Producing pathways: The production of change for ethnic minority socially marginalized families

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Abstract
In an educational system, oriented towards ensuring heightened educational performativity, there is an increased focus on reducing discontinuities between home and educational contexts for ethnic minority children. This article argues, that this is done in a number of more or less standardized ways that attempt to allow for parents and children to transcend their marginalized positions. The article critiques these standardized strategies and introduces Tanggaards notion of "pathways" as a way of analyzing the concrete and situated ways in which professionals, parents and children wrestle with discontinuities and negotiate new ways of moving forward in the socio-material conditions afforded by the particular practices.

Keywords
pathways, marginalization, home-school partnerships, ethnic minority, discontinuities

Introduction

In an interview with a pre-school teacher, a refugee mother was described as both illiterate and unable to tell the time. Consequently, she struggled to pick up her child on time creating great frustration for mother, child and staff. Other teachers described struggles relating to getting the children to school on time (or at all), making sure they were dressed appropriately, as well as stimulating them sufficiently in order to ensure their development and learning. This article addresses how professionals work with these issues in educational settings, attempting to find solutions in everyday practice in an effort to support all children's education and thus reduce inequality.

Research in the sociology of education has for almost half a century been focused on understanding inequality in education, with classics such as Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) and Willis's (1977) work describing the reproduction of class in education at the forefront of this tradition. It has long been agreed that the major differences in school experiences for different classes and ethnicities lies to a large degree in the discontinuities between the cultural backgrounds and family practices of certain groups and the culture of schools (Ogbu, 1982). As Mørck (2007) writes,

> "Expanding possibilities of learning and transcending marginalization is about making better connections, relevance, and transcending contradictions across the pupil's action contexts." (p. 210)

This focus has led to an interest in research in the field of home-school/daycare partnerships in an attempt to counter the impact of discontinuity between home and school/daycare. However, reducing the discontinuities between cultural backgrounds and schooling and thereby enhancing ethnic minority school-performance has proved to be notoriously difficult. There seems to be two main approaches to this problem in both educational policy and research, namely a transplantation model that teaches parents skills perceived necessary to counter discontinuities, and a compensation model, that seeks to eliminate differences by assuming responsibilities traditionally thought of as parental responsibilities (Matthiesen, 2016a). This article describes these approaches and argues that the former leads to further marginalization whilst the later leads to the over-burdening of professionals as well as stripping parents of their rights. These approaches are often implemented at a policy level in a top-down blanket strategy fashion (Husted, 2016) to solve problems of discontinuity. As an alternative, this article draws on the notion of "pathways" (Tanggaard, 2015, 2016) as a concept that allows for analysis of how professionals (teachers/daycare personnel), parents and children negotiate ways of wrestling with these discontinuities and creatively produce new ways of participating through the conditions afforded by the contexts.

The article first delineates the field of home-school/daycare partnerships, the problem of discontinuity and the strategies employed to deal with this problem as well as a critique of these strategies. Subsequently a timid theory of change is presented introducing the notion of pathways which is used to analyze four examples of challenges encountered by professionals, parents and children. The concept of pathways is discussed arguing that change is produced by negotiating new ways of participating through creatively meandering through the conditions afforded by particular contexts and practices.

Discontinuity between home and educational contexts

In a schooling system that increasingly values effective education that is outcome oriented focusing on "what works" (Biesta, 2007), much research has pointed to the effectiveness of parental involvement in increasing pupil attainment levels (Desforges & Abouchers, 2003). In this neo-liberal education system parents are considered both customers who are receiving a service (education for their children) and at the same time held accountable for ensuring their children's success in education (Popkewitz, 2003). Parents are considered *partners,* i.e. responsible agents able to engage productively in ensuring positive schooling outcomes (Epstein, 2001). Moreover, they are considered *assistants* that are required to answer the call of the schools (Matthiesen, 2015; Theodorou, 2008). However, some groups of parents are not considered capable of living up to this responsibility. These parents include ethnic minority parents such as immigrant or refugee parents (Matthiesen, 2016a).

