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Doing Transitions in the Life Course

Processes and Practices

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Preface

Doing Transitions in the Life Course: Processes and Practices contributes to the book series Life Course Research and Social Policies by providing a new perspective on transitions in the life course. Transitions are a central element of life course research and the object of social policies that undergird the institutionalized life course and affect the life trajectories of individuals.

This book is the culmination of a longer process of academic networking – and a document that reflects the transformation from being colleagues to becoming friends: in 2014, Rick Settersten accepted the invitation of Andreas Walther and Barbara Stauber to serve as a "critical friend" in the process of developing a proposal to the German Research Foundation (DFG) to fund a research training group on how transitions in the life course are shaped, practiced, and performed.

The "Doing Transitions" program was successfully funded for a first phase (2017–2021) and is now in its second phase (2021–2025). It is a joint partnership between Goethe University Frankfurt and the University of Tübingen, and co-directed by Walther and Stauber at these respective institutions. Two cohorts of early career researchers (30 thus far) have conducted their PhDs in this framework or are in the process of doing so.

Along the way, our partnership, the evolution of the framework and research, and the progress of the students have been especially facilitated by constructive exchanges and presentations at international conferences held in Frankfurt (2017) and Tübingen (2020). These encounters and discussions generated many exciting ideas expressed through student and faculty projects on how transitions are "done" from childhood through old age, and in schooling, work and careers, social policies, family, health, and other domains and contexts.

The second phase of the program has emphasized a relational perspective, which is also foundational to this book, which began to take shape during the second international conference, in Tübingen in February 2020, just weeks before the COVID-19 pandemic unfurled so dramatically across the globe. We remain eternally grateful that we had the opportunity to be together in that moment before the world shut down.

Over the last few years, we and the contributors have been collaborators on an intensive journey of theoretical and conceptual development, exploring new ways of thinking and formulating ideas – a process that has been both exhilarating and liberating, if not also a little frightening at times. Our regular online editorial meetings spanned a 9-hour time difference between Oregon (US) and Frankfurt, Tübingen (Germany), and Camogli (Italy) – with Rick joining very early mornings with coffee in hand, and Barbara and Andreas in late afternoon or early evening awaiting a glass of wine.

We are grateful to all the contributors for their patience with our questions and their responsiveness to our suggestions as they brought their chapters through multiple revisions – all through the pandemic period when so much else in their lives was in flux. We extend special thanks to Laura Bernardi, who is not only involved as an author but also invited us, on behalf of her co-editors, to publish this book in the Life Course Research and Social Policies series. We also wish to thank Evelien Bakken, Nitesh Shrivastava, and Prasad Gurunadham from Springer Nature for their support and guidance in the production process, as well as Jana Gersdorff, who helped format the manuscript.

We hope that the spirit of this shared work will find resonance in the international community of life course and transition researchers, foster theories and research, and inform social policies concerned with life course transitions in meaningful ways.

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Tübingen, Germany   Barbara Stauber

Corvallis, OR, USA   Richard A. Settersten, Jr
December 15, 2021

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Part I
Introduction

Chapter 1
"Doing Transitions": A New Research Perspective

Andreas Walther, Barbara Stauber, and Richard A. Settersten Jr

Transitions between life phases have long been central to understanding the organization and experience of the whole life course in every society, capturing the attention of researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. The significance of transitions in the life course is especially apparent in times of great social, economic, and political change and discord, as the changing environments disrupt or undermine life as it was understood, whether by individuals or whole populations.

It is common to think about transitions in relation to a larger life trajectory, or pathway, similar to that of a career. A trajectory is understood to be long in scope, charting the course of an individual's experiences in specific life domains (e.g., work, family, education, health, housing) over time. The individual life course is composed of these multiple, interwoven trajectories. Trajectories are punctuated by a sequence of successive life events and transitions. Events and transitions refer to changes in an individual's state (cf. Elder Jr., 1985). Events are usually conceptualized as relatively abrupt changes, transitions refer to longer processes that may include discrete events, involve anticipatory and adaptive processes, and are often tied to the acquisition or relinquishment of social roles. Because trajectories are interlocked, transitions in one domain can spill over to another (e.g., transitions in work can spill over to family, and vice versa).

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Taking a long view of an individual's life, transitions that occur early in life may matter for later life (e.g., early childbearing may restrict opportunities for higher education or work; completion of a college degree may bring cumulative benefits to lifetime career advancement and income). These points reveal an often-examined dimension of transitions – age, or timing. That is, the experience of transitions, and their causes and consequences, depend on their timing – whether transitions are experienced "on-time" or "off-time" (early or late) related to social or statistical norms, or even whether individuals run out of time in making a transition (as not making a transition can itself be a sort of transition).

Transitions are understood as moments in individual lives that create or reproduce social inequalities and risks of social exclusion. Therefore, institutional actors are concerned with supporting individuals in transitions. In modern societies, institutions of the welfare state especially have been concerned with connecting individual lives with the exigencies of the societal division of labor. On one hand, we might point to what has been described as the "tripartite" model of the life course (Kohli, 1985) – with education and training in the beginnning, work in the middle, and retirement and leisure at the end. This "institutionalized" and highly predictable model of the life course emerged in full force by the middle of the last century, especially for men's lives, and rested on a complex overlay of social institutions and policies that were built around it. It also institutionalized a separation between paid and unpaid work and in this way established gendered life courses (Levy & Widmer, 2013; Saraceno, 2008). On the other hand, recent decades have led to the dissolution of the tripartite life course and, in its wake, to greater unpredictability, uncertainty, and insecurity, especially for the most disadvantaged members of societies and those with fewer provisions of welfare states (cf. Beck, 1992). Research has developed in close relation to such policies and paid less attention to theoretical reflections of transitions, while social institutions and policies have treated them as quasi-natural social facts, which has also influenced research (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

There are cultural but historically changing scripts for how lives are supposed to be lived in any given society. People in them are socialized in ways that create "mental maps" of what Neugarten (1969) called the "normal, expectable life." These maps are the backdrop for life transitions: How do people in a society see the stages of life? What transitions are supposed to occur in those stages, and what transitions mark movement out of one stage and into another? These maps affect how people perceive and evaluate themselves and others. They play important roles in decision-making processes, particularly in shaping the kinds of goals people set and pursue at various points in life and how they allocate their resources.

Obviously, life courses and the transitions that mark them are highly complex phenomena of social reproduction. Driven by institutional actors and policy makers concerned with mitigating related problems like social disadvantage and risks of exclusion, much past research has tried to reduce this complexity to better observe and measure the effects of transitions on individual life trajectories (cf. Schoon & Silbereisen, 2009; Shavit & Müller, 1998). Recently, however, several attempts have been made to readdress the complexity of life courses. For example, Bernardi et al.

(2019) have presented a model, the so-called "life course cube," aimed at doing justice to the complex interdependencies involved in how life courses evolve. Schoon and Lyons-Amos (2017) have developed a socio-ecological model of agency structuring education and employment transitions.

This volume introduces a new framework for understanding life transitions – what we call Doing Transitions. We draw on a praxeological perspective, to question, reconsider, and recast some traditional ways of viewing transitions. In being socially recognized and shared, the cultural scripts that guide or prescribe transitions are accompanied by rituals, ceremonies, rights and duties, and institutional procedures. This means that transitions do not simply exist but are constantly constituted by practices – or better, bundles of practices (see Schatzki, this volume). We hope to offer a more comprehensive picture and knowledge of life course transitions, crossing or extending the boundaries of age groups, life domains, and disciplines that so often segregate inquiry. The volume emerges from the work of a German PhD program established at the Universities of Frankfurt and Tübingen. This program is concerned with understanding how various forms of transitions in the life course are constituted through the practices that shape them. Here, the program's approach and some of its findings are for the first time addressed for an international audience. This chapter introduces the Doing Transitions perspective and the volume.

