



DOING TRANSITIONS DOING TRANSITIONS DOING TRANSITIONS

The “right” help?

How “youth jobcenter” clients negotiate their biographies

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Outline

- Introduction: school-to-work transition and the “Jugendjobcenter” (youth jobcenter)
- Theoretical approach
- Research question & study design
- Tentative findings

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

How do young people on welfare deal with being addressed by the “Jugendjobcenter”? What about the “right” help?

What kind of positionings the young people on welfare take?



Background

school-to-work transition ...

... „central ‘transmission belt‘ for reproduction of social inequality“ (Düker/Ley/Löhr, 2013)

... less direct and less certain

discourses \leftrightarrow policies

unequal living conditions and opportunities \rightarrow institutional assistance

activating labour market policy = no resting in the “welfare hammock“



Political relevance: German federal government aims at introducing the approach nationwide (coalition agreement, 2013)

Jugend
jobcenter
Frankfurt am Main

Objective of the JJC:

- integration of young persons - on welfare and under 25 years - into labour market and society
- intends to offer the ‘right help‘ through closer cooperation and better coordination (Stadt Frankfurt, 2012)



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institutions are based on different codes of law

Jobcenter:
placement service, benefits

Employment Agency:
career guidance

Municipal Youth Service:
for people with special needs; support and counselling

Theoretical approach

transitions

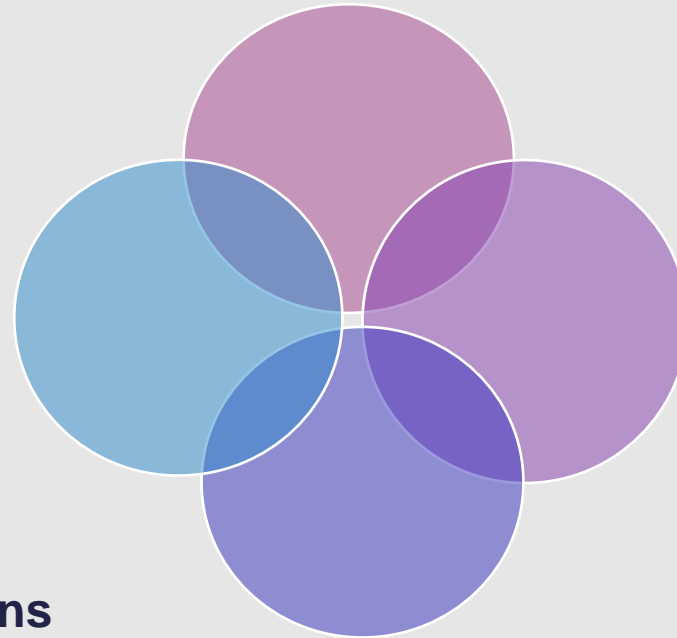
transitions as powerful institutions (Walther 2019)

chain of exclusions → downward spiral (Rieger-Ladich 2020: 226)

welfare state and addressees-research

governmentality

constitution of addressees „as
interactive interplay of reciprocal
shaping“ (Bitzan/Bolay 2016: 37)



doing transitions

relational perspective → production of social phenomena in
interrelation with other phenomena, objects and situations
(Stauber et al 2020: 289)

subjectivation

„process of submission through
power and at the same time the
process of becoming subject“
(subjection) (Butler 2001:8)

taking up and leaving of subject-
positions → agency
(Hall 2004, Spies 2010)



Research question & study design

RESEARCH QUESTION

How do young people shape their transition from school to work when dealing with the “Jugendjobcenter “(JJC)?