In a study of 302 immigrant parents (from diverse locations) in Basque region of Spain, Intxausti, Etxeberria & Joaristi (2013) showed, that despite high educational aspirations immigrant parents were generally not very involved in their children's schooling. This is a pervasive tendency found throughout the research literature, and consequently, research on parental involvement of marginalized groups such as immigrant and refugee parents has focused on barriers for involvement, pointing to language barriers (Dennesen, Bakker & Gierveld, 2007; Peterson & Ladky, 2007; Vera, et. al., 2012; Rah, Choi & Nguyén, 2009; Bitew, & Ferguson, 2010; Ibrahim, Small & Grimley, 2009), and structural barriers such as lack of time and resources to come to parent-teacher conferences due to inflexible working-class jobs, assisting their children in homework and otherwise engaging in parental-involvement activities (Peterson & Ladky, 2007; Rah, Choi & Nguyén, 2009; Bitew & Fergusen, 2010; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Wang, 2008). Bitew and Ferguson (2010) as well as Ibrahim, Small and Grimley (2009) additionally stress that teachers likewise lack structural opportunities that give them extra time and resources to work with immigrant and refugee parents. Furthermore, some researchers stress that immigrant and refugee parents lack knowledge of the educational system, of what is expected of them, and of how to go about supporting their children and ensuring their educational success (e.g. Bitew & Ferguson, 2010; Ibrahim, Small & Grimley, 2009; Ladky & Peterson, 2009; McBrien, 2011; Rah, Choi & Nguyén, 2009).

In the neo-liberal schooling systems aimed at increasing measurable school outcome these perceived parental inabilities and deficits (Matthiesen, 2016a) have resulted in an increase in interventions which strive for dissolving the

discontinuities between home and school for particular groups of children. Additionally, research on marginalization in schooling is increasingly pointing to the need for early intervention (e.g. Ringmose, 2016). In a rapport on countering marginalization through early interventions it is stated: "The small child is incredibly open to learning from the moment s/he is born. At no time later in life is the potential for learning greater than in the earliest years" (Ringmose, cited in Jørgensen & Preisler, 2016 p. 14). Additionally they write,

> "All parents want what is best for their children but in a marginalized family the parents may not have the necessary competencies, and as a society we need to be much better at discovering this and reacting to it."
> (Christensen, cited in Jørgensen & Preisler, 2016 p. 6)

These interventions can be categorized into two models: the transplantation model and the compensation model (Matthiesen, 2016a). In the following these two models will be described:

The *compensation model* builds on the notion that the teachers are the experts who can compensate for any perceived parenting deficiencies and lack of competencies. This is done by assuming responsibilities typically thought of as parental responsibilities such as homework support for instance. An example can be what has been termed whole-day schools implemented in social housing areas with a high density of ethnic minority and/or socially marginalized families. These whole-day schools are intended to compensate for perceived parental deficiencies by taking over responsibilities for socialization and ensuring sufficient academic support for students (Holm, 2011). This model is problematic because it strips the parents of responsibility, rendering them helpless and, in a significant sense, positioning them as ineffectual or even harmful with regards to their children's education, overall development and life-success.

The *transplantation model* is instead intended to dissolve the discontinuity between home and school by empowering parents through *transplanting* the expert knowledge of the educators: "Parental interventions have the greatest impact because they are closest to the child in the first completely vital years. Make alliances with the parents, and teach them how to make good relationships preferably before the child is born." (Ringmose, cited in Jørgensen & Preisler, 2016, p. 16). This is done through intervention programs (e.g. standardized programs such as Parent Management Training Oregon: Patterson, 2005) intended to teach parents to do parenting differently. An example is the introduction of family classes (first time in Denmark in 2003) that are designed to help parents of 'troublemaking' children to develop the necessary skills to support their child's educational work (Knudsen, 2009). An example that explicitly strives to ensure a better parent-teacher communication can be found in

Robin (2008), who conducted an intervention study on the basis of this perceived lack of know-how, where parents in an English-as-second-language class where taught parental involvement skills including dialogue skills. This intervention culminated in a meeting with a school principal.

