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Vassar College

**Cultivating Children for the Common Good:
(De)-Constructing Citizenship in Danish Child Care Institutions**

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree
Bachelor of Arts in Sociology

by

Samantha Hodes

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Professor Eréndira Rueda

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
INTRODUCTION	1
The Social Pedagogical Approach to ECEC.....	3
From Homogeneous to...Homogeneous? Recent Trends in Danish Immigration and Integration.....	5
Defining “Danishness”.....	6
Methodology.....	8
Chapter Overview.....	11
CHAPTER 1 – Creating Danish Citizens Through ECEC	13
Educating for the Common Good.....	13
ECEC as Preparation for Citizenship.....	16
CHAPTER 2 – Cultural Values in Pedagogical Theory	22
Crafting the Individual in the Collective: Democracy as a Danish Value.....	23
Downplaying Difference, Emphasizing Sameness: Equality as a Danish Value.....	27
“They are like us, so we can trust them:” Trust as a Danish Value.....	31
CHAPTER 3 – Transmitting Values in Daily Practice	36
Democracy in Daily Practice.....	36
Equality in Daily Practice.....	40
Trust in Daily Practice.....	43
CONCLUSION	48
References	51

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Introduction

When I arrived at the *børnehaver* (kindergarten) at 8:30am on a rainy fall morning, the main room was already bursting with life. One child was building a lopsided spaceship out of Legos, another child was humming softly to the stuffed animals she brought in from home, while another was reenacting battles with plastic dinosaurs. The pedagogue assigned to the morning shift casually chatted with a child about her favorite rock singers, while the two of them continued to build the Eiffel Tower out of small blocks. As more children arrived—usually dropped off by a parent who came in to say goodbye and wish the pedagogue good morning—they immediately joined their peers in play or scoured the room for untouched toys. At first, the early morning atmosphere of the Danish kindergarten came as a shock, for it bore no resemblance to the American kindergarten classrooms I was used to. Instead of math, the Danes sang. Instead of worksheets, the Danes played. Where were the tables with laminated nametags? Where were the workbooks organized by ability level? Where was the alphabet poster? The birthday calendar? The teacher's desk?

While studying abroad in Copenhagen in the fall of 2018, I spent each week engaging with these questions as I found myself immersed in the captivating world of the Danish *børnehaver*. From the cozy atmosphere with ample toys, to the sounds of laughter as children ran from room to room, the environment of the *børnehaver* seemed like a child's paradise. But as the weeks progressed, my fascination with the Danish approach morphed from an interest in what the children *did* to a curiosity about what it *meant*. What is the purpose of emphasizing play? What are children learning? What does this tell me about Danish children? Parents? Society?

From the moment a child first enters the door, the daily practices in an early childhood education and care (ECEC) institution convey complex messages about socio-cultural expectations.¹ According to Danish anthropologist Eva Gulløv (2011) “[c]hildren are objects of intense normative attention...[thus] studying the collective investments in children, for example by paying attention to the institutional arrangements set up for them, offers insight into dominant cultural priorities and hoped-for outcomes” (p. 1). Therefore, studying children is by default studying culture.

Inspired by research conducted by Tobin et al. (1989), this thesis engages with the central question: what role does Danish early childhood education and care play in “child socialization and cultural transmission”? (p. vii). To answer this question, I focus my investigation on three levels of analysis: structure, theory, and practice. First, I argue that the structure of Denmark’s universal child care system facilitates the socialization of citizens by ensuring that all children are imbued with the norms and values of Danish culture. Next, I identify democracy, equality, and trust as core values of Danish society, and examine how they are embedded within the theoretical framework of Danish social pedagogy. Finally, I demonstrate how these core values are transmitted through daily practices in an ECEC institution, thus effectively socializing children into citizens of the welfare state.

¹ Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is the all-inclusive term referring to the various institutions and programs that provide child care and educational opportunities for children before they enter formal schooling (European Commission N.d.). In Denmark, formal school begins at age six (OECD 2000).

THE SOCIAL PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH TO ECEC

In the introduction to the book *Nordic Social Pedagogical Approach to Early Years*, editors Charlotte Ringsmose and Grethe Kragh-Müller (2017) summarize the key characteristics of the social pedagogical approach to ECEC:

The Nordic tradition is based on a sociocultural theoretical premise that children grow through interaction and communication in shared activities with adults and other children. This social learning approach emphasizes play, relationships, and outdoor life, and learning is presumed to take place through children’s participation in social interaction and processes. (p. ix)

Unlike the American approach to ECEC focused on school readiness and early academic skills, the Nordic, or Danish, approach focuses on “the values related to children’s evolving social competencies and self-concepts” (Einarsdottir 2017:66). Thus, pedagogues—Danish ECEC practitioners—reject the label of *teachers* and the notion of teaching. Instead, they view their role as cultural facilitators who guide children as they grow and develop (Brogaard-Clausen and Ringsmose 2017:240-241).² In the same spirit, Danish ECEC has no set schedule or lessons but, rather, strives to address six basic curricular themes as outlined by the Ministry of Children and Social Affairs (2018): holistic personal development; social development; communication and language; body, senses, and movement; nature, outdoor life, and science; and culture, aesthetics, and community. Through an examination of these themes, we can paint a fuller picture of the values and goals of the Danish social pedagogical approach.

The first curricular theme, *holistic personal development*, refers to a child’s ability to engage in the learning environment, which fosters the development of self-confidence and self-respect. The goal for this curricular theme is to expose children to experiences that challenge

² A note about terminology: while American teachers teach *students*, Danish pedagogues guide *children*. Though subtle, this linguistic distinction reflects the difference between the U.S.’s focus on academic skills (school readiness) and Denmark’s focus on social-emotional, whole-child development (social pedagogy).

their thinking, encourage them to form opinions, and allow them to speak their mind (Ministry of Children and Social Affairs 2018). Next, *social development* refers to a child's ability to participate in the social community of child care, develop empathy, and form relationships (Ministry of Children and Social Affairs 2018). Child care centers must foster a supportive community that values diversity and contributes to a child's understanding of democracy. The focus on *communication and language* emphasizes the need for children to develop the linguistic capacity to understand themselves and others, and the important role of the learning environment in supporting children to verbalize their thoughts and feelings (Ministry of Children and Social Affairs 2018).

Further, the goal of *body, senses, and movement* encourages children to develop a bodily identity, both physically and existentially, as a means of understanding themselves and others in social communities (Ministry of Children and Social Affairs 2018). This theme underscores the role of the institution in helping children learn to control their bodies—in both activity and calmness—understand their bodily sensations, and recognize their bodily functions. Additionally, through *nature, outdoor life, and science* child care institutions help children develop a relationship with nature, expand their curiosity, and learn to be active observers (Ministry of Children and Social Affairs 2018). Finally, the focus on *culture, aesthetics, and community* encourages children to explore their own creativity and artistic capabilities to foster self-expression and ethically responsible children. To do so, “[t]he educational learning environment must support all children in equal and different forms of communities where they perceive their own and others' cultural backgrounds, norms, traditions and values” (Ministry of Children and Social Affairs 2018). Therefore, the Danish approach to ECEC focuses on imbuing children with the norms and values of Danish culture and reinforcing Danish identity.

FROM HOMOGEIOUS TO... HOMOGENEOUS? RECENT TRENDS IN DANISH IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION

Although Denmark has a history of immigration dating as far back as the sixteenth century (Hedetoft 2006), the country remained racially and religiously homogeneous until the second half of the twentieth century, when an increased number of immigrants from non-Scandinavian and non-Western European countries began to diversify the population (Stokes-DuPass 2015:6). According to the Danish Ministry of the Interior, immigrants are defined as “persons who were born outside of Denmark and whose parents are foreign citizens or were born outside Denmark” (Statistical Yearbook 2000:8).

Like in many European countries, immigration to Denmark has changed significantly in recent decades, specifically with increased immigration from Turkey, Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa (Stokes-DuPass 2015:8). From 1980-2005, the number of resident persons from Western countries grew by 19.8 percent, while the number of resident persons from non-Western countries grew by 520 percent during the same period (Hedetoft 2006). By 2012, foreign nationals made up 10.4 percent of the population and descendants of non-western countries made up 6.5 percent (Stokes-DuPass 2015:9).³ As of 2015, “the largest ethnic groups from non-EU countries [were] immigrants and descendants from the following countries in order from largest to smallest: Turkey, Iraq, Norway, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan, Somalia, Thailand, former Yugoslavia, and China” (Stokes-DuPass 2015:10). Thus, within popular discourse, immigrants and descendants from these countries, as well as others, are categorized as the “ethnic minority” or the “non-Danes.”

³ According to the Ministry of the Interior, descendants are “persons born in Denmark to parents who are not Danish citizens born in Denmark” (Statistical Yearbook 2000:8).

However, despite the overall increase in immigration since the mid twentieth century, restrictive legislation in recent years has posed challenges to citizenship acquisition and subsequent integration, thus significantly impacting migrants' desires to migrate to and remain in Denmark (Stokes-DuPass 2015:66). From 1998 to 2004, the Integration Act and its various revisions made it more difficult for third-country nationals to legally enter Denmark, created mandatory language and culture classes as prerequisites for staying in the country, and established legal distinctions between Danish citizens, or “native Danes” and “new Dane/denizen[s]” (Stokes-DuPass 2015:65-67).⁴ As a result, as of 2018, 86.3 percent of people living in Denmark identify as ethnically Danish (Migration Policy Institute 2018), making Denmark one of the world's most homogeneous countries (Fisher 2013), and an important location to study the expectations of citizenship and the construction of identity.

