



# DOING TRANSITIONS

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Social disadvantage and the power  
(lessness) of support in school-to-work  
transitions

Heidi Hirschfeld

# QUESTION

The relation between welfare regulation and biography in the school-to-work transitions of socially disadvantaged young people

# STRUCTURE

- Youth transitions in the context of inequality
- Theoretical aspects
- Methodological approach
- Case study
- Conclusions

# YOUTH TRANSITIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF INEQUALITY

- social structures, the job market and individual backgrounds determine the specific details and influence how (in)equality opportunities are created
- Socio-pedagogical support is offered to compensate social and economic disadvantages
- → "realistic" career aspirations

## THEORETICAL ASPECTS

- Institutionalized life course (Kohli 1985)
  - Institutional, socio-political and welfare state regulations, along with assumptions of normality (Schefold 2001; Lessenich 2013; Sackmann 2013; Leisering et al. 2001)
  - Social work acts in the sense of the activating welfare state (Kratz 2015; Kessl 2005)
  - Social worker as gatekeeper in the activating welfare state
- Doing Transitions (Walther/Stauber 2018)
  - Transitions are not thought of as given
  - Transitions as a relational interplay of discursive articulations, institutional modes of regulation and subjective-biographical coping processes

# METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

- Qualitative longitudinal data



- Narrative-biographical interviews with young adults
- Biographical case reconstruction according to Rosenthal (1995, 2011), discursive aspects

# RESULTS

- Discursive articulations
- Case study

# RESULTS: DISCURSIVE ARTICULATIONS

Problem diagnosis  
of disadvantage

Difficulties in  
transition

School grades

Professional  
orientation

Interpretation by  
institutional actors

In need of support

Worthy of support

Target group

Access?

Experience?

Process?

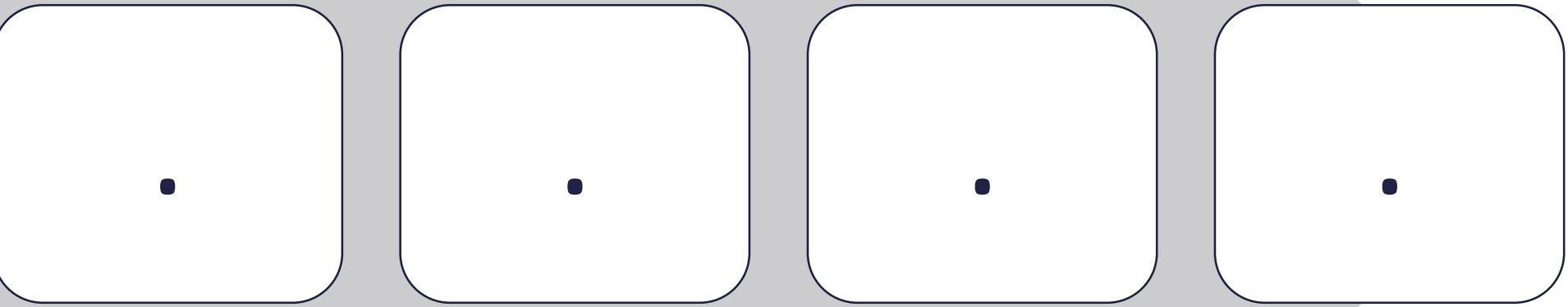
Young people must be motivated and prepared to  
accept the “rules of the game”

## CASE STUDY: VANESSA

- 14 years old
- father committed suicide
- conflicts with her mother
- moved in with grandfather (at 15 years old)
- presentation of her life story:
  - relationships, relationship losses and belonging to the family context
- participant at the “*Berufseinstiegsbegleitung*” in 8<sup>th</sup> grade

# CASE STUDY: VANESSA

Selection by  
a teacher:  
rejection, she  
does not feel  
at all  
addressed



,At first I was against it because I thought >>This is something  
for stupid people<<." (Vanessa 2010, 465-466).

# CASE STUDY: VANESSA

Selection by

a teacher:  
rejection, she  
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addressed

becomes a  
participant:  
family  
pressure

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different life  
topics

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"At the very beginning, I had a strange feeling, and then I really got to know her; first, I snuggled up against her, or first sniffed at her, and afterwards we became really close, meaning I really had a close relationship with her. You can say it was really friendly. And really intimate." (Vanessa 2011, 832-836)

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Staff  
changes:  
end of  
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In retrospect, the support:

- played an important role
- is biographically relevant
- → Overall, Vanessa positively evaluated the support from the pedagogical actor – but she only evaluated her and specifically her help, not the programme

# CONCLUSIONS

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- Institutionalization of support
  - Labelled as needing help
  - Support as a difference from the normal course of life (Kohli 1985)
  - Reproduction of deficits and stigma
  - Time aspects
  - Idea of the successful treatment of transitions

# CONCLUSIONS

II

## • Interpretation and appropriation of support

- Attribution of meaning of support by young people
- Attribution as being in need of support → Access to assistance
- Dealing with attributions and addresses
- Use: (Co)design, reinterpretation, assistance relationship, matching conditions
- Access to and use of assistance linked to life-world and biographical experiences
- Cooling-out

# CONCLUSIONS

## III

- Support as interaction between addressing, interpretation and appropriation of support
  - Uses vs. Addressing
  - Establishment of fit
  - Relationship between young people and pedagogical actor

# CONCLUSIONS

Doing Transitions by doing support

Institutionalisation of support and stored addresses

Interpretation and appropriation of support

Support as interaction between addressing, interpretation and appropriation of support

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Thanks for your attention!

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Uhr].

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Selection by a teacher:  
rejection, she does not feel at all addressed

becomes a participant: family pressure

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"My mom explained it to me and everything. And then I said >>How should I go to a woman who treats me like I was a little stupid child, where you have to explain everything in detail? That's a tutoring, why do I need a tutoring? I have good grades, I'm not a student who likes bad grades or something. Then my mum explained it to me: >>Yeah, no, it's actually more about the job. You'll get it all explained again.<< I just listened to my mum talking about it. Then my mum just registered me. I: >>Yeah, okay, if you absolutely have to. <<"

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"If we say, >>woman [socio-pedagogical acteur] we don't want to do anything today, we would rather read today<<. For example. Then we read. She always responds to our ideas and wishes. Or if we say: >>Today is too nice weather, today I don't feel like doing anything else, today I'd rather sit somewhere quiet and maybe enjoy the sun.<< She gets it"

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intimate relationship, use for different life topics

Staff changes:  
end of participation

“I saw the replacement and said: >>No, I'm not going back there.<<”

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Staff changes:  
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“Now in retrospect I think it was really great that I was a participant of the assistance, because otherwise I would not have been aware or clear about some things today. I was quite happy that there were Mrs. [socio-pedagogical actor].”



# QUESTION OF THE THESIS

How do young people perceive support?

How young people use support?

How does support take place as a process between biographical appropriation and institutional regulation?

How do young people interpret support?

How do young people make support relevant? How is support for young people made relevant?

Power and Powerlessness