These approaches have been thoroughly critiqued particularly from a poststructuralist perspective. When discussing the discontinuity between home and school, Mehan (1992) writes

> One conclusion that could be drawn from this analysis [based on the work of Bourdieu] would be this: Change the cultural capital of the low-income family. Increase bedtime reading, the density of known-information questions at home, and so forth. This would be the wrong inference, however, because it is based on the tacit assumption that the prevailing language use and socialization practices of linguistic and ethnic minority children are deficient. (Mehan, 1992, p. 7)

He thus points out the problematic assumption that *difference* is equal to *deficient* (Guo, 2012). Others have pointed out that working class or ethnic minority parents participate in their children's schooling in other ways than those valorized by the school (Crozier, 2005; Dannesboe et al., 2012; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2007; Palludan, 2012), resulting in unequal opportunities for participation and support. This critical approach notes that policy makers, intervention designers and schools tend to draw on a rather narrow understanding of how to support one's child. For instance, Lightfoot (2004) writes:

> ... middle-class parents are seen as overflowing containers, whose involvement in schools is to be valued…contrasted with low-income, urban parents who speak English as a second language and who are portrayed as empty containers, which need to be filled before they can give anything of value to the schools or their own offspring. (p. 93)

Consequently, this narrow normative understanding of what constitutes 'good parenting' found in schools and that form the foundation of the before mentioned intervention programs risk resulting in enhancing and further manifesting the marginalization of both parents and children.

This critique has in turn been criticized for what has been termed a romanticized egalitarian focus that insists on demanding that parents *want* equal opportunities for participation and influence in a busy life where perhaps at times this ideal is not coherent with the lives parents lead. The critique posits the claim, that, due to busy work life and other pressure, parents perhaps at times appreciate compensatory strategies, where they are relieved from responsibilities and can

rest assured that others will take care of their child (Crozier & Reay, 2005). Others have likewise pointed out that the demands placed on parents from a policy and school-centric perspective is accelerating and difficult for many working parents to honor (Dannesboe et al., 2012). Furthermore, it has been noted that the problem with this poststructuralist approach is that it is a theory of reproduction that adequately analyses power dynamics, the production of identity and (im)possibilities of action, but does not point to ways in which persons can transcend marginalization (Mørck, 2007; Matthiesen, in press). It does not point out ways in which change can be produced and how persons can transcend marginalization. In order to understand how the problems of discontinuity between home and educational contexts are addressed in practices allowing for transcending marginalization, we need to understand how social practices are not only reproduced, but also how they may open up for possibilities of change. In the following section, a socio-ontological theory of learning is introduced where subjects are understood as radically social and mutually independent. The concept of pathways is furthermore introduced in order to analyze examples of how professionals, parents and children negotiate the experienced discontinuities in educational practices.

A timid theory of change

According to Kvale (1976; 1977) conventional learning theories have had huge impacts on how we conceptualize human change. In order to understand change, and the ability to transcend marginalization, theories of learning are of central importance. By drawing on Jean Laves situated learning theory and Axel Honneths theory of recognition, Nielsen (2016) develops a critique of traditional theories of learning. He writes, "…it can be claimed that mainstream theories of learning lead us to misrecognize where the potential for real change lies" (p.156). This misrecognition of where the potential for change lies is due to an overly individualized understanding of agency. He argues that mainstream learning theories conceptualize human beings as rational, individualistic and utilitarian, where action is directed in a means-end rationale towards predetermined goals. The freedom of the agent is central, stressing the ability to choose. Change thus becomes an individual matter, centered around the rational choices of the subject. This is the logic that drives the transplantation interventions (such as parenting classes) described above, where marginalized parents are taught to change their parenting strategies. They are empowered with the knowledge that enables them to act differently. Learning, and consequently the ability to create change and transcend marginalization, is thus understood in technological means-end terms –

the knowledge of the experts is transmitted to the parents who then can thereby rationally choose to act differently.

Instead, Nielsen (2016) argues, that subjects must be understood as radically social and interdependent pointing out that problems must be analyzed as "constituted by social practices and lack of mutual recognition" (p. 156). According to Lave and Packer (2008), "we are always already 'thrown' into a concrete situation, in a way we cannot get out of or behind, or get completely under our control" (p. 31) and at the same time persons are active participants purposefully engaged in interactions. As Dreier (2008) points out, human beings live their lives across different contexts that have a variety of purposes and are organized structurally and materially in different ways. They are constituted as practices that are (re)produced and changed through the concrete participation of persons actively engaging in interaction. Each individual is positioned in the practice both structurally and socially with an array of possibilities for participation bound to each position, i.e. a teacher has the right as well as the duty to participate differently in a parent-teacher conference than the parent who must participate in a way that is appropriate for parents in this particular practice (Matthiesen, 2016b). Furthermore, each participant has different concerns, goals and orientations. The participation of each individual is thus constituted by the structure of the practice as well as the participation of the other participants, and simultaneously the participation of the individual is constitutive of the practice. The being of subjects is thus complexly interwoven with the other. Existence is dynamically coproduced.

