it is '[n]o wonder that the figure of the willful subject – often but not always a child, often but not always female, often but not always an individual has become so familiar' (2014, p. 17). In other words, autonomy in Study I should be understood with reference to these contributions.

However, the presumed lack of moral subjectivity is precisely what makes it impossible in conventional juridical contexts to send children to prison. It could therefore be claimed that ascribing moral subjectivity to children challenges the constructions of children which prevent them from being sent to prison, and which would lead to more trouble than they are in already. Thus, if children can distinguish right from wrong, they should be held responsible for their (moral) actions. Furthermore, one could also ask if ascribing higher moral status to children is the right approach if children are to receive social justice. The feminist philosopher Alison M. Jaggar (2000) notes how there is no logic which can explain why the interests of those who are not considered rational should not be worth as much as those who are (see also Alcoff, 1996; valentine, 2011). Hence, is morality, and grading people in terms of morality, the appropriate approach? Does it not mean that there will always be somebody who is considered to be of lower moral status and therefore, in this particular way of reasoning, seen as less 'deserving'?

Study I is a critical response to a discourse on children's participation. As such, it is part of a discourse which, historically, has considered equal political rights to be reserved for those who are considered equal in terms of rationality but also in terms of moral worth, something which, in turn, has been ascribed rational moral agents (Goldberg, 1993; Jaggar 2000; see also Thorne, 1987). Thus, Study I primarily alludes to associations, but less to the logic *per se*. In addition, the kind of argumentation discussed above connects moral agency with responsibility, which is not the point of Study I or this dissertation. Instead, this dissertation introduces the idea that, in the same way as research stresses that children are social actors that partake in social change and should be able to express their experiences and views (Eriksson, 2009; Graham, 2007; James *et al.*, 1998; Katz, 2015), justice subjectivity imply that this includes articulating injustices, such as experiences involving violations of bodily integrity (e.g. Pringle. 2011), or discrimination (Graham, 2007). To paraphrase Ahmed: 'The willful child: she has a story to tell' (2014, p. 1).

However, justice subjectivity is always dependent on the prevailing discourses of social (in)justices and to whom they are accessible (Butler, 2016; e.g. Donovan & Hester, 2010; Fricker, 2007). As some research notes, there is also a resistance to talking about or disclosing injustices (Motsieloa, 2003).

In addition, as I will discuss in the following sections, justice subjectivity is less intelligible in biopolitical governance and what I call biowelfare.

Health & Welfare = Biowelfare

This dissertation discusses welfare in the light of Foucault's concept of biopower, and biopolitics as a mode of governing (Foucault, 2002, 2014). Biopolitics, the politics of life, is the management, cultivation and protection of bare life and those rendered liveable, and differs from traditional sovereign governance. By analysing the political through management of the biological, Foucault's theory challenges the ontology of the political in modernity which has shaped Western political thought for centuries. This classical thinking about the political – the expression or conceptualisation of (in)justice, the good, the bad and the unpleasant – is articulated through speech and moral claims (Chatterjee, 2004).

According to Chatterjee, unlike citizens under sovereign rule, populations in biopolitics 'do not bear any inherent moral claim':

> Unlike citizenship, which carries the moral connotation of sharing in the sovereignty of the state and hence of claiming rights in relation to the state, populations do not bear any inherent moral claim. When they are looked after by governmental agencies, they merely get the favor of a policy whose rationale is one of costs and benefits in terms of economic, political, or social outcomes. (Chatterjee, 2004, p. 136, emphasis added)

In the above quotation, Chatterjee depicts a shift from citizenry to populations, in terms of the national body. However, there are different accounts of whether citizenship is altogether ruled out in biopolitics or if it is a matter of a *different kind* of citizenship. Rose and Novas (2005) show that claims to rights and resources are still possible, but that citizenship itself has transformed into *biological citizenship*. By illustrating Petryna's (2002) concept of 'biological citizenship' as a conceptual tool, Rose and Novas discuss how biopower offers new tools for thinking about contemporary claims to rights and recognition. In contrast to conventional understandings of formal citizenship, including social-citizenship rights (cf. Marshall, 1950), biological citizenship suggests more emphasis on the biological body.

In line with an interpretation of writing on biological citizenship by Rose and Novas, moral responses are still possible but tend not to respond to the moral claims made by moral subjects. Moral responses, as I will discuss below, refer more to psychobiology and psychosomatic harm, or developmental damage to the 'population' (e.g. Study III; IV; see also Fassin, 2012a; Rose, 2001; Rose & Novas, 2005; Sweis, 2017; Ticktin, 2011a, 2011c). Therefore, rather than excluding moral issues or moral subjectivity altogether, Study IV could be seen as referring to a distinct moral economy of care (see below). This in turn links to *biowelfare* (Ong, 2006, p. 212), as a moral arena with its own norms of inclusion and exclusion in terms of who is part of the national body (Cedersund & Brunnberg, 2013; McClintock, 1995).

The anthropologist Didier Fassin discusses similar developments in terms of a focus on the biological body as a site of a seemingly more inclusive conception of deservingness. For Fassin (2001, 2005, 2011, 2012a; see also Fassin & D'Halluin, 2005), the basic idea of this focus evokes universalising (as the biological bodies we all have and the vulnerability we are all susceptible to) (Fassin, 2001, 2012a).[10] The response to the Covid-19 outbreak in Sweden and in many other countries is a timely example of a biowelfarist response to vulnerability as no human beings are said to be immune to the virus. However, the management of the virus is a management on the national level, which suggests the pandemic virus is a threat to the national body.

What makes welfare biowelfare is that it is a notion of welfare that is tightly intertwined with biopower. Although Ong, from whom I borrow the concept, does not develop the meaning of the concept thoroughly, she, however, seems to link it to basic human survival or to 'an ethical claim that skirts the issue of political rights by focusing on the sheer survival' (Ong, 2006, p. 212). Ong and others address the excluding dimensions of what I here call biowelfare in terms of its downplaying of the societal and political (Fassin, 2005, 2011, 2012a; Ong, 2006; Sweis, 2017; Ticktin, 2011a, 2011c).[11] For instance, injustices can be viewed as 'human tragedies' but can also be related to 'disabling societies' (cf. Dominelli, 2009, p. 61, on 'disability'). Intersecting injustices in childhoods can be seen as an issue for many and as a *political and democratic* problem (cf. Wendt Höjer, 2002, on violence). However, as I discuss below, a biowelfarist approach to injustices foregrounds them as *public health* problems (cf. Dube, 2018, on childhood trauma) and as human misfortunes (Fassin, 2012a). In other words, biowelfarist universalism downplays the seemingly particular that is often associated with intersecting injustices.

The sections below are further elaboration on the umbrella term, biowelfare, and how it can be understood in relation to child welfare as a field of knowledge, modes of knowing and knowing subjects, and a moral economy.

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[10] However, Ong contests the applicability of Fassin's analysis in relation to her own empirical context: 'In Southeast Asia, NGO discourses of the "enslaved" or "at-risk body" of foreign maids is not proposed in the name of common humanity in order to gain citizenship. Indeed, Southeast Asian countries and their populations are very firm in their beliefs that it is legitimate for the state to discriminate against aliens in favor of its own citizens. Thus, NGOs are not invoking human rights as a legal status; they are appealing to basic cultural values about the moral worthiness of women's bodies.' (2006, p. 212). I use biowelfare as an umbrella term and use additional concepts to fill it with meaning. These concepts take into account Ong's analysis of the focus 'on sheer survival' (2006, p. 212), but also Fassin's writings about 'bio-legitimacy' (2001, 2005, 2011, 2012a; see also Fassin & D'Hullain, 2005), which emphasises certain rights, such as rights to life, and health, etc. (see also Ticktin, 2011b; Wells, 2011).

[11] E.g. Ticktin's description of a 'politics of care' as 'antipolitics' (2011a, p. 5).

The Body as a Political Battleground: Embodiment

Embodiment has been an important theme for feminist research which discusses old and new forms of resistance. As Ahmed (2014) notes, these forms of resistance are symbolised by different parts of the body as signs of protest: clenched fists, raised arms, hands, tongues. This is not confined to feminist and anti-racist struggles, as the Nazi-salute clearly indicates, for instance (Ahmed, 2014). In Study IV, a clenched fist is also a sign of a violent fist. Thus, also violations link to the body, such as violations of wombs and skin. As argued in the introduction, research undertheorises the child's body in these and other contexts (Fingerson, 2011; Pringle, 2010, 2011). As the child's body is absent from critical childhood studies, child welfare research and critical analyses of embodiment, resistance (and deservingness) expressed through the body also becomes less visible as a form of resistance (or deservingness) in childhoods (cf. Ahmed, 2014; cf. Puggioni, 2014; but see Fingerson, 2011).

This dissertation therefore considers how child welfare as a moral arena responds to a child's body. The body, in turn, is seen as a channel for resistance, claims to rights and deservingness of support and protection. It is also considered a target for violations of integrity and embodied injustices.

The bodily is in focus of Study II. However, that study draws on the metaphors of *voice* (Sundhall, 2008) and *body* to grasp how the bodily can be understood in relation to children's epistemic status and participation. This study links to research which discusses how the biological body of 'the child' plays a central role in relation to rights to health, wellbeing and life as well as how children have emerged as bearers of rights in the first place. As Karen Wells (2011) argues, biopolitics provided the cornerstone for the idea of children as bearers of rights, and also introduced ideas about children's bodies being vulnerable. Whereas the Universal Declaration of Human Rights protects citizens from the sovereign power of states, the UNCRC, Wells argues, implies a more biopolitical, or in Ong's terms, biowelfarist, response from the start (Ong, 2006, p. 212; Wells, 2011). Wells illustrates how a developmentalist framework, with a focus on health and biological bodies, informs several of the articles of the UNCRC. At the same time, rights associated with children's autonomy and participation – rights which resonate with conventional ideas about citizenship – are determined by age and maturity of the child, and developed with a monolithic depoliticised subject in mind, hence disconnected from structural issues (Lee, 1999; Wells, 2011). The examples made by Wells illustrate, as noted in Studies II and IV, how children's rights are already heavily intertwined with biopolitics, or what is referred to here as biowelfare.

In Study IV I argue that, whether on the basis of embodied axes of power such as ethnicity/race or gender, or through diagnoses and suffering bodies, the body is considered to constitute the political battleground for inclusion and exclusion in a neoliberal biopolitical era (Butler, 2016; Fassin, 2012a; Rose &

Novas, 2005; Ticktin, 2011a, 2011b; see also Foucault, 2014). The body features, for instance, in advocacy for sexual and reproductive rights, and rights to freedom from violations of bodily integrity (Bacchi & Beasley, 2002; Butler, 2016; Pringle, 2011; Ticktin, 2011a, 2011c; Wendt Höjer, 2002). In Sweden, recognised grounds of discrimination relate to transgender identity or expression, age, ethnicity, gender (i.e. 'sex'), religion or other beliefs, sexual orientation and disability (see for instance The Swedish Discrimination Act, SFS 2008:567). I consider these grounds 'embodied' or having body-related manifestations. In other words, different axes of power and difference such as age, ethnicity/race and gender are working in and through the body. Racism, islamophobia, homo- and transphobia, and sexual or gender-related violence could therefore be added to this equation. Thus, Study IV adopts the concept of embodied vulnerabilities, and argues that the aforementioned forms of violation refer to the bodily, but not necessarily the psychobiologised body.

Moral Economy

This dissertation considers the concept of *moral economy* to be an extension of what I call above moral subjectivity. Where Study I poses the question of who can be a moral subject, Study IV asks instead which moral responses are enabled within child welfare practice (as a moral subject), and accordingly, which claims to justice can be made or responded to in the first place. Thus, in Study I, justice subjectivity is associated with children, and more broadly citizens, while in Study IV, justice issues link to institutional responses to (in)justice. The concept of moral economy provides another angle to the empirical context in question, one which enables more focus on the system from a moral point of view, as a moral authority and with moral obligations.

Social work is a profession which relies on 'state-legislated morality' (cf. Bauman, 1993, p. 46). This type of morality involves a reliance on jurisdiction but also on contractual ethics which bind the state and its citizen population in relations of exchange (chapter 4). There are a wide range of theories on these 'social contracts', but the concept of moral economy, as defined in Study IV, emphasises that these relations are asymmetrical (Ong, 2006). I draw on Ong's work, which defines the concept of moral economy as 'a web of unequal relationships of exchange based on a morality of reciprocity, mutual obligation, and protection' (Ong, 2006, p. 199). Thus, the way moral economy is used in this dissertation draws on anthropological reworkings of the concept.[12]

I am mostly indebted to Fassin's work and some other anthropological scholarship for these approaches, which also link to the theory of biopower

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[12] According to Ong: 'In anthropological terms, moral economies involve substantive relationships of exchange that are governed primarily by morality (whether peasant, religious, or "cultural") or by ethics governing a particular vision of the good life.' (2006, p. 199).

and biopolitics (Fassin, 2001, 2005, 2011, 2012a; Ong, 2006; Sweis, 2017; Ticktin, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c).[13] These works were the main sources of inspiration in attempts to grasp the moral dimension of responses, such as the sentiments and principles that guide child welfare practice. In translating the concept as it is used in anthropological research to a child welfare context, I claim that 'the concept refers to the moral sentiments, values, norms and principles that serve as a basis for the protection or distribution of welfare resources' (Study IV, p. 232). This link between the empirical context of this dissertation and that of these authors is yet to be clarified in chapter 4.

In distinguishing the moral economy of child welfare, a broad care orientation was identified. This made Fassin's (2012a) analysis of a health- and therapy-oriented moral economy useful, as well as his contestations of a preoccupation with human suffering and wellbeing.

> What, ultimately, is gained, and what is lost, in the deal when we use the terms of suffering to speak of inequality, when we invoke trauma rather than recognizing violence, when we give residence rights to foreigners with health problems but restrict the conditions for political asylum, more generally when we mobilize compassion rather than justice? (Fassin, 2012a, p. 8).

Fassin's quotation above resonates with the analytical distinction made in this dissertation between care and justice. This distinction stems from the distinction between the harmful and the wrongful. Even though these may overlap, injustice is not only harmful but also wrongful (e.g. Fricker, 2007). However, the quotation above suggests that the moral economy of care indicates wrongs which are recognised as such *only or primarily when viewed as harmful*.

This analysis has been mainly on the level of principles of orientation for moral economies. The starting points of deontology and utilitarianism are adopted in order to distinguish different moral principles, as they are central ethical orientations in social work, and are developed further in chapter 4 (see also Gray & Webb, 2010; Osmo & Landau, 2006).

In this translation, the moral economies discussed can be seen as limited fragments of a version of ethics of care, influenced by utilitarianism, and a limited version of ethics of justice influenced by deontology (e.g. Clement, 1996). I was also seeking 'questions of equality and inequality' (Clement, 1996, p. 1, on ethics of justice) in trying to find examples of a moral economy of *social* justice.[14]

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[13] The way the concept of the moral economy is used in this dissertation was drawn from these debates and used long before I discovered Watters' usage of the concept of 'the moral economy of care' (Watters, 2007).

[14] It is important to note that the moral economy of care and the moral economy of justice are not to be conflated with ethics of care or ethics of justice. Although there are some fundamental similarities between them, feminist ethics of care and ethics of justice, including the debates surrounding their differences, convergences and tensions, are far more extensive than what the

Justice-related discourses link to rights and the law, as these were identified in the material studied here. However, linking justice to rights and laws is problematic and gives a rather narrow definition of justice as legality or conventions (e.g. Akademikerförbundet SSR, 2015a, 2015b). As pointed out by Moroni (2019), (social) justice is broader in scope, as '[d]iscourses relating to justice are discourses that are critical of *existing* institutions, laws and measures' (2019, p. 2; see also Bauman, 1993). This is why I choose to distinguish between *justice* and *social justice*. This enables not only analytical distinctions between care and justice but also emphasises something other than merely a 'better' or 'more just' form of care.

At the same time, thinking in line with *intersecting* social justice issues requires a contextual reading of how morals are mobilised in different contexts. From this perspective, there is a relationship between moral economies and moral subjects. Thus, seeking 'questions of equality and inequality' (Clement, 1996, p. 1) is insufficient. Moral economies are interwoven with the moral status of those targeted (Ong, 2006). This makes it important to mention, for instance, that paternalism and moral imperialism have commonly been mediated through a rhetoric of 'saving' but also a rhetoric of equality. There are various accounts of interventions which are carried out in the name of promoting gender equality, and saving children or women from violent, 'brown', 'barbarist' 'others', i.e. parents/husbands (Mohanty, 1986, 2003; Young, 2003; Wahab *et al*., 2015). As I discuss below, these representations often have a moral as well as developmentalist dimension, where the non-modern and traditional is projected onto gendered, racialised, sexualised and class-marked 'irresponsible' 'others', who are to be blamed for their own positions (Fabian, 2014; McClintock, 1995; Ong, 2003; Pringle, 2016; de los Reyes, 2005).

The Family Tree: Age, Ethnicity/Race and Gender

In her thought-provoking book, Anne McClintock (1995) elaborates on imperial iconography of evolution by describing 'the tree' as a colonial image of human nature and historical change. This symbol of 'the tree' has been a common subject of discussion among philosophers and scholars who have critically scrutinised evolutionist ideas, eugenics, racial biology and the tendency to trace origins and 'roots' (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004; Fabian, 2014; McClintock, 1995).

According to McClintock, the evolutionary 'tree' of 'the Family of Man' depicting the evolution of the human race was an 18th century response to the 'scientific standards' and paradigm of vision and measurement, both in terms of statistical measurements and measurements of 'evolving marks on the

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concept of moral economy can address, or what is here called a moral economy of care (or justice) (for an overview, see Clement, 1996; Jaggar, 2000; Sevenhuijsen, 1998).

body' (McClintock, 1995, pp. 37–38, 50). Looking at 'the tree' metaphor in racist imperial science, McClintock identifies three principles. History is depicted as a unilinear progress narrative. The progress-leading race is depicted as the white European, at the top of 'the tree'. Those deviating are represented as the subordinated and 'lower' branches. McClintock also discusses the gender dimensions of these portrayals. She considers 'the tree' metaphor to be a *family tree*, conceptualised as a patriarchal family where the adult white European man leads subordinates towards progress, expansion and societal improvement. McClintock notes also a familialisation of history 'while the family as an institution is seen beyond history' (1995, pp. 39, 44). 'The family thus became both the antidissertation of history and history's organizing figure' (McClintock, 1995, p. 44). However, she notes that simultaneously, and paradoxically, in the portrayal of 'the family tree', women were absent: 'From the outset, the idea of racial progress was gendered but in such a way as to render women invisible as historical agents' (McClintock, 1995, p. 39). This is the metanarrative of development.

Postcolonial and feminist scholars, as well as scholars of critical childhood studies, highlight how 'the others', i.e. the colonised, children, queers and women have historically been disassociated with metanarratives of civilisation and included in these narratives only as a contrast to the image of the civilised.

Because of its strong associations with nature, 'the tree' naturalises certain institutions, narratives, and relations of power. Hence, 'the tree', as an icon, is symbol of hierarchy, and has served as 'an alibi' for the sources of power in patriarchal, colonial and paternalistic domination over 'the immature' 'others' (McClintock, 1995, pp. 45–46). With the metaphor of 'the family tree', McClintock manages to interconnect imperialism (and racism) with patriarchy (as well as heterosexism and adultism).

> The family image came to figure hierarchy within unity as an organic element of historical progress, and thus became indispensable for legitimizing exclusion and hierarchy within nonfamilial social forms such as nationalism, liberal individualism and imperialism. The metaphoric depiction of social hierarchy as natural and familial thus depended on the prior naturalizing of the social subordination of women and children. (McClintock, 1995, p. 45)

'The family tree' illustrates what Leena Alanen designates as the 'familialized' child in mainstream social theory, i.e. 'the child' whose subjectivity is reduced to that of her parents (Alanen, 1988; Study I). As McClintock notes, the white male 'child of civilization' was thought of as a 'bonsai, a miniature family tree'. Yet unlike the 'savage' who was equated with this child, the idea was that the child would develop and mature, and 'climb[] its own family tree' (McClintock, 1995, p. 50).

I consider McClintock’s analysis of the ‘child of civilization’ to be important for analyses of childhoods from the perspective of intersecting injustices for two reasons. Firstly, she manages to show how much is lost in interlinking ‘the other’ to the adult ‘other’. The portrayal of the civilised child is not only a portrayal of an underdeveloped adult, but also of a white boy. Secondly, McClintock shows how the naturalisation of hierarchical structures and relations fostered by ‘the tree’ make any resistance to power problematic.

In the context of child welfare in Sweden and other Nordic countries, Astri Andresen and colleagues (2011) and Ulla Pettersson (2001) describe child welfare in the early 1900s involving two discussions: some children’s poor conditions, and that social and economic oppositions in society can lead to revolutionary actions and antisocial behaviour. Thus, child welfare has historically been a response to the potential of an emerging resistance, primarily of the classed and uncivilised (young) others.