We will start from a presentation of the concept and its foundational tenets that transitions are shaped and produced through social practices, and that transitions emerge and are constantly reproduced and transformed through the interrelation of discourses, institutional regulation (including formal and informal pedagogical intervention), as well as individual processes of learning, education, and coping. After describing what a Doing Transitions perspective entails, we provide a brief overview of the volume and its chapters, which are organized around three themes: institutions and organizations; times and normativities; and materialities, such as bodies, spaces, and artifacts.

"Doing Transitions": The Concept

The widespread notion of "transition" refers to a movement or process of crossing a certain space from one defined point towards another, or "a change from one state to another" (Sackmann & Wingens, 2001, p. 42). This is consistent with the understanding of "transition" as a key concept in life course research. The life course is viewed as being punctuated by a series of normative age-related transitions, many of which are institutionalized, and individuals are expected to follow as they move across life phases (Elder Jr., 1985; Kohli, 1985).

Although there is a broad understanding of the life course as an institution, transitions simultaneously, and perhaps not surprising, tend to be interpreted as individual processes. The concept of "doing transitions," in contrast, emphasizes that transitions are constituted within and through different types of social relationships

and different modes and degrees of institutionalization. Consequently, transitions are not individual but relational. Take the transition from kindergarten to school as an example. One may be tempted to reduce this transition to the capacity of the child to take this process as self-evident – sooner or later all children go through it, at least in countries where educational systems start early. However, this interpretation neglects some critical points: First, it is only in modern societies that school has been made compulsory, and it is only in recent decades that education has been declared as the most central resource for a "successful life in a well-functioning society" (see the title of Rychen & Salganik, 2003). Second, the transition from kindergarten to school involves many actors, starting with parents (who are made accountable for this process both by society and state authorities), medical professionals and childcare or early learning providers, as well as the teachers who receive new cohorts of pupils into their schools and classrooms. Third, peers are crucial in this process, in that children are sensitive to the reactions and evaluations of their classmates and are, in front of one another, engaged in self-presentation as "school children." Fourth, even referring to school entry as a transition *from* kindergarten *to* school reflects the fact that kindergarten attendance is an aspect and asset of modern childhood – and a consequence of growing rates of female employment when children are young and the need for childcare to make work possible alongside childrearing.

A Doing Transitions perspective, then, begs us to not see transitions as individual phenomena but instead as deeply interwoven with others, as suggested by the concept of "linked lives" (Elder Jr., 1994; Settersten Jr., 2015). Put simply, the life of one person affects and is affected by other people, especially the most central and intimate of relationships. In the spirit of this principle, transitions in the lives of one person can create transitions for others, not only in forcing adaptation, but in bringing formal changes – for example, when children become parents, parents become grandparents; when a couple divorces, the divorce creates "ex" relationships throughout the family matrix. Because family (or family-like) relationships are most central to everyday life, the family is generally the setting in which most transitions, whatever their content, are experienced and given meaning.

Moreover, life course transitions take place in multi-layered settings that affect their experience and transitions themselves may prompt a change in settings (e.g., starting university or a new job, moving to a new neighbourhood). They are intertwined with wider societal processes and embedded in specific social contexts. Transitions cannot be separated from how they are socially constructed, especially through discourses – a topic to which we will return.

It may seem obvious that transitions are processes, and yet they are too often measured as single events. Processes are not only involved in a change from state A to B. Multiple specific events may mark a transition, but the underlying transformative processes cover a longer arc of time starting earlier and lasting longer. This can best be illustrated through apparently "new" transitions like children's transition from parental care into daycare, which precedes the transition illustrated above: This process has been referred to as a transition that needs to be fostered because women's employment has increased and, as such, the entry of children into

institutionalized daycare can be anticipated. Also, neuroscience and educational policy emphasize the importance of early childhood for lifelong learning careers, which also affects how women's work or the placement of children into daycare are interpreted or justified. In the individual case, this transition may be envisioned or articulated from the start of pregnancy – even well before it, when individuals or couples may plan or envision family formation; or even before that, when they are seeking education or building careers and their decisions and negotiations may be related to the future timing of children – all the way up to parents' deliberations about when they (and in most cases, the mother) should return to work.

The relational and processual structure of a transition's constitution is central to a "doing" perspective. If we assume that transitions are *not* a given quasi-natural social fact (unlike the process of physical growth or maturation, which is viewed as natural), then transitions must instead be understood as being constantly (re-)produced. This conception of 'doing" has been introduced by West and Zimmerman (1987), who analyze "doing gender" as "a routine, methodical, and recurring accomplishment" (p. 126) "embedded in everyday interaction" (p. 125). They continue:

> When we view gender as an accomplishment, an achieved property of situated conduct, our attention shifts from matters internal to the individual and focuses on interactional and, ultimately, institutional arenas. In one sense, of course, it is individuals who "do" gender. But it is a situated doing, carried out in the virtual or real presence of others who are presumed to be oriented to its production. Rather than as a property of individuals, we conceive of gender as an emergent feature of social situations: both as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society (p. 126).

This anti-essentialist view has been extended in terms of "doing difference" (Fenstermaker & West, 1995), and can be read as a version of an intersectional perspective, which had already been developed by black feminists in the 1970s. Doing difference implies understanding race, class, and other differences too as "ongoing interactional accomplishment" (p. 8). However, these accomplishments should not be misunderstood as merely situational but as:

> … an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and a means of justifying [one of the most fundamental] divisions of society. We suggested that examining how [gender] is accomplished could reveal the mechanisms by which power is exercised and inequality is produced (p. 9).

If we generalize these considerations, "doing" is not understood as individual action but instead as an interactive or collective practice that not only involves individuals who are co-present but extends to institutional and discursive phenomena that affect those practices as they are enacted in specific social situations.

The concept of "doing gender" stimulates the concept of "doing transitions" in two ways. First, doing transitions emphasizes how social inequalities are (re-)produced during and through life transitions, and transitions themselves are also significantly gendered in their causes and consequences. Second, "doing" emphasizes the need for a constructivist conceptualization of transitions that includes attention to their performative and interpretative aspects.

Thus, a perspective using the prefix "doing" serves as a heuristic device for analyzing mechanisms of power and social inequalities, especially with regard to *how* they are being (re)produced (cf. Hirschauer, 2019). In applying "doing" to transitions we must therefore not view transitions as "neutral" social phenomena but as components of powerful social orders and their (re)production (cf. Stauber, 2020). In fact, transitions represent processes of "doing difference": Inasmuch as transitions refer to the crossing of boundaries between social states, phases of life, ages, social positions, institutional roles, or statuses of membership, they contribute to their demarcation and reproduction. Thus, analyzing how transitions are being "done" allows us to analyze how powerful social boundaries are being reproduced – or modified. Rather than understanding power and inequality as determined, the emphasis of accomplishment and performance inherent to a "doing" perspective is meant as the smallest but fundamental unit of the social involving human actors as well as artifacts and discourses (cf. Latour, 2005; Shove et al., 2012). These theorists conceptualize social practice not as isolated or micro practices, but as bundles of practices that can achieve considerable persistence over time and space, such as the case of institutions (cf. Nicolini, 2009). The life course, and transitions in particular, can be conceptualized as bundles of practice (see also Schatzki, this volume).

Analyzing how transitions are being done implies differentiation between various practices or modes of "doing," through which they are being shaped and formed. For reasons of operationalization, our research, conducted from a Doing Transitions perspective, thus far distinguishes three modes of constitution: discursive, institutional and individual practices.

Following Foucault (1972), *discourses* represent powerful orders of knowledge. These orders are "productive" in as much as they frame if and how social phenomena are named in a specific way. Thus, discourses not only represent structural orders but are also practical acts of distinction, address, and evaluation. Discourses "systematically form the objects of which they speak" (p. 54). They contribute to normality as a system of self-evidence of what can and cannot be said. Regarding transitions, this starts – most banally and most dangerously – when social states, positions, memberships, and changes between them, are formally or informally judged to be indicators of "success" or "failure." In this regard, one might even problematize the increased reference to "transition" (instead of status passage) as a shift from a structural towards a more individualized perspective (cf. Walther et al., 2016).