DEFINING “DANISHNESS”:

As a visitor in Denmark, my Danish friends and teachers were eager to introduce me to new foods, traditions, aesthetics, and sensibilities that they considered “very Danish.” But as the end of my time in Denmark drew near, I still struggled to answer the question my friends and family were curious to know: “What does it mean to be Danish?” In his poem “Danskhed” (Danishness), Henrik Nordbrandt (2013) sums up the difficult task of defining the Danish identity: “[t]he most typical thing about Danishness is that it is so typical, so typically Danish.”

For decades, Scandinavian scholars have struggled to find an accurate and encompassing definition of Danishness—the concept around which the Danish identity is formed (Rasmussen 1997; Jespersen 2004). In 1997, Hans Kornø Rasmussen attempted to answer the question “Who

⁴ In the EU, “a third-country national is a foreigner who has the nationality of non-EU country” (OECD 2015:302). The term *denizen* refers to the multigenerational ethnic populations living in Denmark (Stokes-DuPass 2015:59).

are the Danes?” by offering a definition of what they are not—foreigners. Although Rasmussen does not provide a concrete definition of what Danish identity is, he argues that many native Danes believe that [Danish culture] has been changed by the presence of multigenerational ethnic minority populations and threatened by the increased immigration into the Danish state (2011).⁵ Similarly, Garbi Schmidt (2011) posits that discussions about Danishness are often coupled with what is considered, by many native Danes, to be “un-Danish”—particularly in relation to public discourse around Muslim immigration. She states that while “Danishness is associated with progress, civilized behaviour [*sic*], decency, trustworthiness, and respect for the individual rights,” individuals who are perceived as “un Danish” are associated with “qualities such as primitiveness, uncivilized behavior, rudeness, dishonesty and violent oppression of individual rights” (Schmidt 2011:260-261).

In her book *Integration and New Limits on Citizenship Rights: Denmark and Beyond*, Nicole Stokes-DuPass (2015) adds to the scholarship by arguing that the primary problem with defining Danishness is that it has been constructed in opposition to the “other” rather than having an independent definition of its own (p. 79). She draws upon Desmond and Emirbayer’s (2010) concept of “racial domination normalized” to argue that like many other dominant identities, Danishness is viewed as the default, and thus only becomes visible when placed against the “other” or the “non-Dane” (p. 79). Therefore, as ECEC institutions often facilitate children’s first introduction to the concept of the “other,” child care centers are a critical locale for the construction of Danishness and the development of a Danish identity and consciousness.

⁵ The term “ethnic minority,” as referenced previously, refers to any individual who is not considered “ethnically Danish,” or whose family is not originally from Denmark. These terms have been widely cited in Danish scholarship.

METHODOLOGY

The Challenges of Intercultural Study

According to Danish researcher Grethe Kragh-Müller (2017), visiting and studying child care centers in other countries is beneficial for two reasons: it provides the opportunity to learn about different methods of educational practice and perspectives, while enabling researchers to reflect on their own system of child care as *an* approach rather than *the* approach to education in the early years (p. 4). However, in the article “Outsiders’ Judgements: An Ethnographic Approach to Group Differences in Personality,” Robert A. LeVine (1966) warns ethnographers of the potential risks of intercultural study, primarily due to the likelihood of bias (p. 102). LeVine argues that “professional ethnographers” are more qualified than “non-ethnographers” or untrained observers to do this work because of their extensive training, which attempts to reduce the biases of “loyalistic misperception”—the observer’s tendency to make incorrect overgeneralizations of another culture in order to prove something of their own culture—and “errors of hasty judgement”—wherein observers mistake certain acts or practices to signify a general pattern (1966:102). Similarly, Kristin Luker (2008) cautions that when living in the society which you are observing, “you have to stop being overwhelmed in order to become systematic” (p. 156). Luker explains that at first, it is easy to get carried away when every new experience seems rife with observational data, but researchers must train themselves to stop looking for the out-of-the-ordinary and “notice the daily and the taken for granted” (Luker 2008:156).

While my fieldwork experience inspired this project and aids my analysis, I am not a trained ethnographer, and I must acknowledge the fact that my observations and interpretations may be influenced by my own loyalistic misperceptions and errors of hasty judgement as an

outsider to Danish culture. However, as Levine notes, when the observer is a visitor from another culture, they may be better suited to identify “distinctive attributes of the foreign group” as long as the observer recognizes their “own group's patterns as the understood background against which the foreign group is contrasted” (1966:105). As an American student studying abroad in Denmark, my position as a visitor allowed me to identify the unique characteristics of Danish kindergartens, while recognizing that my interpretations of Danish values and practices were based on how they compared to American values and American kindergarten practices.

Therefore, my research and analysis should be understood as an outsider’s perspective on Danish cultural identity as interpreted through the lens of early childhood education and care practices. I also acknowledge that my position as an American student at a well-known Danish international program gave me access to the kindergarten that other observers may have struggled to obtain. Similarly, although I am not Danish and do not share the same ethnic background as my “informants” (LeVine 1966:103), my racial identity as a white woman enabled me to interact with Danish children and pedagogues as an outsider without being “othered” in a Danish context.

The Field Site

Luker argues that “the point of doing observational methods is to document ‘practices’” (2008:158). As my fieldwork was specifically focused on observing and participating in daily practices within the ECEC institution, I have chosen to include my own observations within this thesis.

My participant observation was conducted as the required “Practicum” component of my “Child Development in Scandinavia” class during my semester at the Danish Institute for Study

Abroad (DIS) in Copenhagen, Denmark in the fall of 2018. I visited the børnehaver once a week for ten weeks from August 30th to November 29th, and spent an average of five and a half hours each visit for a total of 63 hours conducting participant observation.⁶ The børnehaver was located in Hellerup, a district of Gentofte Municipality in the northern suburbs of Copenhagen. In 2017, families in Gentofte reported the highest disposable income in all of Denmark (Statistics Denmark 2017). The børnehaver consisted of seventeen children and three pedagogues. The majority of the children were ethnic Danes and two children were from Serbia. All but one of the children were white, and all of the pedagogues were white, native Danes. All but one of the children spoke fluent Danish, but only four children spoke English. All of the pedagogues were fluent in both Danish and English.

While I agree with LeVine's (1966) assertion that "the greater [the ethnographer's] command of the local language, the more adequate...the field experience" (p. 103), my inability to speak Danish forced me to rely heavily on my observational and non-verbal communication skills, which helped me communicate with children and understand pedagogue-child relationships. This was also an unforeseen benefit, as I often asked pedagogues to interpret or translate interactions I observed—either between children or between pedagogues and children—which allowed me to gain insight into the pedagogues' perspectives of daily practices, as well as my own interpretations. However, due to the high socio-economic status of the children attending the børnehaver and the unrepresentative racial and ethnic composition of the group of children, this børnehaver cannot be seen as an accurate representation of all børnehaven in Denmark. Thus, my observations are not generalizable to ECEC institutions in the rest of the country.

⁶ I visited with the children 11 times in total, but only 10 times at the børnehaver (one visit was a fieldtrip).

Critique as an Expression of Appreciation

In the beginning stages of this project, I grappled with how to reconcile my admiration for Danish pedagogy with my cognizance of its problems. While I strongly believe in the enormous social and developmental benefits of an approach to ECEC focused on social-emotional growth and play-based learning, I recognize the ways in which this Danish approach to early education “others” individuals and renders multicultural perspectives invisible.

Then, towards the end of my research, I was reminded of Elie Wiesel’s famous quote, “[t]he opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference.” During my last class with Professor Krell, they argued that critique, as an act of critical participation and thus the opposite of indifference, is therefore an act of love. Through critique, Professor Krell noted, one demonstrates the willingness to engage in discussion and the desire to contribute one’s own thoughts, out of respect for the subject. Thus, by engaging in a critical analysis of Danish ECEC, I intend to demonstrate my appreciation for its widespread programs and pedagogical practices. By pointing out its shortcomings, I aim to challenge the system to improve the experience of ECEC for children from immigrant families and ethnic minority groups.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This thesis aims to explore the ways in which Denmark’s ECEC system, theory, and practices, both “reflect and affect” Danish society and culture (Tobin et al. 1989:4), while upholding boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. This introductory chapter provides the social and political context for my discussion of Danish culture and ECEC. This chapter begins to grapple with the difficult work of defining the Danish identity—a concept explored in the rest of this thesis through the lens of early childhood programs. In the first chapter, I engage in the

complicated task of defining and demarcating citizenship. Beginning with a discussion of the welfare system and the purpose of education within the Danish state, I draw upon theory from Emile Durkheim (1925) and David Labaree (1997) to argue that Denmark's ECEC system socializes children into citizens through the transmission of Danish values, access to universal child care, and compensatory integration programs for non-native Danes.

Building upon the assertion that ECEC constructs citizens through the transmission of values, chapters two and three seek to locate these values in Danish society and explore how they are transferred to children. In chapter two, I delve deeper into the construction of Danish identity by identifying democracy, equality, and trust as key values of Danish citizenship. I argue that these values are integral to the Danish social identity and therefore are embedded in the structure and theory of Danish pedagogy. This chapter engages in a discussion of the ways that ethnic minority children and families are excluded from accessing these values, or, in many cases, forced to accept them. Chapter three builds upon this discussion by utilizing examples from my own fieldwork, as well as relevant ethnographic research, to demonstrate how the values of democracy, equality, and trust are transmitted through daily practices in a Danish *børnehaver*, specifically focusing on play, relationships, and behaviors. Finally, in the conclusion, I reflect on what I have learned through my research by offering a summary of my analysis. I then consider the difficulties of bringing up children in the age of online ECEC, and close with the hope that children can lead the way as we look towards the future.