Study I discusses similar schemes of thought in relation to children’s resistance towards adults in their own ‘family tree’ by introducing the defiant child, which has no corresponding position in the parent (see also Brown, 2005; Smith, 2009). The defiant child is, in Ahmed’s terms, the ‘willful’ subject, the stubborn child (sv. *egensinnig*; see Ahmed, 2014, p. 202). This is introduced in relation to a discourse of social heredity (sv. *det sociala arvet*, Study I; III). The discourse links to the theory of social heredity, a theory of social evolution suggesting that (social) problems are transmitted across generations *within ‘the family tree’* (Jonsson, 1967, 1973; see also Dube, 2018; Kaufman & Ziegler, 1987, 1989; e.g. Leifer, *et al*., 1993; e.g. Marshall *et al*., 2011; Vinnerljung, 1998). According to Marshall and colleagues (2011), this, in turn, is commonly based on theories of attachment (Bowlby, 1969) and socialisation theories (i.e. social learning) (Hearn, 1998; see also Steen, 2003). Weak and insecure attachments to parents and learning by observing are, thus, aspects used to explain how violent parents shape children and how this, in turn, leads to children becoming violent in the future (Marshall *et al*., 2011). Thus, a parallel can be drawn between McClintock’s analysis of ‘the family tree’ and the theory of social heredity, as introduced by the ‘father’ of that theory in the Swedish context, Gustav Jonsson. The study which has received the most publicity is his longitudinal study, where he focuses on boys inheriting problems of previous men in the family line, i.e. their fathers and grandfathers (Jonsson, 1967, 1973). In other words, the Swedish theory of social heredity depicts a gendered and classed like-father-like-son ‘family tree’, one from which, in the original work where the theory was developed, women and girls are predominately absent (but see Jonsson, 1977). His work *Att bryta det sociala arvet* [Breaking social heredity] (1972), suggests that the way of tackling social problems is to break the heredity. Breaking the heredity can be interpreted as the child, who represents a link in the chain, being removed from the chain. It is not particularly strange that the theory has been received by the Swedish social services, and that it is still present, as discussed in Studies I and III. It acts as a way of legitimising child welfare intervention.

The discourse of social heredity is today widely applied in, for instance, studies of child maltreatment in so-called 'intergenerational families' (e.g. Dube, 2018; e.g. Marshall *et al*., 2011, p. 1024). Contemporary research uses concepts such as 'adverse childhood experiences' (ACEs)[15] (Felitti *et al*., 1998; see also Dube, 2018; Felitti, 2009) or 'cycles of disadvantage' (Rutter & Madge, cited in Wilson, 2002, p. 195). As noted by commentators, even though previous studies show that the majority of abused or neglected children do not become violent adults, the idea of intergenerational transmission of abuse has regained its popularity (Bunting *et al*., 2017; e.g. Kaufman & Ziegler, 1987, 1989; e.g. Leifer *et al.*, 1993; e.g. Maguire-Jack *et al*., 2019; Vinnerljung, 1998; Wilson, 2002). Furthermore, locating childhoods in the foci of crises and formation of problems neglects ideas about these same problems being possible in adulthoods without such previous experiences.

The location of childhood in 'the family tree', and hence its central role for human ontology, has made children a target of intervention in human engineering, and in various biopolitical projects, such as compulsory care and in case of older girls, compulsory sterilisations, based on racial biology, degeneracy and eugenics (Andresen *et al.*, 2011; Burman, 2017; Cedersund & Brunnberg, 2013; Pettersson, 2001). In the case of compulsory placements of children, health/able-bodiedness and ethnicity/race have played a role. Research shows how national minorities, such as Sámi and Romani children, were constituting a category for such care (Andresen *et al.*, 2011; Department Series 2014:8; Pettersson, 2001). However, children are not only supposed to inherit problems, but also capital – economic and human capital – and 'biovalue' (Waldby, cited in Rose, 2001, p. 15; see also Foucault, 2014; Gilbert *et al.*, 2011b; Rose & Novas, 2005). I discuss this in chapter 4 (see 'Needs Orientation').

Even though the deterministic idea of 'the family tree' outlined above is contested in a great deal of critical research, feminist research in particular has brought the family to the fore in important ways. For instance, a common subject of discussion is that families are not a safe haven for women and children (Bruno, 2016; Eriksson, 2003; Wendt Höjer, 2002). However, there are also researchers who depict this in a more nuanced way, claiming that families can also be a shelter from racism and classed injustices (Collins, 1990). The difference between these allusions to family and the family outlined above is

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[15] The first ACE study was published in 1998 and focuses on adults and their experiences of ten adversities in childhood: abuse (emotional, physical or sexual) and neglect (emotional or physical), witnessing domestic violence, substance abuse in the family, mental illness in the family, separated or divorced parents and imprisoned family members (Felitti *et al*., 1998). Later studies include additional adversities, for instance racial/ethnic discrimination and neighbourhood violence. They may also look at how these adversities vary across different racial/etnic subgroups and what groups experience multiple adversities (e.g. Maguire-Jack *et al*., 2019).

nevertheless that family is discussed from a structural and feminist point of view, rather than a psychological and sociobiological one. Thus, the family is politicised rather than neutralised. When critical childhood studies problematise the familialisation of children, they also problematise how the nuclear family and biological kinship relations between heterosexual parents and children are viewed as more fundamental than other sorts of family and community relations (Mayall, 2000).

This section links to approaches to a field of knowledge. Below, I address other themes which instead link to modes of knowing and knowing subjects.

Knowledge Culture of 'Evidencing'

As noted, bodily issues have also been central to theorising about knowledge and truth making. A critique is raised against forms of knowledge which appear to be neutral, objective and disembodied – 'the god trick' (Haraway, 1988, p. 581). In this dissertation child welfare as a field and body of knowledge interconnects with modes of knowing and constructions of knowing subjects. Study II refers to two modes of knowing: *seeing-believing* (see Burman, 2008) and *predicting-believing* (cf. Foucault, 2014).

A seeing-believing epistemology emphasises that which can be captured with the eye, i.e. the practice of seeing and observing as a mode of knowing (Burman, 2008; Haraway, 1988). What emerges in a 'scopic regime' is the idea of a disembodied perspective and the replaceable observer (Jay, cited in Åsberg, 2005). Seeing-believing denotes simultaneously a mode of knowing and a knowing subject. Cecilia Åsberg notes how '[t]he observer is understood as a universal figure, a civilized subject that curiously observes that/those which are different' – the spectacle (Åsberg, 2005, p. 61, my transl.).

This dissertation attempts to capture the idea of the exchangeable observer with the modes of knowing analysed in Study II, in relation to 'evidencing' as a practice. I call this a *knowledge culture*, borrowing the term from Karin Knorr Cetina (2007). In this case, the knowledge culture of 'evidencing' links to the way social workers justify the need for protection in the form of out-of-home placements for children. In this type of process of justification, they draw on 'knowledge sources'. As noted in chapter 1, EBP in BBIC links to three sources of knowledge: professional expertise, scientific knowledge and service-user perspectives (NBHW, 2013, pp. 35-36; NBHW, 2018, p. 14). In Study II, seeing-believing links to the observation of the professionals but also their documentation. I refer to these records as childhood *biocartographies* (cf. Ong, 2006, pp. 195–217). The 'bio' links here to 'biological evidence' (Ticktin, 2011b, pp. 139–140). In contrast to the notion of biography, biocartography is based on practices of mapping, measuring, typologising as a way of separating the deviant from the normal. These practices, as previous research shows, have been common in child welfare, in developmental psychology and modernist positivist science (Burman, 2008, 2017; Fabian, 2014;

Fahlgren, 2009; McClintock, 1995; Piuva, 2005; Sawyer, 2012; Woodhead, 1999),

The court (a legal 'eye') then becomes the prospective reader who verifies the justifications. However, in this study, the legal 'eye' is nevertheless supposed to adopt the gaze of professionals in medical, psychological, educational and social work fields (White, 1998b). The only way all these professionals can adopt the same gaze is through the idea that there is one objective view of the body of the child, and one only, or at least multiple views which nevertheless contribute to a 'holistic' whole (e.g. Healy, 2016). The gaze of the professional becomes a knowledge culture when the particular mode of knowing applies to an organisation as a whole, and may be so normalised that even the people being observed can relate to it and observe themselves through it (Foucault, 1975, Sawyer, 2012). It is a distant way of seeing, and a form of categorisation and simultaneous surveillance of bodies (Piuva, 2005). The characteristics which make welfare *biowelfare* are therefore also the modes of knowing of objectivity and distance (Fahlgren, 2009). These prioritise interpretation based on clinical or professional gaze but also scientific predictions over the interpretation of the client (cf. Foucault, 2014; see also Piuva, 2005; Sawyer, 2012). This is a widely recognised concern and is, hence, why some researchers call for a more patient- or client-centred care and research (Dube, 2018; Herz, 2016; Herz *et al.*, 2012; Pringle, 2011).

This leads me to another mode of knowing and 'evidencing': *predicting-believing* (Study II). In biopolitics, not only the physician is a central knowing subject, so is the scientist. This also gives primacy to the knowledge of scientific experts and 'psy' disciplines, scientists of the soul, mind and more recently, the brain (Abi-Rached & Rose, 2014; Foucault, 1975, 2002, 2014; Rose, 2001; Rose & Abi-Rached, 2013; Wilson, 2002). In the context of child welfare, medical, neurosciences and 'psy' sciences are especially foregrounded (Andresen *et al.*, 2011; Featherstone *et al.*, 2014; Lundström, 1993; White, 1998a, 1998b; Wilson, 2002). Study II links to scientific knowledge as presented in the EBP model in the context of the study and discusses the status of scientific findings in 'evidencing'. The scientific does not encompass all sciences but link to specific discourses that in turn link to sets and clusters of theories and disciplines here referred to as psychobiologism (developmental psychology, biomedical and neurobiological knowledge etc., see also chapter 3; 4). In this dissertation, these fields and disciplines are linked to biowelfare.

Scientific research providing the field with findings on prevalence of future harm is not dealing with observable harm but with *predicted* harm (Study II). This is done with, as already mentioned, the ACE studies, which are informed by social heredity discourses. Neuroscience in particular has been discussed in these ways, namely as an objective 'evidence' of the impact of early childhood on adulthood (Rose & Abi-Rached, 2013; Wilson, 2002). In interpretations of neuroscientific research, the early years of children in particular are foregrounded as critical. Such interpretations, hence, advocate for so-called early interventions, i.e. interventions in young children's lives (Featherstone *et al*., 2014; White, 1998a, 1998b; Wilson, 2002).

Summary

This chapter is divided into two parts, each addressing relationships between knowledge and power. The first part focuses on episteme and begins with a discussion about postcolonial feminist and critical childhood studies approaches to knowledge, and knowing subjects. The theory of epistemic injustice is presented, as is the need to look more deeply into issues of moral status and children's justice subjectivity. The second part of the chapter continued the discussion about knowledge and morality, but from critical readings of biopower and biopolitics. In this part I elaborate on the umbrella term biowelfare in relation to several themes. These themes include the body as a political battlefield and the moral economy of care, which captures recognition and claims to rights and social justice. I also make efforts to contextualise biowelfare in terms of knowledge and modes of knowing, for instance by drawing on 'the family tree' as a metaphor, seeing-believing and predicting-believing.

The next chapter will discuss in more depth how some of these these concepts have been operationalised in relation to the material.

3. Methodology

The critical epistemologies discussed in the previous chapter link to certain methodologies, i.e. ‘a theory of how research is done or should proceed’ (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 5). This chapter discusses these methodologies, as well as the material involved, and will touch on how the four concepts of *knowledge, modes of knowing, knowing subjects* and *moral arena* were operationalised in relation to the material.

Unlearning

This dissertation has made use of a form of deconstructive framework. Deconstruction stems originally from Jacques Derrida (1978). However, this dissertation has primarily been inspired by Spivak’s concept of *unlearning* (Landry & Maclean, 1996, p. 4; Spivak, 1996). Unlearning differs from the positivist idea of knowledge building, which suggests that the main orientation of knowledge production involves accumulating previous empirical findings. In unlearning, the focus is on re-building rather than merely building. It aligns with critical epistemologies, and includes reworking and redeveloping epistemologies, i.e. ‘theories of knowledge’, methodologies and methods, or reading them ‘sideways and across’ and even turning them upside down (e.g. Ahmed, 2014, p. 15; Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; see also Mignolo, 2009).

In this dissertation, this methodology has been employed as an interdisciplinary postcolonial, feminist strategy and a strategy for critical childhood studies. Thus, social justice issues in child welfare were explored and ‘unlearned’ within the scope of multiple disciplines, fields or schools of thought. Knowledge of one field, discipline or school of thought was used to widen the scope of another. In Study III, discourses on violence in child welfare policy are read through the lens of feminist research on violence but also postcolonial and critical childhood studies perspectives. For instance, Study I problematises ‘the loyalty discourse’ in relation to children by referring to how a corresponding scenario might be understood within feminist research on violence:

> Within the research on gender-based violence, there is a discussion, beyond the scope of this article, about shame or fear as preventing the victim from making the experience of violence known to others. The point I want to make here is that this is rarely depicted as an issue of loyalty but one of power relations’ (Study I, p. 482).

Thinking in terms of different disciplines offers alternatives to established ways of conceptualising the world. It gives insights into the way a ‘translated’ idea differs from previous ones (cf. Said, 1983)

Hence, an approach which takes into account how different disciplines frame issues can help arrange these issues slightly differently, taking each of them, analytically, out of their disciplines and organising them into other constellations. This approach can be useful in an explorative dissertation such as this one, which aims to intervene in a field theoretically.

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is often criticised for its lack of tools and guidance in terms of the analytical process. This is especially the case with Foucauldian discourse analysis which, according to Jean Carabine, is a methodology rather than a method (Carabine, 2001; see also Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

In this dissertation, discourse can be defined as ‘a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)’ (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 1). Carol Lee Bacchi identifies two analytical traditions of discourse: analysis of discourses (theoretical political focus on meanings within a social setting) and discourse analysis (‘patterns of speech’). In this dissertation, discourse analysis follows primarily the former approach, analysing discourses, in order to ‘identify, within a text, institutionally supported and culturally influenced interpretive and conceptual schemas (discourses) that produce particular understandings of issues and events’ (Bacchi, 2005, p. 199).

Operationalising Areas of Knowledge and Morality

The different studies address different aspects of the categories distinguished as knowledge, modes of knowing and knowing subjects, but which are interrelated with one another and with child welfare as a moral arena. Study IV only addresses the moral realm, while Study II does not explicitly address this at all.

Here, *knowledge* links to child welfare policy and practice in terms of the knowledge drawn on and in terms of what counts as knowledge. In Studies I and III, this links to discourses on social problems, including intimate partner violence. Discourses were identified using conventional qualitative research strategies such as looking for themes and categories, comparing and contrasting, and taking the analysis into broader social and political contexts (Buch & Staller, 2007). In Studies I and III, this process primarily involves epistemology and hence, theoretical legacy. Both studies refer to *scientific discourses* in terms of what could also be labelled ‘theory’. They are designated as scientific because they link to scientific knowledge production, although some of them may be interpreted as being so established that they are rather ‘common sense’. They are discourses because they never involve the complete theory but rather a narrowed, fragmented or modified re-reading of it (Wilson, 2002). For instance, reference to *the discourse of attachment* in Study I involves the specific way in which attachment theory is used, rather than the theory itself, with all its complexities and theoretical development over time (cf. Broberg *et al.,* 2008).

One discourse was delineated/separated from another using a strategy of comparison and contrasting. This simply means following a line of thought from one context to another to understand its shifting meanings, and referring to these shifts as discursive. Discourses which have been delineated and separated look different, as discourses can operate separately but also merge. Study I refers to discursive formation (Foucault, 1974), which highlights a clustering of discourses that may otherwise be separate, but which can nevertheless also overlap with one another and be ‘mutually supportive’ (Study I, p. 475). Therefore, I commonly refer to (psycho)biologism which here exemplifies such clusters.

Modes of knowing addresses the way in which something ought to be known. Study II, for instance, addresses knowing in relation to ‘evidencing’. I identify seeing-believing (observations) and predicting-believing (drawing on scientific research). Also identified are biological evidencing (linking to biological bodies) and legal evidencing (linking to law, judicial bodies, criminal records, etc.) which at times overlap with one another, or with the aforementioned modes of knowing-evidencing.

This simultaneously interlinks modes of knowing with both knowledge and *knowing subjects,* i.e. the identified subjects who have knowledge about something. However, as noted above, knowing subjects also addresses the ways in which particular subjects, i.e. children, are constructed. Discourse analysis also enables an exploration of *discursive positions* (Study I). Contrary to the idea of ‘a pre-given psychological subject who is made social or socialised’, a discursive position is a construction which is produced by and embedded in discourses (Walkerdine, 2000, p. 4; see also Fahlgren, 2009; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Wilson, 2002). Study I does not analyse how actual children position themselves but rather the positions identified as available for children to occupy, given the constructions of children and childhoods found in policy (cf. Bacchi, 2005; cf. Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; see also Eriksson, 2009; Sundhall, 2008). This is also reflected in Studies II and IV. However, even in these studies it is difficult to make claims about how children position themselves. The empirical material is ‘the discursive voice’ of the social worker/s and policy rather than the child (Fahlgren, 2009, p. 210). Thus, these ways of positioning, if present at all, are mediated through the child welfare assessment reports written by social workers.

The area of *morality* addresses moral orientations of policy and practice. As noted above, in child welfare policy there are no explicit social justice discourses or discourses on social justice. There are, however, discourses which can provide a foundation for considering power, (in)equality and (in)justice as a dimension of a problem. These discourses are here referred to as *social justice discourses*.

To capture the ‘social’ dimensions of social justice issues, this dissertation focuses on discourses on social problems, primarily violence. Study III maps out some prevailing discourses on violence in intimate relationships as a social problem and looks specifically at how each of them enables an analysis of problems in a way which interconnects with issues of injustice. In other words, Study III, and to some extent Study I (which is based on the same empirical material), are discursive analyses of social problems (discourses on social problems) which are scrutinised in order to identify possible social justice discourses that can be mobilised in assessments or in (children’s) articulations of injustice. Looking at both social problems and children was necessary in order to explore the discursive locations of childhoods and positions of children in child welfare policy and practice.

In addition, I refer to *justice-related discourses*. In the studies focusing on child welfare practice, justice-related discourses are linking to rights and more broadly drawing on or referring to law and judicial bodies. However, it is important to stress that I use the concept of moral economy to grasp child welfare as a moral arena (chapter 2; see the section below). In this way, issues of social justice are not merely a question about the presence/absence of social justice discourses but focus instead on moral principles more broadly.

This approach is best exemplified in Study IV which draws on the notion of moral economy of care. This study links to the ethical theory of utilitarianism, and deontology (chapter 4). Intersecting injustices are also considered by drawing on the concept of embodied vulnerabilities and feminist, postcolonial and critical childhood studies.

Exploring Differentiations

This dissertation is based on common qualitative analytical steps, such as *thematic analysis* and *coding* but also *comparing* and *contrasting*. According to Buch and Staller (2007, p. 213) ‘thematic analysis refers to the process of identifying how similar processes or worldviews recur repeatedly in the data’. These patterns are given codes, or words. For instance in Study IV, I refer to embodied vulnerabilities and identify the psychosomatic sufferer, the medicalised child, the unmarked body, etc.

Contrastive analyses of differentiation are most visible in Study IV (but also to an extent in Studies I, II and III). In Study IV, differentiation is analysed by contrasting cases addressing similar problems which lead to different assessments/decisions and vice versa (see also Study II; III). In identifying key themes for arranging the analysis in Study IV, passages were chosen which involve the various ways in which embodiment features in investigations. This is followed by an analysis of the moral economy which underpins these figurations. Here, the focus is on the problems addressed, and the differences identified in terms of responses (care/suffering vs justice/rights), levels of recognition (see below) between each case. The points of contrasting involve intersecting injustices, particularly those relating the age, ethnicity/race and gender in a number of different intersections and in alignment with the epistemological framework outlined (see also Study I; IV).

Study I and III is an effort to explore differentiations in relation to how children are located and positioned discursively in policy text.

Levels of Recognition

In this dissertation, the concept of recognition is employed for a nuanced reading of responses to intersecting social justice issues. The use of the word *recognition* in terms of social problems or the vulnerable body of a child links to several levels of analysis. Here, it is primarily associated with the child welfare system, which links to policy, the assessment framework as an epistemological system, and legislation. This level can be called, for the sake of simplification, the *symbolic* or *discursive level* of recognition.

In the context of social work and child welfare, the symbolic level involves recognising something as a problem, but also how a recognised problem is constructed (Bacchi, 1999). In terms of domestic violence, one could ask: Is it considered to be a gender-related problem or ‘parental conflict’? Is it an issue which results from unequal relations of power, or is it due to the pathology of the individual (Hearn, 1998; Pringle, 2016; Steen, 2003)? Are children also exposed to it, and are they to be compensated for the crime against them, or to be treated with therapy (Eriksson, 2010)? This dissertation links some of these discussions to social justice issues, and more specifically to *hermeneutic epistemic injustice* (Fricker, 2007; chapter 2; 6).

There are several examples of this in Study IV. The case reports address certain situations which I interpret and refer to as racial violations, gender-based violence, etc. However, these incidents are not described with these words in the case reports nor are they responded to as such in terms of practical measures.

However, the same problems are recognised as bullying, which is a recognised problem but one which is not responded to with a practical protective measure. Thus, the former level depends on whether a violation is a recognised problem within the remit of social services, while the latter relates to how this problem is talked about when it is recognised.