The so-called "normal life course" is such a discursive phenomenon. It establishes situational definitions, interpretive frameworks, and symbolic orders that contribute to the constitution of transitions. In this discursive framework, requirements of age roles and judgments of success or failure are implicitly or explicitly individualized (cf. Rieger-Ladich, 2012). If we are to analyze how transitions are "done" through powerful discursive practice, we must question (1) practices of articulation (in what circumstances which processes and situations are referred to as "transitions"; cf. Hall, 1996), (2) practices of attribution (which requirements and which consequences, such as "age-conformity," are attributed to it, especially as "success" or "failure"), (3) and practices of responsibilization (who is assigned as responsible for the outcomes of transitions; see Riach, this volume; Krumbügel, this volume).

If we take the example of school-to-work-transitions, young people are "called into" a powerful discourse (*articulation*) centered around the expectation of gainful employment as a basis of a "normal" life course. This discourse marks a process characterized by orientation, choice, decision-making, and training. Success and failure are clearly marked in terms of qualification, employment and unemployment, stability and precarity *(attribution)*. In recent decades, young people have been construed to be responsible for planning their professional lives and therefore have been made individually accountable for their precarious position in the labor market and, consequently, in society – despite the fact that a broad range of factors are beyond their control, such as the availability and quality of training opportunities, labor market segmentation by gender or ethnicity, or health-related issues related to specific occupations *(responsibilization)*. In the German context, the recent shift towards individualized responsibilization and attribution is reflected in the emergence of the concept "(lack of) trainability" (in fact, German "mangelnde Ausbildungsreife" means a deficit of "maturity" for training). Introduced by employers to justify reducing apprenticeships, government institutions have adopted this concept to refer to school-leavers who do not directly enter training – and whose individual deficits need to be compensated by pre-vocational education or training. This discourse has claimed goals related to trainability as the official objectives and measures of education, even at lower secondary school levels. As a result, professional orientation in school is now anticipated to start in seventh grade, in which students would generally not be older than age 14 (cf. Walther, 2015).

Institutions can be viewed as expressions of social discourses, playing roles in regulating and processing transitions. Broadly, institutions represent sets of expectations and routines, rules and requirements, markers, and procedures (e.g., Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Giddens, 1984). They gain persistence through their historical development as complex bundles of practices, and at the same time they are contingent because they depend on constant re-articulation and reproduction. While this implies openness for change, the interdependence of institutionalized practices contributes to stability and path dependency (cf. North, 1990, see also Walther, this volume). Institutions regulate life transitions through three common practices: (1) *marking* the conditions, times, and duration of transitions, such as determining access to or membership in social categories like age (for compulsory schooling) or performance of knowledge and skill (for school completion, which also includes criteria like minimum duration of school attendance); (2) *processing* on the basis of pre-defined procedures for preparing, supervising, and assessing individuals during the transition (cf. Glaser & Strauss, 1971); and (3) *gate-keeping* as specific actors are assigned and responsible for guiding and supervising transitions (Heinz, 1992).

Entering and leaving school are examples of the institutional regulation of transitions through formal organization with legally codified markers, standardized procedures, and teachers as prototypes of professional gatekeepers. Other transitions are regulated less formally. For example, religious and secular "rites" that mark the passage between childhood and youth, or transitions like marriage, involve both legal and ritual forms of processing, even if the ritualized components of many transitions are diminished or optional. In fact, van Gennep's (1960) classical

analysis of "rites de passage" and his distinction of phases of separation, liminality, and incorporation to some degree reflect different institutional forms of regulating transitions (see also Wanka & Prescher, this volume). One of the demands inherent to the regulation of transitions is to ensure that individuals fulfil the expectations of the new position (Eisenstadt, 1956). Thus, transitions involve the acquisition and performance of knowledge and skills – learning – and their regulation includes formal or informal pedagogical practices that prepare, assess, and support individuals as they enter new positions. Special needs education or unemployment policies are practices of compensation where individuals do not meet transition requirements.

Practices of institutional regulation occur at different scales of aggregation. The construction of life transitions may be analyzed through the comparative analysis of labor markets, educational systems, and welfare states (cf. Heinz, 1991; Shavit & Müller, 1998; Mayer, 1997; see also Walther, this volume); through the analysis of organizational structures and practices of schools or welfare agencies (see also Riach, this volume; Heinrich, Klevermann & Schmidt-Hertha, this volume); or through professional practices aimed at preparing individuals for transitions to ensure the fit between requirements and competencies through pedagogical and social services (Walther, 2017). In addition, ritual practices involve different scales of community formation and performance – for example, a wedding may involve religious practices related to membership in a religious community but also practices limited to specific aspects of marriage, such as throwing rice (see also Wanka & Prescher, this volume).

Transitions are processes *individuals* experience and are subject to; but they are also actively negotiated with other actors regarding if, why and how those transitions are to occur. When transitions are institutionally prescribed, they are adopted, rejected, or modified against the backdrop of biographical patterns involving coping with everyday life, transformative learning, and practices of resistance (cf. Mezirow & Taylor, 2010; Nohl et al., 2014; Böhnisch & Schröer, 2016; see also Hirschfeld & Lenz, this volume; Eberle, Lütgens, Pohling, Spies & Bauer, this volume). Sometimes, transitions develop in a way that for individuals creates a discrepancy between one's social position and the subjective experience of it – or even alienation from it (cf. Welzer, 1993) – leading the person to distance themselves from or relinquish the position. Examples in this respect are gender transitions (cf. Stryker, 2008) or separating from a partner one no longer feels affection for without being asked by anyone else to do so.

Practices ascribed to individuals therefore involve (1) *positioning* oneself towards expectations and being addressed in a specific way (as a child, or young person, or as being on the verge of adulthood); (2) *learning,* in acquiring skills and knowledge related to the new position as well as integrating the new position into the idea of the self; and (3) *decision-making*, as transitions in differentiated and individualized societies imply that there are choices to be made at crucial junctures that put individuals on different life trajectories.

However, transitions are often misconstrued as being individual experiences when they instead are intersubjective, co-produced, shared, dependent, conditioned, constrained or otherwise involve multiple actors (cf. Settersten Jr., 2015). Especially important are significant others with whom lives are intertwined and transitions are

interlinked, gatekeepers concerned with "guiding" individuals through transitions, and objects that stimulate and direct individual agency (such as when job applicants complete forms and answer questions). As we described for school-to-work-transitions, individuals are confronted with demands that are discursively embedded in hegemonic models of the life course to which they must position themselves (cf. Thomae, 1996). Therefore, practices normally ascribed to individuals, such as learning or making decisions, must instead be understood as open-ended, dialectic social processes of "doing" and "being done," of "being active" and "being subjected" (cf. Alkemeyer et al., 2013). These agentic processes represent practices of creating a "fit" between institutional and subjective modes of formation.

Modes of "doing transitions" cannot be isolated from each other. Indeed, they only can be distinguished from each other for analytical purposes. Discursive aspects cannot be reduced to "what is being said" but are inherent to any practice when they draw on, reproduce and/or transform knowledge orders. They are also inherent to spatial arrangements and artifacts (see below). These knowledge orders and their normativities are reflected in institutional regulation, and especially "chrono-normativities" (Riach et al., 2014) – that is, beliefs about what should be done at a specific age, and about the knowledge and skills that individuals need to perform new positions. "Individual" decision-making, coping, and learning must therefore be understood in the context of powerful discourses of "success" and "failure," which are represented in and reinforced by institutional regulations. Regardless of whether individuals affirm or oppose the judgments of success and failure that result from institutional regulations, individuals nonetheless refer to them (Walther et al., 2016; cf. Rieger-Ladich, 2020).