In this perspective, change is thus connected to learning, but learning is considered something fundamentally different than the Cartesian dualistic approach where knowledge is understood as the acquisition of information, beliefs and processual skills (Lave, 1997). Instead learning is understood as an expansion of individual possibilities of participation in changing social practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991). It is thus a radically social process that does not adhere to logics of changing the individual through rational technological means-end strategies, but rather of changing practices thereby allowing for change in human *being*. Change, and the possibility of transcending marginalization, is thus inherently social and complex. Change is therefore not straight forward and frictionless. It is produced in the dynamic interplay of difference (Holland & Lave, 2001), through negotiations and struggle. Although Nielsen (2008) argues that learning and change are possible in social practices, he stresses that "change and transformation does take place, but slowly and incrementally" (Nielsen, 2008, p. 187). This is thus a timid theory of social change, ideologically ambitious, yet respectful of power dynamics and the complexity of the intertwining of human lives in socio-materially produced practices.

So, rather than looking at abstract technological solutions such as parenting classes, it is important to look at what practitioners and parents are actually doing in practice to solve the problems they face in their everyday lives. When attempting to understand change in this socio-ontological approach, it can be helpful to draw on Tanggaard's (2015; 2016) concept of *pathways.* Pathways are defined as "concrete movements and ways of making in everyday life" (Tanggaard, 2016, p. 97). Creative pathways can be considered new ways of moving, new ways of participating, new ways of being, that are already present and afforded by the practice, yet not necessarily realized or imagined beforehand. They are produced through co-creation, coordination, sharing and connecting of subjects and objects in practices that afford the possibility of certain actions rather than others (Tanggaard, 2015). Pathways are thus new ways of being that are co-produced through concrete participation drawing on the socio-materially afforded conditions of the practice. It recognizes the radical social nature of human being by stressing that new ways of being are intricately woven into the conditions of the practice, i.e. socio-materiality as well as the participation of others.

The concept of pathways is a descriptive analytical concept that may be used to describe how particular problems are solved in practice creating change. The concept is thus not normatively imbued with particular universal ideas of what constitutes 'good' processes of change. However, the concept does allow for, perhaps even insists on, these normative discussions. This call for normative discussions is rooted in the socio-ontological approach that stresses the inherent radically interconnected nature of human being. This interconnectedness calls for approaches to change in educational contexts that recognize the co-production, shared, and negotiated way in which participation in practice is produced and consequently how it may be changed. In the following, I will describe four different examples of pathways. Three of these examples may be characterized as successful, whilst the last example was a failed attempt at creating change. The examples are drawn from a study of a social housing project intended to teach ethnic minority parents how to engage differently in parenting in order to reduce discontinuities between home and educational context, but also teachers/day-care personnel and principals how to work with and handle these problems. Firstly, the study will be briefly described followed by a description of the four examples which will subsequently be discussed.

The study

In January 2016, an intervention program named Parent Academy was started in a social housing area in a larger city in Denmark. As many other intervention programs, this program was designed to empower socially marginalized parents by providing them with knowledge of the educational system and of 'good' parenting practices. Parents were invited to evening classes where topics such as 'conflict management' and 'the psychology of a child' were taught. Parallel to the classes for the parents, a series of classes were offered to teachers and daycare personnel who worked in the area's schools and daycare institutions. These classes centered on topics such as "understanding of culture" and "the importance of community." Participant observations of these classes were conducted. Subsequently both parents and teachers/daycare personnel were interviewed. Additionally, two days of observation were conducted in one of the areas pre-schools.

