'Doing Transitions'

The Formation of Transitions over the Life Course

Research and training programme

Coordination
Prof. Dr. Andreas Walther (Goethe-University Frankfurt am Main)
Prof. Dr. Barbara Stauber (Eberhard Karls University Tübingen)

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1. General Information

1.1. Applicant researchers

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Research Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Dr. Sabine Andresen</td>
<td>Goethe-University Frankfurt, Faculty of Educational Sciences</td>
<td>Theodor-W.-Adorno-Platz 6 60323 Frankfurt am Main Tel.: 069-798-36432 Mail: <a href="mailto:S.Andresen@em.uni-frankfurt.de">S.Andresen@em.uni-frankfurt.de</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Professor for Educational Sciences, Social Pedagogy and Family Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Dr. Petra Bauer</td>
<td>University of Tübingen, Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, Institute of Education, Department of Social Pedagogy</td>
<td>Münzgasse 22-30 72070 Tübingen Tel.: 07071-2976757 Mail: <a href="mailto:petra.bauer@uni-tuebingen.de">petra.bauer@uni-tuebingen.de</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Professor for Educational Sciences, Social Pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Dr. Birgit Becker</td>
<td>Goethe-University Frankfurt, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute for Sociology</td>
<td>Theodor-W.-Adorno-Platz 6 60323 Frankfurt am Main Tel.: 069-798-36323 Mail: <a href="mailto:Bi.Becker@em.uni-frankfurt.de">Bi.Becker@em.uni-frankfurt.de</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Professor for Sociology und Empirical Educational Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Dr. Barbara Fiebertshäuser</td>
<td>Goethe-University Frankfurt, Faculty of Educational Sciences</td>
<td>Theodor-W.-Adorno-Platz 6 60323 Frankfurt am Main Tel.: 069-798-36392 Mail: <a href="mailto:B.Friebertshauser@em.uni-frankfurt.de">B.Friebertshauser@em.uni-frankfurt.de</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Professor for General Educational Sciences and Empirical Gender Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Dr. Christiane Hof</td>
<td>Goethe-University Frankfurt, Faculty of Educational Sciences</td>
<td>Theodor-W.-Adorno-Platz 6 60323 Frankfurt am Main Tel.: 069-798-36398 Mail: <a href="mailto:hof@em.uni-frankfurt.de">hof@em.uni-frankfurt.de</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Professor for Adult Education, with a focus on Adult and Continuing Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Dr. Frank Oswald</td>
<td>Goethe-University Frankfurt, Faculty of Educational Sciences</td>
<td>Theodor-W.-Adorno-Platz 6 60323 Frankfurt am Main Tel.: 069-798-36398 Mail: <a href="mailto:oswald@em.uni-frankfurt.de">oswald@em.uni-frankfurt.de</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Professor for interdisciplinary studies of ageing, development, education and counselling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Dr. Markus Rieger-Ladich</td>
<td>University of Tübingen, Faculty for Economics and Social Sciences, Institute of Adult Education, Department of General Pedagogy</td>
<td>Münzgasse 22-30 72070 Tübingen Tel.: 07071-2975435 Mail: <a href="mailto:markus.rieger-ladich@uni-tuebingen.de">markus.rieger-ladich@uni-tuebingen.de</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Professor for Adult Education, with a focus in General Pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Dr. Bernhard Schmidt-Hertha</td>
<td>University of Tübingen, Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, Institute of Education, Department of Adult Education/Continuing Education</td>
<td>Münzgasse 22-30 72070 Tübingen Tel.: 07071-2975016 Mail: <a href="mailto:bernhard.schmidt-hertha@uni-tuebingen.de">bernhard.schmidt-hertha@uni-tuebingen.de</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Professor for Adult Education, Professional Development and Continuing Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Dr. Barbara Staufer (Deputy Coordinator)</td>
<td>University of Tübingen, Faculty for Economic and Social Sciences, Institute for Adult Education, Department of Social Pedagogy</td>
<td>Münzgasse 22-30 72070 Tübingen Tel.: 07071-2978316 Mail: <a href="mailto:Barbara.Stauber@uni-tuebingen.de">Barbara.Stauber@uni-tuebingen.de</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Professor for Adult Education and Social Pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Dr. Andreas Walther (Coordinator)</td>
<td>Goethe-University Frankfurt, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Institute for Social Pedagogy and Adult Education</td>
<td>Theodor-W.-Adorno-Platz 6 60323 Frankfurt am Main Tel.: 069-798-36383 Mail: <a href="mailto:A.Walther@em.uni-frankfurt.de">A.Walther@em.uni-frankfurt.de</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Professor for Educational Sciences. Focus in Social Pedagogy and Youth Welfare</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Also member of the Faculty of Psychology
1.2. Summary

The research training group focuses on the question how transitions in the life course are formed and produced. Transition research has so far dealt with the structural factors of transitions and their effects on individual agency and life course trajectories. The research training group starts from the assumption that transitions are shaped and produced through social practices. It seeks to complement transition research through the analysis of how transitions emerge, focusing on the interrelation between discourses on transitions, institutional regulation and pedagogical action as well as individual processes of learning, education and coping. Research questions address all life ages from childhood up to old age along three thematic strands:

- How are transitions produced and framed by the discursive articulation of demands, distinctions of success and failure and risk identification?
- How are transitions regulated and processed at the institutional level? What aspects of pedagogical action are included in the formal and informal processing of transitions?
- How are transitions shaped through individual processes of coping, learning and education and how is this reflected in individual development and life course trajectories?

Apart from this, interest lies on the interrelationship between levels on which transitions are shaped and produced. The research training group addresses excellent graduates interested in these questions, especially from educational science, sociology and psychology. Further, it seeks to

- Contribute to a broader transdisciplinary understanding of transitions as a social practice in addressing uncertainty and how this is related with social reproduction of inequality,
- Increase reflexivity with regard to the discursive, institutional and pedagogical as well as individual processing of established and newly-emerging transitions in the life course,
- Place young researchers in disciplines, research areas and professional fields that are concerned with transitions as well as at the interfaces in which transitions evolve.

The excellence of the research training group is secured by the high profile and expertise of the consortium, the availability of international networks, a differentiated process of recruitment as well as the high quality of the training programme, which is sensitive to participation and equal opportunities.

2. Profile of the Research Training Group

Transitions are commonly understood as changes in an individual’s social status across the life course, resulting from the entanglement of individual development and expectations about social roles. This research training group starts with the observation that as the structural role of life phases decreases over the life course, increasing numbers of social situations and life conditions are considered and treated as transitions. This applies to all ages and fields of living and socialization: for instance, childhood transitions in day cares or primary school; transitions of adolescence in school, education in children’s home, or in informal youth cultural scenes; in young adulthood in the transitions of work and parenting; transitions in adulthood into new employment opportunities or relationships; in old age for transitions into new types of housing and care settings. Cross-cutting to life ages, transitions result also in relation to processes of migration or bad health, to name just a few.

Research on transitions and the life course so far has emphasized life course trajectories and effects of transitions, such as social positioning as a consequence of transitions or their reflection in the course of biographic (re)construction. Hence, transitions appear as ‘social facts’ (Durkheim), individuals have to cope with. However, little is known about how these transitions come about and on which processes they are based on. To gain theoretical,
methodological and societal irrelevant evidence about these processes is particularly important as transitions can reflect social norms and expectations of normality. They are also linked to individual and collective uncertainty, social structures of inequality and the reproduction of inclusion and exclusion.

The current focus of transition research on trajectories and effects of transitions in the life course translates into limited conceptualizations of transitions in terms of social structure or individual agency, or increasingly an assumed interaction between structure and agency. The Research Training Group seeks to expand this perspective. The concept ‘Doing Transitions’ follows the ‘Doing Different’ approach and applies a practice theoretical perspectives that allow an analysis of practice through which social situations are addressed as transitions. The concept ‘doing transmisions’ and complements previous research on how transitions structure life course trajectories and viceversa. The question how transitions are produced and formed is analysed on three levels: discourses, institutions, and individuals. At each level, transitions are produced and situated in specific modes, which have been hitherto more examined as contextual factors of processes rather than in terms of performative social realities. As such, on the level of discourse, this approach focuses on analyses on the order of knowledge as well as the thematization of transitions as specific modes of formation. At the institutional level, modes are evident that regulate, standardize, and coordinate transitions, for instance as standard patterns or to prepare individuals for new life requirements. At the individual level, it is important to examine how transitions are interpreted biographically with specific reference to how they are practically acquired, modified and subsequently integrated into the actual life course trajectory.

The three levels, which have primarily been analysed as separate phenomena in previous research on life course and transitions, are considered together in this research, particularly in terms of their interactions. Of particular interest are therefore the requirements of transition discourses for individuals, that is, aspects of knowledge and skills, and the dominant conceptualisations of success and failure. At the institutional level, it is particularly interesting to consider formal and informal practices of preparation, reviewing the suitability and support for the movement into the new life roles and in some cases as well, the practices associated with compensation when individuals fails in meeting existing requirements. These aspects of the institutional regulation of transitions particularly appear within the new thematization and modification of transitions in educational institutions. Finally, practices of individual formation of transitions are evident in the form of reconstructed processes of biographical appropriation, which are reflected in various ways in models of coping with everyday life as well as individual learning and educational processes.

This research training group departs from recent research that concentrates on transition trajectories and effects by providing a much deeper examination of the modes of formation and production. It focuses on how the transitions emerge from and establish within the interaction between their formation through discursive orders, institutional regulations, individual coping strategies, learning and educational processes. The research programme is divided into the following research questions and areas of focus:

- How are transitions produced and framed through the discursive articulation of requirements, the differentiation of success and failure as well as the identification of risk?
- How are transitions processed and regulated on an institutional level? What pedagogical aspects are involved in formal and informal processes?
- How are transitions formed in the course of individual coping strategies, learning and education processes and how is this reflected in biographical developments and life courses?

At the heart of the question will be which modes of formation and production can be observed at work at these levels, to determine how each of these modes relate to each other, and how this explains the emergence of new transitions and result in a thematization and formation of established transitions. Furthermore, this research will explore the role of uncertainties and
insecurities in the formation of transitions and how this also leads to the reproduction of social inequalities. Accordingly, the changing relationship between forms of production and processes of transitions are investigated.

The dissertations will define the research objective and choose the empirical point of entry for one formation/production level, while keeping the other levels of investigation in view. The selection process ensures that within the research training group all three research focuses and possibly each age group as well will be represented. The substantive and methodological structure of the qualification programme ensures that the dissertations are oriented towards the overarching research aim and that the findings contribute to a common understanding of the effects and theorization of transitions.

The goal of the research training group is first, to contribute to a broader understanding of transitions in terms of practice by which individuals' life courses are structured, coordinated and normalized in a social context. Second, against the background of an increased focus on and regulation of transitions, this research will also substantiate the need for increased reflexivity in how educational deal with insecurity and uncertainty. Third, since the analysis of transitions requires a collaboration between traditionally-separate disciplines, and interfaces between fields of knowledge and professional backgrounds, the doctoral candidates will be exposed to promising and sustainable academic and professional career opportunities.

Given the comprehensive and mutually-complementary prior work of the researchers involved in the field of research on transitions and current expertise in research on different age groups, Frankfurt am Main and Tübingen offer optimal, highly complementary, internationally-oriented and stable cooperative relationships for the research training group. This is also reflected by the structural variety of existing research options for early career researcher. The universities have excellent doctoral and post-doctoral services and therefore make important contributions to the understandings of transitions as well as their formation and production.

3. Research Programme

3.1. The State of Art of Research on Transitions over the Life Course

In a social science understanding, transitions are described as a change in social status over the life course. This includes transformations during the life course and biographies that lead to a change in role and/or status, changes in subjective self-concepts and social positions that are triggered by external expectations such as institutional life course expectations. However, they could also be triggered by changes in subjective life orientations. The roots of research on transitions can be found in anthropological research on initiations and rituals, which position the resulting transitions as a universal element of individual development resulting from the tension between the maintenance of the social order and social change inherent to generational change. Accordingly, van Gennep (1981) differentiates ‘rites des passage’ on the basis of different transition phases (separation, conversion, affiliation). Eisenstadt (1956) identifies the arrangement of learning processes used to prepare individuals for the requirement of a new role as the focus of initiation rituals, which contributed to social differentiation over the course of the education of particular age groups such as the youth phase. Turner (1969) analyses the creative and innovative moments that emerge from such transition communities, for example youth culture. Additionally, Glaser and Strauss (1971) refer to transition markers and sequences in the social reproduction of institutionalized functional regularity.

Since the mid 1980s, new research on transitions has emerged, increasingly inspired by sociology of education and sociology of the life course rather than anthropology. Bourdieu (1990), for instance, criticizes that the anthropological approach masked structures of inclusion and exclusion. The US-American research group led by Elder (1985), the Bremen Colloaborative Research Centre, SFB 186, ‘Status Passages and Risks in the Life Course’ (Heinz 1992, 2000; Behrens/Voges 1996; Weymann/Heinz 1996; Heinz/Marshall 2003) or the Max Plank Institute’s life history research on education (et al. Blossfeld 1986; Mayer 1990,
1991; with a focus on the differences between East and West Germany; Hillmert/Mayer 2004) brought the question about the influence of socio-economic and institutional factors in the processes of social reproduction over the life course to the fore. These studies primarily focused on the sequence of social statuses within life course trajectories. At the same time, research was also concerned with the diagnosis of social individualization and pluralization, the flexibilisation of work, the limitations of welfare state security, and the question of stability and change in standardized life course regimes (Kohli 1985; Beck 1986). The life course was understood as an institutionalized differentiation that linked life stages, and was therefore part of the social division of labour: ‘age-bound progression of typical, socially-defined states’ with ‘specific expectations (roles)’ (Scherger 2009, p. 532).