There are several forms of recognition at the practical level. Pringle’s (1998) discussion about recognition is relevant here. One form that may link to both systematic, institutional or even interactional aspects involves the discrepancy between statistical records and presumed underreporting (sv. *mörkertal*), and the numbers detected in child welfare practice. Pringle links this discrepancy to flawed technologies for detecting and recognising the problem or its level of severity (Pringle, 1998). A final form of recognition linking to yet another structural level involves the fact that, even when a problem is recognised as such and detected, there are flaws in relation to the practical 'solutions'. In the English context, Pringle writes that 'even when child sexual abuse is detected by the English child protection services, they still often fail to act positively in terms of either prosecuting perpetrators or providing therapeutic help to survivors' (Pringle 1998, p. 158). This links to the example of bullying. Thus, the discursive and symbolic may be in flux in relation to the *level of practice*, as they are manifest in the ways individual child welfare workers deal with problems in childhoods or treat children differently (see also chapter 1).

In this dissertation and elsewhere (Knezevic *et al.*, forthcoming; Östberg, 2010), the question asked is not only *whether* services are provided but also *what kind* of welfare measure is provided and whether it, in turn, is a protective response to (or recognition of) that which is recognised at a symbolic level (see also Study IV). This question is no longer about the symbolic recognition of the problem *per se*. This approach to recognition is closely aligned with Eriksson's analysis of children exposed to violence, who can occupy positions of in/visible victim and un/protected victim. Here, visible *and* protected, and 'victims with opportunities for validation' is the definition used in this dissertation, as it is considered to define recognition in the full sense of the term (cf. Eriksson, 2009, p. 431). How this definition has guided the sampling of child welfare assessment reports is discussed below (see 'Material').

Language & Terminology

In this dissertation, effort has been made to use language as a way to (re)inscribe gender to what appears to be genderless or universal. In Study I, and here, the child is referred to as 'she'. The reason for this is to challenge the apparently gender-neutral conceptions of children. In contemporary understandings of gender, the term 'she' slightly encompasses a concept of gender, where the terms boy/he could be understood in similar ways to man/human, i.e. in gender-neutral ways.[16] Gender is also reintroduced in the reference list of this dissertation and, contrary to the academic tradition in which the dissertation is written, the first names of authors have been included. This is the contribution of this dissertation to a feminist 'citational practice' or 'politics of citation' (Ahmed, 2014, p. 15; Wekker, 2009), which at least offers a more transparent image of my own knowledge production, including its own limitations in terms of languages and geopolitics (see chapter 4, for the definition of geopolitics).

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[16] See, for example, Rawls (1999) who is commonly cited in discussions about social justice.

Throughout the process, some terms were changed. At the outset of the research, the terms ‘ethnicity/“race”’ were used as an axis of power, as is common in scholarship on intersectionality in the Swedish context (see de los Reyes & Mulinari, 2005; Åsberg, 2005). Disavowing race as an analytical category is one of the many points of critique involved in (Swedish) *colour-blind racism* and the invisibility of white hegemony (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Dahlstedt & Lozic, 2017; Eliassi, 2017; Graham, 2007; Hübinette, 2017; Mulinari, 2009). Perhaps for this reason I later on changed ‘ethnicity/‘race’’ to race, and finally, to ethnicity/race. The shift from ‘race’ to race was made *not* through any desire to essentialise race, but rather because I regard ethnicity/race as social constructions, alongside the other axes of power mentioned. Using quotation marks around some and not others is problematic in this context.

It should be noted, however, that the terms race and racism are absent in BBIC (NBHW, 2006; 2013; 2018). The common terms used instead are ‘culture’ (NBHW, 2013) and ‘origin’ (NBHW, 2013, 2018; see also Study I; III). The terms ‘ethnicity’ is not mentioned in the newest publication.

In order to make the material less distant in the analysis, it was addressed in accordance with suggestions by González y González and Lincoln relating to ‘cross-cultural’ and ‘cross-language work’. They suggest keeping the material units in their original tongue (in this case Swedish) separate from the translated, i.e. English versions (González y González & Lincoln, 2006). Therefore, throughout the analytical processes, data were analysed in the original tongue and translated only slightly before submitting an article. However, this does not apply to the writing-up process of the studies, nor the dissertation itself.

Material

As I discuss above, in this dissertation analyses of policy generally link to analyses of the prevailing knowledge underpinning child welfare as a field and how this knowledge, in turn, constructs knowing subjects. Analyses of child welfare assessments look primarily at modes of knowing and knowing subjects but also child welfare as a moral economy.

Policy Documents

To delineate ‘policy’ in this case, I look more closely at what at the time of the research was the three published documents and handbooks linked to the needs assessment framework BBIC. Planning for BBIC began as early as the 1990s. However, the first version was issued by NBHW in 2006 (NBHW, 2006). A second primer was released in 2013 (NBHW, 2013), and the third major revision came in 2015 (NBHW, 2015b; see also NBHW, 2015a), with an update in 2018 (NBHW, 2018). This third version has been in focus of this dissertation, both the first publication and the later update (NBHW, 2018). These documents touch on the theoretical base for the BBIC framework, the research it refers to, and the disciplinary and professional affiliations for this work. A document on assessment of children's maturity (NBHW, 2015c) was added to this, as well as a systematic review prior to the first update of the newest publication (NBHW, 2015a). Additional documents concerning EBP have also been analysed (NBHW, 2012; see also Commission of Inquiry 2008:18).

Child Welfare Assessments Reports

Child welfare assessment reports (also called 'case reports') are considered to be written documents which legitimise social workers' recommendations. Social workers present recommendations, which includes child welfare services and out-of-home placements, and these recommendations are not to be taken lightly. Research shows not only that these recommendations are often aligned with court decisions which regulate compulsory out-of-home care (Ponnert, 2007), but that if there is an out-of-home placement, it first needs to be recommended by a social worker (e.g. Leviner, 2014). Even if a case report does not lead to a service recommendation, the same case report is re-used in a re-opened assessment and, hence, has implications for prospective assessments (Pösö & Eronen, 2015). While research points to constant negotiations of the past, present and future (Pösö & Eronen, 2015), there are limitations to this because it is difficult to rewrite an already closed case report (Thomas & Holland, 2010).

According to Sundhall (2008), who studied the significance of children's voice in investigative texts (family law social work reports), the investigators who write these texts have a prominent role to play. This applies to the information they understand to be relevant out of the overall information and sources of knowledge involved (see Study II). It includes professionals, the child and people in the child's life (often parents), as well as references to scientific 'evidence'. It equally applies to the information and voices rendered insignificant (Pösö & Eronen, 2015). In other words, the investigators 'have the power to define which voices are significant and which [voices] are not' (Sundhall, 2008, p. 101, my transl.). According to Sundhall, investigations of this kind 'are the most important source of information that the court has when it comes to gaining access to children's perspectives and opinions' (2008, p. 101, my transl.). Hence, the investigator/s play/s a significant role in relation to the outcome, to which knowledge sources are used, and whether the child's wishes are respected or not.

Studies II and IV are based on samples from the same empirical material, in total 283 child welfare assessment reports, involving children in the age group 0–12. In rare cases other children, mainly older siblings, were involved.

Study II includes thirteen case reports, addressing ten children. Study IV includes seven case reports which address six children. The reports were collected in one middle-sized municipality in Sweden. All cases closed in the year 2015. They commonly refer to ‘investigators’, and in most cases include the names of two social workers.

Sampling

Two questions emerged from reading the child welfare assessments, which primarily involved different forms of violence/violations against children: ‘Why is there no response or only a limited one?’ and ‘What is required for a response?’ These questions were thus asked within the framework of reference under which the term ‘recognition’ is understood, above (see ‘Levels of Recognition’). This understanding encompasses *practical protective responses,* and therefore recommendations of services and measures which are a direct protective response to the problem addressed. Recommendations offered directly to children, which would involve a change in the situation of a child, were of particular interest.

The first question led to cases which were found to be lacking in response to violations of children (Study IV). Thus, Study IV brought issues to light which I, as a reader, interpreted as injustices and different limitations on responses to injustices. In order to enable cases to be contrasted, a case of response was included in the analysis (see Creswell, 2007; see Study IV, ‘Ada’). Studies IV and II were written after several re-readings of the sample as a whole.

The second question led to cases where children were granted protection in terms of out-of-home placements (Study II). A total of 18 specific case reports were chosen for Study II, and the final sample was made from case reports which referred in some way to violence and abuse against one or several children, including exposure to intimate partner violence. In this way, the sample was narrowed down to cases which could illustrate issues involving social justice, such as cases of different forms of violence. Thus, in order to sustain the relevance of the questions posed in this dissertation, both studies focus on cases in which violations against children and violations of their bodily integrity and embodied selves are addressed.

Study II and IV followed a similar logic, but for Study IV there were far more cases to choose from. Here, relatively long cases were chosen which could illustrate embodied vulnerabilities. Out of multiple cases labelled as touching on similar embodied vulnerability, cases were selected which could most easily be contrasted for differences and similarities from an intersectional point of view (see below). The larger sample also enabled the intentional removal of case reports where the reason for opening the case focused primarily and only on children’s health issues.

Methodological and Ethical Dilemmas and Limitations

The four studies explore different aspects of social justice issues for children, or take slightly different angles in terms of analysing similar issues. This means that the issues discussed in policy studies are not explicitly ‘followed up’ in the analysis of practice, and *vice versa*.

Another discrepancy between policy and practice is that the newest version of BBIC had not yet been implemented in child welfare practice in the municipality from which child welfare reports were collected. However, the themes investigated were rather more compact, and resemble the updated BBIC triangle from 2015 (NBHW, 2015b; cf. NBHW, 2013, 2006; see also NBHW, 2018). For instance, the child welfare assessment reports did not include an identity section. ‘Identity’ was deleted in the 2015/2018 versions but was present in both the 2006 and 2013 versions. This can be interpreted as an implementation in process but also indicates that identity was not a major concern at that time in that municipality. However, some intersecting injustices that are related to ethnicity/race and gender were discussed in previous case reports in relation to identity (see for instance ‘Tarana’, Study IV). This, nevertheless, suggests that with the removal of the identity section in BBIC, central issues for this dissertation, including ethnicity/race and gender, are more difficult to capture in relation to child welfare practice (cf. Dominelli, 2002). This is partially supported by previous research although it shows that, even with the inclusion of identity, children’s views and circumstances in relation to age, ethnicity/race, gender, religion, etc. were underreported (Thomas & Holland, 2010). This applies in particular to children’s own views on their identity and identities that are less linked to family relationships and self-esteem (the authors mention a relative absence of identities linked to friends, religion and cultural identity). Instead, as one of the interviewed social workers in that study argues: ‘Identity and emotional / behaviour development is often a little bit repetitive, I find, and they can be false divides.’ (social work practitioner, cited in Thomas & Holland, 2010, p. 2628).

Domains for assessment in the BBIC-guided investigations that were closely read and analysed include children’s health, as well as children’s education and whether the parents provide security for the child. The subheading ‘Family and Environment’ was not always included in the analysed child welfare assessments. Different child welfare agencies and social workers may choose to stress some areas more than others. Therefore, the analysis of a moral economy of care and knowledge culture of ‘evidencing’ in child welfare practice is an analysis of possible articulations of child welfare modes of knowing and responding. It may also be important to note that at the time of writing and after incorporating the UNCRC into national law in Sweden the case reports can look different.

It should be noted that the written case reports were child welfare e-assessments, hence written into and collected from a database. Previous research has discussed e-assessments as reinforcing a distance between practitioners and clients – in what is already a reduced time for contact – as all writing mostly takes place in an office (Broadhurst *et al.*, 2009; Dominelli, 2009; Holland, 2011; Pithouse *et al.*, 2009; Thomas & Holland, 2010; White *et al.*, 2010). I do not include these in the studies although distancing and objectification are central in the analysis of the case reports.

Seeing the Invisible..?

The four articles in this dissertation focus on intersecting social justice issues, but it is important to note, as already mentioned, that because the word is not mentioned in the material studied, there is no distinct discourse *on* social justice to analyse. However, as I discussed above, this dissertation refers to social justice discourse/s (or discourses of social justice) and justice-related discourse/s. Both categories emerged from interpreting the material.

Study IV is a clear example of how difficult it is to find social justice discourses, and the study illustrates this absence. Discourse analysis methodology is always interpretive, but it usually identifies discourses empirically by tracing ideas in texts and associating them to discourses. Absent discourses are therefore discussed in relation to other texts. This applies, for example, to the discursive positions of children in Study I. The conclusion that there is no unproblematically moral child position draws on sources other than those found in the core material, in this case the theory of epistemic injustice and its interrelated concepts (see chapter 2).

Another limitation links to the concept of agency, which generally is absent in poststructuralist discourse analytic frameworks. This makes any analysis of social change and the interrelated social justice difficult to analyse. It also downplays the agency and interpretation power of the researcher, as discourses appear to be ‘out there’ to be analysed (Eldén, 2005; see also Bacchi, 2005; Brown, 2012; Pease, 2002). For reasons mentioned, this dissertation also considers discursive psychology even though it primarily draws on Foucauldian discourse analysis (cf. Bacchi, 2005; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). The former links to the idea that discourses can be mobilised differently in relation to different individuals or situations, which is most prominently elaborated on in Study IV (see also Study I; III). Similar schemes of thought are reflected in the main idea of the dissertation, namely that discourses can be ‘inscribed’.

Vulnerability or Intersectionality?

Philomena Essed (2013) discusses some of the dilemmas involved in anti-racist scholarship, one being ‘tension around whether to publish sensitive data that can make marginalised communities even more vulnerable’ (Essed, 2013, p. 1407). At the same time, anti-racist scholars may be led into this kind of research, which might not otherwise be taken forward. This tension is relevant to Studies II and IV in this dissertation, which draw on sensitive material, i.e. written child welfare assessments.[17] Thus, one challenge has been how to address axes of power which are central to the chosen intersectional analysis of childhoods without transgressing confidentiality and disclosing a child's identity in too much detail. Contextual details have been largely removed and/or altered in both studies, and this often meant removing as much information about the parents as possible. However, it also led to difficulties in undertaking a relational and intersectional analysis. This issue was resolved by designating excerpts by using a number of pseudonyms, and making some alterations to the axes of power, age, gender and family constellation where it was not object of analysis (Study II; IV). The ethical dilemmas are many in relation to Studies II and IV. Disclosing 'too much' is unethical but so is not to discuss certain forms of injustices because they appear to be rare and therefore 'visible' in the larger sample. This is the main reason why Study II is limited in terms of an intersectional analysis.

Other challenges involved the article format. For instance, Study IV includes six selected cases, based on seven case reports, to illustrate the prevailing moral economy of care, but because it was not possible to include more cases, the study does not provide an intersectional analysis as planned. For instance, some cases discussing boys were removed in order to show that there was also differentiation between girls (see, in particular, the case of 'Memory'). This strategy aimed to avoid presenting a misleading image of the assessments which could give the reader the impression that a (lack of) response is gendered in specific ways, i.e. a lack of response to boys. However, it is still important to note that some of the embodied vulnerabilities identified only involve girls, as is discussed in Study IV.

This dissertation makes use of a wide range of contrasting and distinguishing techniques. Contrasting has been used in selecting material for intersectional and other analyses involving responses to children (Study II; IV). Overall, this dissertation provides an analysis of what appears to be equal-as-the-same approaches, where, instead, differentiation prevails. This includes differentiations produced through the knowledges employed in relation to different childhoods (Study III), the modes of knowing and 'evidencing' (Study II), as well as the mobilisation of different moral principles in relation to different childhoods (Study IV). Thus, the theoretical framework of this dissertation puts emphasis on childhoods as different, but also differentiated in problematic ways. While not all difference is bad, and some may even be necessary to avoid eurocentric, ethnocentric and universal representations, including the differentiations they generate, the choice and arrangement of cases for contrasting links certain axes of power and difference to certain childhoods. In

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[17] Study II and IV were approved by the regional Ethical Review Board in Uppsala (dnr. 2014-350).

several examples, children who are othered and marginalised in terms of age, ethnicity/race, gender and class, come to represent gendered and racialised childhoods in different intersections. This applies in particular to the cases contrasted in Study IV, but also in the arrangement of excerpts in Studies I, II and III.

A number of analytical distinctions are also made between concepts, such as *voice* vs. *body* (Study II), and *care* vs. *justice* (Study IV). While useful as an analytical device, each distinction and contrast reproduce a dual understanding of the world (Essed, 1996; Sprague & Zimmerman, 2004), which this dissertation otherwise problematises. This gives the impression that it is not possible to integrate the ideas which are contrasted, although this is also problematised in Study II in relation to the metaphors of body and voice (see also Wells, 2011), and in Study IV in relation to care and justice (see also Clement, 1996; e.g. Dominelli, 2010; Fassin, 2005).

Summary

This chapter is an extension of chapter 2 in the sense that it presents the methodological approaches employed and how I, for instance, operationalise areas of knowledge and morality in relation to the material. It provides information about the material used, and outlines some methodological and ethical issues which emerged during the research process. The next chapter will provide more background information, this time focusing specifically on child welfare social work. The historical, ethical and geopolitical contextualisation of BBIC in the next chapter also guides this dissertation methodologically. The dissertation refers throughout to Swedish child welfare and the empirical example of BBIC, but it also mentions similarities with other countries and involves periods before the launch of BBIC.

4. The History, Ethics and Geopolitics of Child Welfare

As well as having their own terminologies, canons, tacit forms of knowledge and areas of scope, disciplines are developed in certain historical periods and are linked to the political developments of that time (Wekker, 2009; see also McGrath Morris, 2002; Pettersson, 2001). It is therefore important to consider, in a critical way, the historical meanings attached to a discipline. This can also be applied to processes of understanding child welfare social work as a multidisciplinary field consisting of multiple theories and perspectives (Anbäcken, 2013; Andresen *et al.*, 2011; Healy, 2016; Herz *et al.*, 2012; Pringle, 2016; White, 1998b), as well as to BBIC as a conceptual assessment framework. In this chapter, BBIC is situated in the wider context of child welfare social work, and in a historical, ethical and geopolitical context. These dimensions are of particular importance for this dissertation and are considered to be intertwined. The chapter therefore serves to outline some of the conditions under which BBIC was made possible.

The Historical Context: Swedish Child Welfare

Child welfare became a reality in 1926 in Sweden when special municipal child welfare boards (sv. *barnavårdsnämnder*) were set up. Before that, as Åke Elmér (1965) notes, the welfare of children was the responsibility of the poor relief system (sv. *fattigvårdsstyrelserna*). In the 1940s, institutions for delinquent children were relabelled to school homes, training schools or youth care schools, depending on the age of the children. As has been noted, this was a shift in the object which was being protected. The primary aim of child welfare was no longer to protect society from problematic youth but to ‘cure’ and ‘educate’ them ‘so they [could] adjust to the needs of the society’ (Andresen *et al.*, 2011; Elmér, 1965, p. 118, my transl.; Lundström, 1993; Spratt *et al.*, 2015).

Trevor Spratt and colleagues (2015) discuss similar developments in relation to the ‘European’ development of child welfare. Their descriptions make clear that the contemporary focus on families, including locating problems within the family, is a modern idea. The later development led to new laws and policies, as well as the ‘acknowledgement that children may be at risk in their own homes, and that new types of services were required to enable the state to protect children.' (Andresen *et al.*, 2011; Spratt *et al.*, 2015, p. 1516). Andresen and colleagues write how child welfare in the Nordic context, with this shift, started to focus more on child abuse (Andresen *et al.*, 2011). However, in terms of both street children and the children targeted later on (i.e. in the family), the focus nevertheless remains on *some* children in *some* families (Lundström, 1993; cf. Parton, 1996; Wilson, 2002). As discussed, there is a vast body of research on the issue drawing parallels to differentiations of childhoods in terms of age, class, ethnicity/race, but also gender, sexuality and health/able-bodiedness (Andresen *et al.*, 2011; Hamreby, 2004; Lundström, 1993; Lundström & Sallnäs, 2003). For instance, research discusses the common descriptions of girls as immoral and promiscuous. Boys, on the other hand are constructed as aggressive and criminal. This has led to differentiated and gendered responses in child welfare (Andresen *et* al., 2011; Hamreby, 2004).

In her dissertation on Swedish child welfare from the end of the nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth century, Kerstin Hamreby (2004) outlines three different periods, each based on its distinctive conception of gender and social problems, in particular in relation to the 'delinquent' child. She designates the period 1896–1920 as influenced by *moralism*. According to Hamreby, normative assumptions rather than science ruled this period. Social problems, hence, were linked to 'a morally inferior upbringing' (Hamreby, 2004, p. 181). Hamreby links the second period to *hygienism*. In the 1940s, there was more focus on medicalisation and *psychologism*, and mental health was added to the equation. According Hamreby, the later development has led to more profound essentialisation of problems, and particularly of those issues that have been connected to girls. The focus on the 'psychosocial' became prominent in the 1980s, as Pettersson shows in her historical overview (Pettersson, 2001). She nevertheless traces it to the 1950s.

These shifts also have had an influence on what constitutes prevailing knowledge and expertise in child welfare, but also modes of knowing. For instance, Katarina Piuva (2005) discusses education as a technique through which the social work students were taught 'the clinical gaze'. Referring to mental hygiene discourses, Piuva writes how the students were taught to see 'psychosocial' objects and psychiatric problems (Piuva, 2005, p. 82). In Piuva's dissertation, this applies to the periods mentioned above, referred to as hygienism and psychologism, and more specifically to the period 1939-1989.