Chapter 1:

Creating Danish Citizens Through ECEC

From my first week in Denmark to my last, one concept seemed to permeate every aspect of Danish daily life: Danes are proud citizens of the welfare state. But what does it mean to be a citizen of the welfare state? While the Danish welfare state is not a new invention, its role as a political structure is constantly changing and evolving. Eva Gulløv (2011) posits that in the last two decades, the welfare state has changed drastically “[f]rom a project concerned with providing basic needs for all citizens, ...[to] an ever more encompassing endeavor to identify and prevent social challenges and a means to enforce social norms and regulate ways of living” (p. 1-2). In order to achieve these goals, the welfare state turns to ECEC. Therefore, this chapter uncovers what ECEC programs “are meant to do and be” within the context of the welfare state (Tobin et al. 1989:4), and examines how, in the process of crafting children into citizens, the Danish state also creates the invisible boundaries of citizenship, particularly those which are not written but are felt.

EDUCATING FOR THE COMMON GOOD

The Danish Welfare State

Pinpointing the beginning of the Danish welfare state is a highly debated topic in Danish scholarship. However, many scholars agree that the creation of the social welfare system took place over the course of a century from the 1870s to the 1970s (Kærgård 2006:4). A social welfare state, as defined by Kenton (2019), is “a type of governing in which the national government plays a key role in the protection and promotion of the economic and social well-

being of its citizens.” Swedish scholar Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1990) classified welfare systems into three categories: the corporatist welfare regime, the liberal welfare regime, and the social democratic welfare regime. Denmark, along with the rest of the Scandinavia countries, is an example of a social democratic welfare regime built upon publicly funded and universally administered need-based-services (University of Pittsburgh 2000). In comparison to other welfare regimes, the social democratic system, often referred to as The Nordic Model, is characterized by high public social benefits, such as free healthcare, elderly-care, and child care; reliance on a large public sector with extensive public institutions; relatively low income inequality; and high taxes (Kærgård 2006:5).

From the late 19th century to the early 20th century, a number of economic and social reforms in Denmark began to shape the welfare state as we know it today. Sparked by changes in the agricultural sector and the implementation of a new currency, the beginning of the 20th century brought the first cooperative dairies, public pensions, subsidized healthcare, and unemployment insurance (Kærgård 2006:5). From the 1920s to 1950s, and especially after World War II, the welfare system expanded, including reforms for longer holidays, fewer working hours, and free education (Kærgård 2006:5). In the 1950s and 1960s, the Danish state introduced child care as a way to supplement parents’ upbringing, specifically meant to support “vulnerable” children (Villadsen and Hviid 2017:47). Then, in the 1960s and 1970s, as more women entered the labor market, ECEC was expanded from a “preventing service to a general service” and included programs for all children (Villadsen and Hviid 2017:47). By the 1970s, the welfare state was fully developed, and formed the center of Danish social, political, and economic life (Kærgård 2006:4).

The Purpose of Education in a Welfare State

In his seminal lectures on education, *Moral Education*, Emile Durkheim (1925) posits the central purpose of education as orienting children's behaviors towards the collective needs of society (p. xii). In doing so, education becomes "the means by which a society guarantees its own survival" (Durkheim 1925: xiv). As a welfare system necessitates "collective action for the common good" (Alcock 2016), it is through education that citizens of a welfare state are taught to prioritize the needs of the collective over their individual needs. Thus, Durkheim (1925) asserted that "the school has a crucial and clearly specified function: to create a new being, shaped according to the needs of society" (p. xv).

In Denmark's social democratic welfare regime, the needs of society are heavily intertwined with the needs of the state. Because Danish social and political life is largely comprised of publicly financed social services provided by the welfare state, the continuation of Danish society relies on the citizens' continued financial and social support of the welfare system (Edlund 2006). In essence, the stability of the welfare state is dependent upon the citizens' willingness to believe in the vision of Danish society promoted by the welfare state. In turn, the stability of the state is dependent upon a citizenry that trusts in the capabilities of welfare institutions to adequately provide for and protect them (Edlund 2006). Thus, schools are essential for the continuation of Danish society, for they represent "the best intermediary for the child to go from the moral state at home to being aligned with the requirements of citizenship in political society" (Durkheim 1925:230-231).

ECEC AS PREPARATION FOR CITIZENSHIP

The Danish approach to early childhood education is best described using David Labaree's (1997) theory of "democratic equality" (p.42) According to Labaree, the democratic equality approach to education "argues that a democratic society cannot persist unless it prepares all of its young with equal care to take on the full responsibilities of citizenship in a competent manner" (1997:42). While Labaree's analysis focuses on the goals of education within the U.S. public school system, his argument about educating for citizenship provides a useful framework to understand the Danish approach to ECEC. Labaree outlines three central characteristics of democratic equality: citizenship training, equal access, and equal treatment (1997: 44). The following sections will address how Denmark's ECEC system focuses on these central tenets in an effort to cultivate Danish citizens from the first years of life.

Citizenship Training

Citizenship, how it is conceptualized and defined, has been a subject of much scholarly debate. While classical theories focus on how citizens are created through social rights provided by the state (Brubaker 1992; Turner and Hamilton 1994), more recent scholarship has focused on citizenship as a social identity and explored the relationship between citizenship laws, social inclusion, and social exclusion (Kastoryano 2002; Bloemraad 2006; Stokes-DuPass 2015). Stokes-DuPass (2015) states that "[c]itizenship has traditionally been the key concept viewed by many theorists as the tie that binds members of multicultural and diverse populations within the same nation-state. As a result, when a person acquires citizenship, this person also acquired national identity" (p. 41).

However, Turner (1994) complicates the discussion of citizenship and identity by arguing that claims to national identity through citizenship have two dimensions: “citizenship from above”, referring to state-sanctioned, legal rights to national identity, and “citizenship from below”, referring to the socially sanctioned rights to national identity as validated by other citizens. While the Danish state asserts that Danish identity is attainable through integration and subsequent naturalization “from above,” in reality, claims to Danish identity “from below” are not available to everyone because they are “based on perceived ethnic or cultural...ties among ‘native Danes’” (Stokes-DuPass 2015:36).

Applying Turner’s theory to Danish ECEC, while the Danish government is responsible for creating citizens “from above” through legal status, Danish ECEC programs are responsible for training citizens “from below” through the transmission of Danish cultural values. Therefore, Denmark’s ECEC programs construct and promote Danish citizenship as an “identity that provides a sense of belonging” to the Danish state and adherence to Danish values (Bloemraad 2006:1-2). In order to create Danish citizens, ECEC promotes a “common culture and a sense of shared membership in the community” based on the collective values of Danish society (Labaree 1997:45).

Recognizing ECEC as a site of citizenship training is also evident in the similarities between government citizenship legislation and ECEC policies. The 1998 Danish Integration Act, one of the most important citizenship laws, was created to help integrate new immigrants into Danish society and to establish protocols for denizens who wanted to obtain citizenship through naturalization (Stokes-DuPass 2015:59). As stated in the legislation, the Act had three purposes: “first, to ensure that all new immigrants can participate in Danish society on ‘equal footing’ with citizens; second to assist in making new immigrants self-supporting as quickly as

possible; third, to impart to new immigrants an understanding of the fundamental values and norms of Danish society” (Stokes-DuPass 2015:59). Removed from the context of citizenship requirements, the same arguments have also been made for the purpose of ECEC within the Danish state. Gulløv’s (2011) ethnographic fieldwork reveals that, “[w]hen asked why it was so important for 'bi-lingual' children to be in day-care, the head of [the local authority’s] children and family services stressed [ECEC’s] role at helping the children integrate into Danish society by developing their language skills and familiarizing them with dominant social norms” (p. 7). As a social welfare program, child care is intended to level the playing field for all children and ensure that they, and their parents, are imbued with Danish values and socialized into the norms of Danish society (Gulløv 2011). If children, particularly ‘bilingual children’ (a coded term for children of immigrants or non-ethnic Danes), are identified as ‘at risk’ or behind other children in their understanding of Danish values, norms, or language, they are channeled into compulsory programs which offer additional assistance to redress perceived wrongs (Gulløv 2011:8).

Equal Access

In order for the state to ensure that all citizens are prepared for their civic duties and properly oriented towards desirable social expectations, Labaree (1997) argues that democratic equality necessitates that all citizens have “equal access” to programs at various levels (p. 44). In Denmark, universal child care is available to all citizens. Although the presence of kindergartens in Denmark dates back to the early 20th century, the development of Denmark’s current system of universal child care began during the rapid post-war expansion of the welfare state (Villadsen and Hviid 2017:47). As mentioned previously, in the 1950s and early 1960s, child care became a public welfare service specifically designed to support children and families who were

considered vulnerable and in need of social assistance (Villadsen and Hviid 2017:47). As the welfare state continued to grow in the later 1960s and 1970s, child care was broadened to become a general service, which grew to include subsidized programs for all children from birth to age six (Villadsen and Hviid 2017:47). According to Gulløv (2011), “[e]arly child care has become the guarantor of children receiving a 'proper' upbringing from the very first year of life and considerable efforts are thus made to ensure that children enter the welfare system as early as possible” (p. 5).