The four examples I will present are drawn from conversations held as part of the classes offered for teachers, from the interviews with teachers and daycare-personnel and from the observation at the pre-school. The material was saturated with conversations about difficult problems, struggles and frustrations as much of the talk in both the classes and the interviews revolved around the problems the teachers and daycare personnel experienced. Although this indicates that the practice is imbued with difficulties and the teachers and pedagogues are longing for solutions, this pervasive sense of frustration may also stem from the focus of the meetings and the interviews, where the parent academy program was designed as a place to discuss difficulties. Occasionally, however, narratives of how these problems were solved also emerged, and in the pre-school observation the pre-school teachers were constantly solving problems. As we shall see, these ways of solving the problems that they were confronted with (which shall be termed *pathways*) both reproduced marginalized positions but also allowed for the possibility of change and transcending marginalization. Many more examples could have been presented, but these four are chosen because of their exemplary and illustrative characteristics.

Example 1: Situated dynamic pathway

This first example is from the observations at a pre-school where a pre-school teacher explained that one of their mothers was illiterate and could not tell the time. This meant that she struggled to pick up her child on time before the pre-school closed. This was solved simply by calling her on her phone at 16.00 pm, so that she knew that it was time to pick up her child. This pathway was created

by drawing on the conditions available in the practice, allowing for the mother to pick up her child on time. This pathway did not transplant knowledge (this would require teaching the mother how to read the time). This may in other cases be a viable solution, but in the particular case, the mother's dyscalculia made this impossible. But is not a compensation pathway either, as it does not entirely compensate (this would require the teachers taking the child home) but allows the mother to act differently. It could be termed a situated dynamic pathway.

Example 2: Situated compensational pathway

In an interview a daycare leader, Mary, described some of the day to day struggles they have with particular families. When I asked how they solve these problems, she told me a story of a single mother, a refugee from Somalia, who had six children. The daycare center had made the demand that the children should be escorted to the daycare center by 10.00 am at the latest, but this particular mother often struggled to meet this demand for various reasons. This meant that the mother often kept her youngest child at home. The daycare wanted the child to attend regularly as this was in their opinion the best way to ensure a sense of trust and security for the child when she attended daycare. At the time, the daycare center had received an appropriation that allowed them to hire an assistant who created a certain flexibility in manpower for the daycare center as it was one more person than they were used to. It was arranged with the mother, that, when necessary, the assistant could walk over to the family's apartment and pick up the youngest child.

This solution was thus another pathway that allowed for the child to attend daycare more regularly and thereby thrive better in the center. Once again certain socio-material conditions made this pathway possible including the extra manpower. This approach drew on a compensation strategy, and could be termed a situated compensational pathway, as the strategy compensated for the difficulties the mother was experiencing. By taking into account the situated conditions of the mother, the approach refrains from implying that the mother was inadequate or in some way deficient, not wanting to meet the demands of the daycare center or incapable of doing so in an essentialized permanent manner. Instead the daycare leader, Mary, recognized that certain conditions at that particular time made it difficult for this mother to live up to this specific requirement a negotiated a pathway that met the needs of both mother, child and daycare center in a way that was temporary and transformable. It is precisely both the negotiated and the situated nature of pathway that differentiates this approach from the standardized compensation models described above.

Another example of a situated compensational pathway is in the pre-school where they have a box of extra raincoats, mittens and hats for the children whose parents either cannot afford these items or who have perhaps forgotten to bring them to the pre-school. Once again this is not necessarily a permanent solution for this problem, but allows for equal participation (playing outside with the others despite bad weather) for these children from marginalized families.

Example 3: Situated transplantational pathway

This third example, like the two above, also relates to time-schedules. In a class-session a young teacher (Muhammed) argued that it was important to "go the extra mile" when working with marginalized families. He told a story of a family (comprised of a father and two children) that were refugees from Syria. The father suffered from PTSD and struggled to live up to day to day demands. The children, attending a local school, often did not come to school and when they did they typically arrived late. When realizing that the father, apparently due to his PTSD, struggled to live up to the demand of getting his children to school, Muhammed decided to spend a week teaching the children to take the bus to school. He got up early in the morning and went to the family's apartment and helped them take the bus. He likewise helped them home after work. After a week, the children were capable of taking the bus on their own.