From this research, different fields emerged under the banner of current-day ‘transition research’. This developed with the support of international organisations, which to a large extent sought to determine general context-specific aspects of social change (OECD 1998; European Union 2009). Given the decreasing reliability of national structures, the international comparison was also connected to a political desire to identify ‘best practices’ in managing transitions because a large amount of the research indicators corresponded to institutional criteria for success.

As an extension of this research perspective, life history research brings the reciprocal relationship between transitions and institutional markers (Alheit/Hanses 2004, p. 23) into focus by complementing research on transitions that questions the construction of subjective identity and life histories as well as the appropriation of and coping with transitions (cf. Alheit/Dausien 2000; Dausien 2013). The life history approach was significant for the development of a ‘subject-oriented transition research’ (Stauber et al. 2007). Transitions, inter alia in international comparative research, are investigated as an expression of the negotiation between institutionalized life courses and subjective biographical social action (cf. Evans/Heinz 1994; Evans 2002; Kieselbach 2001; Weil et al. 2005; Walther et al. 2006). A broad life history perspective of transitions brings the plurality of partial transitions into consideration, particularly in terms of those faced by young adults: educational transitions, transitions into parenthood, transitions from foster care, transitions into university, transitions into citizenship and participation in civil society.

Changes over the life course have also been increasingly given interdisciplinary treatment. Educational research on transitions is connected to developmental psychology’s conceptualization of transitions insofar as it examines transitions in early childhood but also in adulthood (Welzer 1993; Griebel/Niesel 2004; Hof/Maier-Gutheil 2014), while developmental psychology increasingly discusses the person-environment relationship across an individual’s lifespan (cf. Baltes 2005). Although national and international research on transitions has expanded in terms of life ages and aspects of life, it continues to be framed in terms of institutional structures of life phases and the associated norms and social constructions (cf. Allmendinger 2005; Burkart 2008). In this sense, current research on transitions identifies points with which this research group can start in order to extend the research perspective:

Research on transitions in childhood is a relatively new field which has developed due to a rising attention on early educational processes, particularly since the expansion of childcare facilities (e.g. daycares) and in the wake of research by the Programme for International Student Assessment (Griebel/Niesel 2004; Roßbach 2005; Kamerman 2008; Hasselhorn 2010; Honig 2012). In panel studies or studies that focus on the links between individual competence development, family context, and daycare and classroom settings in particular, transitions are increasingly gaining attention (cf. Baumert et al. 2009a, 2010; Cadima et al. 2010; BMFSFJ 2013; Maaz et al. 2014). In the context of the institutionalized life course, early transitions, such as those in nursery or primary school fulfil functions of preparation as well as selection (cf. Denner/Schumacher 2004; Becker 2009; Betz 2013). Studies on these transitions, however, refer to the decreased influence of social characteristics as well as the use of childcare according to children’s increasing age (cf. Fuchs-Rechlin/Bergmann 2014). Despite the fact that parents are involved in the study of children’s transitions, research on the topic tends to remain at the level of exploring simultaneous transitions separately or consider
Parents to be merely contextual factors in their children's transitions (cf. Büchel/Spieß 2002; Andrén 2003; Wiese/Heidemeier 2012; Salmela-Aro et al. 2010; Settersten/Cancel-Tirado 2010; Erola et al. 2012; de Maes et al. 2012; Yu et al. 2010). This research group draws in particular on the intergenerational studies that explore the mutual importance of transitions for both the parent and the child (cf. McDonald/Evans 2003; Vélez et al. 2011; Andresen/Richter 2012; Maes et al. 2012; Kalmijn/de Graaf 2012; Graßhoff et al. 2013). This is also connected to early work on processes of adapting to normative transitions and the associated shortening of childhood (Diehm/Panagiotopoulou 2011; Kelle et al. 2012; de Valk/Milewski 2011; Beelmann 2013; Kelle/Mierendorff 2013; Andresen et al. 2014) as well as the institutionalization and pedagogization of the reproduction of social inequality during transitions (cf. Helsper/Kramer 2007; Bischoff/Betz 2011; Klinkhammer 2014).

Transitions from youth to adulthood has for long time been the primary object of transition research as the transition to adult status is ascribed the meaning of full social membership and thus a key role in social integration and reproduction (cf. Eisenstadt 1956). Historical youth research has reconstructed the differentiation of youth as the institutionalization of a developmental moratorium (Musgrove 1968; Zinnecker 1991; Andresen 2005). Newer research on transitions, which focuses on entry into the workforce and youth unemployment, has primarily concentrated on the identification of risk factors for youth unemployment and educational disadvantage: social background, gender, migration and ethnic background, regional disparity, education levels and psycho-social development as well as international comparison of education, welfare state, and the labour market (Lex 1993; Roeder/Schnabel 1995; MPI Bildungsforschung 1996; Gangl/Müller 2003; Hammer 2003; Solga 2005; Wagner 2005; Billett et al. 2012; Low et al. 2012; Faas et al. 2013). Additionally, research on subjective processes and strategies of coping with precarious transitions as well as the effectiveness of educational and political measures has grown (cf. Heinz/Krüger 1985; Schoon/Silbereisen 2009; Thilen 2011; Bibb 2012; Seifige-Krenke et al. 2012; Cucona-to/Walther 2015; Parreira do Amaral/Stauber 2015). With the extension of measures of the so-called 'transition system in Germany' (cf. Bildungsberichterstattung 2008; Oehme 2013) and Europe (Pohl/Walther 2007), the anticipation of career-oriented measures and preparation in school (Bolay/Walther 2014) are increasingly entangled with transition research and educational research (cf. Baumert et al. 2009). In the extension of life history research, mechanisms that lead to the reproduction of inequality in educational trajectories have been brought into focus, for instance those of high school students (see for example the Graduate Centre for Education and Social Research 2006; Maschke et al. 2012), but even more so other transitions in the youth phase: between school and leisure time (Zinnecker 2001), the transitions of so-called Care Leavers from foster care into independent life (Köngeter et al. 2012; Schröer/Thomas 2014; Sievers et al. 2015), transitions in the context of youth culture (Stauber 2004; Sting 2013), transitions between legality and criminality (Sackmann et al. 2000), housing transitions (Iacovou 2010; McHa-le/Crouter 2011; Meuth 2014), transitions marked by risky practices of consumption (Litau et al. 2015) as well as young people's expectations in relation to upcoming transitions (Woodman 2011; Pettit et al. 2011). The DJI Survey AID:A studies childhood, youth and family in terms of broad development processes over the life course (Rauschenbach/Bien 2012). Despite criticism of the dominance of institutional success criteria and problem definition, for instance the reproduction of constructions such as 'disadvantaged young people' or 'trainability' (in the German context), which has often accompanied research on youth transitions (cf. Walther 2002; Großkopf 2014; Karl 2014), this has hardly led to questions about how transitions are produced in the youth phase. One exception is Pfahl's (2011) study, which explores the entanglement of discursive and individual adaptation in subjective processes in the context of disability and the transition into vocational training. The research training programme will follow research in particular that applies a biographical approach and/or explicitly reflects normative assumptions and problem definitions.

This is particularly true for research on young adults' lives as an expression of destandardized transitions into adulthood, or 'life in transition' (Stauber/Walther 2013; cf. Cavalli/Galland 1995; Junge 1995; Walther 1996; Hurrelmann 2003; Arnett 2004; Settersten/Ray 2011; Kelly et al. 2012). The prolonged, precarious, and uncertain transitions of young adult into the workforce
are examined in relation to changing relationships between institutional perspectives and subjective experience, for example orientations that focus on the general desstandardization of the life course. This coincides with a reflexive and critical differentiation of dominant normative orders (cf. Rietzke/Galuske 2008; Stauber/Walther 2013). Starting a family as a transition into parenthood is considered a central moment in integration and reproduction alongside finding employment, both the timing of starting a family (Stauber 2011; Kühirit 2012; Schober 2013) and the effect of the retransitionalisation of gender relations (Fthenakis et al. 2002, Berger et al. 2011; Dechant/Schulz 2013; Jurczyk et al. 2014). International studies have also investigated transitions in and outside of school such as the influence of family and socio-economic backgrounds or those from non-traditional higher education students (cf. Bowl 2001; Alheit et al. 2008; Bradley/Renzulli 2011; Busseri et al. 2011; King 2011; Roksa/Velez 2012). Transitions in childhood are not only considered in the context of early parenting against the background of social and demographic changes, but also gain attention in studies on the importance of caring for family members as young professionals (Hamilton/Adamson 2013). The research group, ‘Young Adult Lives in Transitions’ (University of Mainz) focuses on the relationship between social change and new biographical requirements (cf. von Felden et al. 2014). Research on this transitional stage can be recognized particularly where it does not follow the pattern of a ‘successful’ transition but instead raises questions about the relationship between professional and family-related transitions as well as their connection to social structures and the production of transitions, which is at the heart of this research training group.

Transitions that primarily occur in middle and late adulthood have for a long time been neglected despite the fact that life course research—such as research completed in the context of the MPI for educational research—have underscored the importance of social and professional positioning in adulthood, for instance family and educational trajectories (cf. Mayer 1991, 1997; Lauterbach 1994; Jacob 2004; Hillmer/Mayer 2004; Mayer/Schulze 2009; zu Migration Hao/Woo 2012). The collaborative research centre ‘Status Passages and Risks in the Life Course’ (Bremen) has paid particular attention to the relationship between structured inequality (primarily gender, educational background and social status), institutional processes such as Gate Keeping and individual biographical action. Against the background of a path-dependent life course regime and labour-market-related tendency toward flexibility, mobility through education and training, the re-entry of women into paid work as well as transitions in and out of social assistance come into view (cf. Geissler/Krüger 1992; Leibfried et al. 1995; Witzel et al. 1996; Born 2001). International studies often refer to the effects of transitions in childhood and adolescence as well as career transitions in adulthood (cf. Geissler/Krüger 1992; Leibfried et al. 1995; Witzel et al. 1996; Born 2001). The expansion of transitional research allows a critical analysis of the demands adults increasingly face in the context of the activating welfare state with its shift towards self-responsibility and expectations in terms of lifelong learning (cf. Alheit 2009; Field et al. 2009; Ecclestone et al. 2010). In such perspectives, critical forms ‘transformative learning’ (Mezirow 2000; Taylor 1998) have emerged as a subject (Hof 2013) in addition to career changes, transitions in and out of unemployment, changes in health, or the emergence of new family constellations (Blossfeld et al. 2006a, 2006b; Rupp/Blossfeld 2008; Schröer/Stiehler 2008; Böhnisch 2008; for transitions in the wake of natural catastrophes see Cohan/Cole 2002). These new and newly structured transitions accurately reflect the research perspective that will be followed by this research group.

Regarding transitions and the life course in old age, the focus on retirement reflects the dominant employment-orientation of transition research (cf. Kohli et al. 1992). Research on family transitions in old age also relates to risks and risk factors of care, neglect, loneliness, or illness (cf. Bookwala 2011; Mezuk et al. 2011; Harris 2011; Yong/Saito 2012; Hurd Clarke/Bennett 2013; Fokkema/Naderi 2013). Additionally, it describes the resource-poor ‘fourth age’ (Gildeard/Higgs 2010), in long-term care (Robeiro et al. 2007; Backes et al. 2008), during chronic illness (Bury 1982), or frailty (Hurd Clarke et al. 2008) as well as transitions into homecare or assisted living systems (Burkart 2009; Ryan et al. 2012). Such research is not only helpful for the transitional perspective but also proves to be useful in terms of resource-based preventative health research, particularly with regard to the future necessity of
integrated communal strategies for the provision of ‘sustainable networks’ of demand-oriented support from so-called ‘prevention chains’ or ‘caring communities’ (Klie 2012). Additionally, the line of inquiry discusses the potential for active decision-making in retirement, for example, continuing with employment, civil society engagement, or supporting the family (Grenier 2012; Börsch-Supan et al. 2013; Schneider et al. 2015). At the same time, the transitional perspective takes into accounts processes of adoption and adaptation to the home environment, for example in terms of the implementation of new technologies as well as moving (Wahl/Lang 2004; Oswald et al. 2014; Oswald/Wahl 2013; Oswald 2012). Furthermore, transitions are also examined in terms of changes in male and female roles (Fooken 2004), such as processes of social development like grandparenthood (Klosinski 2008), changes driven by dramatic losses such as widowhood (Bennett 2007; Mann 2007), changes in how time is experienced and individual processes of death, for example, and confrontation with the end of life (Clark 2002; Auffarth 2012; Hurd Clarke/Korotchenko/Bundon 2012; Paul et al. 2015; Bildtgård/Öberg 2015). New forms of regulations for transitions associated with aging processes have been given very little attention. Slowly, however, discursive re-evaluations and requirements taken in the context of ‘active aging’, demographic development as well as the mobilisation of a welfare state are being brought into view (Lessenich/Otto 2005; Maier/Buchen 2008; Ehmer 2009; Denninger et al. 2010; Kruse/Wahl 2010; van Dyk/Lessenich 2010; Igel/Szydlik 2011; Dill/Keupp 2015), which also have particular importance for questions about the formation of transitions.

The overview of the state of art of national and international research on transitions can be summarized to the effect that such research has to date had a narrow focus on the institutionalized life stages, and thereby has both documented and reproduced the modern ‘normal life course’. This manifests itself primarily in a dominant focus on trajectories of transition and the relationship between socio-economic, institutions and individual factors on one hand and life course trajectories and social positioning on the other. Research primarily focuses on the reasons why certain individuals deviate from the linear life course and fail in achieving institutional standards. Thus, current research contributes to the reproduction of both the underlying constructed and institutionalized notions of normality and the related standards of success and failure. Schröer (2015) criticizes this as a ‘methodological institutionalism’ of transition research, which accepts transitions as given social facts. Accordingly, transition research does not only risk generalising a specific historical constellation of ‘normal’ but also depriving the field of an analysis of the genesis and the mechanisms of reproduction of social inequality.