Today, the Danish ECEC system is comprised of three primary services: *dagpleje*, *vuggestuer*, and *børnehaver* (Scottish Government 2013). *Dagpleje* is family day care for children aged twenty-six weeks to six years; *vuggestuer* is nursery for children aged twenty-six weeks to three years; and *børnehaver* is kindergarten for children aged three to six years (Scottish Government 2013).⁷ Over the following decades, Danish day care became an essential part of Danish early life as the percentage of children enrolled in day care institutions skyrocketed from 20 percent in the 1950s, to 50 percent 1960s, and 90 percent in the 1990s (Villadsen and Hviid 2017:47). By 2007, over 87 percent of children ages one to three, and over 95 percent of children ages three to six, were enrolled in either full-time or part-time child care institutions (Gulløv 2011:5). With the majority of children enrolled in state day care programs from their first year of life, child care in Denmark becomes the primary site of socialization where children are introduced to Danish social life and the basic expectations of Danish citizenship.

⁷ All three of these programs (*dagpleje*, *vuggestuer*, and *børnehaver*) fall under the larger umbrella term of *dagtilbud*, or day care centers, which includes all ECEC provisions provided by the welfare state. Throughout this paper, I use the English terms *day care*, *child care*, and *ECEC* interchangeably to refer to all state subsidized early childhood education and care programs. I use Danish terms, like *børnehaver*, to denote specific day care institutions. Additionally, while in Copenhagen, I used the Danish term *børnehaver* to refer to my practicum site, so I will continue this practice to maintain continuity between my field notes and this analysis.

Equal Treatment

While equal access to ECEC in Denmark provides the opportunity for all children and families to opt-*in* for universal child care, challenges to equal treatment in ECEC means that not everyone is allowed to opt-*out*. Many scholars have pointed to what Bundgaard & Gulløv (2006) refer to as the paradox of difference in ECEC: on the one hand, there is no acknowledgement or inclusion of cultural difference and a strong emphasis on homogeneity; on the other hand, in the process of rectifying this difference, compensatory institutional interventions make distinctions between children, thereby providing unequal treatment (p. 147). This tension is most evident in the creation of policies that target immigrant children or “non-ethnically Danish” children in an effort to “identify and address risks and social problems in children and families as early as possible and to lead children and their parents to live in accordance with dominant norms” (Gulløv 2011:2). While local authorities place considerable effort on trying to ensure that all children in the area attend formal child care programs, outreach efforts are disproportionately targeted towards children whose “parents are immigrants or refugees, uneducated, unemployed, and do not speak Danish fluently” (Gulløv 2011:8).

Similarly, particular emphasis is placed on the acquisition of Danish language and culture in both Danish citizenship legislation and ECEC policy, which makes immigrant families and non-native Danes the primary targets of language intervention programs. In 2002, revisions to the Danish Integration Act, made it mandatory for all prospective citizens to pass the *Danprøve*, a high level Danish language exam focusing on grammar and comprehension, and required all citizens to complete the Introduction Program, a previously voluntary Danish history and culture course for new citizens (Stokes-DuPass 2015:59). Reinforcing the changes among the state’s youngest citizens, in 1998 it also became mandatory for all local authorities to offer “language-

stimulation” activities to bilingual children to improve Danish language skills and assist their integration into Danish society before entering formal schooling (OECD 2000:39). If bilingual children were not enrolled in a child care facility, 15 hours a week of language programs became compulsory for children at age four (OECD 2000:40). In 2019, an amendment to the Day-care Act intended to make it mandatory for all children between the ages of one and two living in “marginalized residential areas” to attend 25 hours a week of an “integrated learning offer” if they were not already enrolled in an ECEC program (European Commission 2020):

The learning offer takes place in an ECEC setting or a regulated home-based provision. However, if the municipality assesses that the parents’ Danish competences and work-effort measure up to a learning offer provided by an ECEC setting or a regulated home-based provision, they can teach the child at home. The purpose of the learning offer is to ensure that children’s Danish-language competences are strengthened and that they are introduced to Danish traditions, democratic norms and values from an early age. The children must attend the learning offer until the municipality has made a language assessment.

Without a formal law requiring child care for all Danish children, the compulsory programs for bilingual children confirm ECEC as a socialization tool used to maintain a false sense of homogeneity within the Danish population and push the values of citizenship by ensuring a Danish upbringing and Danish identity from a child’s first year of life.

Therefore, as the operation and perpetuation of the welfare state rests upon the collective sentiments of the citizenry, the survival of Danish society is ensured by universal child care programs which lay the groundwork for the next generation of citizens to uphold the principles of the welfare state. However, as citizenship refers to both legal status and social identity, challenges faced by non-ethnic Danes highlight the boundaries of Danish citizenship, and separate those for whom the values of citizenship are expected, from those for whom the values of citizenship are instructed.

Chapter 2:

Cultural Values in Pedagogical Theory

Tasked with the challenge of cultivating the next generation of Danish citizens, ECEC institutions encourage a pedagogical theory centered around a core set of values, without which, the citizen's social identity cannot be fully realized. According to Gulløv (2011), across the world, ECEC institutions play a crucial role in “teaching children behavioral norms and in transmitting national traditions that comprise and construct a collective system of values and reference points” (p. 7). In this context, values are defined as principles that guide one's behaviors and determine what is deemed important (Oxford Dictionary 2020). As the process of education is intended to orient children's thinking towards the needs and dispositions of the collective (Durkheim 1925), the acquisition of communal values is a critical component of the educational process.

Thus, many scholars have set out to determine the values that characterize Danish ECEC (Broström et al. 2017; Kragh-Müller 2017; Ringsmose and Brogaard-Clausen 2017; Wagner 2004). One such theory, proposed by Broström et al. (2017), identifies democracy, care, and discipline as core values of the Danish ECEC system. Using this framework, they propose that democratic values correspond to children's agency and participation; caring values correspond to relationships with pedagogues; and discipline values correspond to the rules of child care that regulate children's behavior (Broström et al. 2017). Offering another perspective, Wagner (2004) identifies the core values of ECEC as the right to a good childhood, freedom, and equal relationships. She argues that these values are apparent in the ways that children are given the liberty to enjoy their childhood free from external pressures or expectations (Wagner 2004). While Broström et al. (2017) and Wagner (2004) offer compelling arguments, I offer my own

analysis of Danish values and their role in ECEC. I argue that democracy, equality, and trust are the core values embodied by the ideal Danish citizen, and thus, the central principles of Danish ECEC. In this chapter I examine how Danish social pedagogical theory both reflects and affects the cultural interpretation of democracy, equality, and trust in Denmark.

CRAFTING THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE COLLECTIVE: DEMOCRACY AS A DANISH VALUE

In Denmark, the debate over defining democracy has traditionally been concerned with reconciling two theoretical views: democracy as a method and democracy as a lifestyle based on dialogue (Togebly et al. 2004:11). The theory of democracy as a method (Ross 1946) is concerned with the rights and participation of the people, while the theory of democracy as a lifestyle (Koch 1960) is concerned with the establishment of public dialogue where individuals can freely debate their opinions (Togebly et al. 2004:11). In their compressive study “Democracy and Power in Denmark,” Togebly et al. (2004:13) build upon these two perspectives by identifying five ideals of Danish democratic society:⁸

1. *Equal political rights*, based on universal suffrage, majority decisions and protection of minorities.
2. *Free opinion formation*, based on open and diverse access to information.
3. *Broad and equal participation*, which again depends on relatively large equality in economic and social resources.
4. *Effective and responsible governance*, meaning that the public sector is capable of solving collective problems in an acceptable and effective manner in accordance with the politically formulated guidelines.
5. [*Social trust*, meaning]...[a] society characterized by trust, tolerance and regard for the community.

⁸ This source is the “Conclusions” publication of the larger 1997 study commissioned by the Danish parliament entitled “An Analysis of Democracy and Power in Denmark.”

While Denmark fulfils these five ideals to varying degrees (Togeby et al. 2004), taken together, they represent the idealized version of Danish democracy, and can be understood as the guiding principles for the development of democratic subjects within ECEC.

The Democratic Environment of ECEC

In ECEC, children learn the expectations of citizenship first and foremost through their interactions with pedagogues and their active participation in the democratic setting of day care institutions. When conceptualizing the democratic subject, educating to democracy follows two primary schools of thought: the individualistic perspective, which emphasizes the rational, autonomous subject, and the social perspective, which argues that the subject is created through participation in democratic life (Dewey 2005; Broström, Jensen, and Hansen 2017:27).⁹ In theory, ECEC institutions bridge these two perspectives by cultivating independent children who value community, and understand their role in collective society. In practice, this is apparent in the role of the pedagogues and their focus on cultivating the child's self-awareness and curiosity, incorporating the child's perspective, maintaining emotional closeness, and facilitating a playful social environment (Bae 2009; Emilson and Johansson 2009). Therefore, the value of democracy in ECEC is most evident in the role of the pedagogue and their promotion of *dannelse* and togetherness (Brogaard-Clausen and Ringsmose 2017:240-241).

⁹ Biesta (2011) defines the democratic subject as “the one who is driven by a desire for democracy or, to be more precise, a desire for engagement with the ongoing experiment of democratic existence ... [and is] emerging again and again in new and different ways through its very engagement with democratic processes and practices.” (p. 26-27).

Dannelse. Danish sociologist Jonas Lieberkind argues that “[p]reparing children and young people to undertake their roles as democratic citizens is not just a matter of passing on knowledge and analytical skills, but also developing an environment and a context of togetherness in which they will encounter political and democratic practices” (n.d.:5). Professor of Public Education Gert Biesta (2011) echoes this sentiment by asserting that the educational environment should provide the space for children to “learn democracy” rather than being taught citizenship (p. 6). According to Biesta (2011), democratic citizenship is not simply a characteristic of the individual, but rather is understood through the individual’s interactions with others in a variety of contexts (p. 6):

[B]eing a citizen involves much more than the simple acquisition of certain fixed core values. It is participative and as such it is itself an inherently educative process as it has to do with the transformation of the ways in which young people relate to, understand and express their place and role in society. (Biesta 2011:13-14)

Based on this definition, democratic citizenship is a participatory process whereby children learn about themselves, others, and the world. Thus, the value of democracy, and the cultivation of democratic citizens, is embedded in the core pedagogical concept of *dannelse*.

