

Child poverty and child well-being

Perspectives and empirical findings on vulnerability in childhood

Nora Iranee und Stephanie Meiland
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GEFÖRDERT VOM



Bundesministerium
für Bildung
und Forschung

*Poverty as a risk factor - A qualitative study on vulnerability in childhood.
What makes children stronger but also in need of protection.*

Project manager

Prof. Dr. Sabine Andresen

Research assistants

Nora Iranee

Stephanie Meiland

Student assistants

Charlotte Busch

Natalie Povolny

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Research concept

- Poverty as the phenomenological starting point
- Multidimensional concept of vulnerability in childhood:
 - everyday experiences
 - realms of experiences
 - social actors and structures
- School and out-of-school contexts
- Actors:
 - children
 - parents
 - professionals and volunteers

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Research questions

- Which vulnerabilities are becoming obvious in an everyday life, that is shaped by poverty and experiences of deprivation?
- How do different adults in precarious social environments thematize child poverty, border violation and sexual violence?
- Which resources, knowledge and concepts do adults have?
- How do children and adults respectively children among each other interact, if the everyday life and social environment is shaped by poverty and experiences of deprivation?
- How do relevant adults attempt to shape childhood?

Methodological approach

Actors and institutions:

- children (8 - 11)
- parents
- pedagogical staff
- volunteers
- school and out-of school contexts



Methods:

- semi-structured interviews with parents, teachers and pedagogical staff
- participant observation and semi-structured interviews with children

- Data analysis: framework of the Grounded Theory
- Constant interplay between phases of data collection and analysis
- Over 80 protocols and 45 interviews with children, siblings, parents and pedagogues

Research field

- Basis for a qualitative data collection:
 - 4 different districts
 - Big city in western Germany
 - Heterogeneous population structure (e.g. young people, people with migration background)
 - Districts declared as socially deprived based on data of social monitoring (e.g. high unemployment rate, high rate of social welfare benefits, high rate of people with migration background)
 - Every 3rd child on welfare benefits
 - Strained financially situation of the city

Framing conditions of the child-centers (out-of-school care)

Issue	Similarities	Differences
Location and residential environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> socially deprived districts institution as part of a apartment building surrounded by apartment blocks of different size 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> facilities of different size and space more or less child-unfriendly environment
History of district and associated assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> deprived areas with high rates of violence and criminality settlement of people with migration background reorganization of institutional and infrastructural conditions 	<p>„In former times we were used to say this is where the extreme is normal“ (Mrs. Müller-Ziegler)</p>
Pedagogical offer and institutional framing conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> financed by youth welfare office children in elementary school focus on compensation of deprivation of children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> number of employees work with parents pedagogical concept and its extent

*The district, yes? You're making a mistake, you've got the stigma“
(Mr. Schäfer)*

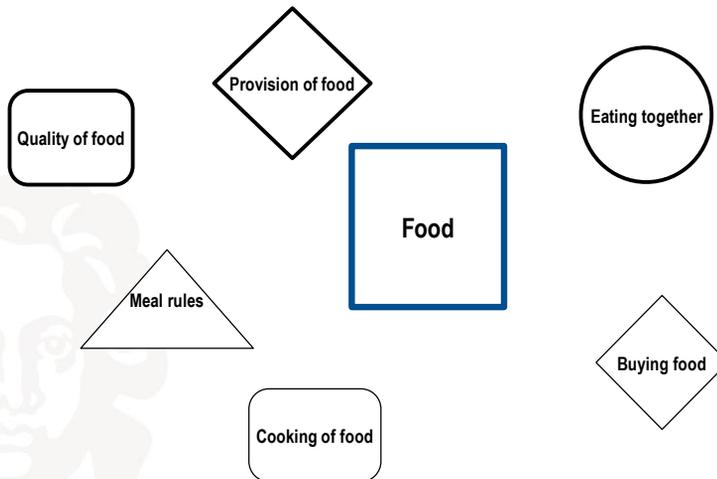
„In former times we were used to say this is where the extreme is normal“
(Mrs. Müller-Ziegler)

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Dimensions of vulnerability in childhood

- Thematization of existential issues:
 - poverty
 - material goods
 - money
 - **food**

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- Main practices among children:
 - eating together and buying food
 - range from:
 - sharing / not sharing food,
 - food as social togetherness,
 - buying food as an event,
 - having / not having money to buy food,
 - loaning money to buy food

When I arrive at the kiosk, Jenny and Susi just finished eating a portion of chips and Jenny is getting ice cream for both of them. Amira and Maha are still sitting at table, sharing a portion of chips with mayonnaise. (quote out of protocol of participant observation)

Frenetic Lisa is shouting at Mr. Schäfer, where her 2 Euros are while fidgeting with her legs. After Mr. Schäfer handed out the money, they run to the kiosk. (quote out of protocol of participant observation)

- Main practices of adults:
 - provision of food
 - range from:
 - serving food,
 - cooking with children,
 - educating ‚good ways of nutrition‘

Mr. Schneider tells, that the eggs and milk are „organic“ and that this is better. Fahad reacts: „Everything of you is organic“. Manisha answers: „Organic, organic, organic“. Mr. Schneider affirms that und starts to explain, what is signifying organic. Fahad says: „Ahhh, I don´t wanna know it!“ Mr. Schneider continues, that the organic seal means, that cows won´t be feed with antibiotics as well as chickens won´t be caged in cramped boxes. Then he turns to Fahad and asks him: „So why is organic better?“ He inquires Fahad to repeat, what he had even explained to him. Then Fahad recites, why „organic“ is better. (quote out of protocol of participant observation)

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- On structural level:
 - limited and restricted scopes of action and capabilities
- On interactional level:
 - affected perspectives, attitudes and social practices
- Vulnerability in childhood as working concept

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Thank you for your attention!



Contact details

Prof.'in Dr. Sabine Andresen, Nora Iranee and Stephanie Meiland

Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main
Department of Educational Science
Institute for Social Pedagogy and Adult Education
Theodor-W.-Adorno-Platz 6
60323 Frankfurt Main/Germany
s.andresen@em.uni-frankfurt.de
iranee@em.uni-frankfurt.de
meiland@em.uni-frankfurt.de