Child welfare in Sweden during the 1960s consisted of physicians, teachers and psychologists who were designated as experts. In the 1960s, the 'child village' (sv. *Barnabyn*) was established, a youth care home in Skå close to Stockholm, where new methods were tested in relation to young people's problems (Elmér, 1965). These methods were later also applied in schools and institutions for young people considered ‘antisocial’ (Elmér, 1965). Elmér indicates that the professionals who were expected to apply these methods were specially educated physicians, psychologists and teachers. Barnabyn Skå is commonly associated with Gustav Jonsson (1967, 1973, 1977), who is mentioned in this dissertation in relation to the theory of social heredity (see chapter 2; Study I; II).

These disciplinary and theoretical legacies have remained and researchers point out how child welfare social work still gives priority to psychological perspectives (Enell & Denvall, 2017; Herz *et al.*, 2012; White, 1998a, 1998b; see below, ‘Disciplinary and Theoretical Basis’; see also chapter 2).

The Ethical Context

As an academic discipline social work is relatively ‘new’, and started in the 1970s. However, social work as a practice, in terms of supporting the poor, has a much longer history rooted in philanthropy (Lorich, 1995; Pettersson, 2001). Philanthropy includes charities and movements working towards better conditions, including for children (Burman, 2017; Pettersson, 2001).

With this history in mind, this dissertation links the empirical context to a moral economy commonly associated with humanitarianism and philanthropy (Fassin, 2012a). The link between child welfare and philanthropy also clarifies why this dissertation chooses to draw a parallel between moral economies in diverse geographical contexts, i.e. the empirical context which is the subject of the study, and the context of immigration politics in France and humanitarian interventions (Fassin, 2011, 2012a; Sweis, 2017; Ticktin, 2011a, 2011b; see also Burman, 2017). In addition, humanitarian and child welfare interventions can both be regarded as moral interventions. While humanitarian NGOs are not state-based, they nevertheless operate on the basis of ‘universal needs and defend[ing] human rights’ and constitute ‘a space of the biopolitical’ (Rabinow, 2005, p. 49). This indicates a clear parallel to social work, particularly BBIC and the idea that children have universal needs, as well as rights. Finally, philanthropic thinking has been the focus of critical approaches within the field, which have drawn a dividing line between charity on the one hand, and social justice issues on the other (McGrath Morris, 2002; Pettersson, 2001; Reisch, 2002; Thompson, 2002).

Contractarianism

Welfare states build on contractarianism, the idea that the social contract is a set of ‘mutual rights and obligations’ (Resich, 2002, p. 345). Theories of the social contract usually depict the state and the citizen in mutual agreement and dependent on each other, but unequal (cf. Fassin, 2011; cf. Ong, 2006). This view of social contracts links justice to public institutions (Moroni, 2019), and makes child welfare legitimate in the first place. An example of a social contract can be found in the SSA 2001:453, which stipulates that the municipal authorities, i.e. the Social Service Board, are responsible for the welfare and protection of residents, including children.

While there are many contributions to and views on contractarianism, social work is commonly associated with ideas deriving from social egalitarianism (*distributive justice*) (Reisch, 2002). This, in turn, is often linked to John Rawls, whose *A Theory of Justice* (1999[1971]) is commonly associated with moral dimensions of social work in general and social justice in particular (McGrath Morris, 2002; Reisch, 2002). Rawls is known for his ‘principle of redress’:

> This is the principle that undeserved inequalities call for redress; and since inequalities of birth and natural endowment are undeserved, these inequalities are to be somehow compensated for. Thus the principle holds that in order to treat all persons equally, to provide genuine equality of opportunity, society must give more attention to those with fewer native assets and to those born into the less favorable social positions. The idea is to redress the bias of contingencies in the direction of equality. In pursuit of this principle greater resources might be spent on the education of the less rather than the more intelligent, at least over a certain time of life, say the earlier years of school. (Rawls, 1999, p. 86)

Rawls’ work is an affirmation of both liberal and socialist principles, yet his theory is primarily developed for liberal-democratic welfare states. Distributive justice usually proposes that resources, benefits and responsibilities should be distributed across the members of the nation-state (McGrath Morris, 2002). Rawls’ principles mirror the much-emphasised concept of self-determination in social work (Gray & Webb, 2010; Rawls, 1999, p. 332), as well as redistribution for promoting the wellbeing of the disadvantaged.

As suggested in the quotation above, childhood is crucial to Rawls’ concept of ‘underserved inequalities’, as these involve ‘inequalities of birth’ or being ‘born into less favorable social positions’. Therefore, some commentators recognise that Rawls’ principles best serve social justice for children (see Bojer, 2000). However, this dissertation disagrees with this argument, and proposes instead that, like other conventional theorising on the matter, this theory adopts a view of children as a generic form, and therefore deprived of subjectivity (Burman, 2017; Castañeda, 2001, 2002). This universalisation of childhoods simultaneously diminishes children’s ability to take part in the meaning making of social justice, which is addressed in this dissertation. It is therefore not surprising that ‘justice subjectivity’ (chapter 2) is ascribed to institutions and adults in Rawls’ work.

Another critical remark can be made in relation to distributive justice *per se*. For instance, Young (1990) regards it as reducible to ‘the distributable’.

Although Rawls imagined the distribution of rights, duties and resources, distributive justice nevertheless often reduces social justice to the distribution of wealth and income (Young, 1990). Young claims that oppression and domination should be a starting point, and that this would acknowledge difference and bring us closer to analyses of decision-making, culture and the division of labour. In addition, she incorporates a discussion about social groups which are absent in much of the philosophical theorising on justice, which tend to focus on moral subjects or their relation to the state.

The exploration of social justice in child welfare in this dissertation refers to other concepts and approaches, including 'moral economy' (Study IV), a concept largely based on the idea of a social contract. However, this includes an analysis of ideas which originate in utilitarianism and deontology, which I discuss below, and considers differences and differentiation within the group of children. Addressing 'embodied vulnerabilities' has been one way of addressing intersecting inequalities, or what Young calls 'difference'. This exploration of the kind of vulnerabilities which fall within and outside the 'social contract' of child welfare responses, protective and otherwise, also outlines practice in terms of moral orientation, and in turn, limitations and opportunities for intersecting social justice issues. To understand different moral orientations I consider utilitarianism and deontology, two prominent ethical theories in social work.

Utilitarianism vs. Deontology

Gray and Webb (2010) note that social work as a profession is influenced by *utilitarianism* and *deontology*, which are usually seen as contrasting concepts. They illustrate how Western moral philosophy of the nineteenth century introduced utilitarianism. According to Gray and Webb, the nineteenth century exemplified 'the pre-occupation of morality in British social work'. The Charity Organization Society focused, in a utilitarian fashion, on utility and the 'common good', and simultaneously on the morality of the individual (Gray & Webb, 2010, p. 14; Marthinsen, 2016; see also Hamreby, 2004; Lundström & Sallnäs, 2003). Utilitarianism is based on the majority principle and is a consequentialist ethical theory which defines justice as maximising wellbeing for as many as possible of a generalised public (Gray & Webb, 2010; Osmo & Landau, 2006; Reisch, 2002; see also Cedersund & Brunnberg, 2013). It focuses on 'flourishing', and defines goodness in terms of 'the greatest possible amount of pleasure' and least harm (Gray & Webb, 2010, p. 8).

Deontology emerged as an ethical theory in critical response to utilitarianism. It focuses on duties, and where *utilitarianism* approaches 'good' not as an act in itself but in terms of its outcomes, deontology implies another approach, where a right is a right regardless of the consequences (Osmo & Landau, 2006). It is claimed that the professionalisation of social work followed a deontological approach, with its emphasis on duty and moral obligations, along with an increased need for legitimisation through a pre-set purpose, principles and mission for the profession. During this wave, formal education and science became more prominent aspects of social work (Gray & Webb, 2010), including in Sweden (Pettersson, 2001).

The above-mentioned ethical theories offer principles and philosophies for action. For instance, utilitarianism is commonly associated with sentiments of compassion (Fassin, 2012a; Gray & Webb, 2010; Marthinsen, 2016). Study IV considers these two ethical theories in relation to child welfare practice, as I discuss in chapter 2 and 3, for instance by referring to philanthropy and utilitarianism as 'politics of pity' (Fassin, 2005, p. 366; e.g. Ticktin, 2011a). However, deontology – 'policies of control' (Fassin, 2005, p. 366) – has been a common focus of critique by researchers in relation to the abstract and gender-neutral arrangement of rights and law (see Clement, 1996; Osmo & Landau, 2006; e.g. Schlytter, 1999; Sevenhuijsen, 1998). In addition, it has not always been possible to resolve issues of structural violence against women, children and the 'alien others' through androcentric rights discourse or nation-bound citizenship (Jönsson, 2014a; Ong, 2006). Commentators who problematise deontology note that it advocates obeying laws or ethical frameworks but that which is obeyed is not necessarily morally good. However, nor can (the reasoning of) the masses always be a starting point for 'good' (for World War II, see Ahmed, 2014; Bauman, 1993) and for this reason, utilitarianism is problematised from the perspective of minority rights (Osmo & Landau, 2006).

Needs orientation

Being abbreviated as 'Children's Needs in Focus', BBIC also falls into the category of needs orientation, juxtaposed against risk orientation, two additional categories applied to Western child welfare systems (Cleaver *et al.*, 2004; Pringle, 1998). In some child welfare scholarship in the UK context, needs orientation has been described as broader in scope than risk orientation because the latter is said to focus only on the presence and absence of risks. Therefore, Hedy Cleaver and colleagues (2004) refer to needs orientation as an 'anticipated shift':

> The anticipated shift was from a service overly pre-occupied by incidents of child maltreatment to one that focused on the developmental needs of children including cases where their health and development was being impaired through neglect or abuse. (Cleaver *et al*., 2004, p. 15).

However, the vocabulary of health associated with needs orientation was present in relation to the institutional care of children in Sweden and internationally long before BBIC was launched (Bergman, 2011; Elmér, 1965; Healy, 2008; Léveillé & Chamberland, 2010; Pettersson, 2001; White, 1998a). Similarly, an increased focus on children have been seen in the process of making child welfare a separate policy domain (Lundqvist, 2011) and practice (Elmér, 1965).

What is considered to be good childrearing practices and approaches to children has been shifting in time and space (Wilson, 2002). Lundqvist and Roman's (2009) account suggests that what has historically been considered 'children's needs' may be in line with, but also periodically in conflict with, gender equality and violence-prevention policies. They also point to discussions about children's needs in relation to changes in the labour market in Sweden. Concrete examples they mention relate to arguments about children needing their parents. In times when the labour market needs of female employees were increasing, the dominant discussion involved children's need for *quality* time (rather than quantity time) with the parent (mother) as an argument for child care such as nurseries. In this context, it was considered positive if the child spent time elsewhere, i.e. in publicly organised child care, as long as certain time, i.e. quality time, was spent with the primary care giver, i.e. the biological parent. Hence, children's 'needs' not only reflected increased employment for women and the needs of the labour market, but also equality discourses at the time, in themselves closely connected to the labour market. This suggests that the way in which children's needs are conceptualised links to family policy in general, as well as to adult productivity. Children's needs in terms of policy are never entirely separate from the needs of the labour market, or from 'adult institutions', to paraphrase Lee (1999; see also Dobrowolsky, 2002; Lundqvist & Roman, 2009). In fact, they may even be determined by them. This shift becomes obvious if this situation is compared to other periods in time where women were not included in the labour market to the same extent, and where *quantitative* time with the parent was seen as important for children's development. Thus, times of economic change tend to alter what is considered morally good or bad, including (middle-class) morals associated with the family and what is seen as good for children (Chatterje, 2004; Lundqvist, 2011; Lundqvist & Roman, 2009; Wilson, 2002).

In analysing the British context, Alexandra Dobrowolsky (2002) problematises contemporary child welfare policies by suggesting that they only appear to focus on children. She claims that they exclude children as living beings, but use the concept (the symbolic 'child') to regulate parents' employability. Behind the focus on children is a social-investment model, which, as noted, is a neoliberal model where employment features as the solution to all problems. Moreover, children feature as future employable adults, and investment in a child's education is considered to lead to a desired productive adulthood (see also Foucault, 2014; Gilbert *et al.*, 2011b; Lister, 2003; Skivenes, 2011). 'Equal opportunity' in this context does not recognise unequal conditions but displays gender-neutral, futuristic and productivist features. These conceptualisations of 'equal opportunity' shaped the assessment framework in the UK, shortly before BBIC was launched in Sweden. However, as noted above, the conceptualisation of children's needs has followed the needs of the labour market in Sweden before the launching of the assessment framework too.

Children's needs are also discussed by Ann-Sofie Bergman (2011) in the context of foster-family care and supervision of foster homes. Bergman illustrates changes in need during the 20th century, with the greatest change at the beginning of the 1970s. During this period, foster care was described more and more often as treatment, and needs were reconceptualised from material and physical (health) to social and mental-health requirements. She further shows how this shift mirrored other changes, namely changes in the problems leading to placement, professionalisation of social work along with, as noted above, an increasing influence of psychology and psychiatry. However, she notes that the ideal of the nuclear family seemed to remain intact, as did a continued focus on the mother's parental skills.

The Geopolitical Context

The term *geopolitics* was originally coined by the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellén, and denotes 'analysis of the geographic influences on power relationships in international relations'. It is commonly used as a synonym for international politics (Encyclopædia Britannica[18]). In this chapter, it refers to sites of knowledge production which are simultaneously geographical and political. Geopolitical frameworks also capture knowledge in relation to language dominance (English-speaking, and primarily Anglo-American and Anglo-Saxon scientific communities) make cross-cultural system transfers such as BBIC possible and legitimate.

BBIC: A 'Travelling' Idea

BBIC is inspired by the British Integrated Children's System (ICS) and 'adapted' to Swedish legislation and praxis. It is a product of policy transfer and therefore closely connected with the English and Welsh child welfare and protection system from which it was imported (NBHW, 2006, 2018).

The very rationale for establishing assessment framework models goes back to the United Kingdom in the mid-1980s. It was shown that children taken into care were worse off than their peers, in terms of health and development (Léveillé & Chamberland, 2010; NBHW, 2006, 2013). Improvements were needed, and assessment frameworks were the result of these demands. First was 'Looking After Children', which has since developed into The Framework for the Assessment for Children in Need and their Families' (Lé-

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[18] https://www.britannica.com/topic/geopolitics

veillé & Chamberland, 2010). ICS is an integration of the two models mentioned above. In England, assessment frameworks which are often described as a focused and standardised model for assessment of children in need did not exist before 2000 (Cleaver *et al.*, 2004). In Wales, an assessment framework was introduced in 2001 (Thomas & Holland, 2010).

The English system has served as an inspiration for many countries, but the way in which ICS has been adapted to each context varies. Using an assessment framework as a tool for working with vulnerable children is a widespread practice today. As well as in the United Kingdom (England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland) and Sweden, they are used in countries like Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine (for an overview, see Léveillé & Chamberland, 2010; NBHW, 2018). These versions differ as the basic model has been taken up differently, and the adapted versions are used in diverse settings of child care or are in different stages of implementation (Léveillé & Chamberland, 2010). Some of the Swedish BBIC documents are referred to as adaptations and others as re-workings (NBHW, 2013, 2015, 2018).

In Sweden, the National Board for Health and Welfare (sv. *Socialstyrelsen*) is in charge of BBIC. The intention was for BBIC to become a national model from the start. During the launching and pilot-project years, 1995–2005, it had been tested in seven municipalities. In 2020, at the time of writing, BBIC is used in almost all Swedish municipalities. Though it has been adapted to the Swedish context, i.e. the legal system, the Swedish counterpart of this 'travelling' policy, BBIC resembles its original model in terms of the forms of knowledge underpinning it, and the emphasis on 'evidence' which this dissertation does not consider value-neutral. On the other hand, this contextualises Study III which touches on these issues by asking why Swedish national policy on gender-based violence is not incorporated into the framework, or is only partially incorporated, and in relation to some families. I discuss Study III in the next chapter and in chapter 6.

Disciplinary and Theoretical Basis

In the three BBIC primers analysed in this dissertation (Study I; III), it is possible to read about the theories underpinning the Swedish (and English) framework for assessment. Theories and key theoretical works are presented, along with research and documents built on by BBIC. The Swedish child welfare system, and more specifically BBIC, is primarily considered to be linked to the developmental ecological perspective inspired by Urie Bronfenbrenner's *The ecology of human development: experiments by nature and design* (1979). This is considered to be combined with 'other theories about children's and young people's development' (NBHW, 2006, pp. 18, 21-22). This framework includes (re-workings of) John Bowlby's attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) and developmental psychopathology. Although it is not explicitly referred to in all three documents, attachment theory is nevertheless a base for several works included in the bibliographies (e.g. Bowlby, 1969; e.g. Broberg *et al.,* 2008, 2015; NBHW, 2015a, 2018).

Child welfare social work has always been in dialogue with what is known today as health and welfare in terms of institutions, terminologies and knowledges (Andresen *et al.,* 2011; Pettersson, 2001; see also Lundström, 1993). In a similar vein, BBIC can be seen as part of a larger knowledge community, as well as a praxis which spans several disciplines. For instance, in terms of disciplinary affiliations, the expert group which has paved the way for the latest version of BBIC (NBHW, 2015a, 2015b, 2018) consists of several representatives from psychology as well as representatives from social work, the humanities and social sciences, and criminology. Also mentioned is a reference network and external expertise from medical psychology, public health, public law and medicine and social work. This also mirrors the research referred to in BBIC. For instance, it makes reference to (subfields) within disciplines such as psychology, medicine, criminology, social work and public health (see NBHW, 2015a, 2018). While this does not give an extensive overview, it nevertheless illustrates BBIC as a multidisciplinary construct.

Thus, BBIC documentation mirrors a certain theoretical legacy in that it draws on psychology, criminology, public health and medicine. However, it has been primarily through sociology as an academic discipline that social workers have had, and continue to have, access to discourses which see problems as structural and related to inequalities rather than individual deviance. While some commentators acknowledge this in terms of tension (McGrath Morris, 2002; Wilson, 2002), others advocate merging ideas through concepts such as the ‘bio-psycho-social framework’ (Healy, 2016), or discuss how to take into consideration different levels of analysis (Herz & Johansson, 2011, 2012).

By situating BBIC in these ways, two key arguments can be made. One is that child welfare has a long tradition of focusing on health, development and what in this dissertation is called child biowelfare (for an overview, see Andresen *et al.,* 2011). Another is that, in terms of its underpinning disciplines, child welfare has been surrounded by a distinct cluster of knowledge bases which are not specific to Sweden only, but which are similar across the geopolitical area, the ‘Nordic’, Western child welfare context. A similar argument has been made in relation to the universalising claims of developmental psychology that are spread around the world (Woodhead, 1999). Looking beyond Sweden, the theory of social heredity, as I discuss in chapter 2, can be seen within a broader context of eugenics and racial biology (Burman, 2017; Castañeda, 2002; McClintock, 1995).

But not only do theories travel, so does empiricist research that does not seem explicitly theory driven. For instance, Margareta Hydén (2008) problematises how systematic reviews, i.e. reviews that give overview and synthetisation of findings from a vast body of research, generate ideas about ‘best practice' that become rather decontextualized in their application. For instance, in the case of BBIC, research on 'risk factors' and 'protective factors', including those linked to age, ethnicity/race and gender, link to empirical studies from the US and other countries that are supposed to be applied in Swedish child welfare practice (NBHW, 2015a).

Comparing Welfare as a Political Practice

In order to understand differentiation as a means of knowledge production within the field, it is useful to consider comparative welfare research and the production of knowledge generated by it. It is interesting, for instance, to consider how conventional methodologies of comparative research, such as 'comparable levels of economic and social development' (Spratt *et al.*, 2015, p. 1514), create clusters of objects for comparison.

Perhaps the most established way of 'mapping out' welfare systems is represented by the geopolitical map provided by the Danish sociologist Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1990; e.g. Gilbert *et al.*, 2011a; Parton, 2014; Pringle, 1998). This type of mapping is based on welfare-state ideal types which highlight culture-specific political ideologies and traditions. Sweden is associated with a social-democratic ideology.

Spratt and colleagues identify 'three trade routes' in comparing child protection:

- 'Anglophone, Anglo-Saxon or neoliberal nations'
- '*developed* or *Westernized* notions of those regarded as *developing*'
- 'West European intra-continental comparisons, with particular focus on child protection systems' (2015, pp. 1510–1511)

Comparative child welfare research is often based on the above categories, but focuses on differences in orientation of child welfare systems (also called child protection systems) (Gilbert *et al.*, 2011a; Parton, 2014). The Swedish family service orientation (also called family support orientation) is usually contrasted with a child protection orientation, for instance when problematised from the point of children's participation and protection rights (Brunnberg & Pećnik, 2006; Cocozza & Hort, 2011; Gilbert *et al.*, 2011a, 2011b; Heimer & Palme, 2016). In a good deal of previous research, the translation of 'system' often relies on legislative and ideological aspects rather than epistemological assumptions in terms of addressing child protection and children's participation. While these orientations are still widely used, there are also efforts to develop more nuanced and updated typologies of child welfare and protection systems (Gilbert *et al.*, 2011b, on child focus orientation; see also Pösö, 2011; Skivenes, 2011).