Dannelse is the term used to describe the “process in which one's personality, through interaction with who or what one encounters, changes one's understanding of oneself and the world” (Efterskolerne 2015). *Dannelse* can refer to both the subject of knowledge and the process through which knowledge is gained (Brogaard-Clausen and Ringsmose 2017:238-239). Through this process, the child or adult “acquires knowledge of the culture in the encounters with surroundings, object, activities and other children and adults, while creating culture and gaining experiences and opportunities for critical thinking and democratic understanding” (Brogaard-Clausen and Ringsmose 2017:238-239). Similar to the German concept of *bildung*, which refers to child’s comprehensive personal development, *dannelse* is the overarching

purpose of ECEC and can be understood as a child's development of three key skills: self-determination, co-determination, and solidarity (Broström et al. 2017:28). When formed together in the child, as explained by Broström et al. (2017), these three skills are crucial components of a democratic subject who views democracy as a "conjoint mode of living" (Dewey 2005) and learns to prioritize collective needs over their individual needs (Biesta 2011).

Togetherness. Since learning democracy and encouraging *dannelse* requires children to learn about themselves in relation to others and society, it is important for pedagogues to facilitate a feeling of togetherness within ECEC institutions. According to Durkheim (1925) the most important role of the educator is to "give the child the clearest possible idea of the social groups to which he belongs" (p. 288). Within Danish pedagogical theory, this crucial concept of "being together," or *samvær*, is integral to the formation of competent, healthy, and happy children (Brogaard-Clausen and Ringsmose 2017:241). According to Lieberkind (n.d.), "[t]ogetherness is the driving force of democracy; just as freedom, equality and democracy are the driving force behind the sense of togetherness" (p. 1).

Further, togetherness is seen as a primary way through which children gain and impart knowledge (Brogaard-Clausen and Ringsmose 2017; Ringsmose and Kragh-Müller 2017:68). For pedagogues, a child's ability to "be together" with other children is the key indicator of development, and a crucial signifier that children have gained the necessary skills to succeed in school and society. Therefore, the pedagogical purpose of togetherness and *dannelse* "is for adults and children to use knowledge and competences ethically in relation to themselves and others and, based in the values of democracy and a good life, aim and work towards a better and more meaningful society" (Clausen 2004; Brogaard-Clausen and Ringsmose 2017:238-239).

Thus, the role of pedagogues is indispensable in Danish culture, for they are seen as trusted member of the welfare system capable of raising children to be good democratic citizens.

DOWNPLAYING DIFFERENCE, EMPHASIZING SAMENESS: EQUALITY AS A DANISH VALUE

When conceptualizing equality in a Scandinavian context, Vike et al. (2001) posit that there are two distinct understandings of equality: one is equality as a guiding principle for political institutions and the other is equality as the basis for social interactions. Building upon this analysis, Bruun (2018) argues that equality from a political perspective means social and economic equality, or the ideological foundation for the universal programs offered by the welfare state (p. 135). In this context, equality is the opposite of inequality. In contrast, equality from a social perspective, Bruun argues, refers to similarity or sameness between individuals (2018:135). In this context, equality is the opposite of difference. Taken together, these two distinct understandings of equality help to explain how the egalitarian principles of the welfare state influence the norms of cultural conformity within Danish society and contribute to the challenges of multiculturalism in Danish ECEC.

Equality as the Opposite of Inequality

Before examining the role of equality in Danish social life, it is first important to understand equality in a broader Scandinavian context. Internationally recognized as some of the most equal countries in the world (Hodgson 2018), Scandinavian states are characterized by a strong emphasis on egalitarianism, both politically and socially (Bendixen et al. 2018). Egalitarianism is a political philosophy based upon a belief that all people are equal and thus

deserving of the same rights, opportunities, and treatment (Arneson 2013). Within Scandinavian welfare states, egalitarianism is seen as a political project, which is “firmly tied to the ideological and social construction of a strong welfare state” (Bendixen et al. 2018:9). By promoting egalitarian ideals of community and universalism (Christiansen and Markkola 2006), the Danish welfare system reinforces its own legitimacy and social support by positioning itself as the protector of equality for all citizens.

Equality as the Opposite of Difference

While equality as a political principle is the opposite of inequality, equality as a social principle is the opposite of difference (Brunn 2018:135). Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad (1984) developed the phrase “equality as sameness” to describe the concept of equality in a Scandinavian context as one characterized by a leveling out of differences and an emphasis on social equivalency. Unlike a purely egalitarian perspective of objective equality based on humanity, the Scandinavian social egalitarianism, Gullestad (1984) argued, is dependent upon perceived similarities. These similarities, later defined by Gullestad (2001) as “imagined sameness,” are the unobservable, collective feelings of equality and familiarity which are highlighted during social interactions, and thus reinforce what is shared (p.35)

The egalitarian approach to social interactions is further emphasized by the leveling mechanism of *Janteloven* (Norman 2018). *Janteloven*, or The Law of Jante, is an internalized Nordic social code which emphasizes “collective accomplishments and well-being, and disdains focus on individual achievements” (Norman 2018). The law, a fictional code popularized by Aksel Sandemose’s 1933 novel, is made up of 10 rules all with the underlying sentiment that

“you,” the individual, are not better than “us,” the society.¹⁰ Janteloven states that “everyone is equal, everyone should be treated the same, and everyone should conform and not stand out” (Stokes-DuPass 2015:16). In Danish daily life, the Law of Jante encourages humility and a focus on the collective good.

However, according to Stokes-DuPass (2015), there is contradiction in the way Danes conceptualize Janteloven. When asked about Janteloven, many of Stokes-DuPass’s Danish interviewees regarded the law as an “old-fashioned” concept or a trademark of “stereotypical Danishness” (p. 16). Yet, all of her respondents still identified Janteloven as a primary marker of Danishness and a point of connection with other Danes and Nordic people (Stokes-DuPass 2015:16).

Therefore, Stokes-DuPass (2015) argues that Janteloven maintains its cultural relevancy in Denmark by creating a narrow view of what it means to be Danish, thus preventing immigrants and non-native Danes from claims to Danishness. In accordance with this social norm, immigrants and non-native Danes are expected to de-emphasize their differences to prevent being seen as a threat to the narrative that Denmark is “a homogeneous, tolerant, anti-racist, and peace-loving society” (Gullestad 2002:59).¹¹ Thus, ECEC is positioned as a primary social institution responsible for eliminating the “invisible fence” between “us” and “them” by promoting the universality of Danishness from an early age (Gullestad 2002).

¹⁰ The ten commandments of Janteloven (in English) from Aksel Sandemose’s (1933) novel *Flygtning Krysser Sitt Spor*:

1. Thou shalt not think that thou art something special. 2. Thou shalt not believe that thou art as much as we are. 3. Thou shalt not believe that thou art wiser than us. 4. Thou shalt not believe thou art better than us. 5. Thou shalt not believe that thou knoweth more than us. 6. Thou shalt not believe thou art greater than us. 7. Thou shalt not believe that thou are worth anything. 8. Thou shalt not laugh at us. 9. Thou shalt not believe that anyone is concerned about thee. 10. Thou shalt not believe that thou can teach us anything.

¹¹ While Gullestad’s quote was originally referring to Norway, similar social codes in the Nordic countries make it applicable to the Danish context.

Equality as Danishness in ECEC Institutions

Based on the principle of equality as sameness, ECEC institutions encouraged children to focus on their similarities, rather than embracing cultural differences. According to Parekh (2000), all societies are characterized by “ethnic complexity,” yet a society’s social response to the increasing complexity reflects either a *multicultural* or a *monocultural* view of society. From a multicultural perspective, “social cohesion is supposed to develop from the recognition of difference and fair negotiation,” while from a monocultural position, social cohesion occurs from the “unilateral assimilation of minority groups and individuals” (Horst and Gitz-Johansen 2010:139).

In Denmark, the tendency to minimize difference and promote a single version of Danishness within ECEC reflects the state’s vision of a monocultural society. From a monocultural perspective, which aims to preserve cultural homogeneity, ethnic complexity is regarded as a problem to be ‘solved,’ rather than a positive aspect of social development (Parekh 2000). Therefore, as Horst and Gitz-Johansen (2010) describe, monocultural policies reinforce and reproduce notions of ethnic inequality because “on the one hand, any recognition of the religious, cultural and linguistic rights of minorities is excluded from policy documents; on the other hand, compensatory interventions are devised in order to address ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity” (p. 141).

Thus, according to Norman (2004), Scandinavian cultures position equality as a core value in order to guarantee sameness as a basic norm. Applying this theory to Danish ECEC, institutions emphasize equality among children in order to instill sameness as a social priority. Although The Six Curricular/Educational Themes discussed in the introductory chapter stipulate that “[t]he educational learning environment must support communities where diversity is seen

as a resource, and contributes to democratic formation” (Ministry of Children and Social Affairs 2018), institutions prioritize sameness—and by default Danishness—over the possibility of learning from a range of diverse perspectives. Therefore, equality is imbedded in social pedagogical theory as a mechanism to ensure the next generation of Danish citizens share a common understanding of the norms and values of Danish culture. Yet in the face of an increasingly diverse population, an emphasis on equality becomes an expectation of homogeneity and a dampening of anything deemed “not-Danish.”