The aspects of "doing transitions" described above enable us to view and analyze transitions beyond changes in social states. From this perspective, transitions refer to movements into new social situations and positions. Transitions express classifications (differentiating and addressing), fulfil the function of social allocation, distribute social goods (prestige, attention, access), and thus become socially momentous in having social consequences and affecting individuals' life trajectories. Transitions are performative realities that are produced in discursive, institutional, and individual practices. There is a crucial relationship to be considered between the dynamics inherent to transitions and dynamics of social reproduction; and, transitions imply a latent potential of transformation. Consequently, reflexive transition research takes a processual perspective towards social realities and raises awareness for the constitution of transitions, including the research enterprise itself.

Cross-Cutting Themes in the Constitution of Transitions and Structure of the Book

The concept "doing transitions" relies on an understanding of transitions as *relational* – done through the interrelation of discursive articulation, institutional regulation, and agentic processes. How this interrelation looks with respect to a specific transition cannot be determined in advance, which is a primary reason why a Doing

Transitions perspective represents a heuristic approach for empirical research. This perspective also demands that researchers be conscious of how research itself contributes to the social construction of transitions through its theories and methods.

The studies presented in this book analyse these interrelations and the "bridging points" between them. In bringing these practices and interrelations into focus, we are also able to better see other kinds of interdependencies – of domains, levels, and time – in the life course (Bernardi et al., 2019) and how transitions are integrated with processes of social structuration (cf. Giddens, 1984).

Theodore Schatzki (Chap. 2, this volume) introduces a practice-theoretical perspective with which the "doing transitions" concept is aligned. A phenomenological account of life trajectories provides the foundation for conceptualizing life trajectories not only as series of events but also as bundles of social practices bound to particular social contexts. Schatzki identifies three cross-cutting dimensions of life-trajectories: space-time paths, chains of actions, and past-future arcs. Schatzki also reflects on the advantages of using theories of practices in this context.

The subsequent chapters are organized by cross-cutting themes that have emerged as relevant in linking "doing transitions" with processes of social structuration: (1) institutions and organizations; (2) times and normativities; and (3) materialities, such as bodies, spaces, and artifacts. Below, we outline these dimensions and introduce the chapters.

We have introduced institutional regulation as one mode of "doing transitions." In fact, *institutions* play a central role in understanding transitions because they contribute to the persistence of transitions as "social facts." Anthropological studies have analyzed how rites of passage structure social reproduction (van Gennep, 1960), just as institutions such as labor markets, educational systems, or the policies and programs of welfare states often serve as causes or predictors of the effects that transitions have on individuals' life trajectories (cf. Mayer, 1997). The latter have contributed to promoting paid work as the organizing feature of what Kohli (1985) called the "tripartite" life course, consisting of preparation for work in childhood and youth, productive (economic) and reproductive functions in adulthood, and retirement from work and continued consumption in old age.

The first part of the book starts with the chapter by *Andreas Walther* (Chap. 3, this volume), which argues that welfare and education must be viewed as key elements of transition "regimes," as these offer quite different packages and therefore different conceptions of which transitions, and transition patterns are "normal" across countries. He emphasises that life courses and transitions are increasingly structured by access to, change between, and exit from education and welfare institutions – serving to reproduce and mitigate unequal social status positions. In practice, these processes of reproduction occur in organizations as an interactive negotiation between professional gatekeepers and individual "users" of these organizations, whether students, recipients of benefits, or clients of counselling. *Heidi Hirschfeld and Bianca Lenz* (Chap. 4, this volume) then focus on transitions to work and how institutional support measures are articulated in the ways young people make use of them. The chapter draws on findings from biographical analyses of two cases from two different German studies of school-to-work transitions, one on

socio-pedagogical support for disadvantaged students in lower secondary school, the other on the combination of benefits and counselling in so-called youth job centers. The analyses reveal that how youth use support reflects their prior biographical experiences and affects how they make meaning and negotiate support during this juncture. At the opposite end of the educational opportunity continuum, *Heinz-Hermann Krüger* (Chap. 5, this volume) analyses the educational pathways of students in specialized and international elite high schools, which in the German context are rather exceptional. His findings from a longitudinal qualitative study show that privileged family backgrounds and mechanisms of institutional selectivity are not alone sufficient to reproduce higher social status and secure respective destinations but need to be complemented by individual biographical orientations.

Research on education and employment transitions often highlights high-level institutional regulations that affect access to and progression through the education system, the labor market or welfare entitlements. However, in modern societies many institutions are enacted by social *organizations*, which in turn must be understood as bundles of *organizational practices*. For example, local practice of educational systems is found in specific schools and the public authorities that oversee them, and local practice of labor markets is found in particular workplaces. It is good to remember that the companies in which many employment transitions take place have ultimate objectives to produce goods and services – they only implicitly act as gatekeepers in taking on individuals as employees or turning people into customers to meet these objectives. In fact, an "institutionalized" life course relies heavily on a network of organizations regulating individual life trajectories and gate-keeping opportunities. An organizational perspective reveals that "doing transitions" in and through organizations is not the simple result of top-down forces imposed on the individual but is instead negotiated and therefore potentially subject to constant modification by organizational routines and cultures, and by individual actors in interaction with other actors.

Eva Heinrich, Nils Klevermann and Bernhard Schmidt-Hertha (Chap. 6, this volume) analyze how organizations shape the transitions and subjective experience of collective actors. They are comparing the different cases of companies that organize female employees' return to work after maternity leave and of migrant organizations expected to offer pathways to (active) citizenship of their members. They show how these processes contribute directly to how transitions are done for whole groups of workers or migrants. At the same time, their analysis reveals that organizations not only contribute to transitions of individual human actors but also undergo transitions themselves through which they are subjectivized as collective actors in the transition regime. This is where *Kathleen Riach* (Chap. 7, this volume) comes in, as she addresses transitions into "older workerhood" for aging employees in their workplaces. Workplaces are institutionalized by labor market dynamics, professional cultures, welfare regulations and organized by private companies or public services. Workplaces involve expectations and identification, as well as bodily performance reflecting norms of competitiveness. Ageing bodies, coupled with age-based ways of understanding transitions, lead workers to negotiate the lived experience of being in categories such as "fresh blood," "prime worker," and "older worker."

The second part of the book is devoted to *temporality and normativities*. Most obviously, the lifespan represents a timeline in which transitions are emerging, are made necessary, and are institutionally regulated. Consequently, first, if transitions are understood as processes, they inherently involve time; timing is crucial to understand, as well as duration – how long a transition takes. But transitions can also be understood in bundles of practices, bringing questions about the significance of sequencing (the order in which they happen, such as partnership, marriage, and childbearing), spacing (how much time exists between transitions, such as those just mentioned or between multiple births), or density (how many changes occur within a bounded period, such as a year or two). Second, transitions are therefore expressed in a framework of time-related norms: expectations about when or in what order they are supposed to happen, how fast or slow they should be, or where they should lead and what will be judged a successful or failed outcome. In fact, the whole idea of the life course can be regarded as a normative ideal, with schedules that privilege some over others. These norms permeate the recognition of transitions through rituals and celebrations, and they also penalize those who cannot, for whatever reason, meet these expectations. And third, transitions emerge differently according to historical developments – they are historically situated. As a result, transitions must always be seen (although not fully or deterministically) as being the consequence to earlier transitions and as being the precursor of future transitions. In all these temporal aspects, normativity is implied: there are (historically shifting) normalities related to how to cope with and how to shape these life course transitions. With its notions of linearity and directedness, dominant conceptions of time itself also imply a kind of normativity.

This is the starting point of *Núria Sánchez-Mira and Laura Bernardi* (Chap. 8, this volume), who suggest a more comprehensive conceptualization of time – one that goes beyond an absolute (linear, chronological, uniform) understanding and instead emphasizes its relative nature. Drawing on insights from narrative and biographical research, relative time is revealed as multidirectional, elastic, and telescopic. However, even if this approach to time may be appropriate to transitions, it is nonetheless undermined by powerful practices that instead reinforce linearity and strict normalities. People are called into powerful discourses – and at the same time get the opportunity to depict their agency. This is then the focus of *Noreen Eberle, Jessica Lütgens, Andrea Pohling, Tina Spies, and Petra Bauer* (Chap. 9, this volume), who draw upon biographical narratives to examine discourses related to "normalities" (or "deviance") in three different fields: in education, in political orientation, and in coping with experiences of sexual violence. They apply Stuart Hall's concept of articulation (Hall, 1996) to identify three distinct modes of articulation in relation to their empirical material, and to discuss the possibilities of distancing oneself from or complying with societal expectations in these fields.