It is important to reflect on comparison for several different reasons. For instance, the knowledge produced by a considerable number of comparisons pertaining to social-care provision and child protection emanates from European countries (welfare systems). For the reasons mentioned, it could be useful to reflect on the ideas reproduced about childhoods when the systems in question are European or Anglophone. Critical accounts have problematised comparative methodologies for methodological nationalism (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002). Others discuss the power of comparison, and how it becomes prominent as a productive homogenising force, and *per se* as a political practice (Andresen *et al.*, 2011; Kettunen, 2011). Inspired by welfare researcher Pauli Kettunen, Andresen and colleagues (2011) use the concept to capture how comparisons and comparative research have informed and shaped development in the Nordic countries. As an aspect of political practice, comparison becomes a tool for understanding developments which are informed by collaborations, competition and external and internal influence (Andresen *et al.*, 2011). I consider this to be of relevance to Swedish child welfare, and how BBIC was inspired by England and Wales, as discussed above. However, this also links to other developments. For instance, at the time of writing, The UNCRC has been incorporated into Swedish legislation (Commission of Inquiry 2016:19; SFS 2018:1197). Norway, a country which incorporated the UNCRC into national legislation as early as 2003, served as a point of reference in the debate on what a similar move might mean for Sweden (e.g. Ponnert & Johansson, 2018). Other phenomena where comparison can be seen as political practice (and competitiveness) include ‘international league tables’. These exemplify an increased ‘harmonisation’ of nation-state policies due to wider globalisation processes (e.g. Weyts, 2004, p.7).

‘Neo’ Framework?

This chapter has provided some important background information for understanding the context of this study in relation to history, ethics and geopolitics. As well as giving a brief historical overview of Swedish child welfare, it discusses some central ethical theories which have been considered in analysing child welfare as a moral economy. BBIC is also contextualised as a ‘travelling’ idea that highlights aspects of complex geopolitical epistemology at play. In this context, BBIC can be seen as an example of homogenising child welfare systems. This chapter situates BBIC in relation to new developments, but their novelty is also contested against the backdrop of the past. As I discuss in chapter 1, a good deal of recent research on developments in the Swedish and other European welfare and protection systems addresses ‘new’ trends and transformations which are often labelled as neoliberalism, capitalism, managerialism, and new public management. To these can be added ‘standardised’ approaches in social work which, along with the above, pose a threat to the basis of social work as an academic discipline and practice. These accounts give the impression that social work is ‘otherwise’ dedicated to ideals of solidarity and social justice, or that it was dedicated to these ideals prior to these developments.

Rather than seeing the assessment framework in the light of the ‘evil’ developments it is mirroring, the dissertation explores aspects which have been there all along, and which enabled BBIC to be introduced in the first place. From this perspective, BBIC is a new-old construction rather than entirely new. Situating BBIC in this way is also a critical response to what could be called the nostalgic new-problem narrative, which presents social work in the past and the core of social work in purely positive ways.[19] I place this nostalgic narrative against the backdrop of what Jönsson (2014) problematises as the ahistoricism of ‘nationalised social work’. Ahistorical claims of ‘nationalised social work […] ignore the historical and global contexts of the development of social work’ and ‘is not generally related to the global history of colonialism, slavery, wars and exploitation’ that also shape contemporary injustices (Jönsson, 2014a; i39). From the point of view of the proposed framework, however, these accounts are problematic because of their clear-cut distinction between the value-based, which is seen as ethical, and the seemingly value-free, which is beyond ethics, as I argue in chapter 1.

However, this is not to say that there are no new developments to consider. According to Jönsson (2014), Sweden, like other Scandinavian welfare states, has managed to resist this neoliberal development to a greater degree than many other states, including the liberal welfare states of the Western world. However, even if Sweden is said to be one of the most advanced welfare states (Jönsson, 2014a; 2014b; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2013), neoliberalism flourishes in terms of neoliberal reforms and welfare state reorganisation. This has been most prominent since the financial crisis of the 1990s. The development of neoliberal late-modern political institutions has been linked to reshaping democratic values into economic and post-political rationalities. This also makes neoliberalism an important factor when it comes to social welfare institutions and their relations to citizens. As well as transforming welfare state institutions, this process has also transformed citizens/clients into consumers (i.e. *users* of services) and self-made entrepreneurs (Ek, 2008; Jönsson, 2014a; Lundqvist, 1998; Petersson *et al.*, 2012; Tesfahuney & Dahlstedt, 2008) and mobilised children’s needs, equality and child-friendliness to neoliberal social-investment state ends (Formark & Bränström Öhman, 2013; Lundqvist & Roman, 2009).

As scholars note, both the discipline and profession of social work have traditionally focused more on needs than on rights (Healy, 2008; Jönsson,

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[19] Similar questions have been raised by others, such as by critical commentators in relation to a keynote speech at the TISSA conference in 2018 (The International Social Work & Society Academy, TISSA, ‘Social Work and Solidarity: in Search of New Paradigms, 2018.08.20-22, Ljubljana, Slovenia). See: https://www.tissa.net.

2014a; see also Ponnert & Johansson, 2018). The framework *Children's Needs in Focus* indicates that this focus is continued. However, this dissertation also contests the dichotomy of the rights framework and needs orientation and discusses how dichotomisation alone does not sufficiently explain the reluctance to tackle intersecting injustices in different childhoods. Following Wells (2011) and White (1998b), in chapter 2, I argue that children's needs are not necessarily excluded from the rights framework, but instead overlap with it. This is for instance elaborated on in Study II, which I summerise in the next chapter. The summary of the studies is followed by the conclusion.

5. Summary of Studies

Study I

Amoral, Im/moral and Dis/loyal: Children's Moral Status in Child Welfare

Study I discusses how children play a central role in debates on morality and moral panics. The study discusses how, at the same time, research on children and childhoods, including research on participation, gives priority to children's competence rather than their moral status.

This study draws on a re-reading of feminist and postcolonial theory, and the concept of *epistemic injustice* (Fricker, 2007), in order to capture children's moral knowledgeability in child welfare policy documents from a critical childhood studies' approach. Children's discursive positions are discerned from discourses on social problems in these documents, more specifically BBIC primers and an additional BBIC document on assessment of children.

I make an analytical distinction between epistemic status and *moral status* in identifying how children are positioned discursively in the texts. I also make distinctions between agency and status. Whereas the former is a prerequisite for the latter, having moral agency does not in itself guarantee trustworthiness or, by inference, high moral status.

The study identifies socialisation, attachment and social heredity – separately or coexisting – as some of the prevailing scientific discourses on social problems in the policy documents. It claims that these discourses produce the discursive positions of the *amoral* child, the ambivalently *im/moral* child and the similarly ambivalent *dis/loyal* child. It further argues that there is a 'missing' position: the unproblematically moral child.

I problematise how these positons resemble a victim-blaming approach, depicting children in adversity in ways which do not enhance their participation when they are in contact with child welfare services. The position of the amoral child depicts children as incapable of making moral judgements. They run the risk of being constructed as reproducing, rather than resisting the very social problems they may be subjected to**.** Unlike the amoral child, the immoral and disloyal child are positions which are granted moral agency, but their moral trustworthiness is questioned. The loyal child is one who is considered loyal towards family, but the loyalty discourses occur in instances which simultaneously position the child as disloyal towards the social services to whom they have to disclose problems at home.

Unlike other positions, the disloyal child is discussed in relation to society and not merely the family context. Like the immoral child, the disloyal child may contest the family, and is therefore morally agentic in problematic ways. On the other hand, the disloyal child may also be disloyal towards society due to discrimination. Differentiation emerges here on racial grounds, in terms of how children's morality is to be assessed, even though this is not stated explicitly in the text. While the loyal child – due to relations of power – is seen as remaining silent and 'loyal' towards the family, discrimination and relations of power are precisely what make the racially othered child disloyal to society. The victim-blaming approach operates on different levels of abstraction, and therefore turns not only against the amoral child position but also the disloyal child.

Another position that depicts children in vulnerable positions, and which simultaneously links these positions to their morality, is the moral child. These children are seen as a product of adversity who, due to previous experiences, may be more mature than other children. However, because the moral agency of children is problematised in child welfare documents, it becomes unclear whether this moral agency is really seen as positive. It also creates differentiation, where the vulnerable child is constructed differently from other children from the perspective of moral subjectivity.

The study argues that in the Swedish child welfare system, and more specifically BBIC, the disqualification of children's moral status/agency can be related to two aspects. Firstly, it involves the position of children as clients or service users, i.e. children who are exposed to social problems. This also suggests that only in families where there are social problems and, hence, where children are assessed as vulnerable, is this also making children's moral subjectivity 'vulnerable'.

Secondly, the construction of children's moral subjectivity interlinks with multiple axes of power and difference, such as age, ethnicity/race, gender and class.

A conclusion from this is that, if children are to participate in the context of child welfare investigations and assessments, so that they can have a say and an opportunity to influence decisions about their lives, it is imperative to grant them recognition as moral subjects. The contribution of the study lies in its focus on morality, rather than simply on children's knowledgeability. As such, it explores not only what children can have a competent say on, or how well they can give their testimonies. It also considers how children assess their surroundings and situations in moral terms. The study addresses key issues in terms of moral authority in child welfare, and locates differentiated childhoods on these hierarchical scales. The study is also a critical analysis of some prevailing modes of thinking on social problems in relation to children and childhoods, and how discourse of social heredity, attachment and socialisation creates tensions with the ideal of children's rights to participation.

Study II

Speaking Bodies – Silenced Voices: Child Welfare and the Knowledge Culture of 'Evidencing'

Study II is a response to some assumptions taken for granted in previous research on the difficulty for children to disclose social problems at home, and the difficulty for social workers to provide 'evidence' for social problems, such as violence. The study argues instead that 'evidencing' is interconnected with the prevailing conceptualisation of 'evidence', and, thereby, also what counts as knowledge and who can provide it.

Empirically, the study uses samples from child welfare assessment reports from a Swedish municipality. The included case reports all recommend removing children (0–12 years of age) from home. All the case reports included mention different forms of violence.

The study focuses on the prevailing modes of knowing in child welfare practice, analysed through modes of 'evidencing'. This, in turn, is discussed in relation to children's epistemic status and particularly their epistemic access. Metaphors of the *body* and *voice* are used to show the identified discrepancy between children's actual participation (voice) and the kind of 'evidencing' that counts in child welfare assessments (body). This study refers to two main modes of knowing/'evidencing': *seeing-believing* and *predicting-believing*. It argues that both are primarily linked to scientific and professionals' epistemic access and modes of knowing.

Considering the knowledge 'sources' that child welfare advocates, namely scientific knowledge, professional expertise and service user perspective, these findings suggest that the perspectives of the service users are downplayed. However, the contribution of this study is not to make yet another case for how children are not participating. Instead, it considers how the areas of assessment social workers need to consider enable, constrain and transform the participation of children. Accordingly, the study highlights how children are best 'heard' as *speaking bodies* who are objects of documentation (*biocartographies*) and observation by a variety of professionals. Where children are not objects of observation, they are temporal categories in scientific predictions of harm. Given that children's bodily and developmental harm is in focus in these assessments, the study also asks how the children who are 'heard' as in need of protection can actually be given access to participation when they are assessed as immature or deficient in cognition. On the basis of this, the study emphasises that health is a central category in intersectional analyses of child welfare responses.

Study III

De/gendering Violence and Racialising Blame in Swedish Child Welfare – What has Childhood Got to Do with It?

Scientific discourses in child welfare social work, when contrasted with the ‘discursive battlefield’ of violence research (Steen, 2003), offer a wide range of understandings of violence, its causes, its outcomes, its targets and the solution to the problem. Research also indicates diversity in terms of how violence is discussed in different domains, legislation, and policy, but this mainly focuses on constructions of adult victims and perpetrators. With this as a starting point, this study analyses what has previously often gone unnoticed, namely the relationship between constructions of violence in intimate relationships and construction of childhoods.

This article is an analysis of the discursive construction of violence in intimate partnerships as a social problem in child welfare (BBIC) policy documents. The study focuses on the location of childhoods and children in these discourses, in order to pinpoint how various discourses on violence are interrelated with different constructions of childhoods and children.

The findings of the study indicate two main gender-neutral discourses on domestic violence, *social heredity* and *epidemiology*. In different ways, these indicate how violence is ‘spread’ either across generations, or within one and the same family. While gender and power are largely absent from policy constructions of domestic violence, they nevertheless become visible in relation to the culturally othered families with ‘honour-related values’. These latter contexts are informed by a *cultural discourse*. The previously degendered, asexual children and children disconnected from power structures in other ways, become children shaped by gendered relations and with gender identities, sexuality and ‘culture’ in a cultural discourse. In relation to these children, a form of violence becomes possible which is an outcome of power relations rather than individualised problems or problems of ‘risk-groups’ resembling contagious diseases.

What previously has been theorised as a gender-neutral framework which apportions blame in gender-specific ways, i.e. towards the women/mothers, is here complemented by an additional framework that racialises blame for the culturally othered. The issue of whether power is mentioned or not in discussing violence not only has implications for how victimisation is constructed but also in terms of who or what is made responsible for violence. The article argues that at a discursive level, there is a racialised split in how violence in different families is thought of, and that this difference also makes different narratives of resistance to this violence possible for different children. The study suggests that children’s access to social justice discourses becomes rather problematic as this applies only for some. Justice, in this vein, becomes unjust.

Study IV

A Cry for Care but not Justice: Embodied Vulnerabilities and the Moral Economy of Child Welfare

The study is underpinned by the Foucauldian concepts of biopower and biopolitics, and discusses how the (child's) body is a battleground for deservingness and for claiming rights. Inspired by moral anthropology, the care vs. justice polemic and feminist literature on embodiment, I approach child welfare as a *moral economy* that draws on specific morals or sentiments when responding to *embodied vulnerabilities* in childhoods. Child welfare responses are analysed in relation to wider limitations and opportunities for rights claims and deservingness in childhoods.

Using a case-study approach as a method of sampling, this study is based on a purposive sample of child welfare assessments addressing children in the age group 0–12. These are contrasted to show when social services respond to a problem in childhoods, and to investigate how the problem is recognised in a practical response through welfare services and other measures.

Child welfare practice is addressed as a *moral economy of care*, in which the moral responses to children's concerns are primarily responses to health concerns as symptoms of social problems. The 'will to health' (Rose, 2001, p. 6) is discussed, not only in terms of its central role in how social services approach children, but also in terms of how parenting capacity is assessed where caring for a child's health and wellbeing becomes the crucial component of good parenting, overruling other issues such as questions of unjust treatment and violence. A moral economy of care also mirrors the child welfare interventions recommended for children in the child welfare assessments under analysis. These indicate no direct responses to violence, violations of integrity or discrimination.

While the material shows a relative absence of justice-related discourses, these discourses are mobilised in some cases more than in others. A contrastive approach to the cases enables the material to be read in this way, and shows how violations at school against a child coded as Swedish and white are more likely to be recognised than the violence she suffers at home. For the children coded as culturally different, the reverse applies. Here, bodily integrity is considered in relation to parents and the home, but gendered, racialised and sexualised violations at school do not elicit responses.

The article argues that a moral economy of care provides very few opportunities to address intersecting social injustices in childhoods where these are linked to embodied vulnerabilities in terms of children's age, ethnicity/race and gender. A reason discussed involves its focus on pathologies, and symptoms of problems. However, where justice issues, rather than care issues are in focus, the options differ for different children. In this instance, some families are considered to be more 'unjust' than others.

6. Conclusion

The overall aim of this dissertation is to inscribe a discourse of intersecting social (in)justices related to age, ethnicity/race, gender, as well as class and health, onto childhoods and the field of child welfare. The present dissertation is located within the triad of postcolonial, feminist and critical childhood studies. Its specific focus is Swedish child welfare policy and practice, here exemplified by the assessment framework BBIC. It aims to explore how Swedish child welfare as a field of knowledge, modes of knowing and knowing subjects, constitutes an arena for claims and responses to intersecting injustices.

The first sub-aim involves examining the discursive locations of childhoods and positions of children in child welfare policy in relation to intersecting social justice issues in childhoods. The second sub-aim involves examining responses to intersecting and embodied social injustices in childhoods in relation to child welfare practice. The third and final sub-aim involves mapping out the linkages between epistemic and social (in)justice, including how they bear on children's claims to justice.

This chapter is divided into three parts: Familiar (In)justices, Seeing Child Biowelfare – Overlooking Intersecting Injustices, and Implications for Theory and Practice. The first part of the chapter focuses on the first and third sub-aim but touches also on the second sub-aim. The second part discusses the second and third sub-aim. The third part continues the discussion by also linking to the overall aim of the dissertation, implications for theory and practice and outlooks for the future.

Familiar (In)justices

The Swedish child welfare system is described as family service-oriented, yet with an increasingly child-centrist focus (Gilbert *et al.*, 2011b; Johansson & Ponnert, 2015). This dissertation discusses how, at first glance, BBIC appears to be a child-centric framework for assessing children in need. At the same time, an orientation towards families prevails in child welfare policy and practice. This has implications for how the child welfare authorities respond to injustices in childhoods.

I approach this focus on the family by drawing on the metaphor of 'the family tree'. Following McClintock (1995), 'the family tree' depicts more than the family; it illustrates a colonial modernist and eurocentric iconography of human progress. It illustrates hierarchies of power in a wide range of contexts where 'the tree' as an image of nature and a scheme helps to make them seem natural. In this dissertation, 'the family tree' is used to illustrate a discourse of social heredity, one of the discourses identified in how social problems are constructed in child welfare policy, a central area of social work. Through this discourse, as discussed in Studies I and III, children and social problems are *discursively located within, and reduced to, the family*. They are, to use Alanen's expression, familialised.

This dissertation and its accompanying studies (Study I–IV) discuss how child welfare policy and practice confine social problems to the realm of the home. This reduction is also supported by child protection legislation, the CYPA (1990:52), which is addressed in Studies II and IV. Study IV illustrates how the CYPA, which primarily regulates compulsory care and out-of-home placements, also informs voluntary care. This suggests that the CYPA represents perhaps the threshold social workers are always seeking. It nevertheless focuses on harm to children in 'home and environment' and in relation to children's own (individual) problems. This is perhaps why child welfare research equates 'environmental cases' with problems in the family, to which the only alternative seems to be seeing the individual child as a problem, i.e. 'behavioural cases' (e.g. Ponnert, 2007, p. 283). The emphasis remains on the ideal of the nuclear family and on the family home as a domain in which children need protection (Bergman, 2011; Hultman, 2013; Spratt *et al.*, 2015). It also reflects the family service orientation and how it views the solution, which involves providing services to the family as a unit (Gilbert *et al.*, 2011a; Parton, 2014).

However, a focus on 'the family tree' makes it difficult to look beyond 'the tree', in this case the realm of home and parents. This focus also downplays responses to injustices in childhoods, in schools and other domains which cannot be confined to the family home/parents. It also makes it more difficult to imagine social problems as structural and intersecting. This is not to say that a focus on the family needs rule out analyses of power structures. Feminist research has a long history of showing the opposite. Instead, it means that the focus on the family in child welfare policy is not linked to these structural analyses of power when it comes to depicting the 'general' family. These models prefer to evoke psychological explanations, often involving risk-groups, as discussed in Study III (Wilson, 2002).

Study I discusses how the focus on the nuclear family presupposes that the biological parents are present, and may even be known to social services. However, the situations of unaccompanied minors clearly challenge this idea, as do other children whose biological parents are not present (cf. Andersson, 2010, on adoptees). However, past parenting capacity is still mentioned as an important factor in assessing impact on the child. Thus, although 'the family tree' can be said to represent the iconography of social problems in child welfare policy, this apparently neutral and generic image involves differentiations. The findings of Study I exemplify this limitation in terms of ethnocentrism, and how it informs the scientific discourses in BBIC. Similar comments could be made about the core idea of social heredity theory, where not only parents, but also previous generations and, hence, family in the sense of kinship (sv. *släktskap*), determine the present circumstances of a child. As Malinda Em Andersson (2010, p. 68) notes, adoptees may be constructed in a similar way, as forever childlike (sv. *det eviga barnet*), as their childhood experiences continue to influence their subjectivity throughout their life. This means that there is an emphasis on the importance of tracking backwards to a family of origin, biological parents and the early stages of childhood (discourse of attachment), regardless of the child's present circumstances or family constellation. In this 'tree-thinking', the 'root of a problem' becomes literally the roots themselves (i.e. descent), which are to be tracked or traced (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004).

In Study I, children associated with so-called minority cultures are discussed in broader societal contexts. While power relations in a 'loyal' child's life are what make the child loyal, for the racialised child power relations which are manifest through discrimination in majority society may also undermine the child's loyalty towards this society. This pinpoints how oppressive contexts are seen in a different light depending on which children's childhoods are under discussion. The discursive positioning of the dis/loyal child evokes associations with 'the societal', not just 'the familial', but also this is done in ways which do not acknowledge structural relations of power, or which do so only to a certain extent. Study I, therefore, suggests that some parts of the policy document investigated in the study are informed by blaming of victims, i.e. of those who are subjected to discrimination by the 'majority culture'. This resonates with previous research discussing how these risk discourses simultaneously position children as 'at risk' and 'a risk' themselves (Dobrowolsky, 2002; Näsman, 2012; Thorne, 1987; Wilson, 2002).

In the discourse of social heredity the child who climbs her own tree (McClintock, 1995) is, as Study I shows, also 'the apple [that] does not fall far from the tree', as the expression goes. Given that the children in focus in social work are predominately from families with actual or presumed social problems, whether it is their parents or they themselves who are exposed to injustices, this construction of children in these vulnerable situations becomes rather problematic, much more so than for children whose 'family tree' is apparently free from these issues. This suggests that vulnerable children in general, and racialised childhoods in particular, come to represent, to paraphrase Ahmed, 'a wayward branch of [the] family tree' (Ahmed, 2014, p. 130).