“THEY ARE LIKE US, SO WE CAN TRUST THEM:” TRUST AS A DANISH VALUE

When passing by any restaurant or café in Copenhagen, you are likely to find sleeping babies in unattended strollers lining the sidewalk outside. While the thought of leaving a child unsupervised may seem like a parent’s worst nightmare to foreign spectators like myself, the high level of social trust in Denmark leaves Danes blissfully unconcerned about potential stranger danger. According to the official Danish website run by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2020), “Danes are considered some of the most trusting people in the world.” While the claim may seem lofty, the assertion is not wrong. Studies have shown that Scandinavian countries rank among the highest countries in the world for trust in others (Ortiz-Ospina and Roser 2020) and trust in the state. Specifically, in Denmark, a 2013 study by the European Union (EU) revealed that Denmark had the highest degree of “trust in others” and one of the highest degrees of “trust in institutions” out of all EU countries (Eurostat 2020). But what makes Danes so trusting?

As defined by Newton (2020), trust is “the belief that others will not, at worst, knowingly or willingly do you harm, and will, at best, act in your interests.” There is a significant body of literature that suggests that trust is an essential component of social capital (Coleman 1988,

1990; Putnam 1993, 2000; Dinesen and Sønderskov 2012), when social capital is defined as a variety of entities that facilitate the actions and interactions of social actors within a social structure or system (Coleman 1988:98). Simply put, “the fact that trust will make it possible to achieve things that otherwise would be unattainable is what turns trust into social capital” (Hansen 2018:285). In the context of ECEC, the development of Danish social pedagogy and the expansion of the child care system has been made possible by the high degree of “trust in the early years professionals... and the long-held perception [that] nurseries [are] beneficial for children and society” (Brogaard-Clausen and Ringsmose 2017:243).

Trust in ECEC: Dual Socialization

Dual socialization is the pedagogical framework that bridges the gap between the state and the family in children’s early years. A cornerstone of Danish social pedagogy, dual socialization is the process whereby families and institutions have an equal role in a child’s upbringing (Kragh-Müller 2017:17). Through this process, both parents and pedagogues share responsibility for children’s growth and development (Kragh-Müller 2017:17). While many societies, as Durkheim (1925) posited, share “the all too popular notion that moral education falls chiefly within the jurisdiction of the family” (p. 18), Denmark positions both families and institutions as indispensable sites of socialization where children are meant to learn the expectations of Danish citizenship. Therefore, as Gulløv (2011) explains, “[t]he child has to some extent become a shared project between parents and the welfare state, where the role of the state includes the right to cultivate [the child] in accordance with a vision of the common good” (p. 8), while the role of the family is to provide an emotional environment focused on fostering the well-being of the individual child (Kragh-Müller 2017:18). With socialization

happening in the two distinct spheres of the home and the institution, dual socialization is based on a relationship of trust between parents and pedagogues, where both parties are expected to fulfil their respective promises and expectations in regards to children's upbringing.

Families Trust Institutions. Before even visiting an institution, the ability for parents to trust pedagogues is based on the assumption that the pedagogues will be similar to them, and thus share the same values and methods of childrearing. Since the majority of children in Denmark are enrolled in institutional care from their first year of life, it is imperative that parents not only trust child care professionals and institutions to care for their children physically, emotionally, and mentally, but also to trust that while in child care, their children will be brought up with the same values, social expectations, and norms of behavior that they would have received at home. According to Dinesen and Sønderskov (2012), "when the surroundings consist of people like oneself, whose cultural codes are intelligible, trusting others is easier" (p. 275). Therefore, the homogeneity of the Danish state and the emphasis on sameness gives parents the reassurance that pedagogues and child care administrators will "be like them" and thus will be capable of raising their children the "proper" way, according to the norms of Danish society. Simply put, "[t]he prevalence of interpersonal trust ... characterizing the Scandinavian societies... require[s] a certain capability for treating others as equals: they are like us, so we can trust them" (Eriksen 2018:vi). However, if the family's trust in the institution is strengthened by the assumption of sameness, then the institution's trust in the family is weakened by the assumption of difference.

Institutions Trust Families? When children are not in child care, pedagogues trust parents to raise children with behaviors, values, and expectations that align with the norms of Danish citizenship and the needs of the institution. However, the assumption that all families understand the “morals of interpersonal conduct built into this vision of welfare” (Gulløv 2011:19), makes the assumption that all families have the same cultural capital presupposed by the welfare state.

According to Lamont and Lareau (1988), cultural capital is “institutionalized, i.e., widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors, goods and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion” (p. 156). To simplify, Luker (2008) posits that “the possession of ‘cultural capital’ is what marks the boundary between the in-crowd and the losers” (p. 14). In Danish ECEC, the expectations placed on parents by the welfare state position the Danes—who have command over the Danish language, a “sense of entitlement to interact with [pedagogues] as equals,” and the free time to spend time on child care (Lareau and Hovart 1999:42)—as the “in-crowd”, and “non-native Danes”—those who do not share the same cultural norms and values—as the “losers.” In this way, institutions and pedagogues view the implicit norms of Danish child care as universal expectations for parents’ child-rearing practices. Therefore, when non-ethnic Danes struggle to adhere to such behavioral norms, their inability is attributed to cultural differences in childrearing and thus result in a loss of trust between pedagogues and parents.

Consequently, when the cultural norms and values of children’s home lives and institutional lives differ, it leads to the process by which the different upbringings of minority children are not valued as cultural diversity, but regarded as cultural deprivation. From this perspective, the experience of ethnic minority children is regarded within “the deprivation paradigm,” a paradigm that attempts to blame the educational and social problems of

marginalized groups, particularly ethnic and racial minority groups, on their supposed insufficient social, cultural, or communication skills, rather than blaming larger racialized social systems (Bloom, Davis, and Hess 1965).

Thus, ethnic minority families must *earn* the institution's trust, while "ethnically Danish" families are *given* the institution's trust. For instance, in the 2003 policy document, *Vision Og Strategi for Bedre Integration* (Vision and Strategy for Better Integration), the Danish Minister for Integration (2003) wrote, "[t]he differences between the culture of the homeland and Danish culture makes it difficult for the parents to live up to their responsibility in relation to bringing up their children and to cooperate with the Danish school system and other pedagogic institutions."¹² Therefore, within Danish ECEC policymakers and practitioners place the burden on ethnic minority families and children to conform to Danish ways of being.

While independently the values of democracy, equality, and trust serve as markers of Scandinavian culture and Danish social priorities, when viewed together, they paint a fuller picture of the cultural construction of Danish identity and the limits of citizenship. Thus, as pedagogues interact with children in institutional settings, these values are translated from theory into practice as children are socialized into citizens.

¹² Homeland refers to a country other than Denmark, most likely a Middle Eastern country or non-Western European country.

Chapter 3:

Transmitting Values in Daily Practice

While leaving the børnehaver after a particularly long day, I stopped to admire how the little yellow house, with its welcoming, homey atmosphere and fading paint gave no indication of the dynamic and joyful learning taking place behind its humble façade. Similarly, at face value, Danish social pedagogical theory, with an emphasis on play and holistic development, gives no indication of the crucial and transformative values being transmitted to children through daily practices. Using Kristin Luker's (2008) definition of "practices" as "those moments when belief and actions come together" (p. 158), this chapter argues that through daily interactions and activities in the ECEC institution, children learn and internalize the values of democracy, equality, and trust. Drawing from my experience at the Hellerup børnehaver as well as fieldwork experiences from relevant scholars, these examples illuminate the various ways in which life in an ECEC institution prepares children for the expectations of Danish citizenship.

DEMOCRACY IN DAILY PRACTICE

From the art materials they use to the innovative games they play, children in Danish child care are given the space to create their own experience within the institutional setting. As indicated by The Six Curricular/Educational Themes outlined in the introductory chapter of this thesis, "[t]he learning environment must ensure that all children have experiences that can anchor values, and which can act as guidelines to orient them and help them act in a considerate, democratic and respectful manner" (Ministry of Children and Social Affairs 2018). In accordance with Biesta's (2011) assertion that children learn democracy through active

participation, Wagner (2004) notes that Danish ECEC provides the opportunity for children to “live democracy”—a concept she identified as the children’s freedom from external control, influence over their daily lives, and ability to help make decisions. These democratic values are primarily communicated through children’s engagement in free play and the planning and execution of collective activities

Free Play

In Nordic social pedagogical theory, free play is an essential part of children’s growth and development, and the mechanism through which children learn to express themselves and relate to others. Free play—child-initiated play without structure or interference—comprises the majority of the day in all Danish child care centers (Ringsmose and Kragh-Müller 2017). However, as Gulløv (2011) notes, “an apparent lack of structure should not be confused with a lack of purpose” (p. 9). Play is a vehicle for the cultivation *dannelselse* (Brogaard-Clausen and Ringsmose 2017), for it helps children learn to communicate, work towards a goal, think abstractly, and act out social situations they cannot yet participate in (Winther-Lindqvist 2016). For instance, my supervising pedagogue noted that it was important for children to come into the house and, through imaginative free play, copy the behaviors and situations they encountered elsewhere as a way to “process the world around them.”¹³ By offering children the freedom to explore themselves and their surroundings through self-directed, unstructured play, it gives them the space to develop the critical, personal, and social skills necessary to exist in Danish society (Ringsmose and Kragh-Müller 2017).

¹³ *House* refers to the physical setting of the børnehaver. The physical environment of the børnehaver emphasizes “coziness” and more closely resembles a house than a traditional classroom environment (Kragh-Müller 2017).