The next two chapters turn to the tension between normality and extraordinariness that characterizes some, but not all, "transitional events" in the life course. *Anna Wanka and Julia Prescher* (Chap. 10, this volume) propose that, whereas everyday mundane practices might be viewed as sites of repetition and routines that tend to reproduce social positions, transitional practices are marked by

extraordinariness. The authors use empirical studies on transitions in youth and older age to explore the dynamic interplay between the mundane and the extraordinary in transition experiences. *Tobias Boll* (Chap. 11, this volume) systematically examines how life transitions are situated in terms of their "normality" or "deviance." Even more, his chapter explores the idea of "doing transitions between categories," bringing insights into the construction of what is regarded as normal or abnormal, for instance in the direction, timing, or mode of transitions.

The third part of the book focuses on *materialities* – such as space, bodies, and artifacts – in the constitution of transitions. Transitions are always situated in and cannot be separated from specific social spaces (see Schatzki, 2019). Even less can they be separated from the body – and may even go directly *through* the body, such as transitions in gender, health, pregnancy, and childbirth, or approaching death. Additionally, both spaces and bodies involve artifacts. The latter also become relevant in institutionalized contexts – for example, in the forms through which access is regulated and documented or how places are arranged to process transitions in particular ways. Spaces become stages or sets for transitions with thresholds, doors, walls, furnishings and decorations, public and private areas, and the like. Bodies are adorned with clothes and jewelry, work with instruments, swallow medicine; and even bodies themselves represent living materiality, most obvious in gender transitions, extreme body work (Ferreira, 2006), anti-ageing treatments, cosmetic surgeries, or other body modifications.

This trifecta of spaces, bodies, and artifacts is explored by *Deborah Nägler and Anna Wanka* (Chap. 12, this volume) in their treatment of materiality in social practice and its relevance for transitions. They illustrate these processes in two different phases of life, childhood and old age, opening a comprehensive and multi-layered view of the meaning of materiality and its relevance in the discussion of transitions. Their insights partly reinforce approaches of new materialism/post humanism, where artifacts become as important to creating social situations as human beings themselves. As with Bruno Latour, such artifacts are to be seen as actants with a certain potential of "doing transitions." *Janne Krumbügel* (Chap. 13, this volume) picks up this issue, at first sight focusing on only one of these material dimensions: the body and, more specifically, the *pregnant* body. She analyzes pregnant bodies through the lens of the German pregnancy advice literature, thus bringing the dimension of artifacts back into the play. Such advice books, as artifacts, represent discursive practices through which processes of "re-naturalizing" the body can be made visible as a social process. While pregnancy is dealt with as a biological transition, these discourses give socially and historically contingent meaning to the pregnant body and its changes. Not surprisingly, these discourses are highly gendered, including concepts of medical risk, which form a specific normative notion of doing pregnancy the "right" way. *Tabea Freutel-Funke and Helena Müller* (Chap. 14, this volume) turn attention to the significance of spaces as contexts for transitions. However, they do not reduce space to the qualities of an outer environment but instead conceptualize it as a relational arrangement of people and spatial features. Based on two empirical studies grounded in dispositive analysis and environmental psychology, they examine the roles of space in two transitions: to independent mobility within neighborhoods in childhood and to multigenerational

cohousing in older age. They ask: How and by whom is space made relevant in these transitions? How do spatial practices change with a change of environments? And how do spaces contribute to people's everyday lives?

In the concluding chapter (Settersten, Stauber, & Walther, Chap. 15, this volume), we as editors integrate key theoretical, methodological, substantive themes that emerge in the chapters – not only identifying bridging and connecting points, but also building a set of overall lessons and contributions of a "doing transitions" perspective. We hope to bolster the relational framing of "doing transitions" by identifying, distinguishing, and outlining different patterns of relationships involved in the constitution of transitions in the life course. We show how a relational perspective is important to enlarge the understanding of life course transitions.

With this volume, we hope to stimulate debate and contribute to the development of reflexivity in research on life course transitions. Analyzing transitions in terms of doing includes reflecting how research itself is involved in the social practice through which transitions are being constituted.

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Chapter 2
The Trajectories of a Life

Theodore R. Schatzki

Lives and their trajectories are an important topic. To begin with, each of us has one. This is possibly the greatest commonality that exists among people. Not only, moreover, does each of us have one, but the one each of us has—regardless of how socially structured or constituted it might be—is inescapably one's own. Awareness of this situation can lend bitter poignancy to what someone does, experiences, and suffers—all this acting, undergoing, and suffering, it's *his*, *hers*, or *theirs* and no one else's, even if some of it is shared. This bite is well known to anyone conversant with existentialist literature.

Not surprisingly, accordingly, life and its trajectories have been deeply plumbed, by poets, novelists, philosophers, theologians, gurus, journalists, therapists of various stripes, an occasional statesperson, and others. Words of sobering, somber significance capture important aspects. In English, words like "fate," "destiny," "potential," "achievement," "dignity," "choice," "free will," and "necessity" pick out notable features or possibilities of life that command or portend some portion of hope or despair, splendor or destitution. Life not just joins but means a lot to us humans.

Lives and their trajectories are also important for the social disciplines in toto. Regardless of what one thinks social life is ontologically, accounts of sociality must take account of, and at some point encompass, individual lives. Even if lives are not the objects, or even the chief constituents of the objects, that these disciplines study, these objects would have no substance, duration, or even existence absent human lives. The relationship between lives and social entities is one of the principal theoretical issues faced in these disciplines.

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The current essay will not directly address this relationship. Instead, my discussion will focus on life, its trajectories, and the relationship between life trajectories and social practices. My aim is to help illuminate the phenomena that life course research in general, and the Doing Transitions approach in particular, study. More specifically, I will link a phenomenological account of human life and its trajectories to a practice theoretical approach to the social contexts in which lives proceed (on this combination, see Schatzki, 2017). In doing so, the essay will help show what it is for lives, and their phases and transitions, to be "constituted by practices."

What Is a Life?

The word "life" points toward a tangled conceptual field. Life used to be a, if not the, premier concept in biology: for decades, biology was defined as the study of living organisms. In this discipline, life entails such properties as reproduction, metabolism, growth, and self-organization. Life, however, is too important to be left to the biologists. Although the concept of life must retain its biological dimensions, it must also offer something to the flights of poetry and philosophy.

Distinguishing the notion of "a life" from the notion of life full stop points in a salutary direction. *A* life is something that stretches from beginning to death (cf. the ancient Greek *zoe*, which designates something opposed to death). The notion applies to creatures more diverse than humans, thus ensuring some continuity with the biological phenomenon. But the notion assumes special meaning in relation to humans, or better, people, in part because we seem to bear an unusually complex relationship to death. Human lives are biological and, like lives generally, stretch from beginning to death. But a human life is a *refined* version of something that is biological and shared with members of other species. The ancient Greek *bios*, which is a human affair embracing, among other things, biography and way of being, captures the idea.

I begin with a feature of a life that emphasizes commonality with other species. A life embraces a continuing series of sensory—or just detectional—events in, and movements carried out by, a functioning organism. This characterization brackets the properties typically treated as definitive of biological life. It does not apply, for instance, to an utterly comatose person, who is alive biologically. It instead picks out something stretching from beginning to death that is common to many living beings.