DATA COLLECTION

biographical-narrative interviews

(e.g. Schütze 1983, Rosenthal et al. 2006)

- with young adults (up to 25 years),
- who were on benefits of the JJC
- for at least half a year

DATA ANALYSIS

biographical case reconstruction (Rosenthal, e.g. 1995, 2005)

& analysis of positionings (e.g. Spies 2010)

SAMPLE

17 people between 16 and 24 years

- 11 were in contact ONLY with JC, punctually with Employment Agency
- 6 were additionally in contact with Municipal Youth Service
- 2 „Aufstocker_innen“ (~ working poor)



Tentative findings

Cooperation across the three institutions within the JJC

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS ABOUT THE COOPERATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE

- “Jobcenter” (JC) is the crucial institution
- rules of JC are pivotal

→ Municipal Youth Service (MYS) is not able to suspend rules of JC

- assignment to MYS depends on the individual professional of the JC
- Employment Agency only acts punctually and when instructed by JC





Contrasting cases about the role of the JJC in the life of young people in transition between school, vocational education und employment

	Chahida <i>„if you are living under the Jobcenter, you have such a shitty life“</i>	Dennis <i>“somehow I miss this, this helping hand“</i>	Jandra <i>„I simply want more“</i>
age	18	21 / 22 / 24	24
education	basic school qualification (Hauptschulabschluss, HSA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HSA • 2 unfinished vocational qualifications 	qualified HSA 2 vocational qualifications
current status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • living with her parents • searching for voc. education • assigned to new scheme for support in search for voc. education/job • conflictual relationship to professional of JJC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • living alone since death of mother • attending school for former drug addicts in fulltime → said to be “supplied” → less contact to JJC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • single mother • part-time job as geriatric care assistant (working poor → on welfare) • in process of clarification whether a new voc. education will be paid by JJC



role of JJC in vocational orientation

Chahida

impact rather relevant but with little effect on the aim of transition into voc. education:

- uncertainty caused by assignment of rehabilitation status
- adheres to occupational goal which isn't respected by JJC, legitimation by devaluation (saleswomen textile sector)
- has given up former more demanding professional aims (medical assistant)

Dennis

minor impact on orientation:

- cancellation of voc. education in which he was forced by JJC (electrician)
- access to 2nd voc. education by scheme, this occupational field meets his personal interest (social sector)
- again school attendance after consultation with social worker and psychologist after drugwithdrawal
- preferred career more or less consistent through 4 years

Jandra

no impact on orientation, but highly relevant for realisation

→ Her project has to be recognised by JJC to get financial support (maybe, stepfather would otherwise finance her new voc. education)



perception of the role of JJC (in their life)

Chahida

- experiences dependency from JJC as extremely restrictive
 - perceives interaction with her as pejorative and humiliating
- feels no support and regards JJC as a powerful supervisory authority

Dennis

- intensively looking for ‚help‘ - MYS is able to temporarily give him more time and attention
 - describes interaction with professionals as “ok” - presents himself as a charmer who can deal well with people, including employees at the JJC
- JJC can't give him what he's looking for; but he has come to terms with being on welfare to a certain extent

Jandra

- presents JJC as irrelevant to her life
 - but: appointments at JJC are associated with fears
 - repayment claims by the JJC caused financial problems
 - uses relative financial stability of being on welfare to fight bad working conditions
- doesn't want to give JJC control over her life
- emphasizes that she has learned to deal with JJC financially



Positioning of the young people: figures to legitimate their situation

WHY DO THEY LEGITIMATE BEING ON WELFARE?

- being on welfare means deviating from 'normal life course'
- from the perspective of the young people: this has to be explained and legitimated, esp. in the interview setting (e.g. Lenz/Lütgens vsl. 2021)

WHAT ARE POSITIONINGS?

- taking different positionings
(at the same time, in different situations → *interpellations* (Althusser), changes over life course)
- positionings reflect young people's struggle with being addressed by JJC and the requirements which they perceive through their role being on welfare
- requirements can be addressed implicitly or explicitly by employees of JJC or socially imparted ↔ positionings are part/results of discourses



First thoughts on positionings

- ,officially‘ recognised positions (employed, pupil, parent)
- victim of labour administration (or at least: disappointed by JJC)
- disoriented person without help
- failed seeker for help
- working on her-/himself
- eager to meet (too high) requirements of JJC
- trying to solve more crucial problems
- being disadvantaged by family/origin
- distancing oneself from people on welfare

Chahida

- victim of labour admin.
 - seeker for help
 - eager to meet requirements of JJC

Dennis

- person without help
- trying to solve more crucial problems (drug addiction)
 - pupil

Jandra

- employed
- working on herself
- single mother



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Thank you!

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