

TRANSFORMING SWEDISH CHILD WELFARE THROUGH CLAIMS TO REPRESENT CHILDREN

Hedvig Nylén

Institutionen för socialt arbete, Stockholms universitet

This study explores claims to represent children, emerging from demands to enhance children's rights. In Sweden, these claims converge in a governmental report considering the incorporation of the third Optional Protocol of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into Swedish law. Here the report is analysed based on concepts from political theory on the representative claim. The discussion indicates that: (1) as the children's rights discourse evolves towards representation, NGOs can use their strong position within this discourse to make claims to represent children; (2) the shift in the discourse increases the risk that children's voices are perceived as a resource for political purposes; (3) when NGOs make rights-based claims to represent children, children are portrayed as victims of societal deficiencies; (4) the claims to represent children result in a new, more bureaucratic role for the publicly organised Swedish Child Welfare Service.