There are also differences in terms of child welfare responses to intersecting injustices in childhoods. Firstly, injustice may be taken more seriously in some children's lives than in others. For instance, as discussed below, it can be concluded from the material that injustice is taken more seriously in families coded as culturally 'other', or when parents are diagnosed with incurable illness or chronic disorders (Study II, III; IV). Secondly, there is a different response to different forms of violence and violations of bodily integrity. As discussed in Study IV, this leads to situations where children lack protection from institutional violence, and parents take on this responsibility even though this violations take place outside the home. This can be linked to Zygmunt Bauman's description of privatisation of risk in contemporary Western societies and how 'the collectively produced dangers are "dumped" into the privatized worlds of individual victims and translated as realities one confronts individually' (Bauman, 1993, p. 202). Study IV points to a lack of response to gendered and racial violations, as well as harassments (at school) and institutional violence more broadly. The question of limitations on, and opportunities for responding to intersecting justice issues could therefore be seen as an issue of 'not seeing the wood for the trees'.

Subjects of Justice…

Study I claims that participation as an ideal is incompatible with a child welfare policy which constructs children as amoral, lacking their own moral standards and copying their parents' morality. This discursive position is in stark contrast to the 'willful' subject (Ahmed, 2014). As argued, this construction is produced by a discourse of social heredity (e.g. Jonsson, 1967, 1973; e.g. Kaufman & Ziegler, 1987, 1989; e.g. Leifer *et al*, 1993; e.g. Marshall *et al*., 2011). In particular, if a child is constructed as amoral, it is hard to see the meaning of children's participation. If they are constructed as copying their parents' morality, children do not need to voice their perspective because their perspective is assumed to be the same as that of their parents. In other words, in terms of justice subjectivity, a child is presumed if not to reproduce, then certainly not to be able to resist or express injustice legitimately (other than in the way it is articulated by the parents). If this line of thought is followed, and moral subjectivity is considered a prerequisite for claims to justice, then the position of the amoral child excludes the idea of children being subjects of justice. This adds to previous research showing how responses to 'vulnerable children as victims and actors seems to be a challenge for social workers' (Eriksson, 2009, p. 442).

Social change in these contexts must come from the outside, from external forces such as social workers who, to paraphrase Jonsson, the founder of the Swedish version of the social heredity theory, can 'break the heredity' (Jonsson, 1973). This implies that subjectivity in terms of justice is either expected through the self-determination of parents as clients and moral agents, or from intervening social workers.

The theme of the subjectivity of justice can also be linked to child welfare assessment reports. Study IV shows that children can also address injustices, or possibly describe what more just treatment would be (see for instance ‘Bell’, ‘Maya’, ‘Kailash’ and ‘Tarana’). This suggests a certain level of recognition of children’s moral agency. However, they are not ascribed high enough moral status, and their concerns are left without response or are not taken seriously. Children’s moral status does not allow them to be subjects of justice, and therefore to transform their childhoods and initiate social change in a direction that suits them (e.g. James, 2011; James *et al.*, 1998; e.g. Qvortrup, 2011; e.g. Qvortrup *et al.*, 2011). In this sense, issues related to children’s moral subjectivity and epistemic (in)justice issues (cf. Fricker, 2007) are interrelated with social (in)justices in childhoods more broadly. However, it is also important to consider what social justice issues are possible to address in the first place and by whom (Study III; IV). This discussion is continued below (see ‘Justice Unjust’).

… or Speaking Bodies?

In her dissertation about children’s participation in the context of a family law unit of the social services, Sundhall asks ‘Can children speak?’. She concludes by stating: ‘in the sense of whether children can gain a position from where they are able to speak, I answer with a “no”’ (2012, p. 186). A similar conclusion is drawn in Study II in this dissertation. Study II draws on feminist epistemology (Haraway, 1988) but also postcolonial contributions (Fabian, 2002; McClintock, 1995). The findings illustrate the limitations and opportunities in terms of children’s participation, as well as how children are constructed as knowing subjects in relation to prevailing modes of knowing in child welfare. This is analysed through modes of ‘evidencing’ in child welfare practice. The study identifies the position of the child as a ‘speaking biological body’.

As Studies II and IV both show, a child may be heard, and her account may be granted considerable space in the investigation, but in order to be taken seriously, her testimony often has to be accompanied by validation from other sources, primarily medical records, school reports and social services’ own observations. In Study II, I write how these documents constitute childhood *biocartographies*. I use the notion of biocartography (cf. Ong, 2006, pp. 195–217), as opposed to the notion of biography, as a way of understanding child welfare practice as modes of knowing. Biocartography captures child welfare practice and its mapping methods, i.e. measuring, typologising, weighing and other ways of differentiating the deviant from the normal (Burman, 2008, 2017; Fabian, 2014; Fahlgren, 2009; McClintock, 1995; Piuva, 2005; Sawyer, 2012; Woodhead, 1999). In terms of informing practice, this means that the subjects under investigation become less intelligible as subjects and more as temporal dehumanising and depoliticising typologies of development or health.

What seems to be important to ‘know’ in assessing children’s needs for protection is, as argued, beyond what children are supposed to talk about or know. Simultaneously, what children are allowed to speak about (or are asked about) is not always what ‘counts’ as ‘evidence’. It is important to stress that this is not necessarily because children are distrusted although this may also be an issue (see Study IV). Instead, it can be associated with the predominant focus on harm and risk, which largely only scientific predictions of risk and the expertise of professionals are considered knowledgeable to address. This also links to previous research showing that assessments which are guided by BBIC focus more generally on health. At the same time, children’s own perspectives on their health in these assessments tend to be limited (Hultman, 2013; Hultman & Cederborg, 2014).

Thus, constraining the participation of children is also linked to limited epistemic access to the domains which are reserved for others to know, or to temporalities that are beyond children’s capacity of narration (Study I; II). In Study I, this is discussed in terms of the past, such as early childhood (the discourse of attachment), parents’ upbringing/family history (the discourse of social heredity). Study II also shows that constraints on children’s participation can be related to scientific predictions as an additional mode of knowing which is beyond what children (are supposed to) know. I discuss this below.

Constraints to children’s participation in child welfare social work are discussed by many (van Bijleveld *et al.*, 2014, 2015; Cater, 2014; Eriksson, 2009; Holland, 2001; Hultman 2013; Hultman & Cederborg, 2014; Iversen, 2013, 2014; Matscheck & Berg Eklundh, 2015; McLeod, 2006; Sundhall, 2008, 2012). Some prior research link the constraints of the service user perspective to ‘a partial and flawed evidence base’, as opposed to a holistic model consisting of three knowledge sources – scientific research, professional expertise and the (child) service user perspectives (Helm, 2011; e.g. NBHW, 2013, 2018). However, Study II contests such an idea as it approaches the model of EBP as inherently asymmetrical. In this sense and practicing of the model, knowledge-based social work and children’s participation rights do not indicate a cross-fertilisation but rather a problematic tension – and epistemic injustice for children.

I argue that previous research on children’s participation cited in this dissertation, including Sundhall’s critique and partly also the views expressed in this dissertation, is only intelligible in relation to conventional participation ideals which highlight voice and active involvement in decision-making (e.g. Eriksson, 2009; e.g. McLeod, 2006; e.g. Shier, 2001; e.g. Sundhall, 2008, 2012). In biopolitics, however, participation carries other meanings, as discussed above (Chatterjee, 2004; Fassin, 2012a; Fassin & D’Halluin, 2005; Sweis, 2017; see also Wells, 2011). The conditions for being ‘heard’ are not necessarily mediated through voice and speech, but rather through the body. This ‘speaking body’, in turn, is seen through a psychobiological lens (e.g. Bergman, 2011; Piuva, 2005), and discussed in relation to normative status in health and development.

For instance, in Study IV, I address a care report about a girl called Ada, who I identify a child that is taken seriously compared to other case reports included in that study. The social workers interpret Ada's story as it has been channelled through various professionals, i.e. psychologist, teacher, health care staff, etc. My interpretation of why this case is responded to as serious links, hence, to the professionals involved and how this interconnects with the construction of Ada's embodied vulnerability, i.e. psychosomatic suffering (cf. Rose & Novas, 2005; Sweis, 2017). In this sense, the 'truly' s*peaking* bodies are not the bodies of children but the embodied gaze of the professionals (e.g. Piuva, 2005; Sawyer, 2012).

Furthermore, the expression 'speaking bodies' not only suggests constraints to voice and speech. It also suggests that there is an epistemic injustice within these already constrained modes of 'participation' for children as speaking bodies. The metaphors of voice (Sundhall, 2008) and body are used to illustrate this point concerning children's participation, but also to show some ways in which they overlap or are in conflict with each other. One point is that the voice can be heard when the body speaks. However, the status of voice of a developmentally damaged child's body is questionable (McLeod, 2006). This applies to children with cognitive difficulties, whose development is harmed and who are assessed as immature for their age. It also applies to children who are assessed as immature because they are very young (e.g. Matscheck & Eklundh, 2005). Eriksson's (2009) analysis about how cultural conceptions of victimhood serve as obstacles for participation is useful here. Following this, I argue that in biowelfare children as speaking bodies are simultaneously silenced voices from the perspective of age and health/able-bodiedness. Yet, these are precisely the children who are 'heard' as requiring protection.

This makes it important to stress that, from the perspective of protecting 'speaking bodies', whether or not a child's voice is heard may be beside the point. Hence, linking participation only to voice is insufficient in terms of understanding child welfare practice, and what is referred to in this dissertation as biowelfarist approaches to childhoods. Accordingly, justice subjectivity also plays less of a role when justice issues, if addressed at all, are downplayed (cf. Chatterjee, 2004; Fassin, 2012a).

Justice Unjust

BBIC is a standardised framework and, as such, it enables similar and equal assessments of all children, regardless of municipal location, gender, ethnicity/race, class, etc. (NBHW, 2018). The three headings for assessment – 'Child's development', 'Parenting capacity' and 'Family and environment' – are supposed to be applied to all assessments of children. Furthermore, all children are to be protected from all forms of violence.

However, given that there are differences in how children are constructed in policy documents and child welfare assessments, child welfare simultaneously and paradoxically differentiates. Study III is a further elaboration on this. It raises the issue in relation to children's access to what can be interpreted as discourses of social justice, namely social problems involving values, power, gender, etc. Through concepts such as 'de/gendering' and interrelated racialisation/culturalisation (Brah, 1993; Essed, 1996; Wikström, 2012), Study III highlights more and less politicised factors in child welfare policy. By exploring discursive constructions of domestic violence, the study shows how different childhoods and forms of violence are located within different discourses on violence in intimate relationships. As well as being constructed as something resembling an epidemic (epidemiological discourse), or as something transmitted across generations (discourse of social heredity), violence may also be linked to specific cultures (cultural discourse). In the child welfare policy which forms the subject of this dissertation, 'honour-related values' feature as the only explicit value-related explanation for violence (NBHW, 2013, p. 53; Study III). It thus indicates how certain people, or families, tend to be associated with violence because of their values, while violence against others can instead be explained in ways which do not evoke an association with morality. The explanatory models which apply to what could be seen the 'normally dysfunctional' family point instead to stress, ill-health, etc.

The main difference between the discourse involving social heredity and epidemiology on the one hand and the cultural discourse on the other, is that the former two discourses depoliticise and individualise violence as a problem, while the latter involves advanced theories of power, gender and sexuality which do not feature in the first examples. This is in alignment with previous welfare research which discusses the implications of national images of child-friendliness and equality (Bruno, 2016; Pringle. 2016). For instance, Pringle (2016) discusses how this makes gender-related and power-related problems more visible in certain families, in this case the family of a specific category of racialised children.

The main conclusion from Study III, however, is that the construction of a social problem is intertwined with the construction of the child subjected to it. The introduction to this dissertation claims that dominant conceptions of 'the child' and 'childhood' are located at the heart of, and simultaneously dislocated from, 'the societal' (Burman, 2008, 2017; Castañeda, 2001, 2002; Mayall, 2000). In this dissertation, I associate this with a longstanding debate among critical childhood researchers who have questioned the depoliticisation or decontextualisation of childhoods. A similar argument has been made previously in relation to depoliticisation of social problems in social work (Herz, 2016). In this sense, Study III shows there is also a discursive split between, on the one hand, that which critical childhood studies often describe as a dominant conception of children as decontextualised and disembodied 'child' and, on the other hand, children with gender, sexual orientations and culture. The latter is precisely what is required if children are to narrate exposure to violations as issues of injustice (see Graham, 2007). Yet, if violence is viewed as a justice issue for some but not for others, what conclusions can be drawn? Politicising childhoods (Mayall, 2000), or issues in childhoods (cf. Ticktin, 2011c), is not enough, at least not as long as some children's childhoods are politicised and others are not. Thus, where limitations and opportunities are concerned in terms of social justice issues in childhoods, different narratives become possible in the various ways of framing 'family violence' vis-à-vis 'honour-related violence' (Wikström, 2012), where only the latter allows for drawing on social injustice.

At the same time, suspected abuse in what I above refer to as the 'normally dysfunctional' family, which is classed and coded as white and Swedish, seems more private and depoliticised, as it may go unnoticed or not be linked to justice issues, which in the analysed child welfare assessments primarily links to justice-related discourses, i.e. laws and rights.

Hence, if social justice is to be understood as awareness of structural relations of power, the opportunities for raising issues of social justice in childhoods are uneven. As such, social justice, if read as equal treatment for all children, is unjust, which has negative consequences for all children involved, not only racialised children.

Seeing Child Biowelfare – Overlooking Intersecting Injustices

Two questions emerged from reading the child welfare assessments, which primarily involved different forms of violations against children. These questions were: 'Why is there no response or only a limited one?' and 'What is required for there to be a response?' Studies II and IV were written with these questions in mind. The next two sections discuss examinations of responses to intersecting and embodied injustices in childhoods in relation to child welfare practice. I use biowelfare, as an umbrella term, to make sense of these responses, and discuss child welfare practice as a knowledge culture of 'evidencing and a moral economy.

Knowledge Culture of Seeing, Predicting, 'Evidencing'

Study II is written against the backdrop of previous research showing that child welfare in Sweden has gone from being called a 'Kinder Gulag' by other child protection systems (i.e. Germany), to adopting a more careful approach to out-of-home placements for children (Cocozza & Hort, 2011, p. 90; Ponnert, 2007). Ponnert (2007) addresses compulsory care in child protection in

Sweden and notes how the social services have a negative view of compulsory care, as there is a general scepticism about the extent to which institutional care and foster parenting can safeguard children or provide the care needed. There is also a view that it is rather problematic to separate children from their biological parents, especially when they are young. A third aspect mentioned is that social workers feel a need to present legitimate 'evidence' to the court so that an application is not rejected, and to avoid the risk of jeopardising future ability to safeguard a child. They consider that the application needs to reach a stage of what Ponnert calls 'legitimate conviction' (2007, p. 290), meaning an assumption that the 'evidence' presented will fulfil the court's criteria and will convert social services' recommendations into an actual out-of-home placement. This means that when 'evidence' is lacking, the application for care takes longer. According to Ponnert, it is more difficult to provide 'evidence' in assessments of young children and what she calls 'environmental cases', i.e. problems in the family and not (merely) with the child. This dissertation addresses these cases and primarily children who are relatively young (0–12). However, it also draws on another idea: that the distinction between easier or harder to prove lies in the epistemology itself, and in what is seen as 'proof' in the first place (Study II). Thus, Study II explores the knowledge culture of 'evidencing', hence what it is that needs to be proved, and also who provides the 'proof'.

The knowledge culture of 'evidencing', in turn, links in Study II to two modes of knowing: seeing-believing and predicting-believing. In terms of seeing-believing, as discussed above, problems in childhoods are supposed to be visible to the naked eye, or in other ways are supposed to be witnessed or observed by adult professionals and experts. That which is detected by the eye involves symptoms of problems which are visibly inscribed onto a child's body, and onto the child's health and development status.

Miriam Ticktin (2011a, pp. 192–219) has claimed that governing on the basis of bodily health leads to that which it is supposed to prevent: diseased citizens. Others refer to similar tendencies as 'a public health paradox' that merges the problem and the solution (Felitti, 2009, p. 131; see also Vinnerljung, 1998). Although Ticktin's accounts refer to the context of immigration politics in France, this is precisely how the present dissertation would describe child welfare practice. The findings of Study II support previous research showing that responses to children are often given when child neglect is detected, when children are already harmed and have suffered over long periods of time (Leviner, 2014; Linell, 2017; Östberg, 2010). Put differently, the prevailing epistemology rooted in visualism contributes to what previous research implicitly addresses as a 'reactive enterprise (Östberg, 2010, p. 209).

Contrary to previous research, Study II shows how not all 'evidence' provided constitutes 'evidence' in the traditional sense of the term (cf. Leviner, 2014; cf. Ponnert, 2007). I identify another mode of 'evidencing', predicting-believing, i.e. reference to scientific research involving predictions of risk of harm. This dissertation discusses how predicting-believing does not necessarily have to challenge conventional legal ‘evidencing’, which, according to Leviner (2014), is not well aligned with hypothetical risks (but see White, 1998b). Study II shows that scientific predicting-evidencing coexists with observations and seeing-evidencing, for instance in a case which draws on forensic medicine (medical expertise) and scientific research. I discuss this in relation to a child called Malcolm. I argue that the focus of biowelfare is on the injured body (or the risk of harm) and less on how the harm occurred or whether the parent intended to harm the child. I link this to consequentialism (see Gray & Webb, 2010; Osmo & Landau, 2006), which I elaborate on below. This also resonates with a form of ‘psycho-legalism’ (White, 1998b, p. 284).

However, predictions can be used for the purpose of prevention, and hence do not always require the identification of existing, visible harm. Predictions are also employed in a case where a child is too young to have a say. All these aspects are important in terms of understanding the role attributed to scientific research in these contexts.

This dissertation claims that the aforementioned issues with epistemic access operate primarily at the level of what Fricker (2007) calls *hermeneutical epistemic injustice*. This affects cultural interpretations of modes of knowing and knowing subjects in child welfare, but also interpretations of children, what children ought to be protected from and in the longer run, what kinds of social injustice are targeted. This leads to another point.

Studies II and IV can be read in the light of an emphasis on multi-professional collaborations (Jönsson, 2014a; NBHW, 2015a, 2018). This development brings to the fore professionals other than social workers and is in alignment with the idea of inter- or multidisciplinarity. In the shared quest for more truthful, i.e. more holistic assessments, the idea of a possible tension, or even hierarchy between these different forms of knowledge (Enell & Denvall, 2017; Jönsson, 2014a) becomes quite viable, as does institutional violence by professionals. Knowledge and morality become intertwined if it is taken into consideration that professionals, who represent a ‘source of knowledge’ and expertise (NBHW, 2013, pp. 35–36, 2018, pp. 14, 20), cannot simultaneously be portrayed as violators of children (and parents). A case in point involves ‘The Medicalised Body’, Bell, in Study IV (pp. 236–237). The case raises concerns about institutional forms of violation through forced examination. This is never problematised, and is taken for granted in relation to a child who is assessed as having health problems. Together, Studies II and IV suggest that childhoods are seen through a psychobiological lens on the one hand, involving a focus on neglect (such as failed or missed medical examinations of children). On the other hand, Study IV suggests that injustices linked to health and care, such as medical violence, can only be understood in this context as the *absence* of care, not *enforced* care. As I discuss in Study IV, this is indicated by the way in which the investigators problematise Bell’s resistance to care, and how this leads them to assess her behaviour and what she says as less trustworthy.

As justice subjectivity of children is absent, as discussed above, and children have limited epistemic access to what counts as 'evidence' (past, present or future), there is a risk that any injustice which is not observable as symptoms, or fails to be included in predicting-believing future psychosocial harm, will go unnoticed. 'Evidencing' through seeing-believing is, to paraphrase McClintock, a '"discovery" [that] is always late' (1995, p. 28). As Also Ahmed notes, '[t]o discover something implies that thing already existed' (Ahmed, 2014, p. 6). However, Study II also discusses the future orientation critically. A problem, in order to be recognised as such and be considered severe enough to elicit a response, requires *prospective* harm. If understood in these ways, the future becomes a time-space against which to measure injustices, if unjustices are measured at all. From a critical childhood studies perspective, these ideas of social justice are always already unjust for the children experiencing them at that moment (cf. James *et al.*, 1998). It would, however, be more fair to state that Study II indicates measurements of risks, a practice which is in alignment with the 'modern dream of "colonizing the future"' (Bauman, 1993, p. 202; Fabian, 2014; Petersson *et al*, 2012).

In terms of social justice, predicting-evidencing allows social workers to assess risks by referring to scientific research that links *certain* forms of violence to harm in terms of health and development. In Study II, these forms of violence largely involve neglect, but also include physical violence. When it comes to other problems in childhoods, the modes of 'evidencing' discussed above adds to previous critique of flawed technologies for detecting and recognising problems in childhoods (Pringle, 1998). Thus, psychobiologising and developmentalising childhoods are also influential processes in terms of what counts as (in)justice in childhoods. They involve visible harm to biological bodies and minds, but are less associated with violation of integrity. The latter seems to lose in translation what the biological body is 'articulating'. This prioritises some vulnerabilities over others, and at the same time blurs the distinction between pathologisation and vulnerability.

Moral Economy of Care: A 'Pity' Response?