Accordingly, this research group will focus more on the how of the production and formation of transitions. This will not only make the creative and dynamic aspects of transitions visible but also allows for analysing the (re)production of historical and societal constellations of normality and its consequences. For this purpose, the research group will build on recent development in research on transitions in the educational sciences, which is related to the fact that insecure and uncertain transitions are more and more addressed as problems and by pedagogical practice. The research questions the role of educational actors in the formation of transitions as well as the goal orientation of pedagogical action in light of the destandardisation of the life course (cf. Lenzen 1997; Stauber et al. 2007; von Felden/Schiener 2010; Hanses/Homfeldt 2008; Böhnisch 2009; Schildmann 2010; Thielens 2011; Ahmed et al. 2013). Such developments have been documented in questions such as those about the role of pedagogy in the formation of transitions in early childhood (Griebel/Niesel 2004; Oehlmann et al. 2011) or about the basics of educational guidance during transitions (Walther/Weinhardt 2013). The profile of the recently published ‘Handbook of Transitions’ (Schröer et al. 2013) is strongly influenced by pedagogical perspectives while Hof et al. (2014) outline a ‘pedagogy of transitions’. Educational and pedagogical research are therefore good starting points, as it is here that the changing relationships between discursively produced education goals, institutionally framed educational activities and individual processes of education, coping and learning are revealed. It is the basic assumption of the research group that transitions are generally produced and shaped as a product of such changing conditions.
3.2. Modes of Production and the Formation of Transitions – Theoretical Framework

Transitions do not exist on their own; they are not natural occurrences but are instead socially constructed and are socially malleable insofar as they are repeatedly reshaped, reformed, or bypassed through processes of construction. By focusing on the processes of production and formation of transitions guided by the concept ‘Doing Transitions’, this research group is engaging with a theoretical approach currently used by different social science disciplines. The goal is to avoid the narrowness, oversight, and theoretical subsidence of the dualism of structure and action (cf. Biesta/Tedder 2007; Raithelhuber 2013). This dualism has been criticized often for running the risk—with its focus on the structural conditions of transitions—of structurally-deterministic misunderstanding. The narrative of individual accomplishment and agency tends to deal with problematic elements such as a ‘strong subject’ with numerous factors. For both structural and agency-oriented perspectives, transitions are primarily analysed without consideration of their origins.

The perspective ‘Doing Transitions’ establishes a complex entry into research on the origins of transitions for all ages. Transitions are no longer viewed as simple rites of passages more or less successfully navigated—in the confines of normative orders—by individuals, but are considered instead performative social realities (Hirschauer 2004), which are constantly constructed and shaped. Accordingly, the view is not only strengthened for new transitions but also for new forms of already existing transitions. The same accounts for the reciprocal relationship derived from the articulated requirements and criteria for success, practices for their mediation as well as processes of adaptation. In this perspective, all life phases with their corresponding transitions as well as overarching life themes can be explored. For example transitions in old age, which for example are produced and formed by the arrangement of care, discourses about seniorhood as well as material shortages of nursing care insurance, can also, in hindsight, be analysed in parallel to transitions in early childhood or act as an entry point to the reconstruction of the importance of and experience with being dependent during the life course.

The question about how transitions establish themselves as performative realities will be the central focus of this research, particularly in terms of the difference between different modes of production and formation of transitions as well as the interaction between the two. The theoretical like the empirical questions transforms the current research focus on transitions as constellations of structures and actions (cf. Heinz 2001; Furlong/Cartmel 2006; Woodman 2009; Walther/Stauber 2013), without losing sight of structural relationships and agency. This reflected by applying two theoretical approaches:

The first point of entry is the ‘doing difference’ approach (West/Fenstermaker 1995). Initially conceived of in terms of ‘doing gender’ (West/Zimmerman 1987) in gender research this interactionist approach allows for research on the complex interrelationship between social structures (such as segmented labour markets, a gender-specific division of labour, state regulations), institutions (e.g. schools, families, churches), symbolic orders (representations, norms, symbolic violence, recognition systems), social practices (e.g. interactions, performances) and historical subject formations (e.g. identity formation, subject positions). The interplay takes on different forms; its elements arise from historically-developed power constellations and relationships, which not only reproduce but also extend, neutralize, build up, contradict, and therefore transform transitions.

The second point of entry is gained from a practice-theoretical perspective (cf. Reckwitz 2003; Schmidt 2012). An understanding of practice as ‘[…] routinized “nexus of doing and saying” (Schatzki) […]’, [which is] held together by an implicit understanding’ (Reckwitz 2003, pp. 290) offers an opportunity to avoid a reductive action-theory perspective on different forms of production and formation of transitions: appropriation, articulation or shifts of transitions are
thereby not as a predominantly intentional act driven by ‘strong subjects’. Instead, they are now considered as a practice that is ‘embedded’, tied to the incorporation of social orders and the physical disposition of individual actors involved. This perspective is also found in models of person-environment exchanges, as discussed, for instance, in developmental psychology of the lifespan. The latter postulates that neither individual nor contextual descriptions alone explain the mechanisms of action and outcomes, and therefore focuses on interactive, transactional or social-ecological processes (Bronfenbrenner 1999; Baltes/Smith 2005; Wahl/Kruse 2014). In this theoretical perspective, transitions are no longer considered solely from the predominantly ontological perspective but are understood instead as a social practice, that is socially framed and discursively constructed. The assumption is that there is no guarantee: success cannot be understood as the rule; while failure is not the exception.

Above all else, the ‘doing’ perspective argues against a structural essentialism, and in that matter, it draws attention to the practice-theoretical perspective primarily for the problematic assumption of intentional and capable actors and emphasizes moments of non-availability, contingency, and contextuality (Reckwitz 2003). With these two theoretically compatible entry points, a research heuristic is established whereby the formation of transitions over the life course can be considered part of the interplay between individual constructions and mechanisms of social reproduction. The doing perspective has already been successfully used in the past in analysing the construction of symbolic orders (for example, gender relationships) and has not only drawn attention to the importance of contingency but also has helped to raise awareness of the mechanisms of legitimization for structures of social inequality. Research that analyses this everyday legitimization and normalizing practices underscores the proximity of these two concepts to practice theoretical approaches. The latter are increasingly fruitful for analysis of—in the widest sense—educational contexts (Kessl 2011; Alkemeyer et al. 2014). Both approaches are explicitly interrelated.

The complexity associated with doing transitions is accessed via a heuristic comprising three different levels of analysis: discourse, institutions, and individuals. Again, this involves the identification, description, reconstruction and analysis of different modes of production and formation of transitions.

**Discourses:** On the most abstract level of processes of social negotiations, discourses and their social consequences come into view. Discourses reveal themselves as reality generating, performative statements that create zones of what is said and not said as well as binding conceptualizations of normality, which do not necessarily reflect individual and collective actors (Foucault 1976, 1991). Discourses therefore frame individual actions and shape social practices by establishing powerful situational definitions, interpretive framework and symbolic orders. A challenge for the research group is, therefore, to analyse discourses that—on the foundation of normality and intelligibility—frame the production and formation of transitions. Furthermore, in light of their discursive state the perceptions of insecurity and uncertainty can be reconstructed to which transitions are connected. For the enabling of actors, these discourses are relevant insofar as they implicitly or explicitly individualize the requirements of age roles as well as criteria of success or failure (cf. Rieger-Ladich 2012). Informed by discourse theory, the research group will explore the modes of production and formation of transitions: What circumstances and situations are thematised as transitions and which are not (mode of thematization of, for example, passages)? Which life passages confront which requirements (mode of responsibilization)? Which transitions are attributed to which effects (such as the mode of individualisation, the attribution of success or failure)? And which assumptions of normality and unreasonable demands does this imply for the individuals concerned (see for example Kohli 1985)?

**Institutions:** It is on this intermediate level that transitions are regulated and processed. Using a broad concept of institutions (see for example, Gehlen 1986; Hasse/Krücken 2008) a historically- and socially-situated not withstanding cancellable but also repeatedly affirmed set of rules, requirements, markers as well as processes and procedures. Therefore, in the institutional formation of transitions a pedagogical core is evident, both in the formal as well as informal practices of preparation, assessment and support with regard to entering new life age
roles. This also includes processes of compensation in the case of failure in fulfilling existing requirements. On this level, the production and formation of transitions can be analysed in terms of modes of institutional regulation and standardization such as the labour market, the educational system, and the welfare state (cf. Heinz 1991; Lessenich 1995; Mayer 1997). Professionals in education and social institutions prepare individuals for transitions as ‘gatekeeper’ ensure the fit between requirements and competencies and moderate compensatory measures (Heinz 1992; Behrens/Rabe-Kleberg 2000). For this reason, forms of addressing the perceived risks of transitions through professionalized pedagogical as well as social services are of interest, that are part of transition and life course regimes and involved in reproducing social inequalities (Walther 2011; Griebel 2011; Walther/Weinhardt 2013; Hof et al. 2014). Here, modes of production and formation of transitions involved in professional cooperation and network-like organizational structures are of interest alongside modes of coordination and harmonization, professionalization and (re)regulation.

**Individuals:** This level draws attention to individual actors of a transition, but also on their social environment in the sense of significant others (Mead 1934) like, for instance, parents who experience own transitions through their children’s transitions, or professionals who prestructure and support individual transitions. During transitions, individuals are confronted with ever-new institutional impositions and expectations and well as their discursive framing. Practices of formation are therefore understood as open-ended social processes and - - - in terms of the practices of subjectivation—as an indissoluble dialectic of ‘doing’ and ‘being done’ and of ‘being active’ and ‘being subjected’ (Alkemeyer et al. 2013). Accordingly, individual coping and learning processes are accentuated, which are reflected in individual developmental and life courses, but always in the context of social structures and discourses. Considering the institutionalization of assumptions of normality transitions must be considered in light of success as well as the possibility of failure (Böhnisch 2009; Koller/Riegler-Ladich 2013). The requirements for individuals are embodied in hegemonic models—in both explicit and implicit forms—and devise the tracks of the life course (Thomae 1996). They are constantly adopted individually against the background of biographical patterns and reformulated based on subjective priorities and relevancies but also decidedly rejected, such as in practices of resistance, the transformation of the habitus and educational processes (cf. Welzer 1993; Nohl et al. 2015). It is interesting to note the emergence of different practices of adoption from the negotiations of available socially-structured possible actions as well as subjective motivations and biographical relevance, habitual transformations and individual learning, educational and development processes (cf. Henderson et al. 2006). Social practices are concerned with producing a fit between institutional and subjective modes of formation (Antonovsky 1997; Bourdieu 1993). Fit does not mean a simple adjustment but includes original and creative modes as well.

These three levels are in no way isolated from each other; they can, however, be distinguished from each other for analytical purposes. Such analysis reveals the production and formation of transitions first—similar to the multi-level concept of ‘transition regimes’ (Walther 2006)—in terms of an interrelatedness between discursive framing, institutional regulation, and individual forms of appropriation and formation (Fasang 2012; Fleckenstein/Seeleib-Kaiser 2011; Igel/Szydlik 2011; Champion/Bonoli 2011). It is exactly for this interrelatedness that the ‘doing’ approach as well as practice theory have advantages over current research on transitions and its dominant structural- and action theory perspectives. In this sense, the ‘doing difference’ approach, as it is based on practice-theoretical considerations, overcomes established problem formulations: it creates new theoretical and methodological options to explore the emergence of transitions across different life ages. It neither forgets the role of structure nor does it ignore the relevance of powerful discourses; instead, it underscores the context-specific contributions of collective or individual actors (e.g. children/adolescence, professionals, father/mother, seniors) when doing transitions (see exemplary project descriptions in 3.3).

The question about how transitions are produced and formed, according to the modes of doing transitions, allows to explore the productivity of each specific contribution of the two theoretical approaches and their connectedness to earlier research, which primarily understood transitions in terms of structure and action. Both are therefore able to take into consideration
the level of production and formation for concerned transitions as well as powerful and performative events. This is never frozen in time; both implicit and explicit as well as potentially transformational processes of negotiations take place over the course of the production and formation of transitions.

The research training programme’s research interest is the development and expansion of analyses of the consequences of the patterns of reproduction of inequalities connected to transitions of individual developments and processes understood as exchanges between different levels of the formation of transitions: discourses, which legitimise demands towards individuals as well as related knowledge and skills, which differentiate between success or failure and identify risks or risk groups; institutional practices, procedures and processes that verify individual competencies and skills, that support them during transitions and, in some cases, are also attached to the consequences of failed transitions; and finally, individuals’ attempts to cope with transitions as well as associated learning processes and changes in status that are reflected in individual life courses trajectories. The social relevance lies in the accurate identification and thematization of potentially processes of exclusion as well as their transformative potential.

This interest lends itself to transdisciplinary research. This means that with attention to the underlying thematic perspective of the graduate programme: as a topic of research, the production and formation of transitions has a multidisciplinary relevance. Accordingly, it involves theoretical and methodological approaches and research strategies from different disciplines of educational sciences, sociology, psychology and cultural studies and brings them into a fruitful exchange (cf. Riegel et al. 2010).

3.3. Research Focus and Methodology

The research training programme seeks to analyse different modes of practical production and formation of transitions on the level of discourses, institutions and individuals as well as their interactions in terms of Doing Transitions. Starting from a transdisciplinary understanding of transitions as processes of transformation in the context of individual life courses and biographies, the research focuses first on discourses in which requirements, criteria of success and failure and risks associated with transitions are formulated. Second, the research will also examine institutionalized regulatory practices that prepare individuals for the requirements of future roles and support and advise as well as monitor and oversee them during such transitions and the pedagogical aspects associated with them. Third, the research programme will also analyse practices of coping and formation of transitions at the individual level including learning and educational processes as well as the consequences of complex practices of formation for individual transition processes and sequences.