In addition to free play indoors, children are given the opportunity to engage in more rambunctious play outdoors. Through rain, snow, or sunshine, Danish children typically spend the majority of their day outside engaging in a variety of activities from tricycle chases, to sandbox restaurants, to swing set sing-a-longs. In addition to the belief in the health benefits of outdoor play (Ringsmose and Kragh-Müller 2017), spending time outside allows Danish children the freedom to run, jump, scream, and shout, or otherwise behave in traditionally child-like ways that are often deemed unacceptable indoors. While pedagogues typically dictate designated times for indoor or outdoor play, children are given full autonomy once in the space. As a pedagogue explained, “as much as the child can do themselves, we should not do for them because then we take something away from the child” (Personal Communication 2018). Thus, affording time for experimentation and self-exploration fosters curious and autonomous children—important characteristics of the democratic subject.

Collective Activities

Similarly, democratic values are communicated in the planning of and participation in collective activities (Bröstrom et al. 2017:29). Bröstrom et al. emphasize that through these projects, “children get to express their perspectives on common matters, and they can experience being able to influence the common agenda, thus developing a sense of co-determination” (2017:29). For instance, the development of such skills was evident in the preparation and execution of a traditional Danish lunch during my second to last week at the børnehaver.

Unlike lunchtime on a typical day, where each child brought a packed lunch from home, the traditional lunch was a communal meal comprising of traditional Danish foods that the children prepared in child care. According to the pedagogues, traditional lunches used to occur

only twice a year, but because the children “loved them so much,” the lunch had become a monthly event—a clear demonstration of children’s ability to influence their daily lives in child care and the pedagogues’ willingness to consider their opinions. With the help of the pedagogues, children cut, cooked, de-canned, and plated their respective food items, which they then explained to the rest of the children.

According to the pedagogues, a traditional lunch provides children with multiple learning and social opportunities. First, children learn about different kinds of food and where it comes from, which teaches them to be conscious and reflective citizens and consumers. Second, children learn to work together towards a common goal. When we sat down to eat, one of the children emphatically informed me that he had provided the canned shrimp, and he beamed with pride when I told him I liked it. Supporting Durkheim’s (1925) assertion that it is important for children to experience collective life because “[t]he child feels himself stronger [and] more confident when he feels that he is not alone” (p. 239), the pedagogue noted that it was important for children to experience the pride associated with contributing to the collective goal. By contributing to a communal lunch, the children have a sense of working together and providing for one another—an essential part of citizenship in the welfare state.

The lunch also provided the setting for children to learn the social norms of Danish society by practicing proper table etiquette. Children are expected to ask their friends to pass a plate, fill their glass, or share food. The pedagogues emphasized that children must learn to be conscious of the amount of food they take when sharing with others, as to not be impolite. I witnessed this educational development towards the end of the meal when one of the children reached for the last two pieces of *fiskefrikadeller* (fish meatball) before remembering to ask the other children if they wanted any more food. She immediately retracted her fork from the plate,

asked her peers if they were still eating, and once they had replied ‘no,’ she happily scooped up the food. Throughout the meal, pedagogues acted as “culture bearers” facilitating children’s understanding of traditional Danish culture and social norms, the value of co-determination, and the development of *dannelse* (Brogaard-Clausen and Ringsmose 2017:240-241; Broström et al. 2017:29-30).

EQUALITY IN DAILY PRACTICE

Acknowledgement in Pedagogue-Child Relationships

Unlike a traditional hierarchical relationship between teachers and students, the relationship between pedagogues and children is formed on a basis of equality and emphasizes the importance of acknowledgement and care in the relationship. Within ECEC institutions, “[t]he Danish pedagogues and children do not exist in separate hierarchical domains but in shared life spaces” (Ringsmose and Kragh-Müller 2017:242). The historical roots of Danish pedagogy cite the importance of a non-authoritarian, reciprocal relationship between adults and children which allows them to explore the world together (Kragh-Müller 2017:15). More recently, the relationship between pedagogues and children has been significantly impacted by Scandinavian psychologist Annelise Løevlie Schibbye’s (2002) research, which points to the impact of acknowledging relationships on children’s development. Schibbye’s theory emphasizes the need for pedagogues to regard children as equals in order to listen to and understand the child’s perspective based on the child’s subjective experience.

One day during snack time, a child accidentally spilled her cup of water onto her lap, soaking her clothes. Immediately she became tense, silent, and unresponsive to my questions about her feelings or my attempts to comfort her. Eventually I signaled a pedagogue, who came

over to help. When the pedagogue noticed the spill, she asked the child if she had spilled the water herself, to which the child shook her head ‘yes.’ The pedagogue then validated the child’s feelings of embarrassment, explained that she couldn’t stay in wet clothes, and offered to help her look for a new outfit in her cubby downstairs. Instead of scolding the child, who was already upset, or reassuring her, as I was attempting to do to no avail, the pedagogue acknowledged and named the child’s feelings and offered a practical solution to the problem. Within minutes, the child returned to her typical, cheerful mood, and was excited to continue playing in her new outfit. Therefore, the pedagogues’ commitment to regard children as equals allows them to understand the child’s perspective and communicate effectively while, in turn, modeling for children how to recognize their own emotions and empathize with others (Schibbye 2002).

Sameness in Peer Relationships

Birthday celebrations. As discussed in chapter two, pedagogues make a considerable effort to emphasize sameness between children in child care (Ringsmose and Kragh-Müller 2017:13). One way this value is emphasized is in the traditional børnehaver birthday celebration. On the day of a child’s birthday, the entire børnehaver is invited to the child’s house for a celebration. The purpose of this tradition, the pedagogues explained, was for children to get a glimpse into the daily lives of their friends outside of child care, in order to foster community and create more socially aware, thoughtful children.

When I arrived at the child’s house, I observed the unassuming birthday decorations: Danish flags, a “Happy Birthday” sign, a balloon in the shape of the number “5,” and themed paper plates for lunch.¹⁴ One of the pedagogues noted that this was how Danish birthday

¹⁴ Danish flags are customary decorations on birthdays and many other celebratory occasions.

celebrations were supposed to be—simple. In recent years, the parents in Gentofte had begun planning birthday parties that were packed with over-stimulation, hired entertainers, party favors, themes, rented locations, and scheduled games. The pedagogue explained that from a pedagogical point of view, the birthday celebrations “were of no use to us anymore like that,” if they no longer felt personal to the child. So, the pedagogues banned parents from throwing extravagant parties “on børnehaver time.”¹⁵ Since the intention of børnehaver birthday celebrations has always been to emphasize the general sameness between children (by visiting their peers’ houses, meeting their families, and playing with their toys), the pedagogues viewed the practice of extravagant parties as contrary to Danish cultural values. By banning such affairs, they reinforced and prioritized equality between children in ECEC. Thus, in order to maintain sameness between children, pedagogues’ actions reflect implicit understandings of the Law of Jante by ensuring that no child’s party was meant to out-do another, and instead, the parties would allow children to get to know one another on a personal level by recognizing their sameness with their peers.

Institutional food. Similarly, in an effort to stress equality, institutions prioritize the muting of difference, specifically cultural differences. Despite the abundance of experiences and cultural knowledge present in a child care institution, very rarely do children have an opportunity to share this knowledge—such as other languages, religions, family history, or holidays—for the day to day life in the institution does not provide space for the inclusion of multicultural

¹⁵ As a point of comparison, it is interesting to think about how this attempt would be received in an American context. While parents in the U.S. are often resistant to teachers’ attempts to comment on children’s lives outside of the preschool setting, parents in Denmark trust the pedagogues to know what is best for their children. Thus, the pedagogues’ ability to ban extravagant parties reflects the key principles of dual socialization and the institution’s ability to influence children’s lives both inside and outside the børnehaver.

perspectives (Bundgaard and Glløv 2006:152). In fieldwork conducted by Bundgaard and Gulløv (2006) in “underserved areas of Denmark,” this trend was exhibited by a child care center’s institutional food policy, which required all food to adhere to Islamic dietary laws (p. 152). When the researchers asked the lead pedagogue about the policy, she said it helped to reinforce “that we all can eat the same food and thus minimize those differences” (Bundgaard and Gulløv 2006:152).

While it is essential that children’s religious and cultural needs are addressed within the institution, the decision to make all food halal, rather than providing halal options, reflects the desire to *rectify* differences without *acknowledging* differences. As such, Bundgaard and Gulløv theorize that the “muting of differences is, on the one hand, related to attempts to create similar conditions for all children and, on the other, to ensure that everybody is introduced to everyday life in Denmark” (2006:152). Thus, highlighting equality in ECEC becomes a complicated convention of manufacturing sameness and concealing difference.

TRUST IN DAILY PRACTICE

Trust in Families

In the previous chapter, trust was discussed in terms of dual socialization between the home and the institution. While families’ trust in institutions is evident in daily practices simply by children’s continued enrollment, the institution’s trust in families is more difficult to recognize, but noticeable when pedagogues believe that children are struggling to adopt Danish norms. In particular, both my fieldwork and notable scholarship reference two important Danish norms that are used as indicators of children’s development and family’s childrearing competencies: self-control and verbal expression (Dencik 1998). Due to the structure of ECEC—

with its emphasis of child-directed play and the inability for pedagogues to cater to all children's needs simultaneously— self-control and verbal expression become crucial norms within institutions, for children are trusted to conduct themselves appropriately and ask for help when needed. Since “self-managing children are an institutional necessity...staff count on and expect parental support in this matter” (Gulløv 2011:13). Because these expectations of children's abilities are heavily rooted in the functioning of the institution, they are deemed necessary and essential components of what “should be” a universal parenting priority (Gulløv 2011). When children exhibit mastery of these skills, trust in families is maintained. However, when children struggle to reach these behavioral benchmarks, their lack of ability is attributed to their cultural differences, and thus trust in families is broken.