This dissertation considers how the body and embodiment are constituting a political battleground. It discusses how critical scholars have highlighted the body as embedded in, and embodying, multiple and intersecting relations of power and difference, i.e. age, ethnicity/race, gender, etc. These discussions can be found today in research espousing the idea that different bodies are differentiated in problematic ways and this differentiation is commonly linked to adult privilege, racism, sexual harassment, gender discrimination, homo- or transphobia, etc. (Burman, 2017; Eriksson, 2009; Essed, 1996; Fricker, 2007; Graham, 2007; Murris, 2013; Ringrose & Renold, 2010; SFS 2008:567).

The above approach has been juxtaposed with what this dissertation calls a biowelfarist approach to recognition and protection. To illustrate this approach the dissertation uses the concept of *moral economy of care*. I argue that care in this context differs from justice in terms of its underpinning moralities and principles, in its orientation or in what it responds to. It has been argued that the moral economy of child welfare – in terms of sentiments and moral principles – focuses on the seemingly unfortunate, the unintentional (Fassin, 2012a) and on consequences. In this sense, the moral economy of child welfare is tightly intertwined with utilitarianism. This moral orientation has also previously been referred to as a 'politics of pity' that mobilises compassion (Fassin, 2005, p. 366; e.g. Ticktin, 2011a).

The basic idea of this focus evokes universalism (as the biological bodies we all humans have and the vulnerability we are all susceptible to) (Fassin & D'Halluin, 2005; see also Fassin 2005, 2011, 2012a). This would correspond to the equal-treatment approach (chapter 1; Clement, 1996; Gullestad, 2002; Wikström, 2014), yet, paradoxically; its conceptualisation of equality does not recognise relations of power and inequality. Thus, a moral economy of care may also lead to repressive care and pathologisation (Dominelli, 2010; Fassin, 2005, p. 366; see also 2011, 2012a).

This dissertation shows how a moral economy of care, which resonates with discourses of care, welfare or therapy (Eriksson, 2010; Ponnert, 2007; Östberg, 2010), is either a prerequisite for, or rules out alternative moral economies based on a recognition of structural relations of power. This can be read as conceptualising justice in therapeutic and medical terms, or as excluding social justice issues altogether, depending on the view of social justice. Through this orientation, child welfare responds primarily to symptoms rather than to the problems which create them. In other words, problems are acknowledged as such when symptoms are detected. Another possible interpretation is that psychosomatic suffering and developmental harm *are the problems,* and symptoms are instead predicted for the future, for the adults the children are yet to become.

An argument is presented above that the family home is considered the main domain in which children need protection. This would suggest that certain problems commonly linked to the home, such as child neglect or children's exposure to intimate partner violence, are given prominence. However, this is more complex. As Studies II and IV indicate, child welfare responds primarily in ways involving biowelfare, with symptoms and 'biological evidence' of issues related to health and development. This gives primacy to problems like child neglect more than violence of other kinds. This is not to say that child welfare does not respond to violence. It is to say that physical, sexual and psychological forms of violence, when responded to, are seldom sufficient in themselves for a protective service or measure (Fassin, 2005; Ticktin, 2011b, 2011c). This may mean that future outcomes for health and development still need to be brought to the fore. For instance, in Study IV, I show how the focus on diagnoses, medical conditions and psychosomatic symptoms overshadow recognition of intersecting injustices and situations that can be labelled as sexual harassment, gendered and violations, adultism and class-based stereotyping. It also prioritises narratives involving medicalisation over disclosure of child sexual abuse (see ‘Bell’).

However, there are also nuances to this pattern. In Study II, the case of a boy called Samir stands out in relation to how other children are assessed. It is not possible to estimate or compare the level of violence experienced by the children in the study in question, and nor is this the point. The point is that child welfare services respond to Samir *not* in terms of the damage the violence has done (i.e. symptoms), which would constitute a biowelfarist approach to the issue. Instead, the child welfare services respond to the violence *per se*. However, the same case also suggests that a possible reason why violence against this child is taken seriously, even though there are no visible signs of exposure to violence, involves the assessment of his violent parent’s chronic diagnosis and conditions. The severity of violence as a problem also becomes chronic, hence beyond change (Knezevic, forthcoming; cf. White, 1998a). This suggests that, although violence is dealt with not as a symptom but as a problem in itself, the assessment nevertheless remains within a care discourse and the idea that violence is incurable. The findings in Study II, if seen in the light of Studies III and IV, can also be interpreted as yet another example of racialised othering. However, the cases included in this study are few, and therefore any such interpretation can only be made with caution. I continue the discussion about the different mobilisation of justice in the section ‘Towards a Moral Economy of Intersecting Social Justices, below.

Implications for Theory & Practice

This section breaks with the conventional arrangements used in dissertations, where a theoretical contribution is discussed separately from implications for practice. The dissertation is based on the assumption that this type of separation is problematic. In order to remain true to this assumption, this section continues along the same lines and discusses theory and practice as intertwined. In addition, some of the changes envisioned and called for in this thesis must first be realised in research, policy and education if they are to be undertaken by social work practitioners in the future. For this reason, theory and practice are inseparable.

This dissertation explores how Swedish child welfare policy and practice constitutes an arena for claims and responses to intersecting injustices. Intersecting forms of social injustice are analysed primarily in relation to a broad conceptualisation of violence against children and violations of their integrity due to age, ethnicity/race and gender, as well as class and health. It also addresses children’s right to participation and to protection from violence. When there are policies, legislation and treaties which aim to prevent these violations or to support these ideals, it is easy to scrutinise practitioners critically who do not appear to live up to them. However, this dissertation discusses how the conditions for living up to them are constrained in a number of complex ways. This does not allow for a simple critique of professionals who are obliged to follow certain guidelines to pass as professionals in the first place. It could be argued on this point, as does Fahlgren, that '[t]he framework of social work's praxis is […] set not by the practitioners themselves', but by 'officialdom, through parliamentary decisions, experts, scientific authorities, market forces and so on. The framework is set by the power of discourse, which also gives social work its legitimacy.' (Fahlgren, 2009, p. 225).

At the same time, social work professionals are crucial. This dissertation emphasises in particular how in times when inter-professional collaboration is advocated, it is primarily social workers who can contribute with their theoretical knowledge about 'the societal', and who can highlight the social aspects of injustice. In addition, social workers whose job it is to take children's right to participation into consideration are in the privileged position of being able to listen to children's stories, including those about (in)justice (Graham, 2007). In other words, social workers can have 'knowledge about structures and a curiosity for individuals' (Herz, 2016, p. 164, my transl.).

However, in this dissertation, some constraints are discussed in relation to these prospects and in terms of child welfare as a field of knowledge and a moral economy. There is knowledge within the field which supports the idea of children's participation, protection of children and recognition of intersecting injustices in different childhoods. This suggests that a radical reconsideration of the field in terms of knowledge is not required, as structural approaches and social justice issues, including intersecting forms of injustice, are widely discussed in social work and particularly in relation to adults (Herz, 2016; Mattsson, 2005, 2014; Mehrotra, 2010; Sawyer, 2012; but see Eriksson, 2009; Gruber, 2007; Sixtensson, 2018). Thus, the overall aim of this dissertation, to inscribe a discourse of intersecting social (in)justices onto childhoods, is not an invention but a modification, and simply 'travels' between what is already in place in different sub-fields, critical debates and schools of thought, in social work as a discipline as well as elsewhere. At the same time, the findings of this dissertation indicate how the same inscription into child welfare as a subfield involves barriers in terms of incorporating this knowledge into policies and practices.

Towards a Moral Economy of Intersecting Social Justices

> The best sort of concepts are those which are internally structured to point to their own inadequacy, concepts whose very meaning is to say that what we are here signifying exceeds our grasp. (Caputo, 2000, p. 118)

This dissertation is located within the triad of postcolonial, feminist and critical childhoods studies, and it is from this location that it approaches intersecting injustices. The overall aim of this dissertation is to inscribe a discourse of intersecting social (in)justices onto childhoods and in the field of child welfare. This aim has been accomplished primarily through an analysis of intersecting social injustices in childhoods which are manifestations of intersections of adultism, gender-based violations and racism.

As noted in chapter 1, child welfare policy and research already adopts a form of thinking 'in intersections' when referring to multiple, complex and co-occurring problems or bringing together different levels of analysis (e.g. Bronfenbrenner, 1979; NBHW, 2018; Study III). However, I also argue that analyses of intersecting injustices should not be conflated here with institutionalised categories of child welfare social work: 'people with a diagnosis', 'addicts', etc. (Sawyer, 2012, pp. 157–158; see also Fahlgren, 2009; Herz, 2016; Herz *et al.*, 2012). These are categories of deviance which signify a need to be brought back into normality, rather than addressing intersecting injustices in the way intersectionality is discussed in this dissertation. Similarly, the additive approach to social problems focuses on marginalisation only, and tends to rely on the logic that the higher the number of problems, the more severe the situation. As touched on in Study III, this gives the impression that injustices accumulate like a disease which spreads (epidemiological discourse).

This dissertation shows that assessments of embodied vulnerabilities in childhoods in terms of what vulnerabilities are recognised and responded to cannot be reduced to assessments of parents but need to be viewed in relation to constructions of children and vulnerability too. However, although intersectional approaches allow for sensitivity in terms of mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, and a nuanced understanding of relations of power, intersectionality has primarily been developed to fit the adult world. This dissertation claims that this has also informed some of the challenges in intersectional analyses within, or in relation to, the field of child welfare. For instance, the introduction discusses how analyses of age, ethnicity/race and gender may also contribute to reductionist approaches, sometimes conflating axes of power relevant to parents and/or adults to those of children. However, above I discuss contexts in which childhoods are located in 'cultures' and families and which suggest that childhoods cannot be analysed in isolation but need to be analysed in relation to how parents and adults are constructed. It could be argued on this point, as does Linnéa Bruno for instance, that an assessment of a parent or parents determines how the child is assessed (Bruno, 2015; see also Ong, 2003). However, the approach is limited in terms of the school environment and the embodied injustices to which children are exposed.

This highlights the importance of an intersectional perspective, and how concerns need to be voiced from different subject positions (Graham, 2007; Pringle, 2011; Sundhall, 2012), not merely age, which is commonly associated with children as a group. For instance, Study IV shows similar patterns in child welfare practice to those discussed by Eriksson (2009) in relation to the gendered construction of the vulnerable child. The identification of embodied vulnerabilities, and the fact that some of these (obesity, self-harm) are associated with girls, confirms a feminised construction of vulnerability (Eriksson, 2009). However, Study IV intentionally includes assessments of girls in the analysis to highlight the nuances of intersecting injustices in childhoods. In this case, ethnicity/race and class add to Eriksson's intersectional analysis, as does health. Vulnerability is not simply associated with girl-children, but a particular construction of femininity, i.e. passive, suffering. A precocious girl, a girl who have been ascribed a diagnosis and a girl whose body is 'unmarked' and is not ascribed symptoms are girl-children who are seen and listened to but none of them seems to be heard or granted protection (Burman, 2017; e.g. McLeod, 2006).

In addition, Study IV shows very different manifestations of racist violations and racialised responses to children. While some aspects of these manifestations can be linked to parents, other point to different gender-based violations in racist contexts or racist violations in gendered contexts (Essed, 1996). The line is not clear-cut and this is also the point in drawing on the concept of intersecting injustices. According to Eriksson, children who are seen as competent and older are less liable to be recognised as vulnerable (Eriksson, 2009). This has been seen in this dissertation in the sense that normative constructions of how children should be like do play a role and children who in different ways go against what is expected are not taken as seriously. These normative constructions link to ethnicity/race, class, and gender but also age, including a young child (see Study IV, 'Bell').

This dissertation claims that there is no explicit social justice discourse in the context studied here, i.e. child welfare policy and practice. I have also discussed that justice-related discourses are relatively absent. On the other hand, in child welfare practice, justice equals rights, and involves drawing on legislation or referring to jurisdiction, police authority, etc. These ways of drawing on justice remain within an individualised and at best – juridified – framework of justice, which makes it difficult to capture the social and intersecting elements in injustice.

This dissertation partly contests the argument that scientification in social work can be associated with deontology (Gray & Webb, 2010). Using scientific findings could be seen as following certain principles about how to gather information and present justification for claims in child welfare practice. However, a more substantial analysis of the scientific knowledge drawn on by child welfare workers suggests rather a utilitarian and biowelfararist focus. The findings of this dissertation are also in line with the research by Rujla Osmo and Ruth Landau, who show that social workers draw on both ethical theories but tend to emphasise utilitarianism when confronted with concrete situations, i.e. in practice (Osmo & Landau, 2006, on social work in Israel).

Contrary to this, however, Study III discusses how problems can be culturalised (Wikström, 2012) and, therefore, value-based, and this instead links less to utilitarianism, outcomes and misfortunes (i.e. bad luck) and more to a deontological focus on intent and responsibilisation. The split indicated at the discursive level, and in relation to constructions of social problems, is simultaneously as discursive, racialised, disciplinary and ethical split.

This is precisely why there is a need for a moral economy of *social* justice, and it could be argued that this is what could prevent the selective mobilisation of justice. In other words, a moral economy of intersecting social justice recognises that biowelfare does not necessarily exclude particularisation, but instead, produces deterministic and deterministic views on particularised vulnerabilities and 'risk groups'. This links to the third sub-aim which was to map out the linkages between epistemic and social (in)justice as well as how these bear on children's claims to justice. Given that the identified discursive/disciplinary divides produce racialised differentiations, epistemological issues and injustices are intertwined with issues of intersecting social injustices. In this dissertation, therefore, a turn towards a moral economy of intersecting social justices means a turn towards critical reflections about how knowledge can be used to avoid problematic differentiations of this kind. Such a turn means a turn towards another kind of knowledge, modes of knowing and knowing subjects.

Thinking in terms of such alternative moral economies is thinking in terms of 'wills', helping hands, and clenched fists (cf. Ahmed, 2014; cf. Rose, 2001) – what social work as a helping hand might mean, what it fights against, and what it fights for. This dissertation has perhaps emphasised the need for helpful hands more than helping hands – hands that follow other wills than only the will to health and hands that can turn into clenched fists and can respond to the clenched fists of children. Moving towards a moral economy of intersecting social justices not only is about a more inclusive understanding of 'childhood' and 'the child' but is also about expanding the domains of knowledge that are available for children.

Some Final Notes on Health (and Class)

This dissertation draws on various concepts, such as the concept of biowelfare and moral economy of care in the exploration of child welfare as a field of knowledge and a moral economy. This does not mean that the dissertation is critical to care as such. In the time during which this dissertation is finalised, the corona-virus crisis (i.e. the outbreak of Covid-19), the world is reminded of the importance of care and medical expertise. However, given that this dissertation focuses on the social dimensions of injustices, I have made an effort to illustrate that a preoccupation with care, biological bodies and medical, individualised and psychologised responses creates limitations to the recognition of injustices of structural and societal nature, including those in care and in relation to (un)caring itself.

In addition to age, ethnicity/race and gender, which formed the scope of the intersection at the beginning of this dissertation, other axes of power emerged throughout the process, such as class and health. Health is unavoidable as an axis of power, and should perhaps have been given more attention in the dissertation, considering the focus on biowelfare. Here, health is broadly defined to also encompass illness, or able-bodiedness/disability. While health may be associated with chronic diagnoses, in the context of child welfare and as shown in Study II and IV the temporality of 'health' has more to do with symptoms and what can still be corrected in terms of delays in development during the formative (e.g. not-yet-mature) childhood (Woodhead, 1999). In this broad usage, the term health can be used in a similar way to age, ethnicity/race and gender, and hence as an axis of power and difference which encompasses positions of privilege as well as marginalisation.

Thus, health, as an element in multiple axes of power, is associated with recognition, protection and provision, but also with pathologisation in child biowelfare. The former resonates with previous research, particularly Lena Sawyer's phrase 'To Be Normal by Being Categorized as Sick' (Sawyer, 2012, p. 159). In Sawyer's study, health issues become a way of legitimising families as normal in a moral sense when ethnically Swedish parents (the 'Svensson' family) seek help, and where seeking help is otherwise seen as not being normal. A parallel can be drawn between this simultaneously legitimising/normalising and pathologising power of health and how biowelfare serves to foreground 'misfortunes' (e.g. Fassin, 2012a). This also illustrates how violence in what I above call the normally dysfunctional family may link to illness and issues of wellbeing, while in the family of the culturalised 'others' it is an issue of values and power (see also Wikström, 2012), as I discuss above. In this vein, morality and health are intertwined with issues of ethnicity/race and processes of normalising/othering (Sawyer, 2012; see also Ahmed, 2014; McClintock, 1995).

Health intersects with multiple axes of power, and this dissertation makes this particularly clear. In Study IV, I use the case of a girl called Tarana to discuss how child welfare responds to obesity and neurological disorder as embodied vulnerabilities in childhoods. This, I argue, is not only a response grounded in pyschobiologism, hence one that gives primacy to the obese neurobiologised body but is equally a classed, gendered and racialised response. Obesity here becomes the ground for but also legitimisation of bullying. The response is gendered and racialised because the bullying is not linked to racist slurs and sexual harassment at school, or what seems to be 'sexual harassment in a racial context' (Essed, 1996, pp. 46-56). In this case, Tarana's body, which apparently deviates from middle-class white norms about how a girl's body should look, and gendered ideals about how a girl-child should behave makes the girl the very problem (cf. Burman, 2017; Ringrose & Renold, 2010). An obesity clinic, hence, becomes a possible solution to the problem of the bullying of the girl.

In terms of child welfare responses to childhoods, as I discuss above, health in intersection with age may be both an axis of power which produces recognition, and an axis of differentiation and 'silencing'. There is also an issue of who has access to services (provision) and can meet professionals who can validate a child's (health) concerns. This is best visible in the contrasting of two cases in Study IV, 'Ada' and 'Memory'. I show that the severity of violence is not the main difference between a child responded to as psychosomatically suffering and a child that I identify as 'The Unmarked Body' (Study IV, p. 237). The difference is instead related to access to health care and professionals who can validate the child. In this context, parents seek external professionals or place obstacles in the way of children of meeting them. Access to these validation channels, as they could be called, looks different for different children. This suggests that biowelfare produces conditions which reinforces adultism and make children rely on professionals and parents.

Equally important is the issue of which parents are resourceful enough to resist voluntary recommendations. This dissertation discusses several cases where social services offer individualised measures for children whose situation could be interpreted as a societal issue, and therefore as a structural issue. Study IV discusses how less resourceful parents who, for various reasons such as dependency on social services, cannot afford to go against professional assessments, and may accept services which pathologise the child and/or indicate that the child is the problem, thereby discrediting the child's experience of violence at school.

Outlooks for the Future

As noted by Claudia Mitchell and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh, Nordic welfare states are associated with 'advanced social services and democratic beliefs and practices [that] are admired around the world' (2013, p. 1). A critical question has nevertheless been raised in this dissertation in terms of the services and protection at the disposal of the social services. The explorative approach to social justice taken in the dissertation has allowed social justice to be broadened in ways that avoid what Moroni calls 'the incomplete overlap between *social justice* and *distributive justice'*, an overlap common in social work and elsewhere (Moroni, 2019; see also McGrath Morris, 2002; Reisch, 2002; Young, 1990). This is partly because not all social justice issues are 'distributable' (Young, 1990), and partly because distributive justice fails to acknowledge the important aspect of what is being distributed in the first place. From this perspective, distributive justice becomes inadequate as a tool for understanding social justice issues in different childhoods, for instance in terms of recognition of violence against children. As discussed here, the available services are mismatched with intersecting social justices issues. In contemporary child welfare practice, protective voluntary services offered directly to children appear not to exist, or are at least rare. In the data drawn upon in the dissertation, only the presence of a support person during visits to an abusive parent can be seen as a protective measure for children in this context. However, the aim of the service in itself is not protection (Commission of Inquiry, 2007:52; Government Bill (2009/10:192). The actual protection provided, as it manifests itself through child welfare measures, points instead to compulsory, hence non-voluntary, care (Linell, 2017; Östberg, 2010). It may be important to consider how protection of children could better be aligned with children's participation rights and voluntary care (Knezevic *et al.*, forthcoming). However, enabling this will require a rethinking of contemporary definitions of 'voluntary' needs, so that children can be more involved in decision-making and can also accept recommended services without a parent's consent, as indicated previously (Heimer & Palme, 2016). In other words, this dissertation asks whether these responses from child welfare would look any different if there were more to respond with, and if the measures considered protective today would then imply compulsory care which, as previous research shows, is chosen as a last resort (Ponnert, 2007).

This dissertation suggests that more focus is needed on how the 'solutions' help to shape the problems, i.e. how assessments are shaped by existing services and other 'solutions' at disposal. Policies are usually considered to trickle down into practice. Thus, the proposed focus requires a re-orientation of methodologies within the field (Knezevic *et al.*, forthcoming). Hence, instead of merely asking what the problem is considered to be in looking through policy texts, more focus is required on what the *solutions* are *considered to be* and how this, in turn, shapes practice (cf. Bacchi, 1999). This is imperative in any moral economy informed by a will to help, or as shown in this dissertation, a will to care. As this dissertation shows, help is equated with therapeutic solutions. This may encourage therapy-oriented assessments in order to provide any help at all. In other words, a moral economy of intersecting justices not only encompasses changes in the focus of assessments. It also changes the help needed and what the solutions look like.

This dissertation particularly illustrates the problems involved when child welfare assessments and scientific discourses on social problems reduce children's issues to the level of the family (see also Hultman, 2013). However, it is quite possible for child welfare policy and practitioners to pay more attention to problems which occur outside the family home, or to individual problems of children. Similar approaches have been used historically (Andresen *et al.*, 2011), and are already in place in terms of the social-investment model and the increased emphasis on children's schooling (Burman, 2017; Dobrowolsky, 2002; Gilbert *et al.*, 2011b; Gruber, 2007; Lister, 2003; Mayall, 2000; Woodhead, 1999).

