

**ZSE**

**Zeitschrift für Soziologie  
der Erziehung und Sozialisation**

**Journal for Sociology  
of Education and Socialization**

### ■ Schwerpunkt

Editorial: Bildungsbezogener Rechtspopulismus/-extremismus

Vereinnahmungen von Kindern und Kindheiten

Kind-Bilder in rechtspopulistischen und/oder wissenschaftsfeindlichen Narrativen im Kontext der Covid-19-Pandemie

Wissenschaftsbezogener Rechtspopulismus/-extremismus an Hochschulen – eine Feldexploration und Herausforderungen in der Lehre

Rechtsalternative Thematisierungen von Bildung und Erziehung – Diskursanalytische Perspektiven auf gesellschaftliche, politische und kulturelle Narrative

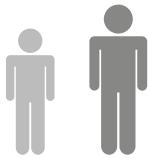
### ■ Freie Beiträge

Familienerziehung im Generationenvergleich. Befunde einer qualitativen Studie in Ost- und Westdeutschland

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# ZSE

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the stigmatization of being “left behind” and *Viorela Ducu* discussed how Moldovan and Ukrainian children actively shape transnational family relationships, communication practices and care arrangements.

Considering the rejection of bourgeois family norms discussed as part of the two keynote addresses, the 13 presentations examined how transnational families encounter these normative expectations and explored the potential insights their experiences could offer in redefining the conventional family model. By doing so, the conference revealed three important, overlooked aspects of transnational family life. First, the presentations highlighted the work that goes into maintaining a family across borders, the social determinants of the outcomes of migration, and how families use transnational migration as a tool to secure their upward social mobility. In doing so, the conference moved beyond normative notions of family life to unveil the diverse and dynamic ways families use transnational mobility to pragmatically respond to pressing concerns. Second, the presentations demonstrated that a comparative analysis of the different forms of transnational family life is extremely difficult because the conditions that lead to the formation of a transnational family vary greatly. Consequently, the variation that exists in transnational family formation also affects how we understand what it means to have a good childhood. Nevertheless, engaging an international perspective on both topics is extremely important, as it allows us to understand family and childhood as social constructions, recognize their variability, and grasp the precariousness of transnational family life. Third, the conference highlighted the urgent need to study the perspectives of the children in transnational families. In transnational families, children typically occupy the most vulnerable positions, while also making relevant and consequential contributions to family life. Therefore, learning more about their perspective will provide important insights into the reality of transnational families.

The keynote addresses and paper presentations featured in the three-day conference, discussed the conditions that produce transnational families, and how families experience transnational mobility. The content

of all the presentations would be useful to those with an interest in international migration, family studies, and children and youth. Given their geographic diversity, these presentations would also benefit those with an area studies interest in South and Southeast Asia, Europe, South America, and North Africa.

Conference website: [https://www.uni-due.de/biwi/koenig/dodzi/international\\_workshop.php](https://www.uni-due.de/biwi/koenig/dodzi/international_workshop.php)

*Adrienne Lee Atterberry, Union College*

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## Relational Perspectives of the Life Course

Report on the 3rd International and Transdisciplinary Doing transitions conference “Relational Perspectives of the Life Course” from May 10 to May 12, 2023 at Goethe University Frankfurt

“Relational Perspectives of the Life Course” conference opened a joint space to discuss reflexive and relational transition research. The conference was organized by the *Doing transitions* research and training program (funded by the German Research Foundation, abbreviated DFG in German) for young researchers implemented in collaboration with Goethe University Frankfurt and University of Tübingen. The program is coordinated by Professors Andreas Walther and Barbara Stauber. The *Doing transitions* program consists of three cohorts of young researchers. The present third conference served as a platform for presenting the

research findings of the second cohort of young researchers who are interested in the constitution of transitions in the life course. As a result of the open call for papers, one-third of the presentations were given by international researchers. Overall, the conference included three keynote speakers, four panel sessions with 11 panels and more than 30 presented research papers plus a poster session and commentary section with a concluding discussion summarizing the conference.

The emphasis of “doing” transitions underlines the relational and reflective nature of emerging transitions in the life course (see Stauber et al., 2022). It aims to challenge the assumption taken for granted that transitions are mainly individual processes and to broaden the exploration of transitions as relationally constituted phenomena that individuals experience (Walther et al., 2022). As encapsulated in the conference program the “doing” emphasizes the relational constitution of transitions that considers “multiple agents, processes and practices”. Furthermore, transitions are constituted in relation to time: in relation to earlier transitions, but also constituting and being a part of future transitions (Walther et al., 2022).