Self-management. A few weeks into my time in Copenhagen, a new child, a recent immigrant from the United States, enrolled in the vuggestuer across the street from the børnehaver. Although the child was only three, his pedagogues expressed their frustration that the child was unable to put on his own shoes, zip his coat, or generally take care of himself. When explaining the situation, my supervising pedagogue reiterated the importance of the self-reliant child, and hypothesized that the American child's dependency was likely due to his upbringing in the U.S., where “children don't learn these things” at a young age. Although it may be true that children in the U.S. are not expected to achieve the same level of independence as their peers in Denmark, the pedagogue's response points to a larger trend in ECEC: when children struggle to adhere to behavioral norms, their challenges are attributed to cultural differences in childrearing, rather than their individual capabilities. Therefore, since social trust between institutions and families is difficult to restore once it is broken (Hardin 1968), this

pattern of thinking leads to the general distrust in the parenting abilities of non-ethnic Danes. Consequently, this contributes to the tendency for non-ethnic Danish children to be treated differently in Danish ECEC.

Verbal Expression. One such example of differential treatment is evidenced by the pedagogues' belief that non-native Danes are not encouraged to express their feelings at home (Gulløv and Bundgard 2006:149). As previously mentioned, when compared to Danish children, ethnic minority children are often viewed as socially and culturally "deprived" (Gulløv and Bundgard 2006:149). At the same time, Danish children are given the benefit of the doubt, for the pedagogues and practitioners believe in the proper upbringing of the Danish child, and thus attribute any inconsistent or troublesome behavior to an individual moment rather than a question of cultural values.

For instance, in their explanation of pedagogue-child interactions, Gulløv and Bundgard (2006) provide an excellent example of this phenomenon playing out in an institutional environment: when faced with the situation of two typically gregarious children exhibiting signs of shyness and sadness, the pedagogues attributed the Danish child's emotional distress to a typical post-holiday sadness, while the Turkish child's behavior was blamed on her lack of emotional expressiveness at home (Gulløv and Bundgard 2006:147-148). When asked about the situation, the pedagogue clearly explained the Turkish child's experience through the deprivation paradigm:

We are just not able to establish contact with her. She simply cannot put words to her feelings and thus subsides into silence, making it impossible to make any contact. I keep training her in order to make her express her feelings, but she just cannot express herself. I do not think they talk like that at home. It is crucial to teach them to voice their feelings.

Thus, the fieldwork example, and the pedagogue's use of the word "them" (to make a generalization about all ethnic minority children) reflects the troubling phenomenon highlighted by Gitz-Johansen (2003) where "[p]roblems for Danish children tend to be explained in social, psychological, or neurological terms. Ethnic minority students, on the other hand, are viewed as coming from backgrounds that lack cultural and language resources" (p. 76). Therefore, challenges faced by ethnic minority children are attributed to their cultural upbringing, which results in a lack of trust in the parents' childrearing abilities as they relate to the norms of the welfare state.

Trust in Children

In the midst of what, at times, seems like joyful chaos, pedagogues are often strategically absent from the action, for children are trusted to play and exist without supervision (Gulløv 2011). Unlike the carefully monitored play which I had witnessed in American preschools, "Danish [pedagogues] allow children their independence...because they consider it important that children have time alone—away from adults—where they can play without interference" (Ringsmose and Kragh-Müller 2017:23).

On my first day at the børnehaver, my tour of the house included a stop in the "pillow room"—a room, typically containing pillows, mats, and cushions, that is specifically designated for children to play without pedagogue supervision. When the pedagogue and I entered the room, there was a giant pillow fort, but no children in sight. Then, one by one, three children slowly popped out from behind the mattress and grinned mischievously. The pedagogue explained that she was giving me a tour then promptly pretended to hide her eyes and mutter "I'm not looking, I'm not looking," as we exited the room. By cultivating such spaces of freedom, Danish

børnehaven give children the “latitude to resolve their own conflicts” and create a unique peer culture that is free from adult influence (Ringsmose and Kragh-Müller 2017:6). In doing so, pedagogues demonstrate their trust in children, which in turn helps the children develop trust in themselves and in others (Alexander 2016).

Further, children are also encouraged to engage in risky play as a way to build trust in their own abilities to tackle challenging situations (Sanderseter and Lysklett 2017:125-126) and learn from their mistakes. As stipulated in The Six Curricular/Educational Themes discussed previously, “[c]hildren should be encouraged to conduct their own investigations, supported and guided in daring to practice over and over again thereby building a basic trust in their own ideas and abilities, even though they face adversity” (Ministry for Children and Social Affairs 2018). As demonstrated by the pedagogue shouting “come on you can do it, you got it!” to the nervous four-year-old climbing across the monkey bars like a horizontal ladder, pedagogues “trust [children] to trust themselves” (Alexander 2016). Rather than making children fearful of new and potentially dangerous situations, pedagogues build a foundation of trust by helping children understand the risks and the need for caution but, ultimately, encourage them to experiment with their own abilities and grow into happier, healthier, and more resilient children (Alexander 2016).¹⁶

By imparting the values of Danish society through the daily practices of the institution, child care programs shape how children understand themselves and others while contributing to the intangibility of the Danish identity and the formation of the democratic citizen.

¹⁶ Although outside the scope of this thesis, trust and risky play are essential characteristics of *Skovbørnehave* (forest kindergartens), which focus on outdoor education and hiking. Today, Denmark has over 500 *Skovbørnehave* (Sandseter and Lysklett 2017).

Conclusion

The Role of Danish ECEC

This thesis explores the role of ECEC in maintaining key pillars of Danish citizenship and belonging. To ground my argument, I began my analysis with a discussion of the purpose of ECEC within the welfare state. In order for the operation and continuation of the Danish welfare state, a political system built upon collective investments for the common good, citizens must believe in the vision of life curated by welfare institutions. Therefore, drawing upon Durkheim's (1925) theory of moral education, in Chapter One, I argue that education serves as the primary method through which the welfare state ensures the existence of a loyal and diligent citizenry willing to live in accordance with the dominant norms of welfare institutions. Therefore, with the majority of Danish children in child care institutions from their first year of life, ECEC programs become the primary site of socialization, where children become citizens.

However, the concept of citizenship is neither straightforward nor static. Rather, it is a dynamic social identity constantly being restructured and reformed. I build upon Turner's (1994) theory of citizenship from "above" and "below" by I arguing that while the Danish state creates citizens through legal means, universal ECEC creates citizens through social means. Thus, imbuing children with the dominant values of society, ECEC serves the role of integrating children into Danish cultural life.

To support this claim, in Chapter Two, I offer my own contribution to the scholarship by identifying democracy, equality, and trust are the core values of Danish cultural identity, and thus the central principles of Danish ECEC. To begin, I examine how the Danish concept of democracy, centered around a free and participatory citizenry, is reflected in ECEC through the promotion of *dannelse* and togetherness, which fosters autonomous individuals who understand

the importance of the collective life. Next, I employ Gullestad's (1984) theory of "equality as sameness" to investigate how emphasizing similarities leads to the "othering" of differences, particularly for non-ethnic Danes. Moreover, since trust is aided by the assumption of sameness, I then examine how the perception of homogeneity in the welfare state facilitates the process of dual socialization, while generating distrust in the parenting capabilities of non-ethnic Danes.

Finally, in Chapter Three, I examine how these values of democracy, equality, and trust are transmitted through daily practices in ECEC institutions. Pulling examples from my fieldwork experience and relevant scholarships, I argue that the day-to-day interactions and activities in an ECEC center help socialize children into the norms of citizenship by allowing them to "live" Danish values in everyday life. I assert that the value of democracy is learned and expressed through children's free play and their active participation in collective activities. Through acknowledging relationships with pedagogues and the emphasis on sameness, both outside and inside the institution, children learn the values of equality. And finally, I posit that trust is reinforced through behavioral norms and independent play, yet trust is lost when individual differences are attributed to cultural differences.

Therefore, through Denmark's system of universal child care, the values of democracy, trust, and equality are instilled in Danish children, thus preparing them to become the next generation of citizens willing and able to ensure the survival of the welfare state and the continuation of Danish society.

Where do we go from here?

Although I am grateful for the opportunity to engage in this work, writing a thesis during this tumultuous time has been a challenge to say the least. While parsing through field notes, I

was forced to reflect on the importance of being together, and more so, on what is lost now that we are apart. What does it mean for a four-year-old to go to child care online? What values are being transmitted when no physical interaction is taking place? What does togetherness look like from six feet apart? How will the future be impacted when the next generation of citizens is being socialized through a screen?

Although I have no answers to these questions, I try to find a glimmer of hope. I find hope in the educators and ECEC practitioners who have been working tirelessly to preserve the spirit of child care, even if it's from miles apart. I find hope in children, for they never cease to stop learning, engaging, and asking questions. It is through their curiosity and ingenuity that we will be able to recover and rebuild. And lastly, I find hope in Denmark. As the first country to reopen schools, "Denmark seems to be on its way to life after the coronavirus—with the youngest leading the way into the new normal" (Gargiulo 2020). Thus, as the Danes have taught me time and time again, when in doubt, look to children. As we exist in a moment rife with uncertainty, when it is difficult to know what to do or where to turn, I put my trust in children. Not only will they be the ones who will grow into adulthood in this new and strange world, but their generosity and resilience can be a lesson for us all. So, as we discover how to navigate this uncharted territory, I urge us all to learn from the Danes and move forward together, if not for ourselves, then for all children.

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