This sensory-movement continuum assumes a richer form with a more complex trajectory in the vast majority of human lives. There, it becomes a life of self-conscious action, where to be self-conscious is to be aware that one is alive. Such a life might be unique to humans; it might also be shared with higher mammals such as dolphins, bonobos, and elephants (not to mention aliens). The more complex sort of trajectory it possesses in comparison to a basic life of continual sensory mobility lies less in a person's directed passage through a cognized world—a sort of existence shared with other organisms—than in, among other things, a life always

embracing a significative arc stretching from past to future (see section "The Trajectories of a Life"). When a person understands that she is alive, the questions that make up the title of Gauguin's famous 1897–1898 painting—e.g., Where do we Come From? Where are we Going?—become and remain meaningful, at least until death or the loss of one's faculties. Life thus understood is familiar to all of us. It poses the types of issues, and brooks the sort of considerations, that the social disciplines raise about life trajectories. These issues and considerations presume that lives are self-conscious.

A life as we live it embraces a procession of activities performed and "psychological" conditions expressed by an active body (see Schatzki, 1996). The "psychological" conditions involved include states of consciousness, emotions, and conative as well as cognitive conditions (such as self-consciousness). Incidentally, to say that psychological conditions are "expressed" by the active body is to say that psychological conditions are present and encounterable in public space by way of bodily activity; other people can also interpretively infer the existence of such conditions. An important feature of the activities and conditions that make up a life is that they belong to a specific person, namely, the person living. They belong to this person because it has been a feature of human practices for many millennia now to *attribute* the performance of actions and the possession or undergoing of mental and cognitive conditions to the person whose body expresses them. This makes the relationship of a person to her body central to a life. It also provides a first glimpse in this essay of the profound social constitution of lives.

Another feature of a life is that it incorporates the world. Important events are part of our lives. They are, among other things, incorporated into the narratives we tell about our pasts. I remember, for instance, when the Red Sox lost the 1976 baseball World Series; it is a notable reference point in my life. This incorporation of the world into a life can be accommodated by treating select, or in principle all, objects of a person's activities or mental and conative/cognitive conditions as part of her life. Lives are open to the world in a second important way. Which "psychological" condition is expressed by any given piece of bodily activity, just like which action is performed through the performance of a particular bodily action (see below), often depends on the context in which it occurs. Crying, for instance, expresses joy or distress depending on, for example, whether it is preceded by a great victory or by a scathing insult. Relevant contexts include states of the world and past and future actions (see Schatzki, 1996). In this way, the identities of many components of a life depend on how things are in the world.

Finally, the actions and "psychological" conditions that make up a life overlap. Life is a mosaic of processes and conditions that differentially start, connect, and cease.

The following discussion highlights actions and de-emphasizes "psychological" conditions. It does so because activity is what centrally gives a life its trajectories, in part because activity is processual in character and in part because many "psychological" conditions accompany activity. Biological development from beginning through youth and adulthood to old age and death also grounds trajectories. In emphasizing activity, I do not deny that passivity, or being, is an important

dimension of a life. Many life conditions, including sensations, emotions, and beliefs, happen to or hold of people. Biological processes and developments likewise happen to them, as does the impingement of the world (including other people). Through it all, however, a person, even if she "withdraws," forges ahead in action. Nor, moreover, do I deny that experience, or as Tim Ingold (2015, 126) puts it, "undergoing," is important to life. Indeed, in the past I have often conceptualized activity as experiential activity to emphasize that activity transpires within the ken of experience. If the topic of this paper were life and not life trajectories greater attention would have to be paid to both being and experience.

In the following, consequently, a life will be treated as a procession—in Bernardi et al.'s, 2019 words, as an "individual behavioral process" composed—of overlapping activities that are constituted in bodily doings and sayings performed by a self-conscious living person and whose identities as particular activities depend on states of the world in the context of which they happen.

This phenomenological conception of a life treats it as a process. This process includes bodily doings and the actions they constitute; it also incorporates and is partly defined by the world through which it proceeds. It is not, however, a process in the sense of (1) a Bergsonian (1999) dureé (an ongoing unfolding advancing), (2) a pragmatist passage through or in relation to present experience, or (3) a mere series of events. For example, I do not, as is common, treat a life as a moving stream or as constant becoming (see, for example, Ingold, 2015, whose phenomenological accounts of wayfaring and navigating I affirm). Rather, life is a process in a Rescherian (1996) sense of a continuous integrated nexus of events, in this case, activities (and "psychological" conditions). What integrates the events composing a life are the body that expresses them and the person to whom they are ascribed. Interesting life possibilities arise when the one-to-one relationship of body to person shifts, as when multiple people (personalities) occupy the same body.

The Trajectories of a Life

Sociological life course research construes the life course as the progression of events—above all, activities—that make up a life over its entire history (cf. Featherman, 1981). This total series is composed of multiple trajectories, each embracing the events and transitions that make up the progress of that life in specific life domains, or institutional spheres, such as work, family, and education (cf. Elder, 1985). In this essay, by contrast, the trajectories of a life are construed as certain key dimensions of a life qua continually forward-unfolding entity. The plurality of trajectories reflects, not the diversity of life domains, but the fact that the character of life as continually unfolding exhibits several key dimensions. A trajectory, as the life course literature construes it, in my sense is, or corresponds to, a series of discontinuous episodes in a life. These episodes are socially constituted in ways that will be touched on below.

Three sorts of trajectories will be distinguished in this essay.

Space-Time Paths

A life trajectory is, first, the space-time path of a life, that is, the path through space and time that it traces as it proceeds. In this context, space means three-dimensional space, and the specific spaces involved are material ones, that is, occupied or defined by collections of material objects. Lives trace a path through these material spaces (in a sense explained below). Time, furthermore, means before-and-after time: the ordering of events and processes into successions by virtue of before and after relations between them. Lives take up their places in such successions, the various bodily doings and activities (as well as psychological conditions) that compose them occurring before or after other events and processes in the world. The same holds of entire lives, which likewise transpire before and after other events and processes.

Strictly speaking, the only thing that can trace a path through material space is a material entity. Lives, however, are not material entities. Nor are activities. It is the body at and through which a life unfolds that is a material entity. However, activities (and psychological conditions) are always intimately connected to material entities. In particular, as indicated, they are constituted by bodily movements. It also seems eminently plausible that they are connected, in various ways, to the neural, endocrinal, and muscular-skeletal bodily systems among others. And they clearly presuppose particular bodily processes. Given this rich relationship, it makes sense to define the spatial-temporal paths of lives as the spatial-temporal paths traced by actors' bodies as they move about in the world.

Performances of action, too, are located in material space and positioned in before-and-after time. This is because any action a person performs is performed through the carrying out of one or more bodily doings (voluntary bodily movements), which in the situation of performance constitute the performance of the action in question. For instance, one can greet a friend from afar by waving one's hand back and forth because, in the context of encountering friends, such a bodily doing amounts to a greeting. All performances of action, including mental actions such as thinking, involve performances of bodily doings, in the case of thinking, such doings as furrowing one's brow, pacing back and forth, drawing on a chalkboard, and gesticulating in the air. (Omissions, moreover, involve omissions of bodily doings that constitute actions that are expected, appropriate, or sensible in particular circumstances.) It follows that the performance of an action is located at all the locations in material space where the bodily doings that compose it are located. This location is usually a point or a curved or jagged line; a discontinuous line is also possible.

A person is always doing something, at least while they are awake. The movement, moreover, of that person's body through space describes a continuous line: as Ingold (2015, 118) writes, to lead a life is to lay down a line. This lifeline is broken into overlapping segments that are where the person performs particular actions (it is also broken into longer episodes—or "durations"—that make up her trajectories through particular life domains). The path that her body takes through

before-and-after time and material space thus defines the path taken by her bodily performances of actions (and bodily expressions of "psychological" conditions), which is at once the space-time path taken by her life.

Sequences of Action

A life trajectory is not just the space-time path traced via the movement and movements of a living person's body. It is also the sequence of actions performed in a life, the sequence of actions performed by a living person. Unlike passage through space-time, this trajectory is irreversible (a fact that makes life transitions possible). This is because an action always occurs in a context that includes the actor's earlier actions and that itself helps form the context in which her subsequent actions take place. As, consequently, her life progresses, the context in which it proceeds includes ever more actions and sequences of action that the person herself performed. Future actions can double back and help create situations that resemble situations in which earlier actions of hers were performed. But a life cannot literally repeat actions in reverse order since each further action—not to mention other events and processes—only makes the situations of subsequent actions increasingly unlike those of predecessors.