Transitions connect different life phases, and transitional experiences are already constituted in childhood (e.g. the transition from home to kindergarten or to school). For us as childhood and transition researchers interested in children’s agency, relationality is an important starting point for research. On the one hand, children actively constitute the transitions that occur in their everyday lives, and on the other hand, transitions form a continuum in which childhood transitions lay the foundation for transitions experienced later in life. Childhoods as social constructions constitute transitions, and transitions constitute childhoods. In what follows, we offer a glimpse of some of the interesting and inspiring ideas that were presented during the conference days, using childhood research as a lens on the topic. In the first keynote lecture *Daniela Grunow* illustrated especially methodological tools and challenges in life course transition research through her family research related work. She presented the life course cube tool for studying lives (Bernardi et

al., 2019) that was discussed in some other presentations as well. The life course cube is a multidimensional model, for example illustrating the complex macro and micro interactions and relations between different domains of life. *Silke van Dyk* delivered the second keynote on processes of ageing and particularly highlighted that elderly people tend to be assigned a similar kind of position as “other” as children in relation to other age categories and norms. As *van Dyk* argued, both middle-class and middle age are the standard norm. However, here as throughout the conference, the transitions in later parts of life were represented and discussed from varying perspectives. In the third keynote, *Eric Widmer* focused specifically on relationships and how they are modified in transitions. He illustrated the relational changes unfolding in transitions through configurations of new and old relationships. Relations among significant others in addition to the person in transition are reshaped in transitions. *Widmer*’s presentation included children as part of their families and variously structured compositions of family networks.

In his closing remarks at the conference, *Rick A. Settersten Jr.* argued that the simple division between childhood and adulthood is nowadays complemented by a finer distinction of life phases. He presented childhood as divided into early and middle childhood towards young adulthood. The diversity of childhood is the cornerstone of childhood studies, and the general discourse is to speak of childhoods in the plural. Thus, the complex and multilayered construction of childhood and individual life phases together challenge researchers to understand childhood transitions.

Childhood studies places high value on the lives of children, their experiences of childhood, their rights, and their own perspectives. Thus, researchers maintain awareness of power relations when conducting research with children and continuously work on developing reflexive research (Eunicke et al., 2023). The situational analysis discussed in the session “Analyzing transitions in relational perspective – methodological perspectives” resonated to be an applicable part of the childhood studies research toolkit. Situational analysis as a method to capture and present the processuality of transitions

and as a flexible method to visualize relations was discussed in two papers by *Karla Wazinski & Anna Wanka* and *Tamara Schwertel*. *Wazinski* and *Wanka* introduced transitions especially as transformation processes where mapping, inspired by situational analysis, can address the complexity of transition as well as reflexivity in conducting research. *Schwertel* in addition pointed out how it is possible to consider also material elements in situational analysis (for further details see *Schwertel*, 2023; *Wazinski et al.*, 2023). This panel very much contributed to the conference goal to study transitions in a reflexive and relational way as a research subject, but also as a methodological challenge. It was a reminder that the researcher always has a position within the research process, not just as an observer of the subject. This is particularly emphasized in childhood studies. However, as *Eunicke et al.* (2023) pointed out, situational analysis is not yet an established method in childhood studies.

Childhood transitions were discussed in more detail in the panel “Institutional Regimes in the Life Course”. *Natascha Shalutkeyich* gave a presentation that unfolded her findings on the varying discursive productions of childhood in preschool programs of East and West Germany during the Cold War. Similarly, *Marius Hilkert*’s paper focused on children’s out-of-home placements and in particular on transition regulations based on his institutional ethnography. Our contribution reinforced the institutional perspective by discussing children’s transitions and pathways in Finnish early childhood education and care based on our longitudinal multi-case data.

Finally, very interesting for transition researchers was also the contribution of *Kerstin Meissner* as a discussant on the panel “Interpersonal Relations in Doing Transitions”. She adduced three challenges related to studying life course and transitions: The challenge of addressing social norms in research and not reproducing them, the challenge of methodically confronting the individualization of social phenomena and the challenge of reconstructing transitions as multiple processes rather than specific events or outcomes.

As transition researchers, these comments underline how we tend to produce the phenomena we study, not just describing them. We reproduce our interpretations of transi-

tions; we reproduce perceptions of different phases of the life course, e.g., by our decisions regarding which life phases to study and how to study them. Although research is conducted by individuals, relationally oriented researchers must always focus on the relationships and phenomena involved in transitions. This observation highlights the multifaceted and process-oriented nature of transitions, of which research can only capture a certain aspect.

*Kaisa Harju, University of Jyväskylä, Finland & Mari Vuorisalo, University of Jyväskylä, Finland*

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