Accordingly, the research programme traces the levels involved in the formation of transitions across three research focal points (see section 2 and Figures 1). The research areas offer different ‘entrances’ into the analysis of the production and formation of transitions across each specific level, but also remains open to the interplay between discursive orders, institutional-pedagogic practices and individual transitions and development processes. The graduate programme as a whole and its qualifying programs and workshops offer a space in which these different approaches can be related to each other.
In order to avoid overburdening the fellows with the demands of an analysis of the interplay of three central analytical levels associated with the practical formation of transitions, individual projects will focus on one of the three research approaches but must also be aware of theoretical as well as methodological ‘bridges and linkages’ (Helsper et al. 2010, p. 123) between each of the levels.

The interest on Doing Transitions in terms of the question about how transitions are produced and formed seems at first glance to be tied to a qualitative research perspective. Nevertheless, an obligation of a research programme on a particular methodological orientation or a particular methodological approach is not justified in this context. Depending on the research question, standardized, quantitative or non-standardized, qualitative research strategies are appropriate (see Schröer et al. 2013). Thus, quantitative research methods can be a useful means of examining both comparisons of practices of formation as a function of selected contextual factors as well as the consequence of specific formation practices for individual transitions and life courses. The graduate programme practices therefore a methodological pluralism and a fundamental equality of various standardized and non-standardized approaches (see for example Atteslander 2003). Beyond different individual priorities and expertise, the researchers involved are not obligated to a specific methodological paradigm and therefore base decisions about research methodology on the concrete research interests. This is the only way to account for different transitions in tradition research as well as for the specific research interests of individual projects. In the context of innovative research questions, integrative methodological designs (see Kelle/Kluge 2001; Rieker/Seipel 2003; Taashakkori/Teddlie 2010), that require theoretical (knowledge) as well as methodological openness are of increasing importance (see also section 3.4).

Depending on the research subject of different modes of Doing Transitions, different research approaches strategies, and methods are appropriate. The differentiation between approaches according to their function is nevertheless analytical, as concrete research designs usually fulfil multiple functions, for example, are both descriptive and reconstructive:
Descriptions of practices of the production and formation of transitions through the analysis of documents and institutional structures, the observation of individual and collective practices, including formal and informal, professional and everyday conversation; here, the analysis of artefacts (such as documents or organisational structures, see for example Hoffmann 2012; Wolff 2000) are as relevant as ethnographic and ethnomethodological approaches (such as participant observation, see Schulz 2013; or conversation analysis, see Bredenstein/Tyagunova 2012; Kolthoff 1994). Descriptive approaches are particularly needed where new transitions or formation of transitions are discovered and analysed.

The reconstruction of practices for the production and formation of transitions in the context of discursive orders using discourse analysis (Keller 2011), in the context of professional pedagogical treatment using qualitative expert interviews (Meuser/Nagel 2010) and/or participant observation (Schulz 2014), in the context of individual subjective construction, coping, and balancing of life plans through biographical research (Ecarius/Schäffer 2010). Reconstructive approaches are appropriate when it comes to the genesis, reproduction, and relevance of certain practices for the formation of transitions and their subjective and collective meaning.

The analysis of associations between the different levels (discursive, institutional, and individual) of the production and formation of transitions as well as those between transitional forms and transitional processes and sequences through standardized data collection and quantitative methods. For example, this includes regression analysis of cross-sectional data (see Urban/Mayerl 2011; Wolf/Best 2010), but also path analysis (see Christ/Schlüter 2012; Ho Yu 2007), longitudinal data analysis (Allison 2005; Singer/Willett 2003) or sequence analysis (Scherer/Brüderl 2010) on the basis of panel data, whereby, realistically, the dissertation projects are rather based on secondary analysis of existing data than conducting an own primary data collection, and quantitative text analysis (Laver et al. 2003). Such approaches are adequate that focus on the contribution of institutional and/or discursive framing for institutional and educational practices of the formation of transitions or on their relevance for individual processes of transition and the reproduction of social inequality at transitions.

Comparisons of practices of the production and formation of transitions between different historical or national societal contexts (see in particular Walther 2011), between different institutions and/or pedagogical-practical forms of processing as well as between individual processes of transitions. Such comparisons can allow for qualitative comparison methods such as grounded theory or documentary methods in terms of individual or collective courses of actions (cf. Nohl 2006; Strauss 1987) or quantitative methods of comparing transitional processes in connection with different historical and national contexts or different forms of pedagogical treatments. Comparisons are especially appropriate for the examination of the influence of specific discursive and institutional modes of transitions for individual coping, processes and sequences of transitions, or for practical pedagogic interpretive systems.

In the general context, the planned research programme can be understood as a multi-level model to which different research questions, designs and methods make contributions that are integrated theoretically on a meta level. A total of twelve positions will be made available for doctoral candidates to cover the research foci at different stages of life using different approaches. The relationing of the findings of these complementary individual works are an explicit component of the graduate programme. In a cross-project workshop on data analysis, dissertation projects are discussed in terms of their joint contribution to the analysis of the formation of transitions in terms of the interrelationship between different modes. This will stimulate the integration of this overarching perspective as a broader theorization into the own work (see for example Helsper et al. 2010; Winker/Degele 2010).

Subsequently, the three research priorities will be operationalized with regard to the overarching research question with three exemplary ways to implement these overarching themes in the dissertation projects:
Research Focus 1: The Discursive Level

How are transitions produced and framed through the discursive articulation of demands, differentiation between success and failure as well as marking of risks?

Constitutive for this research question is how the (thematization of) demands and expectations associated with certain changes in status and role taking processes contribute to the production of new and the new- thematization of already existing transitions over the life course. This includes questions about:

- discursive orders that are included in the existing forms of institutional regulation and subjective coping with transitions but also (current) discursive practices for labelling, distinguishing, differentiating and problematizing transitions by institutional, pedagogical and individual actors;
- the growth in normality assumptions as well as new norms and normalization that are included in distinctions of successful and failing transitions;
- the implications for the formation of transitions’ constitutive goal definition (for example through the definition of skills as goals of pedagogical actions) but also about the learning processes and arrangements that are considered important in this regard;
- the designation of risks and risk factors associated with transitions as well as the marking of groups as being ‘at risk’ and the relationship between ascriptions and mechanisms of the reproduction of inequality.

Thus, this focus addresses the analysis of power relations and processes, the analysis of forms of subjectivation and the forms of knowledge and competencies that are deemed relevant. In this process, transitional discourses are merged into practices of institutional regulation—as well as into practices of pedagogical treatment—and are produced simultaneously by them. But they are also interrelated to individual development and life courses. Discourses reflect changing social trends but are also found in biographic reconstructions of transitions at different ages.

Discursive orders of the formation of transitions can be operationalized by analysing how transitions over the life course are thematised as decision-making, coping- and behavioural requirements, for which individuals need to prepare themselves or to which they need to react, and how this knowledge is generated. The object of analysis is also how transitions are produced as inducement for learning and education, and, at the same time, as inducements of educating, teaching, counselling or assistance. Projects in this focus apply a research approach for the analysis of the production of transitions using a discourse analysis methodology and use this as a starting point to examining the interplay between institutional-pedagogical and individual practices.

With a discourse analysis a research perspective is developed that asks how transition-related knowledge systems emerge and how they are reproduced and further developed through the interplay between articulation and invocation (Keller 2011). The critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995; Jäger 2009) brings power relations and processes into question, which allows for an analysis of which positions of power emerge from prevailing discourses and how they structure power relations. The material examined through discourse analysis are often political, programmatic and academic texts but also media products. From the perspective of practice theory on discourses (Langer/Wrana 2007), other documents such as pictures and film material, recorded conversations and interviews, TV series (Rieger-Ladich 2014) or literary texts (Koller/Rieger-Ladich 2013) can also be analysed through discourse analysis (for quantitative analysis see Laver et al. 2003; Klüver 2009).

Exemplary dissertation projects could focus on the following topics:

| Competence discourses at transitions in the context of an activating welfare state and lifelong learning such as school and training readiness, employability and active aging. |
A research question might address the similarities and differences that can be found in the discourses on school and training readiness, employability and active aging as well as the conclusions can be drawn in terms of the restructuring of life courses. Neither these discourses nor their interrelationship have been systematically explored to date.

Methodologically, a discourse analysis can be applied using central documents from politics, media, and pedagogical practice.

Interrelations between the three levels of research: discourses on school and training readiness, employability and active aging frame the educational institutional treatment of transitions in terms of school entry, in vocational guidance and career education, employment support as well as in transitions into old age; these transitions are also key occasions for individuals’ biographical constructions.

Alternatively, other discourses could also be analyzed similarly, such as the discourse of responsibilization, or different discourses could be compared at one stage of life, for example discourses about children’s school readiness, children as active learners as well as child welfare and endangerment.

Discourses about lifestyle practices in terms of the best possible preparation for uncertainty and competition in young adulthood, such as self-optimization.

Here, the research question could focus on which demands, criteria for success and risks in relation to which transitional themes are reproduced in the media thematizations and productions about self-optimization in young adulthood and what gender-oriented messages they carry.

Methodologically, a discourse analysis could be completed on contributions to print media (for example, German media such as Zeit, Spiegel, Stern), as well as in self-help literature, self-representations and thematization in social networks (for analysis on webpages, see Schirmer et al. 2015) and television series (for social scientific film analysis see Ehrenspeck/Lenzen 2003).

Interrelations could be pointed out to the conveyance of the ‘technologies of the self’ in education and transition-related counselling as well as to self-optimization as a topic of biographic narrative and justifications for particular young adult lifestyles.

Alternatively, similar discourses could be explored at other stages of life, for example, active aging.

Changes in social normality expectations towards mothers and fathers since 1990

A research question may concentrate on the changes in the expectations towards mothers and fathers of how they prepare and support their children at transitions during the last 25 years in Germany. Are these changes associated with other social developments and discourses of normality?

Methodologically, these questions could be analysed using quantitative text analysis on selected newspapers and magazines for parents. Interrelations between the three levels of research: Social expectations of normality regarding the mother and father role have direct and indirect effects on parents(-to-be) and also influence their utilization of institutional services (e.g. counselling, child care).

Alternatively, changes regarding the social expectations towards educators and teachers over time could be analysed in a similar way.
Research Focus 2: The Institutional Level

How are transitions regulated and processed on an institutional level? Which pedagogical aspects—both formal and informal—are evident?

This research focus approaches the question of the production and formation of transitions on the level of institutional orders, regulations, and initiations. This also implies practices that are not necessarily formally institutionalized, such as informal social regularities or cultural rituals. Of particular importance are practices associated with preparing individuals for transitions, the assessment of prerequisites for transitions, support during transitions, as well as compensation in case of so-called failed transitions. All this brings the pedagogical – understood in a very wide sense – as well as pedagogical goals of such modes of formation into focus: more or less intentional practices associated with the transformation of individual behaviour and lifestyles as well as the transfer of competencies and norms, irrespective of whether they are explicitly identified as educational. This is why Lessenich (2013) refers to the welfare state as an “agent of education” as its material components serve as an incentive and therefore function as education in the normal life cycle. This focus includes addressing institutional and professional practices associated with processing transitions as well as questions as to whether and, if so, how far there actually has been an increase in the treatment of transitions by educational professionals and institutions (in and out of school) as part of a trend toward the pedagogization of transitions (see for example Walther et al. 2014). This question is also important as the institutional forms of approaching transitions frame individuals’ formation of transitions and function as gate keepers for their own biographical appropriation and coping (compare Alheit/Dausien 2000). International comparison of transition regimes (Walther 2006; 2011) shows that institutional regulations are closely intertwined with discourses of social normality and exist in an interplay between structurally anchored opportunities for education and work and life resources. As such the following should be analyzed:

How are transitions brought about by institutional markers, procedures and and modes of processing?
What educational goals and pedagogical rationales are reflected in the procedures for preparation, coping and compensation?
How are normative requirements and associated aspects of knowledge and skills addressed and communicated?
What transitional discourses and normalities do institutional forms of regulations express?
What individual ways of formation are expected and supported?
Which new and different ways of regulating transitions are evident? To what (new) discourses and individual practices are they interrelated?

On a structural level, new or traditional interfaces that exist between institutional practices of formation both in and outside the realm of social services and the educational system in terms of their contribution to the production of transitions come into view, while on the pedagogical level, formal and informal educational practices are of interest. It remains to be clarified to what degree these practices that are embedded in particular discursive frames do influence individual trajectories and individual modes of formation of transitions. It is also of interest, which transitions are not framed by pedagogical institutions, not formally institutionalized and inherently not considered to be in need of regulation. While this thereby provides for individual freedom, it also creates in pressure.

As a methodological approach, this research focus could use group discussions, narrative as well as guided interviews and standardized surveys, particularly those with professionals in the field. A comprehensive view of institutionalized practices can also be obtained through participant-observation (Smith 2006; Cloos/Thole 2006). Furthermore, document analysis (for example, counselling protocols) may also be of interest in some settings.
Exemplary dissertation projects could address the following themes:

**Counselling in Youth Services as an interactive construction of transitions**

A research question might be: How are transitions produced as a co-construction in interactive practices in the counselling context (as in processes between the counsellor and those seeking advice in the institutional framework of a counselling service in the framework of child and youth welfare)? Accordingly, prior research on counselling on transitions over the life course could be complemented, particularly in terms of counselling strategies and the competency profile of the counsellors or the subjective relevance and use of counselling processes.

Methodologically, conversation analysis of counselling sessions or other processes of reconstructive methods for analysing interviews with counsellors and those seeking advice can be applied.

Interactions with other levels of formation are also evident in so far as the construction of transitions in counselling sessions are influenced by and reacts to individual goals and the intentions of the participating actors and can therefore be understood as a reaction to discourses.

Alternatively, this research focus lends itself to other counselling contexts (for example educational counselling, career counselling, educational counselling, counselling for unwanted pregnancies, housing advice for seniors, etc.).

**Transitions into Parenthood as an Educational Demand**

Research questions could include: Which themes and aspects of parenthood are taken up in educational programmes for (expecting) parents? How are transitions in parenthood regulated in terms of the content that is selected for and focused on in family and adult educational support services as well as programmes?