Trajectories as sequences boast a type of direction, namely, steering toward yet another activity, that is, toward the next activity performed. This phenomenon can be called "progression." Life trajectories progress so long as they exist, and it is due to their progressive nature that they accumulate, or leave behind, ever longer successions of activities. This sort of directionality is inherent to an active being. Note that the first sort of trajectory, spatial-temporal passage, possesses a parallel type of direction: a perpetual moving forward in time.

Performances of actions are events. Accordingly, a succession of action performances is, ontologically, a sequence of events. Obviously diachronic in character, any such succession also has a synchronic structure, in which performances help compose broader activities that can be called "projects." Looking for a job, for instance, is a project embracing multiple narrower actions: consulting web sites, talking to friends, designing a resumé, going to interviews, and so on. In turn, looking for a job can be part of a wider project, for instance, getting one's life in order. The synchronic structure of a life trajectory as a sequence of actions is a stack (cf. Caliskan, 2020) of overlapping, progressively wider actions. While the upper reaches of the stack usually metamorphose slowly, its base layer comprises the more frequent and rapid bodily actions whose performance constitutes intentional actions. I mention this structure because it provides a medium for sociality. It thereby helps fill out the idea of "linked lives" (see Elder et al., 2003; Settersten, 2015; cf. Ingold's, 2015 notion of "knotted" lives) that the Doing Transitions project draws on to mark the fact that transitions depend on other people. For example, talking to friends about job opportunities involves (1) performing actions that causally interlock with

and are otherwise directed toward friends' performances (i.e., interactions; more generally, chains of activity—see section "Life Trajectories and Chains of Action"); (2) the intersection and coordination of, as well as the presence of references to others' lives in, the synchronic structures of the various players' life trajectories; and (3) the practices within whose scope the causally interlocking actions are performed and the intersection, coordination, and mutual referring are established. As this suggests, sociality, and thus the social constitution of individual lives including their phases and transitions, depends on such phenomena as interactions with others, the intertwined stacked character of different people's activities and life trajectories, and the common practices people carry on.

Closely connected to life trajectories as sequences of actions is the idea of life phases. A life trajectory, like most any process, can be broken into phases of many different sorts. These include numerous, possibly fleeting segments of lesser significance such as those that make up a typical start of the day: enjoying a caffein beverage, consuming food, personal hygiene, dressing, walking the dogs, and going to work. Likewise possible are fewer, usually longer stages of greater significance such as the durations that compose the trajectories of a person's participation in particular life domains and the very long phases included in the once dominant tripartite model of the life-course (Kohli, 1985). Life trajectories can be broken into multiple series of phases because different conditions and discursive criteria can be marshalled to demarcate (and name) segments or stages of activity sequences. These criteria include those that define "normal" life courses, which discursively circulate among practices with institutional backing. Divisions of normal or normativized lives—or generations—into major phases (i.e., segments of social clocks; Neugarten & Datan, 1973), vary across "cultures": the above examples pertain to lives in North Atlantic countries, though they share many elements with lives in other parts of the world.

Phases are sequential and linked by transitions. As suggested, many sorts of things exist between which people transition. Over the course of a day, for instance, a person proceeds from situation to situation, from one life domain to another, and from one physical station to another (see Hägerstrand, 1975), each switch a "transition." Over time, many other transitions occur in significant aspects of particular lives or collections thereof, for instance, in the divvying up of work required to maintain a home, in jobs, in family situations, in friendships, and so on. There are also important, typically age-related status transitions of sorts that members of particular collectivities mark, for instance, in membership status (e.g., initiation, baptism), marital status, education achievement, retirement, puberty and majority, and so forth. Transitions of these sorts are flanked by important life phases, for example, childhood and adolescence, high school and university, minor and adult. At the base of all these phases and transitions lie the sequences of actions that compose the trajectories of lives day in, day out. These sequences provide the raw material for phases and transitions, which incorporate segments and stretches of the sequences. Incidentally, life trajectories are structured, not just by discourses and institutions, but also by, among other things, phases and transitions themselves. For, as a general

matter, action sequences are shaped by the social practices they pass through (see section "Trajectories, Bundles of Practices, and Material Arrangements"), and social practices often explicitly mark, and what people do in them is sometimes organized by reference to, phases and transitions.

Pasts and Futures

A third sort of trajectory that characterizes most human lives is an omnipresent structuring arc from past to future (see Schatzki, 2010). A life not only inexorably proceeds to the next thing done. It also always heads somewhere, toward something to be realized. This heading toward concerns the future. It is captured in more familiar terms by the notions of purpose and end. Purposes and ends are the states of affair a person aims at, or comes toward, in acting. Whereas purposes are more immediate and often tied to particular intentional actions, ends are more distant and often require the performance of multiple actions. Practically all human activities display a multidimensional future of this sort. In typing on a keyboard, for instance, someone might be searching an online job site, which she pursues in order to check out hot leads about jobs, which is part of the project of looking for a job, which she seeks for the sake of bringing order to her life. Human action is practically always teleological (which does not imply that people are conscious of their ends as they act).

At the same time, life always comes from somewhere. A person reacts to or proceeds in the light of particular states of affair. These state of affairs are where she comes from in heading toward what she seeks to realize, that because of which it makes sense to her to do such and such in pursuit of this and that purpose and end.

Life always displays this structure of coming from-heading toward and, as a result, contains an arc from what one comes from to what one is headed toward. Significative trajectories of this sort omnipresently structure activity.

I should add that each activity in a life trajectory inflects that trajectory. What I mean is that, merely by occurring, each addition to the sequence of actions a person performs ipso facto alters what the trajectory of that person's life has been. This alteration can be trivial and inconsequential as when the job seeker accesses a job advert through an online job site instead of clicking a link to the advert sent to her by a friend. Or it can be more momentous as when the person says to herself that she has had enough and abruptly abandons the search. (Of course, even assessing the site directly can have great consequences, as when job seeker picks up malware at the site's portal that could have been avoided by following the link.) The next action in a sequence thereof can also send the sequence in a direction different from the direction the life had been taking before then. In fact, what a person does at *any* moment can in principle send the trajectory in a significantly new direction. This mutability derives from the character of activity as an event, according to which human activity is indeterminate until it happens (see Schatzki, 2010). As things are, life trajectories only infrequently head suddenly towards something different.

Due to the action stack that structures a life trajectory, actions that pursue purposes different from those pursued by immediate predecessors often continue to pursue distal ends that the latter sought. A job seeker who suddenly stops searching the web in order to talk to a friend about the friend's new employer is pursing the same more distant end as before—finding a job—even though the immediate purposes of searching online and consulting differ. A life trajectory is continually changing, not just in embracing additional activities and thereby both describing a longer space-time path and being composed of a different activity sequence, but also in incorporating different significative arcs.

All told, the trajectory of a life is made up of a phases-forming, transitions-embracing sequence of actions (and other life conditions) that describes a spatial-temporal path through the world and is omnipresently coming from somewhere in heading toward something.

Some theorists (e.g., Carr, 1986; MacIntyre, 1981) claim that one more sort of trajectory applies to a life. It is the courses of the stories or narratives that we tell about ourselves and our pasts. I do not include this sort of trajectory because, as I see things, narratives articulate how people should or do *understand* their lives. Narratives do not inherently structure either actions (see Schatzki, 2005) or lives; that is, actions and lives do not intrinsically have narratival structures. To be sure, the narratives people tell about their lives can affect how they act and inform the significative past-future arcs that structure their activities. This is especially true in societies with strong oral traditions. Such shaping also exemplifies the discursive molding of life trajectories, a topic of interest to the present book. But many phenomena affect people's activities. The courses of people's narratives are never their life trajectories but only help shape the latter.

