

Child-rearing within families out of children's view: A qualitative study  
about intergenerational relationships of power

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## 1. Research interest: Children as experts for their lives

- **Research question:** *Which perspective do children aged from 5-10 have upon child-rearing processes within their families and how do power relations of the generational order play a role in that?*
- Within my research I bring two perspectives together
  - 1) Perspective of the new social childhood studies: Children in the here and now, as actors and constructors of their life worlds (**orientation to the present**) → **Well-Being**
  - 2) Perspective of the educational sciences: Children in development, vulnerable and in need of protection (**orientation to the future**) → **Well-Becoming**
- **Children are seen as experts for child rearing processes within families**

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## 2. Methodology

- Access to the research field via primary school and kindergarten
- **Focus group discussion** with eight 10-year-olds about child-rearing → interview guideline
- **Partly standardized interviews** with four kindergarten-children and six primary school pupils
  - Initially single interviews
  - As a result from the research experiences I changed to „dialogue-supported“ interviews (Weltzien 2009) with two children
- Data analysis via Grounded Theory: Group discussion and interviews

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3. Core results: *An ideal conception of child-rearing and the experienced reality of child-rearing*

### ***Ideal conception of childrearing***

- **Out of the perspectives of the children child-rearing is seen as a metamorphosis**

Children form from an undeveloped, uncivilised being to a developed and socially acceptable character → children and adults get dichotomous attributes

knowing vs. not-knowing

developed vs. non-developed

civilized vs. uncivilized

mature vs. immature

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3. Core results: *An ideal conception of child-rearing and the experienced reality of child-rearing*

- Child-rearing is seen as a **teleological process**, which is controlled by the intentions of the parents (“my parents want that...”)
- Child-rearing is seen as a **development process**: “Now” and “**then**”
- Adults are seen as **powerful**
- **Childhood is a phase of civilisation and a metamorphosis** from the immature, under aged child to a mature and responsible adult
- The **children approve the generational order** (between acceptance and lack of power)

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3. Core results: An *ideal conception of child-rearing* and the *experienced reality of child rearing*

## ***Experienced reality of child-rearing***

- This category is full of breaks, resistance and ambivalences

***Renate:*** „Parents can be quite stupid“

- Children **negotiate** with the child-rearing process, that they experience every day
- The children **challenge the power** of the adults
- The children see themselves als powerful and **competent actors**

→ **Children can be seen as souverain subjects within the child-rearing process**

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## 4. Theorization

- On the one hand, **children acknowledge the differences in the generational order** and **accept the power of the adults**
- Tanja Betz also determines that **children accept the relationships of inequality between the generations** and asks “which power of negotiation is really available to children?” (Betz 2009)
- Children **accept power relations in the generational order** due to different reasons (acceptance of the rules, trust into the parents, lack of power)

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#### 4. Theorization

- On the other hand, **children question the power of parents in the generational order**, and confront it powerfully from their own side.
- Hence, **children gain an active role in the child-rearing process**
  
- This means that children are in no way only the products of their parents or other educators, but that **they play an active role in an interactive process** in which child-rearing and self-development are interlinked.

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#### 5. Child Well Being and Family Well Being out of the Children's Perspectives

- What **children need** out of their perspectives is
  - Freedom for own decisions → Right for Participation
  - Appreciation and respect → Right for Protection and Care
  - Time

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## 5. Child Well Being and Family Well Being out of the Children's Perspectives

- Children see themselves in the **here-and-now**; they actively negotiate concepts of “child-rearing” and participation opportunities. At the same time, they see themselves as being in a **condition of development and becoming**.
- **Children move between Well-Being and Well-Becoming**

→ In a connection of CWB and FWB, this means **focusing**

on the developing child, the child's dependence on and integration in a generational relationship of power



**and the child's actor status.**

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# THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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## Literature

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