As well as considering how injustices and childhoods are reduced to the family, this dissertation also discusses how analytical tools used in intersectional analyses are adult-focused. Nevertheless, if theories of power are to be discussed which were primarily developed for adults, as is the case in this dissertation, it is always important to ask questions about the balance between 'epistemological advantage' and epistemological 'danger', to use Pringle's words (Pringle, 2011, p. 161). On the one hand, it could be said that some of the 'channels' proposed in theories of social justice in adult-centric settings are a way of making injustices in childhoods more visible. On the other hand, it could just as easily mean imposing yet another adult-centric framework, category or idea on children (cf. Dahlstrand, 2008; cf. Honig, 2011). In alternative ways of thinking, different axes of power and differentiation to those discussed in this dissertation could, and should, be considered. I leave this debate open. The dissertation simply provides some examples of the potential of intersectional approaches and highlights situations in which different injustices are difficult to separate, but suggests that it needs to be reconsidered if it is to be useful in contexts involving childhoods.

The dissertation also opens up for thinking in terms of intersecting social (in)justices such as the intersections of racism, sexism, and adultism rather than simply ethnicity/race, gender and age.

The discussion in the sections above gives reasons for cautiously formulating a final argument. In child welfare policy and practice, as discussed, racism seems to be excluded from the definition of violence and tends to, instead, be labelled as 'bullying'. While there is a vast body of research on child abuse and maltreatment, as well as more and more research on the risks associated with children's exposure to intimate partner violence, less of the research that child welfare practitioners seem to draw on deals with racist violations. This dissertation also suggests that it will always be easier to present 'evidence' of some violations than of others if drawing on diagnoses and scientific predictions of future outcomes (cf. Fassin, 2011; Fassin & D'Halluin, 2005; cf. Ticktin, 2011b). However, it would be problematic to argue in line with 'we need more research on…', and it would contradict previous claims made, including the aim of this dissertation. This is not because racial violence should not be more profoundly explored in research. However, as long as discourses of social heredity and 'adverse childhood experiences', epidemiology and neuroscience dominate the field such additional research would in a best-case scenario discuss how racism, discrimination and other intersecting injustices have a negative *impact* on the health and development of children and the adults they are yet to become. When impacts are linked to health outcomes, and whatever makes people ill is a guiding principle of practice, child welfare work is a moral work in distinctive ways – and responds morally to wrongs that are recognised as such only when they are psychobiologically harmful (Fricker, 2007).

Sammanfattning

Den här avhandlingen utgår från att analysverktyg som utvecklats för att förstå sociala orättvisor främst är anpassade för vuxna och därför är underutvecklade när det gäller att förstå orättvisor i barndomar. Avhandlingens övergripande syfte är därför att skriva in en diskurs om intersektionella sociala (o)rättvisor i relation till barndomar och i den sociala barnavården. Intersektionella (o)rättvisor som avhandlingen fokuserar på är orättvisor som relaterar till ålder, genus och etnicitet/ras och i viss mån klass och hälsa.

Avhandlingen är teoretiskt situerad i postkolonial och feministisk teori samt kritiska barndomsstudier. Empiriskt avgränsad till den sociala barnavården som policy och praktik och *Barns Behov i Centrum* (BBIC), ett ramverk som används i utredningar av barns situation, syftar denna avhandling mer specifikt till att utforska den sociala barnavården. Med det valda och poststrukturalistiskt influerade teoretiska ramverket hamnar den aldrig värdeneutrala kunskapen och kunskapandet i förgrunden för analysen av den sociala barnavårdens policy och praktik, liksom frågan om vilka ses som kunskapssubjekt i den sociala barnavården. Kunskap i en sådan belysning bidrar till moraliska orienteringar, trovärdighet och erkännande – det som denna avhandling refererar till som “moralarena”. Avhandlingen undersöker därmed också den sociala barnavården som en arena som möjliggör och begränsar erkännande och utkrävande av rättigheter – och därigenom en arena för respons på intersektionella sociala (o)rättvisor i barndomar.

Avhandlingens delarbeten är alla kvalitativa och baserar sig på diskursanalys samt tematisk och fallstudieinspirerad analys. Studie I och III fokuserar på diskurser om sociala problem och våld i BBIC-handböcker, medan Studie II och IV baseras på barnavårdsutredningar från socialtjänsten i en svensk kommun. Av de totalt 283 insamlade barnavårdsutredningar som berör barn upp till tolv års ålder har två olika urval gjorts för närläsning och exemplifiering i Studie II respektive IV.

Studierna I och II tar upp den sociala barnavården genom analyser av barns moraliska status och kunskapsstatus. Båda studierna kan ses som empiriska undersökningar av det som i de valda policydokumenten framstår som ett förespråkande av barns delaktighet. Studierna III och IV fokuserar istället på hur rättvisa och rättviserelaterade frågor mobiliseras i den sociala barnavårdens policy och praktik.

Sammanfattning av avhandlingens delarbeten

I **Studie I** analyseras diskurser om sociala problem, däribland våld, samt hur dessa diskurser producerar diskursiva barnpositioner. Studien tar avstamp i feministisk teori och begreppet epistemisk orättvisa (*epistemic injustice*) som, för att anpassas till barndomskontexter, läses utifrån bidrag hämtade från kritiska barndomsstudier. Studien visar att diskursen om det kompetenta barnet är otillräcklig för att möjliggöra barns delaktighet. En förutsättning för delaktighet är att barn också ses som moraliska subjekt.

Moralisk subjektivitet definieras i denna studie dels som moralisk agens (förmåga att agera utifrån moraliskt resonerande om rätt och fel), dels som moralisk status (hur detta resonerande bedöms utifrån). Från den identifierade diskursen om socialt arv och diskursen om anknytning identifieras tre övergripande diskursiva barnpositioner: den *amoraliska,* den *o/moraliska* och den *il/lojala* barnpositionen. Positionerna ger antydningar om en ambivalens som blir tydlig när olika barndomar tas i beaktande. Exempelvis diskuteras att diskursen om det sociala arvet, där idén är att sociala problem överförs från generation till generation, framställer barn som individer utan moral. Det hävdas vidare att konstruktionen av sådana barn, problemen i sådana barns barndom och sådana barns moraliska status familialiseras, d.v.s. reduceras till familjen och föräldrarna. Barns delaktighet blir i och med detta obegriplig eftersom det barnet har att säga till om inte antas skilja sig från det föräldrarna har att berätta. Konstruktionen kan också förstås som problematisk om ensamkommande flyktingbarn tas i beaktande då dessa barn, liksom en del andra (t.ex. adopterade barn), inte har biologiska föräldrar i sin närmiljö. Barnpositionen bidrar dessutom till klandrande av offer, d.v.s. barn som lever med föräldrar vars beteende är moraliskt problematiskt, eftersom positionen förutsätter att barnet är en kopia av sina föräldrar.

Den amoraliska positionen i likhet med de övriga identifierade positionerna gör det svårt att tänka sig att barn kan vara moraliska subjekt. Den ambivalenta o/moraliska positionen tillskrivs barn med hög (moralisk) mognad men även barn som är trotsiga, problematiska och asociala. Det il/lojala barnet blir aktuellt i relation till barn som upplever förtryck i hemmet och i samhället i stort. Barn som upplever förtryck i hemmet framställs som lojala gentemot sina föräldrar när de inte avslöjar problem (men underförstått illojala gentemot socialsekreterare). Här görs dock en skillnad mellan barn i fråga om minoritets- och majoritetskultur. Barn som upplever förtryck i samhället diskuteras, till skillnad från vad som är faller när det handlar om de andra positionerna, i relation till samhället i stort. Dessutom blir de positionerade som illojala gentemot de som förtrycker dem. Även om positionen det il/lojala barnet i slutändan framställs som illojala barn görs här ändå en skillnad mellan barn som diskrimineras i samhället och de som upplever förtryck i familjen. Dessa skillnader relaterar jag till etnicitet/ras. Sammantaget visar studien att den moraliska aspekten är fundamental för hur barn framställs diskursivt i diskussioner relaterade till sociala problem.

Studie II kan ses som en kritisk respons på tidigare forskning som hävdar att bristande bevis på skyddsbehov är ett av skälen till att barn inte får skydd. Studien diskuterar istället hur "bevisningen" (*"evidencing"*) inte går att separera från den sociala barnavårdens kunskapande och kunskapsaktörer och att dessa i sin tur avgör vad som utgör "bevis" och vad blir viktigt att bevisa.

Materialet är barnavårdsutredningar som leder till placering, d.v.s. till att barn omhändertas med omedelbar verkan eller rekommenderas en placering utanför hemmet och separeras från en eller båda föräldrarna. I de utredningar som analyseras i denna studie omnämns olika former av våld.

Studien tar avstamp i den sociala barnavårdens praktik som en *bevisningens kunskapskultur*. "Bevisning" relaterar dels till det sociala arbetets kunskapande, dels till kunskapssubjekt som tar sig uttryck i socialarbetares insamling och sammanställning av underlag från olika aktörer (polisen, (för)skolan, föräldrar, barnen själva o.s.v.) inför en rekommendation om placering. "Bevisningen" i detta sammanhang innebär att visa att det finns ett behov av skydd. Studien kopplar även begreppen kunskapskultur och "bevisning" till "evidensen" i evidensbaserad praktik. BBIC som evidensbaserad kunskapskultur innebär beaktande av olika kunskapskällor: professionell expertis, forskning och brukarens perspektiv.

Studien urskiljer två olika former av kunskapande som kan relateras till "bevisningens" praktik. Den ena grundar sig i *se-tro*. Det som blir synligt för det blotta ögat blir relevant, vilket i många fall är just symptom på problem snarare än problemen i sig. Ett annat sätt att peka på skyddsbehov är genom *förutse-tro*. Detta kunskapande är främst reserverat för forskning som bidrar med prognoser inför framtiden, något som jag menar är bortom vad barn kan förväntas bidra med. Jag hävdar att båda formerna av kunskapande för oss bort från delaktighetsprincipen i traditionell mening. Istället hamnar psykobiologiserade kroppar i förgrunden. Barn blir "talande kroppar" (*speaking bodies*) vars röster tystas. Det centrala är dock inte huruvida barn kommer till tals utan vad det är som räknas som "bevisning" i utredningsarbete och hur det gör barns utsagor, även om de kommer till tals, mindre betydelsefulla. Att de blir talande kroppar har att göra med att de objektifieras av olika professionella så som lärare, psykologer och läkare vars observationer och intyg utgör underlag för *biokartografier* av barns hälsa och utveckling och därmed också underlag för utredningarna. Studien diskuterar psykobiologiserade barndomar och hur hälsa och utveckling blir fundamentala för att få skydd, samtidigt som just nedsatt funktionsförmåga försenad utveckling och omognad skapar hinder för delaktighet i traditionell mening.

Jag hävdar att de identifierade formerna av kunskapande kretsar kring vissa sårbarheter mer än andra – de som relaterar till barns biologiska kropp och deras utveckling. Detta gör att integritetskränkningar och mindre synliga former av våld ges respons först när synliga och dokumenterade somatiska eller kognitiva symptom uppstår.

Samtidigt som forskningen i socialt arbete uttalat förespråkar mer fokus på sociala orättvisor är en social rättvisediskurs frånvarande i det material som jag har studerat. Dock förekommer olika ord, så som rättigheter, värderingar och makt, som ändå pekar på möjliga, om än oartikulerade, rättvisediskurser (eller rättviserelaterade diskurser). En vidareutveckling av dessa tankegångar görs i Studierna III och IV, som ur ett intersektionellt perspektiv fokuserar på den sociala barnavårdens policy och praktik som en arena för erkännande och utkrävande av rättigheter och social rättvisa för olika barn.

Studie III fokuserar på konstruktionen av våld i nära relationer i BBIC-handböckerna. I likhet med Studie I, som dock är bredare i sitt angreppssätt och som fokuserar på sociala problem generellt, identifieras *diskursen om det sociala arvet* med idén att våld förs över till nästa generation. Utöver detta framträder även en *epidemiologisk diskurs*. Båda diskurserna går i linje med idén att våld föder våld, d.v.s. att våld sprids likt en sjukdom från en individ till en annan, inom eller utanför familjen. Med hänvisning till feministisk våldsforskning samt 1990-talets reformer och införande av lagen om grov kvinnofridskränkning, som erkänner våld i nära relationer som ett genus- och maktrelaterat problem, visar studien att båda diskurserna istället framställer problemet som genusneutralt. Våld blir något abstrakt utan tydliga förövare, och offer kan ses som potentiella förövare. En tredje diskurs identifieras vilken framstår som en kontrast till det ovan beskrivna och bidrar till en *kulturalisering* av våldsproblemet i beskrivningen av det så kallade hedersrelaterade våldet. Både problem och barn konstrueras annorlunda inom denna diskurs. Det hävdas i studien att problemet blir en rättvisefråga, då det kopplas till makt, genus och värderingar. Även barn, som i tidigare framställningar är utan genus, specificeras till flickor och pojkar med sexuell orientering, genusidentitet och -uttryck. Detta anknyter till tidigare forskning som visar på vikten av att studera problems “inramning” och hur detta i sin tur konstruerar de som antas bli exponerade för problemet. Feministisk våldsforskning har länge diskuterat att genusneutrala inramningar för med sig konsekvenser för kvinnor som utsätts för våld i form av klandrande av utsatta. Denna studie bidrar till att synliggöra att även olika barndomar konstrueras olika beroende på hur problem konstrueras diskursivt.

Tidigare forskning om biomakt och biopolitisk styrning menar att det är den biologiska kroppen som hamnar i förgrunden i samtida kamper för erkännande och rättighets- och rättviseanspråk. Samtidigt finns också forskning som kopplar diskriminering och kränkningar av kroppslig integritet till en social kropp som exponeras för ålderism, rasism och sexism m.m.

Studie IV inkorporerar båda debatterna när den utgår från kroppen som politiskt slagfält. Studien undersöker den sociala barnavårdens praktik som en moralekonomi i förhållande till erkännande och hantering av *förkroppsligade sårbarheter* i barndomar. Utgångspunkten är att kroppen, främst den biologiska kroppen, blir ett maktmedel för erkännande. Det innebär likaså att orättvisor som har att göra med det kroppsliga och de förkroppsligande kategorierna etnicitet/ras, genus och ålder gör kroppen till ett föremål för våld, kränkningar och andra intersektionella orättvisor.

Studien baseras på utredningar av barn som inte lett till insatser eller som lett till insatser som inte är en direkt respons på intersektionella orättvisor, i detta fall, rasism, sexuella övergrepp och trakasserier, samt olika former av våld från familjemedlemmar eller andra i barnens miljöer, exempelvis i skolan. Urvalet görs dock i relation till alla insamlade barnutredningar, inklusive de som har lett till omhändertagande av barn och placeringar (se ovan). Studien kontrasterar de valda fallen mot varandra, främst med ett fall som analytiskt benämns som “psykosomatiskt lidande”, vilket i studien exemplifierar ett fall som inte är helt i avsaknad av respons från socialtjänsten utan tas på allvar. Jag kallar dessa responser en omsorgens moralekonomi (*moral economy of care*).

I likhet med Studie III visar även Studie IV att en rättviserelaterad diskurs, i detta fall omnämnandet av lag och rätt, om än relativt frånvarande, mobiliseras i relation till de rasifierande barnens familjer samtidigt som det råder en generell psykobiologisering av barns kroppar och sårbarheter i olika barns barndom.

En rad andra fall identifieras som erkända i bemärkelsen utredda och beskrivna men som inte nödvändigtvis är erkända i full bemärkelse, d.v.s. rekommenderar en insats som förändrar ett barns situation. Ur ett intersektionellt perspektiv visar denna studie i likhet med tidigare forskning en feminisering av vissa förkroppsligade sårbarheter. Dock visar kontrasteringen av fallen att genus är otillräckligt för att förstå förkroppsligade sårbarheter i barndomar liksom förhållningssätt gentemot desamma.

Syntetisering av studierna och avhandlingens slutsatser

Övergripande används i denna avhandling begreppet *biovälfärd* för att illustrera den sociala barnavården i termer av kunskap och moral och som förhållningssätt till barndomar. De olika studierna tar upp hur utvecklingspsykologiska perspektiv, diskursen om det sociala arvet och omvårdandens moralekonomi begränsar idén om orättvisor i barndomar som strukturella och intersektionella. Istället hamnar barns biovälfärd och barns biologiska kroppar och kognitiva eller psykiska utveckling i förgrunden. Detta gör att vissa problem blir osynliggjorda i processen, nämligen de som är kopplade till etnicitet/ras, ålder och genus. Mot bakgrund av detta dras i avhandlingen slutsatsen att intersektionella orättvisor som grundar sig i olika former av rasism, vuxenmakt men även heterosexism och klass blir svårare att greppa när den sociala barnavården handlar om biovälfärd för barn.

Biovälfärden inbegriper ett specifikt kunskapande där se-tro och den professionella blicken görs central men likaså en viss forskning som prognostiserar framtida psykosociala problem (förutse-tro). Kunskapssubjekten som involveras i påvisandet av dessa problem blir därmed inte barnen utan lärare, läkare, psykologer och socialsekreterare, som med sin dokumentation och sina observationer bidrar till biokartografier av barndomar. Att biovälfärden reducerar barns delaktighet till “talande kroppar” betyder också att barn som rättvisans röster tonas ned. Rösten är, som jag hävdar, mindre betydelsefull i den delaktighet som biovälfärden möjliggör. Likaså är social rättvisa mindre betydelsefull i en biovälfärd där rättvisediskurser är så gott som frånvarande. Att barn konstrueras i avsaknad av rättvisesubjektivitet har också att göra med barns moraliska status. I de delar av avhandlingen som berör detta diskuterar jag att i BBIC som policy konstrueras barn svårligen som oproblematiskt moraliska. Motstånd (trotsighet) i barndomen ses i ett negativt ljus: som ett problematiskt beteende vars motsvarighet saknas i vuxenvärlden.

Jag diskuterar också tendensen att familialisera barn. Detta betyder att intersektionella orättvisor i barndomen – om de alls synliggörs – reduceras till familjen, vilket osynliggör andra sfärer av barns liv. Tillskrivningen av professionella som kunskapssubjekt gör det vidare svårt att tänka att de professionella som barn är i kontakt med, så som lärare och vårdpersonal, också kan utsätta barn för kränkningar och våld. Institutionella orättvisor av dessa slag blir med andra ord tämligen osynliga i biovälfärden och i “viljan till hälsa” där tanken om patologiserande och orättvisor utesluts. Dessutom problematiserar avhandlingen de professionellas valideringsmakt utifrån hur denna makt bidrar till barns beroende av föräldrar som verkar behöva komma i kontakt med psykologer, kuratorer och vårdpersonal för att barn ska få erkännande. Flera av avhandlingens studier visar just att hälsa är central såväl för förståelse av problem som vid respons på desamma. Därmed kan också en koppling göras mellan epistemiska och sociala orättvisor i barndomar.

I denna avhandling diskuteras skillnadgörandet mellan våld och våld och barn och barn som diskursivt och samtidigt disciplinärt och kunskapsrelaterat. Det ges också antydningar om hur rättviseanspråk i en bredare bemärkelse är begränsade till rasifierade barndomar och att mobiliseringen av sociala rättvisediskurser – i detta fall diskurser om makt, genus och jämställdhet – i slutändan blir en “orättvis rättvisa”, då de mobiliseras i relation till vissa men inte andra. I dessa sammanhang är det inte bara en fråga om att olika kunskaper (teorier och perspektiv) används för att förklara liknande fenomen i olika barndomar. Även detta leder till en sammanlänkning av epistemologiska och sociala orättvisor. Differentieringen av barndomar kan också kopplas till en differentiering av “det etiska”. Socialt arbete har i tidigare forskning både kopplats till utilitarismen och den deontologiska etiken. Som avhandlingen visar är utilitarismen i fokus när barnvälfärd blir en biovälfärd för barn och blickpunkten hamnar på konsekvenser för hälsa och utveckling. Men det uppstår också differentiering sett utifrån en etisk vinkel när rättviserelaterade diskurser och därmed också plikt och ansvar (d.v.s. deontologi), görs mer tillgängliga för vissa barndomar än för andra.

Slutligen diskuteras i avhandlingen att varken en omsorgens moralekonomi eller en rättvisans moralekonomi kan bemöta intersektionella orättvisor i barndomar. För att undkomma den ovan beskrivna differentieringen av barndomar krävs istället en moralekonomi som kan förhålla sig till orättvisor i barndomar som både strukturella och intersektionella. Ett steg närmare en sådan moralekonomi kan uppnås med socialt arbete självt som behöver erkänna barn som rättvisans röster. Socialt arbete är dessutom den enda professionen som kan föra in det sociala i praktiken. Dock begränsas även detta i biovälfärden som kunskapsfält och moralekonomi, som istället premierar psykologisk, medicinsk och neurologisk kunskap. En begränsning kan också vara de insatser som finns till hands och som i avhandlingens material ger individualiserade och terapibaserade lösningar. Även om orättvisor kan vara relationella tar sig ändå rasifiering, genusifiering samt ålders-, klass- och hälsorelaterade orättvisor ett annat uttryck för barn än för vuxna. De kan inte lösas med terapi eller individperspektiv.

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The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.
(Angelou, 1994)

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