Method: Content analysis of programmes using document analysis and/or expert interviews.

Interactions with other levels of formation are evident as the educational programmes on one hand draw on social discourses and forms, while, on the other hand, they also mirror individual practices of formation, in which specific transitional goals are anticipated, define and reproduce success criteria for the transition into parenthood and affect both the biographical point of view as well as the everyday practices of the addressees.

Alternatively, educational programmes in relation to transitions could also be similarly explored in the post-employment phase.

**Occupational framing of transitions into the post-employment phase**

Research questions might include: What education and training do companies offer their employees in preparation for the post-professional life phase? Which labour-market policy models are favoured by companies for such transitions? To what degree does this reflect current discourses and modified life and employment career models?

Methods: Secondary analysis of data from the IAB-Business Panel in conjunction with data from official statistics.

Interactions with other levels of formation can be found in the fact that companies' human resources strategies must be considered in terms of social discourses and individual models of life planning. It is therefore expected that, on one hand, period effects (discourse level) can be identified, while, on the other hand, the effects of the workforce composition in terms of age and skill level (individual level) are also evident.

Alternatively, other life ages can be similarly reconstructed such as organisational frameworks for career entry and career change.
Research Focus 3 – The Individual Level: How are transitions formed in terms of individual processes of coping with everyday life, learning and educational, and how is this reflected in biographical developments and life course trajectories?

First, this research focus will centre on the means by which individuals in different life phases aim at coping with transitions against the background of discursive orders and institutional regulations. The question as to what transformational processes are associated with transitions will also be explored. It is important to first clarify which changes in status do individuals consider as (relevant) transitions, with which demands and (normality) expectations as well as positive and negative consequences they deal with during these transitions, and how they orient themselves in this context. It is likely that these perceptions, evaluations and orientations also depend on the individuals’ resources, experiences and skills. The focus of interest is how individuals cope with and thereby contribute to forming transitions. This includes how individuals deal with institutionalized role expectations, the practices they turn to and how these practices are socially selected. This research focus will also highlight the significance of different forms of institutionalization of a transition for individual practices as well as which roles other actors (for example, educational staff) also take on. Other questions include, how individuals use institutional and pedagogical forms of regulation for coping with their transitions, how they take on or reject discursive distinctions of ‘successful’ versus ‘failed’ transitions and how these are linked to individual learning and educational processes.

A second priority for this research focus is the impact that different forms and constellations of formations of transitions have on individual development processes and life courses as well as for the (re)production of social inequality across the life span. From a life course perspective, it is possible to analyse how transitions (considered either ‘successful’ or ‘failed’) are prestructured through interactions with individual learning, educational and developmental processes of individuals, possibilities to transform future transitions, and how sequences of ‘typical’ transitions arise, and which socio-economic, institutional and discursive conditions and alternate paths emerge. Of particular interest is, finally, the question as to how during transitions social inequalities are (re)produced through the combining effects of discursive systems, institutional frameworks, and individual coping strategies.

Methodologically, there are particularly suitable procedures to survey and observe individuals, including narrative interviews, structured interviews, or standardized interviews with various forms (in person, by telephone, by mail, online, etc.) as well as participant observation or videography (Dinkelaker/Herrle 2009). Additionally, biographical materials could also be evaluated (for example, school essays, diaries, blogs, Facebook messages, photos) while, for some research questions, experimental designs could also be used. In addition to surveys, secondary analysis using existing data could form the analysis, particularly large panel studies (for example, SOEP, NEPS, SHARE, Pairfam). As varied as the data collection methods are in this research area, potential methods of analysis are also wide reaching, ranging from reconstructive analysis of qualitative interviews, from content analysis to panel and sequence data analysis.

Exemplary dissertation projects could address the following themes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parental decisions about earlier transitions in a daycare in relation to social background and availability and structures of provision.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A research question would be: Is there a correlation between parents’ social background and the timing of transitions into daycare, and to what extent is this moderated by the availability of nursery school places? Here, variations over time and between federal states could be analyzed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods: Secondary data analysis – for example, the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), in connection with German federal state’s macro data from official statistics – using event data analysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With regard to the interactions between levels, individual decisions to start bringing a child to daycare are examined as a function of institutional frameworks. In addition, the transformation of normality assumptions in a specified period in terms of the “right” age for the transition to daycare can be discussed on the basis of media reports.

Alternatively, the timing of individual transitions as a function of institutional frameworks could also be explored for different transitions (for example, the transition period into retirement or transitions into independent living in young adulthood depending on welfare state incentives).

Subjective Well-Being in Childhood: Transitions into early stages of adolescence

A research question here could be, how the subjective well-being of children is differentiated in the transition to adolescence and which dimensions (e.g. the self) or individual indicators (e.g. satisfaction with their environment) are the decisive factor for a lower well-being. The analysis could also focus on what children themselves perceive to be transitional phenomena in youth. Based on available international data sets, an international comparison of selected countries would also be conceivable.

Method: Secondary analysis of existing national or international datasets on the subjective well-being of children and youth, for instance multi-level or regression analysis. Accessible international datasets, for example, the Children’s Worlds Survey (see Rees/Main 2015) or Young Lives Survey (Georgiadis/Hermida 2014). For the reconstruction of themes of childhood transitions, group discussions could be of use.

Interactions: Childhood is dominated by institutions, structured by transitions (from the family, to the school, in recreational areas, among others) and framed by public discourses. Therefore, such analysis systematically places the question about the effect of the institutional and discursive levels on the individual level of subjective well-being on the table.

Alternatively, the question about the relationship between well-being and transitions during other life ages emerges with respect to old age.

Transitions into collective living and housing arrangements in Old Age

Research questions could include how and why individuals opt for this form of housing in old age and which strategies of coping with everyday life do they develop for such transitions? Which local conditions play a role in addressing this transition? How do individuals react to the institutional and local level?

Method: Narrative interviews with residents immediately before, immediately after and a few months after moving in and additional interviews with experts in institutions and communities.

Interactions with other levels can be found in how individual coping mechanisms are seen in the context of local institutional conditions.

Alternatively, with respect to other life ages, the research questions could similarly examine the transition to community living or dorms for students

3.4. Integration of qualifying fellows and research students in the research programme

The research group proposes to grant scholarships to highly-qualified graduated, in particularly those from faculties that are not represented in the specific subjects focused on in the research programme. These may have to fulfil requirements to be accepted as doctoral students. Scholarship provide them a subsidized period during which they will participate in select components of the training programme.

Particularly qualified students in the Master’s programmes can be included as research students in the research group. They will be supported in their own research on questions from transitions research, through, for example, participation in selected activities as part of the qualifying programme or through integration in Doc-AGs, as long as this means no additional burden for the doctoral students.

Postdoc applicants funded from other sources, please refer to application guidelines.
3.5. Applicants’ previous research and experiences

The participating research group is characterized by extensive preparatory work and an established profile in the field of transition research. Starting from the focus on requirements, criteria of success and failure, institutional regulation and educational processes as well as processes of coping, learning, and education, the profile is primarily educational. It is differentiated with regard to social pedagogy, adult education, philosophy of education and is completed by expertise in developmental psychology and educational sociology.

Frankfurt am Main is distinguished for its research expertise across life ages. The expertise of participating researchers, as members of the Faculties of Educational Science, Social Sciences, and Psychology, cover a broad range of research topics pertaining to transitions:

Tübingen is characterized by expertise across life ages in terms of biographical and gender-related pedagogical, organizational, and discursive processing of transitions.

**Figure 2: Research profiles of involved scientists**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frankfurt</th>
<th>Tübingen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Andresen</strong></td>
<td><strong>Becker</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood</td>
<td>Childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions in daycares, primary school, well-being</td>
<td>Transitions in daycare, and further education, social inequality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse analysis Ethnography Qualitative methods Quantitative Indicator</td>
<td>Quantitative methods, surveys, panel studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frieberts-häuser</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hof</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth, young adults</td>
<td>Adulthood-Old Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition rituals in all-day and high school; gender studies</td>
<td>Lifelong learning, Family establishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnographie, qualitative methods</td>
<td>Biographical research, qualitative and quantitative Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oswald</strong></td>
<td><strong>Walther</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late old age</td>
<td>Youth, young adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions in living arrangements, mobility in old age, Developmental psychology over the lifespan</td>
<td>Transitions in school and employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative surveys</td>
<td>Qualitative und quantitative research, international comparison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bauer</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rieger-Ladich</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life ages in general</td>
<td>Life ages in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling Networks, cooperations in transitions</td>
<td>‘Failure’ in the life course, pedagogological discourses, Gender Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive analysis, qualitative methods</td>
<td>Discourse analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Schmidt-Hertha</strong></td>
<td><strong>Stauber</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adulthood, advanced old age</td>
<td>Youth, and young adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing education, media competences in old age</td>
<td>Transitions in school, employment, ritual formation, risky practices, Gender Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qualitative / quantitative methods</td>
<td>Biographical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The complementary nature of the profiles and expertise of the participating researchers—together with the excellent infrastructure at the two universities—was the main reason for organizing the research programme across two locations.
4. Training Programme

The overall objective of the graduate programme is to establish a sustainable, innovative, internationally recognized and transdisciplinary research and training platform for early-stage researchers that deals with various aspects and modes of production and formation of transitions. This perspective is developed as the overarching theme for the various disciplines involved, including educational science, sociology, and psychology. This platform should develop an international reputation and offer early-stage researchers an excellent—and in this context unique—environment for the successful completion of their research and PhD as well as the acquisition of key competences for their careers.

The graduate programme’s goal in relation to the knowledge and the development of early-stage researchers will be supported and achieved by an integrated training and supervision approach comprised of five fields of competence. A steering committee (see below) coordinates the group across both locations but also ensures flexibility for individual research projects.

The training programme is—both in terms of content and scheduling—primarily oriented on the research fellows and their dissertation projects and allows them sufficient time to work on it. Additionally, the training programme is understood as a means to support the fellows for career planning and entry. The third year of the programme includes both an orientation for university and non-university career tracks.

A central principle is the cooperation with existing infrastructure and services at each location, which are also accessible to the fellows from both locations. Here, duplication should be avoided and synergies generated. This infrastructure primarily includes:

- The Goethe Graduate Academy (GRADE), a training platform for doctoral students at Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, which provides a comprehensive training programme for academic writing, communication, time and project management. Training on key competences and career development, individual coaching, networking and language courses are open to all doctoral students; other offers are tailored to the needs of PhD students from the graduate programme to help ensure completion of the doctorate within three years.

- The Graduate Academy of the University of Tübingen consists of the Doctoral Research Programme (in the fields of science and responsibility, communication and management, career development) and the Research Development Programme (teaching, leadership, and management as well as career development)

- At Frankfurt am Main, the Departments of Educational Sciences, Social Sciences, and Psychology cooperate with the German Institute for International Pedagogical Research (DIPF). This includes in the field of empirical educational research a number of training options for early-stage researchers, which will also be available to members of the graduate programme.

- At Tübingen, the Excellence Initiative funded by the DFG Graduate School and Network LEAD (Learning, Educational Achievement, and Life Course Development) offers a research and training programme for doctoral candidates that consists of training and advisory support for methods, exchange of school contacts, support for knowledge transfer between academic research and practice.

- The networks „QualiNet WISO“ and „QuantiNet WISO“ of the University of Tübingen’s Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences offers doctoral candidates comprehensive training for the acquisition of qualitative and quantitative research method competence.
4.1. Professional and Career Fields for Graduates

The training programme is oriented towards the requirements arising from the work of the research training group as well as the following professional and career-related considerations:

The graduate programme is based on the observation that transitions are increasingly problematized by various academic disciplines and research areas as well as through policy and practice in increasing areas of socialization and are identified as being open for shaping. More and more aspects of daily life and social situations are considered and treated as transitions. This development is the starting point of the research interests of this graduate programme, while there is a growing labour market for individuals trained in the fields of academics, policy/administration, and pedagogical as well as psychological practice. In all these fields, the complexity of transitions and, accordingly, related tensions and dissimultaneities are evident. Researchers and practitioners increasingly face the challenges of reflecting on the processes for producing transitions, and begin to consider them as phenomena across the lifespan. In spite of respective specialization, connections between certain life stages are realised and—in cooperation—appropriate measures are conceptualised.

In the graduate programme, fellows will be prepared for a wide range of academic activities both at universities as well as research groups in the educational and social sciences as well as associations, institutions and the management of educational and social services. The increasing importance of the life course and theoretical approaches to transitions in the fields of educational, childhood and youth, adult education and old-age research increasingly requires researchers who are able to move beyond single-discipline approaches to deal with the changes in at key points over the life course. In the different fields of education, health and social services—for instance, early childhood education, school, the worlds of school and work, youth social work, educational assistance, adult and further education, labour administration as well as labour market policies and the elderly—increasingly requirements for transition-related services conceptualised from a life span perspective do emerge and must be organized in cooperation with other actors.

4.2. Programme of study

The programme of study covers the entire doctoral phase over a period of three years through content and coordinated offers. Accordingly, preparation for fellows’ further careers options for an academic career path as well as professional engagement outside the university, is given a great role reflected by provision of additional qualifications.

On one hand, the programme emerges from the identification of content with respect to the state of research on transitions and the life course, life ages as well as the research training group’s theoretical focus on the production and formation of transitions in the sense of “Doing Transitions.” On the other hand, in terms of research methodologies and career development, it takes on an individual form, and this dependent on the skills, needs and research orientation of the fellows. The programme therefore comprises individually-selected and group specific as well as general compulsory components.