Muhammed thus created a pathway together with the children that enabled them to meet the demand of coming to school. The socio-material conditions were already in place, i.e. a bus-route nearby, a school schedule that they are required to adhere to etc. In order to produce change, Muhammed, together with the children, created a pathway using these conditions. This could be termed a situated transplantation pathway as Muhammed successfully enabled the children to learn to attend school on time, empowering them to live up to the requirement of the school, i.e. arriving on time. This particular example does not include the father, creating a pathway that did not require his participation. Whether or not this was *good* is difficult to judge, as the father was not interviewed. This point of the contingent nature of the normative value of the pathways will be discussed further below.

Nonetheless, the examples thus far have overall been presented as positive pathways that have enabled change, not by changing parents or children in a technological way but by creating new ways of participating for both parents, children and teachers. However, pathways are not necessarily positive constructions that are neatly and frictionlessly produced. They are created in social practices that are produced and organized through particular power

structures. In the following I will present an example of a pre-school teacher's attempt to create a pathway that was resisted by the child.

Example 4: Resisting a proposed pathway

In the pre-school, a small ethnic minority girl (Huda) does not speak very much. The pre-school teachers are worried because they are concerned that she will not develop her language skills sufficiently before starting school. In their opinion, it is their responsibility to ensure that she has adequate language skills before starting school as her parent's do not speak Danish well (i.e. a compensatory logic). At lunch time, a group of children are gathered around a table where a pre-school teacher, Simon, is seated. He has their lunchboxes and raises each one in turn. The children say their name when their lunchbox is raised. When Huda's lunchbox is raised, she remains silent. Simon places the lunchbox on the table and continues with the next one. Eventually Huda's lunchbox is the only one that has not been handed out. When Simon raises it again, Huda climbs under the table.

Simon tries to create a pathway that motivates Huda to speak by coaxing her to at least utter her name. But she resists this pathway, negotiates it, and instead creates her own by climbing under the table. In this way, she physically places herself outside of the social circle where she was demanded to speak and negotiates another kind of participation. This new pathway, moving under the table, was not considered 'good' by Simon. The example points to the necessary condition of joint production, where all parties are concerned about and oriented towards the same agenda. This may often create tensions, contradictions and struggles which risk reproducing social inequality rather than producing change and the possibility to transcend marginalization.

Discussion

In each of the described examples the teacher or day care leader/pedagogue together with the children and/or parents created a new way of moving forward that allowed for new possibilities for participating, i.e. new ways of being. In each case the pathways created were already afforded by the practice, both materially and socially, but were assembled in a new way allowing for a different connection, a different movement, a different path. As Tanggaard and Beghetto (2015) point out, ideas develop in interactions within sociocultural and materially structured spaces. The kind of pathways described in this article are all purposeful and reflectively thought through. However, it would be meaningful to

study how pathways are produced spontaneously as bodily pre-reflectorily coordinated interactions in the socio-material practice, i.e. how pathways are produced in an improvisational here-and-now.

With the exception of the fourth example, each pathway that is produced meets the actual situated needs of the involved persons. It is not necessarily a permanent solution. Furthermore, due to the situated and particular nature of the pathways produced in a specific socio-material context, it is not a standardizable tool that is applicable in other situations and contexts. There is an increased tendency in education for to-down municipality implemented strategies to counter discontinuities between home and school/daycare with either a transplantation or a compensation rationale. However, these strategies are connected to at least two problems. Firstly, these top-down one-size fits all solutions risk dismantling professional reflection, judgement and engagement reducing teachers/daycare personnel to mere technicians executing predetermined methods towards predefined goals (Husted, 2016). Secondly, these standardizable solutions build on an ontological assumption that situations fall into certain categories and types, so "evidence" and best-practice descriptions from other contexts may be applicable to new settings as they follow the same situational rules (Dohn, 2011). But situations are always concrete and socio-material as well as bound to persons who are uniquely oriented towards the world. Something never works in an abstract sense – always in relation to concrete and particular conditions with acting and thinking persons with specific concerns and orientations. It is a *pathway*, not a highway. It is produced tentatively and dynamically, with the possibility of moving in a different direction and allowing the path to be erased when it is no longer applicable in the particular case (being either quickly covered by downfallen leaves or slowly overgrown by shrubbery).

