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Children's Participation in Social Work Research - Openings, Opportunities, Obligations and Considerations

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Abstract Title

CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH - OPENINGS,
OPPORTUNITIES, OBLIGATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

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Since the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989), the consideration on children as citizens regarding equality and participation has been a growing challenge to our societies and in practical social work research. The concept of childhood has been linked to the protection of children. But the children seem to be objects of rights more than subjects of these rights. The paper will present, discuss and elaborate the findings concerning children and students involvement in social work research regarding practice and education on different levels based on the results of the three years research project on using Signs of Safety / Safety Plans in Child Welfare in a municipality in Denmark. The qualitative research aim was to investigate the children's participation in decision making. The empirical basis is including several groups of children, 3 to 15 years of age, and different research methods, such as dialogue meeting with children and case-material developed together with the children and students. Many students from social work education in Copenhagen, children and social workers from child welfare have been involved in the process of collecting data. The paper will explore openings, opportunities, obligations and considerations regarding

- How the children are involved in decision making regarding their own safety and well-being
- How the children look upon their own role in decision making

- The children as co-researchers in social work research in practice
- What the professional social workers can learn from the process as reflective practitioners
- The impact and perspectives on practice and education when students are involved in social work research
- Challenges and perspectives in transforming the findings into education material for students in social work research practice and education