The programme of study is structured by a kick-off workshop and five competence areas (See Table 2). Many course offerings are available across locations and will be available as block seminars. This has not only has economic reasons but also allows for informal exchanges and common social activities in order to strengthen the networking and promote cohesion in the research training group. In the compulsory component, the fellows must attend at least 15 hours per competence area. Here the coursework’s fit with respect to the individual’s doctoral projects will prevail. Contents will be agreed upon between the fellow and the two supervisors and are subject to yearly review and planning discussions (see below).
Table 2: Overview of Required Coursework for the Qualification and Supervisory Programme of the Research Training Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competence Area</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Lecturers</th>
<th>Semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kick-off</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coming together, presentation of projects, development of working structures,</td>
<td>2.5 days</td>
<td>Kick-off</td>
<td>All applicants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>methodological needs assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td>workshop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competence Area 1: State of Research and Theoretical Foundations (Coordination: Stauber/Walther)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of art of research on transitions and life courses</td>
<td>2.5 days</td>
<td>Conference</td>
<td>Becker, Friebertshäuser, Oswald, Stauber, Walther; guest speakers: e.g. Settersten, Schoon, Evans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing Transitions I: Discourses, institutions and individuals</td>
<td>2.5 days</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>All applicants as well as guest speakers, e.g. Alkemeyer, Lessenich, Phoenix</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Competence Area 2: Methods and Methodology (Coordination: Becker/Bauer)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Transition research methods: Data Collection*</td>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>All applicants, visiting researchers, in coordination with doctoral students, based on needs assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition research methods: Data Analysis*</td>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>All applicants, visiting researchers, in coordination with doctoral students, based on needs assessment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competence Area 3: Reflection and support of individual research projects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular colloquiums at each location</td>
<td>4h bi-weekly</td>
<td>Local and</td>
<td>All applicants, visiting researchers, in coordination with doctoral students, based on needs assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 cross-location colloquiums</td>
<td>8 x 1.5 days</td>
<td>cross-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dissertation outlines, design and data collection; reflection on research</td>
<td></td>
<td>location</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>process, reflection and presentation of results</td>
<td></td>
<td>colloquiums</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Guidance through DOCgroups (ca. 3 meetings a year)</td>
<td>9 x 1 day</td>
<td>Work group</td>
<td>Fellows</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DocAGs Workshops (3 per Doc/AGs)</td>
<td>3x1.5 days</td>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>Fellows and guest researchers, based on needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kompetenzbereich 4: Internationalisierung, Vernetzung und Ergebnissicherung</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Coordination: Andresen/Oswald)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing Transitions II: Theorisation, Production of Interactions</td>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>Fellows and guest researchers, guest speakers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing Transitions III: Findings and Issues in Transitions Research</td>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>Internat.</td>
<td>All applicants fellows and guest speakers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conference</td>
<td></td>
<td>conference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competence Area 5: Key qualifications for Academics (Coordination: Friebertshäuser/Schmidt-Hertha)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teambuilding, best academic practices, research ethics and privacy (4 workshops</td>
<td>4 x 1 days</td>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>Applicants, GRADE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in total)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Time does not include hours of preparation and follow up
The training programme includes a workload of 30 credit points (that is, 900 hours over the course of 3 years). This ensures that the doctoral candidates will have enough time to work on their dissertations. The programme is comprised of a mandatory component (600 hours), one-third of which (ca. 200 hours) will be coursework on theory, the state of research, methodology and methods, and the remained (two-thirds, ca. 400 hours) will include discussions of individual work in different constellations. Additionally, there is an elective programme (approximately 300 hours), which will be used for participation in external educational opportunities (for instance conference or workshops on methods) or internal events organized in collaboration with the research training group.

From the first to the third year, the training programme decreases the intensity of mandatory coursework (see Figure 1). In the first year, the fellows will acquire the necessary theoretical and methodological foundations for the research programme of the training group as well as those skills that are necessary for their own projects. In its second year, the discussion will focus on conceptual and research-related issues in the location-based and cross-location based seminars. The final year will, parallel to finalizing the dissertation, include a workshop on the analysis of interactions between different modes of formation and for the theorisation of research outcomes as well a final international conference.

In addition to the regular colloquia at the two locations as well as self-organized workshops and research group meetings, six conferences and workshops are planned for the first year. In year two, there will be five locally-based colloquia, while during the third year there will be two colloquia, a workshop and one (final) conference (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Distribution of the mandatory and elective programs over the duration of the research training groups**

The training programme comprises the following content and formats:
Kick-off Event

During the kick-off event (2.5 days) outside normal university context, the fellows will come together with lecturers for the first time. In addition to an introduction to the research training group’s research questions and goals, the individual projects will be presented and discussed in terms of good academic practice. A panel of the research training group’s topics, approaches, and methodological as well as theoretical orientations will be discussed. From there methodological training requirements will be assessed and determined. This forms the basis of the formation of the Docgroups as well as of the planning for methodological training. There is also sufficient time allotted so that the fellows can get to know each other and the scholars involved in the training group.

Competence Area 1: Theoretical foundations and research status

Competence Area 1 comprises 2 compulsory courses about the state of art of research on transition and life course research as well as its theoretical framework.

Conference on Transitions over the Life Course: In the third month, there will be a 2.5-day seminar on the topic transition over the life course. Here, the fellows will gain a common understanding of the state of art of research on transitions over the life course, life course trajectories and biography across various life ages and life ranges. This conference will also integrate existing transition research from different disciplines in relation to different life ages and specific transitions. Relevant qualified national and international researchers will be invited as a speaker.

Doing Transitions 1-Workshop: At the end of the first semester, there will be a 2.5-day workshop on the research training group’s practice theory orientation, during which aspects and dimensions of practices of formation and production of transitions across the three central levels (discourse, institution, individual) will be discussed. The goal is the positioning and strengthening of the research training group’s identity both internally as well as externally. Here as well, qualified guest speakers will be invited. The workshop will focus on an interactive format that facilitates the fellows’ ability to acquire the theoretical concepts and to relate them to their own research questions

As part of the core curriculum, central aspects and theoretical strands of transitions and life age research will be developed. The different research perspectives and expertise of presenters from the (sub) disciplines general education, educational sociology, development psychology, adult and social education will be specifically addressed and offered in various conferences, with different research perspectives and each theoretical priority will be offered. National and international experts will be invited to these conferences, to expand the theoretical content and methodological horizons of the doctoral candidates internationally and interdisciplinary. Additionally, the fellows will be able to explore the thematic and theoretical orientation of their work by organizing, via DocGroups, smaller sessions themselves and inviting guest speakers as well as by visiting national and international conferences (see Competence Area 3 and 4 as well). This will be supported at both locations.

Competence Area 2: Methodology and Methods

The Competence Area Methodology and Methods seeks to train fellows methodologically as well as for their own project by expanding their research methodological profile. In addition to the necessary project methods for their own projects, fellows should also gain an overview of the different methods used within the group so that a meaningful and fruitful exchange about projects is possible. Based on the needs identified in the kick-off session the individual fellows’ study programme can be established.

Method Workshops: From the needs assessment two mandatory three-day workshops on data collection and analysis will be developed for all fellows and lecturers. Methodologically here, the methodological requirements and suitableness of Doing Transitions research as well as the applied qualitative and quantitative methods for the research training group will be introduced. During the workshops, nationally- and internationally-recognised experts on the
methods used for transition research from different disciplines will be invited. The contributions from internal and external experts will result in a book publication about methods and methodological questions in transition research. As such, the contributions can be used for future study, while at the same contributing to methodological innovations in transition research.

Additionally, the fellows will in further elective workshops have the possibility to participate in specific courses on research methods, either in the framework of already-established graduate programmes (particularly GRADE, LEAD, Quali-Net WISO, QuantiNet WISO or DIPF) or small workshops specifically organized for and with the fellows (currently, four workshops are planned per year). The use of DocGroups as self-regulated research workshops will be encouraged and supported. The aim of the wide-range of offers is to provide each fellow a tailor-made programme of study for the methodological approaches and requirements of the individual doctoral project.

**Competence Area 3: Reflection on and Support for Individual Research Projects**

Tailored to the lecturers’ supervision of fellows a variety of formats for collective scientific advice and support, and also contribute to working on the research training group’s overarching research question. As such, there will be sessions in which both professors and doctoral candidates will work together as well as those on the fellows’ peer level. The fundamental principle of communication in the research group is the creation of a space for mutual contact, cooperation and support. This will have already been facilitated by the kick-off event as well as in all subsequent common events that provide the room and time for informal exchanges and common social and cultural events. The fellows should also actively participate in the planning of events.

The research colloquia are the foundational infrastructure for the research training group. Here, the fellows and lecturers meet regularly outside the realm of individual supervision. There is difference in terms of location and composition, frequency and function: At each location, a colloquium will be held every two weeks as central forums for the individual projects and specific challenges. The needs of the fellows form the focus here, as once per semester each of them will give an overview of his/her current work in the framework of the local research group. The focus will lie on the collaborative work on the actual challenges in the framework of each project (theoretical basis, data analysis, interpretation, etc.). Furthermore, the colloquia will act as a platform for the discussion of project-specific as well as cross-cutting issues and for clarifying, on an ad hoc basis, theoretical, methodological or strategic research issues. Finally, this will allow the establishment of thematic connections between research projects at each location, for example in those developed in discussion with other fellows. The local colloquia also explicitly serve to support fellows holding qualification scholarships and research students, which places the special requirements on a valued communication style and a climate of trust.

All the lecturers and the fellows will meet six times in the first year, five times in the second year and four times in the third year across the locations (see Figure 3), either by alternating location or using a third location outside the normal university context. In addition to the kick-off event, the first year programme will consist of workshops and a conference balanced by the research colloquium. The 1.5-day cross-localation colloquia are the central forum for discussing the group’s work and for the professional exchange pertaining to the group’s thematic and methodological objectives in the second year and—supplemented by a workshop and the final conference—in the third year. The PhD students are to participate by presenting about (an aspect of) their work at least once per year, while the faculty will also contribute a content-related talk once per year. Additionally, national and international guest researchers from the field of transition research, theory and methodology will be invited to provide input and to discuss the fellows’ projects. This will provide spaces for informal knowledge exchange between the fellows, with the faculty and with the guest researchers that will result in constructive feedback and suggestions throughout the programme.

**Doctoral Students working groups (DocGroups):** To promote independence early in the
programme, the PhD students are expected to come together in self-organized, either thematically- or methodologically-focused DocGroups. This could begin as early as the kick-off event, and should already be arranged by the end of the first semester. Due to the different methodical and thematic profiles of the DocGroups, the fellows can participate in up to two groups. DocGroups serve as continuous workshops for common data interpretation as well as for peer mentoring through mutual constructive feedback. For one-day inter-site DocGroups meetings and workshops, travel expenses will be paid but at the same time, the online platform and videoconference will also play a central role (see below).

**Competence Area 4: internationalization, networking and revenue protection**

The research training group places value on international and national transdisciplinary exchanges in a variety of ways: through an international programme, guest researchers, through exchanges with other early-stage researchers, through participation and contributions to national and international conferences and meetings as well as research abroad. First, the input of external experts is placed in the forefront, while later, the research group will increasingly seek out ways to bring the group’s finding to an audience outside the research programme and therefore integrate the research into the larger transition research field. The research training group’s perspective on the production and formation of transitions in interactions between discursive, institutional and individual levels can be considered an innovative contribution to transition research, which has been to date primarily a field focused on trajectories and outcomes and therefore must be actively facilitated. The international contacts of the faculty is large, and has the potential to bring an international perspective to the research while also bringing the group’s findings to an international forum when these contacts are actively used by the fellows. International networking and cooperation will be further developed over the course—also at the early-stage researchers’ level—of the research programme as well as at the suggestion of the research group.

As a form of academic presentation, *posters* have a very special meaning. They provide early-stage researchers a simple entry point into the scientific community. In cooperation with GRADE, the fellows will attend a workshop during the first semester to create a poster based on their research proposals. The posters serve to present the fellows’ research projects in the workshops but can also be used to present their research during national and international conferences. Before the final workshop and the international conference, the posters will be updated and translated into English.

**DocGroup workshops:** In the second year of funding, the members of DocGroups have the possibility to organize workshops or research groups as well as to invite guest researchers whose research is relevant for the fellows’ work and discuss with them their research project. In addition to the resources provided by the research training group, the DocGroups can also take advantage of the infrastructure and funding provided by GRADE when the planned workshops are open and relevant for GRADE members.

**Conference participation:** The doctoral students are encouraged to participate in workshops or organize congresses in order to build their international network. Appropriate encouragement and support is part of the fellows’ supervision as well as the financial budget of the programme (participation and travel expenses). If orientation in the research field is the primary focus at the beginning of the programme, the fellows should begin presenting their own conference papers or posters by the second year. As research has shown that male PhD candidates are more frequently encouraged to attend conferences (Korff/Roman 2013), attention to a gender balance in this regard will be paid.

**Networking:** In addition to attending conferences, fellows should seek out contact with other early-stage researchers both on the national and the international level (which should be intensified as the programme progresses). Here, exchanges with other graduate programmes in the thematic vicinity is also intended. Based on networking, common themes between projects can be explored, which may lead to a joint publication at best.

**Research abroad:** Where it is of importance for their own research, the fellows have the possibility to study in another German location or abroad for one to three months, regardless
of whether it is for data collection, for international comparative research or to collaborate with researchers who have high-level expertise about the specific research project. With selected international partners, a reciprocal exchange programme is possible, where fellows from the research group could be involved with research at the partner institute as well as its programme for early-stage researchers. External PhD students could also spend a few weeks or months working on their research projects as part of the research training group and could also participate in all of its activities. Such stays could be funded as ‘Mercator-Fellows’ or external funding bodies such as ERASMUS, DAAD, Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung or the partner university itself. Accordingly, a bi-directional internationalization could be achieved for both the research training group at home and the research group abroad. Preliminary discussions have already been held with representatives from the following universities and institutions: Tel Aviv (Israel), Genua (Italy), Lund (Sweden), Birmingham (United Kingdom), Helsinki (Finland), Oregon State, Portland, and LeHigh, Bethlehem (USA), Montreal (Canada), Instituto de Ciencias Sociais Lissabon (Portugal), the Institute of Education, London (United Kingdom) und the Ecole des Hautes Etude en Santé Publique Rennes (France). In encouraging and planning stays abroad, attention will be paid to a gender balance.