Importantly, in each example it is clear that no pathway was created without the co-operation and co-ordination of all involved participants. As we saw in the last example, Simon attempted to create a pathway where it was meaningful, even necessary, for Huda to speak, but she resisted and negotiated this pathway, insisting on another way of participating, creating, through her bodily negotiation, a new pathway that was not in accordance with the concerns of Simon. Two points about the notion of pathways become clear through this example: Firstly, pathways are negotiated and require co-ordination and co-operation by all involved participants. Secondly, the notion of pathways may be seductive, stressing buzz words such as 'creation', 'change' and 'co-operation', but pathways are not inherently *good* as change is not inherently good and learning is not in itself valuable. As Biesta (2015) stresses, it is important to consider what learning is *for*, i.e. the purpose of learning and the purpose of the

change created in the pathway. This means that the normative question of what constitutes a 'good' pathway is crucial. Furthermore, the change produced ought to be meaningful for the participants rather than forced change (Matthiesen, in press).

This leads us back to Nielsen's (2016) socio-ontological approach to learning presented in the section entitled "A timid theory of change." Nielsen (2016), drawing on Honneth's theory of recognition, argues that social conflicts and social domination are not to be considered conflicts of interest but rather as struggles to achieve recognition (p. 152). Recognition is closely tied to its counterparts; social contempt and disrespect. Recognition is thus, according to Honneth, about *recognizing* the individual as an autonomous and agentic individual. However, as Nielsen (2016) stresses, this individuation is not to be considered separation but rather an understanding of the individual intertwined and co-produced in a socio-material context. Recognition of the individual as autonomous and agentic thereby requires creating spaces that allow for the individual to respond as an agentic subject. Standardized one-size-fits-all attempts to find ways through which parents and children can transcend marginalization, often do not allow for negotiation thereby shutting down the opportunity for the struggle for recognition. Consequently, the possibility for recognition is asphyxiated. The production of situated pathways, on the other hand, do hold the potential for recognition – the recognition of particular needs, of certain strengths and abilities, of desires, longings and concerns held by unique agentic individuals who can respond to the participation of the other.

In addition to this strong development towards standardized models and solutions in education, Biesta (2015) points to the rise of the culture of accountability. He distinguishes between bureaucratic and democratic accountability. Accountability is about giving an account of what has been done and why, which of course is in itself important and helps raise the standards of everyday work. However, whilst bureaucratic accountability entails providing data that shows how the professional meets certain pre-defined standards, democratic accountability focus' on what makes education good. It holds a strong normative element. Democratic accountability has to do with professionalism and judgement and allowing for the teacher/day-care personnel to wrestle with the normative questions of what is the best way forward in this particular case. Democratic accountability thus allows for the creative production of unique pathways. Bureaucratic accountability, on the other hand, has to do with technical scientific "evidence" and risks becoming a mechanical measure of control, rather than enabling opportunities for ensuring the quality of the work done (Biesta, 2015).

I wish to further distinguish between accountability and responsibility. Accountability has to do with being held accountable by others, whereas responsibility has to do with responding to the other – it has to do with the obligation to respond to the need of the other in an ethical sense (see Løgstrup, 1957). The notion of pathways, with its socio-material focus on co-operation and negotiation, insists on, is even contingent on, the ability to respond, i.e. response-ability for *every* social actor involved. This means that both the professional (teacher/pedagogue etc.) and the parent/child must be able to respond to the other as they co-produce ways of participating through negotiations of their afforded conditions in the practice. It is this response-ability that allows for the struggle of recognition and the possibility of transcending marginalization.

Conclusion

The notion of pathways is a helpful concept in order to analyze how social actors (in this case professionals, parents and children) go about creating change. A person's being is constituted by but also simultaneously constitutive of the practices in which they participate and live their lives. "Pathways" is a concept that allows us to examine how professionals, parents and children negotiate and wrestle with the challenges posed to them by the discontinuities between home and educational contexts. Pathways are produced in and through socio-material settings, enabling subjects to participate in new ways through new ensembles of afforded conditions. Although the concept is descriptive it rests on the socio-ontology of human being as radically interconnected. This means that in order to create 'good' change one must acknowledge the necessity of negotiation and resistance and the possibility for each actor to respond to the other. It requires creating space for professional judgement, rather than striving for standardized solutions to uniquely constituted struggles.

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