Doing Transitions II Workshop: In the third year, a three-day workshop on the general research topic will be held in order to share the research findings related to each of the levels and modes of production and formation of transitions, to allow for comparisons of transitions at different ages. On one hand, this will ensure the contribution of the research group to transition research, while on the other, it provides incentives for the doctoral candidates to take the step towards (re)theorizing their findings. Accordingly, visiting scholars who are considered experts in methods and the research area will be invited and such discussions will be very fruitful for the research training group. This workshop will result in a book publication that brings together overarching findings, issues and aspects of Doing Transitions.

Doing Transitions III International Final Conference (3 days): At the end of the first training period, the research training group will hold a conference open to national and international scholars, during which the results of the PhD and qualification projects will be presented and the insights and open questions about transition research will be discussed with national and international guest speakers. Here, the reflection and discussion that will begin at the Doing Transitions II workshop will be continued and combined with the findings of the research training group, which will then form the basis for a further English-language book project.

Competence Area 5: Key Academic and Professional Competences

Both academic qualifications as well as preparation for academic and professional career tracks require numerous key competences. In cooperation with programmes at the different sites, the following training will be made available:

Key academic competences: in the initial phase, all fellows will obtain a specialization in key skills for academic work, academic research, time management, as well as data protection and research ethics.

Academic writing: In the writing phase, fellows can take advantage of the individual and group offers from GRADE as well as the Writing Centres at Goethe University of Frankfurt and the Graduate Academy at the University of Tübingen.

Presentations: Workshops on academic presentations (for example, poster design, presentations, use of media) will enable fellows to appropriately present their work.

Theory-practice dialogue: Transition research is highly relevant for both practice and policy. First, the assumption cannot be made that all fellows will continue with an academic career after graduation. Second, the research field, transitions, has a high degree of practical relevance and the dialogue with representatives of policy and practice requires an element of academic professionalism. Accordingly, necessary communication skill will be taught in specific workshops.

Communication, Cooperation, and Team building: To prepare for the active use of scholarly exchange within the research training group as well as for later work in teams and networks,
the fellows will be provided the opportunity to participate in workshops on communication, teamwork and leadership skills. The kick-off event and multi-site colloquium will include a teambuilding workshop.

Planning for publications: The doctoral candidates will receive an early understanding in the realm of supervisory support and suggestions for the planning of the format and opportunities for publishing their findings. In terms of the possible publication of the research training group’s work and publications, which are key components of the study programme, the series of transitions and coping research by Beltz Juventa Publishers is an available option (the research training group’s coordinators are co-editors). There are, however, also plans to produce a series with greater visibility. Additionally, the necessity and possibility of establishing an international journal on transitions and the life course will also be discussed with international partners.

Coaching: Doctoral students will also have the opportunity to obtain support from external experts and seek advice with respect to problems, challenges and career planning. For female doctoral candidates, who will comprise the majority of the research training group, the Equal Opportunity Office at the University of Frankfurt as well as the University of Tübingen will also offer additional coaching.

4.3. e-Kolleg

Both the cooperation across two locations as well as the planned internationalization of the research training group requires a diverse, function and easy to use web-based electronic infrastructure.

The public website primarily offers a space for presentations and communication with those outside the group. Here, all members of the group will be introduced, public events will be announced and regularly updates will be provided about the development of the research training group. Internal pages will act as a central point of information for the members of the research training group’s announcements and meetings. Over the course of the research programme, a wiki-glossary of terms pertaining to transitional research will be created and inquiries, commentaries and discussions will also be possible.

- An eLearning Platform will provide discussion forums that can be used for subgroup formation and communication (for example, DocGroups). At the same time, these forums could be used for the preparation and review of the qualification programme’s activities. The platform is designed so that different forms of networking and exchange and collaboration can be developed over the course of the programme, such as individual blogs, and topic-oriented chat forums. The platform includes all relevant organizational information and content produced by/for the research training group. Over time, a collection of key texts will be established, which all members of the research training group can use. For the purposes of blended learning, the possibility for co-present learning will be supported. Moreover, this will allow the inclusion of fellows who complete an extended research stay abroad.

- At both locations, video conference rooms will be made available for smaller groups such as the DocGroups for direct communication between those meeting at one of the locations. Accordingly, international guest researchers who are unable to be physically present will have the ability to provide input on and participate in discussions about the research training group’s theoretical and methodological progress.

The elements of the eKollegs will be systematically linked to the study programme. All participants will receive an introduction on how to use the elements.

4.4. Guests and ’Mercator Fellows’

The research training programme is transdisciplinary and international. Guest scholars will be integrated via guest lectures, contributions to the different events as well as other components of the research training group’s study programme. In terms of the selection process to invite
guests, the fellows will be increasingly involved over the course of the research programme. Due to its role model function, a gender equality policy will be maintained to ensure the participation of the highest number of female scholars. Selected international researchers will be integrated into the research training group for a longer term after the second semester funded by ‘Mercator Fellowships’. Accordingly, this will ensure an intensive exchange with scholars through participation in the individual elements of the study programme. The specific request is made depending on the topic and the methods employed, complementary to the existing expertise of those in the research training group and increasingly in cooperation with the fellows over the course of the study programme. Accordingly, new cooperations can be established.

4.5. Qualification Fellows and Research Students

Qualification fellows and research students will be involved starting with their participation in colloquium at the two locations and then flexibly in the qualification programme. This includes participation in selected workshops and conferences, and assistance with the doctoral regulations established for the requirements to complete a PhD programme or by Master thesis on transition related research questions. Here, the experience and status difference of sensitive work and communication forms are important. Small teams of doctoral students and (under)graduate students could be formed to jointly collect and evaluate data for their research projects.

4.6. International Fellows

In order to integrate international fellows, some of the programme events will be held completely in English, while others, based on need, will be held in German and/or English so that for everyone low-threshold participation is possible. It is also expected that international fellows will also acquire German language skills during their first year so that they can participate in discussions of German-language work in the research training group.

4.7. Transition to the Next Generation of Fellows

The transition to the second generation of fellows through the involvement of graduates in the kick-off workshop will ensure a new cohort. Accordingly, their experience can be used and disseminated. Furthermore, former fellows will be invited as discussants for select workshops and conferences. Last, but not least, important informal relations within the field of transitional research should be promoted for the establishment of productive cooperation and exchange. Based on regional and/or thematic proximity, a mentorship could be developed between former and new fellows.

5. Supervision and Career Development, Equal Opportunity, Organizations and Quality Management

5.1. Advertisement and Selection Process

Target Group and Selection Criteria

The research training group seeks to attract highly-qualified and motivated recent graduates who are interested in transdisciplinary transitional research. In particular, early-stage researchers from the educational sciences, sociology, and psychology are preferred, as well as those from related disciplines if they want to complete a PhD in one of the disciplines represented in the research training group and in line with the doctoral regulations of the two universities. A particular importance has been placed on the participation of international early-stage researchers. The general selection criteria comprise the quality standards of excellent academic work as defined by the DFG and the participating universities as well as the contextual persuasiveness of the PhD proposal. That is,

• with a view to the candidates’ professional profile, their academic achievements, and their
content-related and methodological competencies, the degree of innovation of their project proposal as well as their personal motivation and readiness for cooperation in the research training group;

- with a view to the research interest of the research training group and the anticipated contribution of the project to one of the three research areas (doctoral students) as well as questions about the interaction between the levels of production and formation of transitions; the three levels of production and formation of transitions (discourses, Institutions, Individuals) as well as different life ages should be adequately represented;
- With a view to equal opportunities that targets cascade principle (see 5.2.).

Six PhD students will be selected for each of the two sites.

For doctoral candidates, selection will be determined in accordance with the doctoral regulations, in particular:

- A degree, especially in educational science, psychology, or sociology with above-average grades in their field of studies;
- Above average knowledge of methods and research experience (as a student assistant in academic projects and or through empirical qualification thesis);
- Profound knowledge in at least one subject areas of transition research;
- Very good knowledge of English;
- The quality of the submitted research outline in terms of its connectedness to the research training group’s topics and simultaneously to the state of art of research; it should make the applicant’s readiness and capacity evident, to engage in a common research context, to contribute theoretically and empirically to the analysis of the formation of transitions, and to complete the doctorate within the funding period.
- Reference letters of two professors providing information on study progression and research expertise

The envisaged qualifications should fit into the candidate’s previous career while also substantially advancing future professional opportunities. International applicants must show a willingness to learn German within the first year of the programme and participate in discussion of the German-language projects.

For the selection of qualification fellows and research students, their academic achievements as well as degrees are above average and they have an evident interest in the topic of transitions; that they expect to complete the requirements for acceptance into the doctoral programme and they have a clear interest in and motivation to pursue an academic career path.

Selection procedure

The selection process will begin with an ad in the weekly newspaper DIE ZEIT as well as the internet portals academics.com, academics.de, and hsozkult.de. Furthermore, national and international journals and portals as well as relevant newsletters of professional societies will be used to disseminate the ad. In order to promote international applications, the research training group’s faculty will use their own individual networks.

The ad will include a short description of the research training group’s objectives, the duties of the fellows, the requirements for applicants as well as a link to the research programme’s website and an overview of the research training group’s educational programme.

Candidates are requested to apply with a letter of motivation, a location preference, a CV, academic certifications, and two letters of reference from professors as well as an exposé on the planned research project (research proposal).

The selection committee will comprise at least two representatives of the research training group from Frankfurt and Tübingen, who will complete a preliminary analysis of the applications. Applicants who meet the formal and content criteria will be invited to attend interviews with at least three faculty of the research training group who work on research associated with the proposed project. All interview will be documented according to a
standardized protocol. Based on the recommendations of the selection committee, the faculty of the research training group will jointly decide on who will be offered the positions. In cases of disputes about the decision, an independent external person of trust, who will be appointed in advance of the selection, will be consulted.

5.2. Supervisory Concept and Career Advancement

Individual Supervision

The concept of supervision for the research training group is through the balance between the common responsibility of all professors for the fellows and their work and a, at the same time, guarantee of the following contact persons:

With the selection of candidate, a recommendation will be made for the joint supervision of two professors whose expertise is relevant for the proposed project, one from each location. In connection with the methodological requirement determined at the kick-off meeting, the PhD students will be given the possibility to change the composition of the supervisory team. At the end of the first semester, the fellow and all professors involved in the supervision will sign an agreement that confirms the topic, the supervisory team, and the supervisory guidelines as well as the rules of good academic practices. At both locations, such arrangements are included in the doctoral regulations.

Individual supervision ensures that regular meetings are held between the supervisory team and the fellows, for instance in terms of the cross-site research colloquia. However, each doctoral candidate has, fundamentally, the opportunity to seek advice on their PhD project from any of the faculty involved in the research training group. The Competence Area 3 of the above-described study programme ensures that the supervisory relationship does not slip into a unilateral dual constellation fellow-supervisory relationship, but is instead part of the research training group's larger discourse.

Since it is not unusual at the beginning of a doctoral project for many points to remain unclear and for change to occur, the PhD students will be given the opportunity two years into the programme to confirm who will examine the thesis. The aim is also to ensure that—in line with the concept of supervisory teams—the supervision load is balanced between the research training group’s professors (professors should not be involved in the supervisory and examination team of no less than 2 and no more than 4 students at a time).

Performance reviews

An integral part of the supervision concept are measures to ensure the progress and success of the individual dissertations. The bi-weekly colloquia will provide a space where the thresholds for discussing each of the fellows's works are low, which will allow for greater transparency on the work's progress and will therefore avoid placing the fellows under constant pressure to present and justify their progress. The variety of topics that will be discussed during the colloquium will allow the discussion of individual aspects of the qualification work such as research methods or methodological questions in which the fellow’s work is imbedded. The doctoral students will present on the status of their research at least once every six months in the colloquium. Based on the methodological needs assessment completed during the kick-off workshop, each fellow’s individual learning plans will be developed in discussion with the fellow’s supervisory team, which will be oriented to individual learning and research requirements. After the first year, the state and progress of the research project will be documented during a conversation with the supervisory team. For international students, the supervision will also include questions about language acquisition, integration and transnational career planning.

Agreements on the rights and responsibilities of members of the research training group

At the beginning of the research training group and regularly thereafter at cross-location workshops, discussions will be held on the rights and responsibilities and the division of labour
between all stakeholders of the research training group in order to ensure a continuous process of quality assurance (see below). The duties of the fellows consist first and foremost of the determined completion of their projects, on-site presence at one of the locations, active participation in the qualification programme and the organization of activities. They also have, in addition to their labour rights, a right to well-equipped workstations, committed and consistent supervisor, and a high-quality programme of study. The faculty are responsible for protecting and guaranteeing these rights.

Career Planning

The supervision concept not only focuses on the fellows’ research project as part of the research training group but also on supporting them in terms of their career and professional planning beyond the doctoral programme. The doctoral candidates will be actively supported to effectively manage both their research projects as well as planning their next career steps.

During the regular meetings with the supervisory team, the following will also be discussed:

- Subject-related career opportunities associated with the fellows' research work,
- Planning for presentations and papers, and journal articles in relation to the individual research topic,
- A reflection on networking opportunities and activities,
- Potential involvement in university teaching; this is voluntary where team-teaching approaches would offer barrier-free access for the fellows who would then be involved in teaching only subjects that are directly related to their own work.

Additionally, the fellows are encouraged to participate in career-related courses outside the research training group supervision, such as the training programme GRADE at the University of Frankfurt and the Graduate Academy of the University of Tübingen, such as individual coaching.

5.3. Support for highly-qualified young scholars (initial funding)

To support the transition following the completion of the doctorate, fellows, who have proved during the funding period to be particularly suited for an academic career, will be given the opportunity to continue in an academic staff position to work during their transition. This initial funding will be used in particular for writing their own project proposal. The selection criteria will include the completion of an excellent dissertation within the funding period and the development of an excellent research topic, which especially contributes to the academic goals of the research training group. The fellows are able to apply by submitting a project proposal. The professoral members of the steering committee will form a selection committee, which will assess the applications and make decisions in light of available funding.

5.4. Equal Opportunity in Academics

Gender equality and diversity policies are indispensable conditions and characteristics of the excellence development in research, teaching and support for young talent and are also key management instruments for both the University of Frankfurt and University of Tübingen.

Both universities have included the support of equal opportunities in their mission statements, and have established targets and timelines for increasing the presence of women as part of their strategic planning instruments and have taken extensive and diverse measures for their achievement as well. Both universities have met the highest level of the standards of research-oriented gender equality defined by the DFG in 2011 and 2013 (Stage 4; Tübingen also in 2007). The University of Tübingen was also awarded the certificate, ‘Family Friendly University’ in March 2014, while the Goethe University has been awarded the certificate of the ‘Work & Family GmbH’ every three years since 2005. In 2008 and 2013, Goethe University also engaged with success in the Female Professor Programme of the federal and state government and was awarded the ‘Total E-Quality Award’ in 2012. Goethe University is also a member of the ‘Charter of Diversity’, the ‘Alliance for Family’ as well as the Best Practice Club ‘Family in Higher Education’.
In gender studies, the Goethe University of Frankfurt enjoys international recognition for the Cornelia Goethe Centre for Women’s and Gender Studies (CGC). The focus of the newly established Centre for Gender and Diversity Research at Tübingen is the intersectional extension of the gender perspective.

At both locations, different services are available for the assurance of equality:

At the Equal Opportunities Office at the Goethe University of Frankfurt, the Dual Career Service, the Family Service, the Gender & Diversity Controlling as well as the training programme, ‘Career Support-Training for Female Academics’ are available. The latter provides up to ten interdisciplinary training sessions (in German and English) each semester for women in academics and leading positions. Recently, a position was created for Gender Consulting for collaborative research programme and research training groups, which acts as a contact for all equality issues and participates in the nationwide network ‘Gender Consulting’.

Three large and interrelated cross-university Hessian mentoring programmes are located at Goethe University, ‘ProProfessur’, ‘SciMento hessenweit’, ‘MentorinnenNetzwerk’, which provide support across all qualification levels. A coaching pool is also provided for female early-stage researchers, in particular for those working in coordinated programmes, by the Gender Consulting Coordination.

The family service advises university staff about the compatibility of work and family life and continues to work on building family friendly infrastructure. The office oversees a network of students and doctoral candidates with kids (‘Goethe Kids’), and offers workshops on the work-life balance as well as advice and support regarding problems with caring for family members. For the intersection of courses and school holidays as well as during meetings and workshops, childcare is made available.

At the University of Tübingen, there is also a well-developed Dual Career Service, the Family Office with a comprehensive advisory service as well as intensive programs for early career researchers such as the Athene Programme. This promotes early-career female researchers during doctoral studies to support them along the way to professor through financial means that may flexibly be spent for research and/or childcare, with training offers for interdisciplinary skills, individual coaching and networking. In particular, in the third year of the doctoral programme candidates are intensively prepared for the transition phase (‘The Road to Professorship’).

At the Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen, the family service coordinates the implementation of these numerous measures in the auditing process. In close cooperation between the university, municipality, and other local providers, child care places are provided, for instance, for the short-term needs of visiting scholars.

Both universities have extensive childcare facilities in daycare centres, with that in Frankfurt currently undergoing further expansion, while those in Tübingen are supplemented by the best-developed public child care in Baden-Württemberg (total coverage of the demands for toddler and full day care). In addition to the regular child care services, both sites also offer full day care places that may be flexibly used.

Gender equality has an important meaning for the research training group. The doctoral students can participate in all offers at the two sites. The equal opportunities offices at both participating universities have supported the research training group in developing and implementing its gender equality concept.

When awarding grants and positions, the research training group will orient itself on the cascade model with the goal of ensuring that the proportion of women meets that of the graduates in the respective fields of study (for PhD positions). Potential suitable national and international female scholars are encouraged to apply. Moreover, other diversity criteria will be taken into account.

For the implementation of the Gender Equality and Diversity Policy, the research training group will cooperate closely with the equal opportunity offices at both universities and, if required,
with the Gender Consulting Coordination for equal opportunities policies for coordinated programmes at the Goethe University of Frankfurt. In this regard, the following measures are planned:

**Gender and diversity competence:** Senior staff members have the opportunity to take training on gender- and diversity-related awareness at both locations.

**Flexible childcare:** For the children of members and guests of the research training programme, flexible childcare will be offered for meetings, workshops and seminars. Members of the research training group will also receive childcare during off-peak hours.

**Advice and support during pregnancy:** In the case of pregnancy, the Family Service of the university as well as the coordinator for the implementation of gender equality policies can provide advice. Pregnant fellows will receive where possible a student assistant to make it possible for her to continue her academic work.

In general, care is taken when organizing the qualification programme to ensure that all fellows can participate and contribute equally. Moreover, female fellows are encouraged to use the qualification programme, including the gender equality policies, for their own projects and career planning in the best possible way.

5.5. Organization

The applicants form a consortium agreement, in which the structures and the rights and responsibilities of the members are upheld. The following committees are provided:

The coordinator and the alternate represent the research training group in public and coordinate the work of the steering committee. They are supported by a respective coordinating academic staff per location (split 50-50).

The steering group plans and coordinates the offers and processes of the research training group. Its members include four professors (2 for each location), three fellows (at least one per location) as well as one of the two coordinators. It convenes in conjunction with the planned cross-site events.

The assembly comprises all participants in the research training group. It shall meet at least every six months or as needed and will discuss organizational issues as well as the thematic focus of the programme.

The professorial consists of the participating professors. Every six months, it will meet to discuss primarily questions about supervision and qualification.

The collegiate shall comprise the fellows and is a space for self-organization and the representation of interests within the research training group. The fellows' journiﬁx to prepare for the research colloquia at the sites as well as the fellows’ meetings following the cross-site research colloquia and workshops allow for the coordination of the qualiﬁcation requirements, planning conferences, or organizing working groups.

The consortial agreement also include the supervisory principles as well as the assurance that all professors will keep at least one predefined day per week free from teaching and academic administration to ensure participation in the research training group’s events. The consortium agreement is therefore also signed by the respective faculties and departments.

The organization is based on the principles of cross-site integration, flexibility for the benefit of the supervisory and qualiﬁcation needs of the fellows as well as the efficient use of ﬁnancial and temporal resources (e.g. alternating meetings between the two sites, meeting 'halfway', and the intensive use of internet, electronic learning platforms and videoconferencing).

5.6. Quality Management

The individual projects of the participants in the research training group (see also 5.2) as well as the group’s study programme and the supervision will be regularly evaluated, the results of which will be taken into account for further planning.
Quality dialogue: Flexible forms of internal evaluation are central for quality assurance. In order to further develop and continuously improve the programme in dialogue with the fellows, a biannual round table will be held for the supervisors and the fellows, the results of which will be directly involved in further planning and management of the research training group. Additionally, continuous feedback and concerns from the fellows will be discussed by the steering committee in order to be able to respond quickly when necessary. Moreover, the steering committee will discuss the results of each event’s evaluation and will take them into consideration for following events.

External evaluation: The internal evaluation will be complemented by external evaluations. In the middle of the three-year programme, the fellows from the first group of doctoral candidates will be surveyed (personal interview and written questionnaire) as part of an external evaluation.

6. Surrounding Environment

The research training group is found in an academic environment characterized by strong research universities as well as dynamically developing infrastructure in the field of early-stage researchers. The main reason for the development of the research training group, Doing Transitions, across two locations is the outstanding expertise and complementarity of the applicants’ profiles as well as the experience in joint research and the supervision of early-stage researchers. The quality of the existing infrastructure helps the research training group to realize and capitalize on synergy between the two locations and to avoid the duplication of research and funding structures.

Academic priorities of the participating universities

The Goethe-University of Frankfurt am Main is one of the largest universities in Germany with more than 40,000 students. It combines excellence and internationalism in research with the claim of a comprehensive university that is also open to increasing student numbers. A central aspect of research funding in recent years is initial grants for coordinated programmes, from which the research training group, Doing Transitions, has received over €40,000. Thematic links to other coordinated programmes exist, including the collaborative research centre, SFB 1095: Discourses of Weakness and Resource Regimes, or the Cluster of Excellence, The Formation of Normative Orders. Both groups—similar to Doing Transitions as well—focus on the production of social structures, albeit in relation to other subjects and disciplinary contexts. The Institute of Social Research is of enormous importance both for theoretical developments and empiricism in the social sciences, and therefore for the Doing Transitions research training group as well. Another important research infrastructure is found in the Cornelia Goethe centre, which has established and distinguished itself not only in Gender Studies but is also engaged in the promotion of early-stage researchers. The DFG research training group Public Sphere and Gender Relations has connected these two areas superbly, the former coordinator of which, Prof. Dr. Barbara Friebertshäuser, is also a member of the Doing Transitions consortium. The Goethe University has significantly expanded its research-related services: specialized and highly-qualified contacts are available for research training groups. Furthermore, the Goethe Graduate Academy (GRADE) also provides an effective space for the support of early-stage researchers.

The profile of the Faculty of Educational Sciences consists of the Pillars of Heterogeneity and Inequality on the one hand and Pedagogy of Life Ages on the others. In recent years, the topic Transitions over the Life Course has emerged as a focus, which is also tied to the objectives of the university governance. This framework, which is especially relevant for the research training group, is particularly sustained by the institutes directly associated with the group, namely the Institute for Educational Sciences, and the Institute for Social Pedagogy and Adult Education, both of them also carrying out research across all life ages. The Institute has also organized the following thematically-relevant lecture series:

- Transitions as the occasion and goal of Upbringing, Welfare and Education;
- Learning in the Life Course (Hof et al.).
Consequently, the faculty's research committee has provided early financial support for the Doing Transitions project during the application stage. The faculty is also committed to providing initial and completion funding for doctoral candidates in order to support early career researchers. The Frankfurt-based members of the research training group also have a range of experiences in the joint supervision of doctoral studies. In recent years, the faculty has also significantly expanded its research efforts. This profile is complemented by the cooperation with the chair for empirical educational research at the Institute for Sociology (Faculty of Social Sciences) on research on the relationship between educational transitions and social inequality. The following research institutions will work closely with Doing Transitions:

The LOEWE Centre for Individual Development and Adaptive Education of Children at Risk (IDeA) is a collaboration of the Goethe University with the DIPF and the Sigmund Freud Institute. The Centre researches children's individual development processes and analyses the effectiveness of individual learning support (Andresen, Becker). It also offers methods training that can also be used by the research training group fellows.

- At the Social Pedagogy Research Centre ‘Education and Coping in the Life Course’ focuses on research related to the adolescent and young adult transitions. Here, the training of early-stage researchers is connected with research on training and practices as well as research basics and the development of methodological approaches of transition research (Walther).

- The Frankfurt Forum for Interdisciplinary Ageing Research combines social and educational science, psychological, legal, medical and economic perspectives in order to explore the conditions of life quality in ageing processes. Transitions in old age that get increasingly attention are a central focus of many studies as well as the promotion of early-stage researchers.

As one of the oldest European universities, the Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen is rich with tradition and is, at the same time, oriented at modern, international research through its three primary objectives: research, relevance, and responsibility. Currently 28,500 students are studying at the university from Germany and abroad. The development of the university is currently visible in the success of its applications for the national and state Excellence Initiative, which has enabled the university to create a Graduate School, a Cluster of Excellence as well as to further develop its top-level research (funding line ‘Institutional Strategies’). Doing Transitions received €12,500 in start-up funding from the university administration and can also benefit from the programme of the graduate school.

In addition to this financial support, the University of Tübingen has expanded its research-related services; the research training group will also benefit from the specialized counselling services and competent contacts. In terms of the support for graduate students at the University of Tübingen, the Graduate School, Learning, Educational Achievement, and Life Course Development (LEAD), a university-wide Graduate Academy and the networks "QualiNet" and "QuantiNet" in Economic and Social Sciences will provide relevant support, which complements that offered by GRADE and DIPF in Frankfurt very well.

The Institute of Education is part of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences and is associated with the above-mentioned infrastructure. In particular, the master programmes ‘Research and Development in Social Pedagogy / Social Work’ and ‘Adult Education / Training’ are an ideal context for the Doing Transitions research training group due to their life-course-related profile. The Department of Social Pedagogy, with its subject-specific networks and educational activities; the Department of General Education, with its discursive and practice theoretical reinterpretation of questions on the development and education in life course; and the Department of Adult / Further education with its emphasis on Aging Research. Through its membership in the Graduate School LEAD, the latter forms an important link between the research training group and empirical educational research. For the Research Training Group Doing Transitions, relevant research connections at the Institute of Education include:

- The Center for Counselling Research and Training (Bauer) analyses topics in the field of...
transition counselling and multi-professional cooperation in the context of continual evaluated, video supported development of counselling competence (DFG project and practical project for the field of collaboration for social work and schools, school social work).

- The research focus, Biographical Transition Research (Stauber) currently combine research on the processing of transitions (DFG), on risky youth cultural practices (DFG Project inclusive a continuation of a previous DFG project) and on educational transitions in the migration context (DFG D-A-CH-Project).

- The research focus, The Elderly (Schmidt-Hertha), consists of research on transitions in the post-employment phase and on the acquisition of skills (DFG) and on learning and media use in old age (BMBF).

- The Center for Childhood and Family Education Research (Bauer et al.) coordinates research and development projects in the field of childhood and family pedagogy.
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Research Training Group „Doing Transitions“ – Research Programme (unauthorized English version)