Trajectories, Bundles of Practices, and Material Arrangements

According to theories of practices (see Schatzki, 2002), practices and constellations thereof make up the social contexts in which lives proceed and the phases and transitions of life occur: all transitions are experientially performed by people in constitutive social contexts composed of practices. As a result, practices bear responsibility for lives, phases, and transitions being social phenomena.

A practice is an open set of organized doings and sayings. Examples are cooking practices, wedding practices, day trading practices, teaching practices, university freshman orientation practices, and job searching practices. Practices are closely intertwined with—in some practice theories, they include—arrangements of material entities. Practices and material arrangements thereby form bundles; cooking in a kitchen or working in an office are examples. Particular practices can bundle with multiple arrangements; freshman orientation practices, for instance, can be pursued in different settings. Conversely, particular arrangements can link to multiple practices; consumer, job searching, entertainment, and information gathering practices, for instance, can be carried out at arrangements at home centered around a computer. Bundles, in turn, can connect—through relations pertaining to practices or

arrangements—as constellations, which are just larger, more complicated bundles of practices and material arrangements. I use the expression "practice plenum" to denote the entirety of bundles and constellations.

Practices are composed of organized doings and sayings. This implies that any bundle of practices and material arrangements exhibits a dimension of activity that embraces the organized doings and sayings that compose its practices. This dimension is key to the relationship between life trajectories and bundles. For life trajectories, too, are made up of activities.

As a person goes through her day, she performs one action after another. Each of these activities is part of some practice and bundle, sometimes more than one practice and bundle. After getting up in the morning, for instance, a person might cook and then eat before turning to personal hygiene and getting dressed. While cooking and eating, the person carries out, that is, her activities are part of, cooking and eating practices. As a result, her life, for these stretches, *coincides* with these practices. If, the whole time, she also, in her head, plans a business meeting scheduled for later in the day, her life, for that stretch, also coincides with business practices. When, subsequently, she gets herself ready, her life coincides with personal hygiene practices, having left behind those of cooking and eating. And when she gets dressed, her activities are moments of dressing practices, having left behind those of cooking and eating and *passed through* those of personal hygiene. In this way, as a person goes through her day, her life episodically coincides with various practices and has passed through these practices once she moves on to further ones. (A similar analysis applies to the life trajectory of someone learning these practices since learning them involves either carrying on tentative, incomplete versions, for which room is made in the practices, or participating in distinct "learning" practices that are carried on as preludes to the practices themselves.) These coincidences can be considered phases, between which she transitions as her day develops.

Coinciding and passing through, like life phases and transitions, are temporal phenomena. They also involve space. To pass through a bundle, episodically coincide with its practices, is at once to proceed, and to trace a spatial path, amid the bundle's material arrangement(s). To coincide with a practice, for example, the practice of job seeking, is to perform job seeking actions—navigating, talking, answering questions etc.—while proceeding, and moving amid, material arrangements set up or usable for job seeking.

A second type of space is also involved. Humans generally proceed through the world sensitive to arrays of places and paths distributed through their circumjacent environments. By "places" I mean places to perform specific actions (e.g., a place to sleep), whereas by "paths" I mean avenues for getting between places. Places and paths of these sorts are anchored in the material entities and arrangements thereof amid which people proceed. Which places and paths, moreover, are distributed through circumjacent environments is tied to people's ends; a kitchen table, for example, can be a place to eat given the end of consuming a meal or a place to search for a job given the end of being employed. Which places and paths are anchored where is also tied to social norms that determine what is prescribed or allowed to be done at or in relation to particular material entities (e.g., it is a social

norm that a bed is a place to sleep). As people pass through a bundle, they are sensitive to arrays of places and paths that are tied both to the ends permitted and prescribed in the bundle's practices and to actions that are acceptable or prescribed to perform there at or toward the components of its material arrangements. Passing through a bundle thus entails that a segment of the sequence of actions that composes a life coincides with practices that are entwined with the material arrangements through which the trajectory cuts a spatial-temporal path and across which places and paths are distributed to which the course of that segment is sensitive. All of this, finally, might transpire in a particular encompassing place: a meaningful localized region through which people proceed related to it as a whole. This encompassing place could be one's room, one's home or neighborhood, a work institution, a community, a country etc.

Before and after a life trajectory passes through a bundle of practices it lies outside the bundle. Even though, moreover, a life trajectory, during any stretch of time, lies outside many bundles, it always also coincides with some bundle(s) or other. This implies that, even though the trajectory, like any trajectory, lies outside many bundles in the practice plenum, it never lies outside the plenum. Over the course of a day, month, or lifetime, a life trajectory passes through a multitude of bundles, sometimes repeatedly, sometimes doubling back, sometimes in a regular sequence, and sometimes in unique combinations or sequences. Trajectories can even, usually jointly, extend the practice plenum by adding to or annexing further stretches of the material world to its material arrangements or sending chosen material entities into new material environments (e.g., the Voyager satellites).

Coinciding with and passing through are not the only relations that life trajectories bear to bundles. Trajectories also proceed dependent on bundles and on the background of bundles. These are two modalities of a wider phenomenon, namely, the sensitivity of human activity to states of the world.

All sorts of elements of a life, including its trajectories, phases, and transitions, depend on bundles, both those the life involved passes through and ones it proceeds outside of. This dependence can take different forms. For instance, the normative organizations of practices shape how participants in them proceed; this is an important vehicle by which discursive or institutional norms shape trajectories and the durations they exhibit (whether trajectories are construed à la life course research or the present essay). Via memory, moreover, bundles and what goes on in them can affect subsequent moments and phases of the lives that coincide with and pass through them. Similarly, learning, which involves the acquisition of knowledge, know-how, tastes, virtues, and the like, occurs as and as a result of people carrying on certain practices. Like the ability to recall past perceptual experiences, what is learned accumulates (and modulates as well as dissipates) and can affect later moments of life trajectories. Memory and learning are key mediators through which practices and constellations thereof shape trajectories, phases, and transitions.

Life trajectories likewise proceed on the background of bundles. The background comprises everything, given which a person acts as he does. An important component of the background encompasses everything a person experiences, knows, or is familiar with that (1) helps determine what makes sense to him to do, including in

reaction to something, or (2) makes him the sort of person who reacts as he did to that thing. A teacher who awards a student for repeated good work reacts to that student's history of good work. In the background of this action lie items, experience of or familiarity with which makes him the sort of person who welcomes and is inclined to award good work, for example, having received similar treatment himself when younger, admonishments from administrators to profile good students, a teaching workshop that emphasized the benefits to all students of recognizing good work, and so on. An important subtype of this component of the background comprises practices. For people often perpetuate practices with which they are familiar—especially those that they have "lived into" (*einleben in*)— without giving much thought to what they are doing. The teacher, for instance, might have grown up in a school system in which rewarding excellence was a widespread practice and then unreflexively rewarded the student after realizing that she had long been doing good work.

More expansively, bundles, and the practices and material arrangements that compose them, lie in the background of many actions and thus in the background of a life's trajectories, phases, and transitions. They contain matters, familiarity with or knowledge of which either helps shape what makes sense to people to do or makes people inclined to react in particular ways. Bundles also provide patterns of action, which people fall in line with. All these matters help fill out the situatedness of human activity.

In the introduction to the present volume, the editors explicate how a transition involves a bundle of practices. As explained, this means that any transition embraces segments of life trajectories in my sense that coincide with and move among the varied practices that make up the bundle involved. A transition, accordingly, embraces movement among practices. As I have explained, what moves between them are lives. A transition, as a result, involves one or more life trajectories in my sense passing through a variegated constellation of practices. Of course, it is not just this. As the editors argue, transitions also involve a variety of social processes that bear on life trajectories, above all, relations among individuals, institutional regulation, and discursive information. The bundle of practices that is involved in a transition thus embraces not only the practices that the transitioning life or lives coincide with but also those through which other actors, institutions, and discourses shape, regulate, and co-constitute these lives. Because of this, transitions can be described as "relational." Still, the peregrinations of lives (through bundles) are fundamental: without individual lives, there are no transitions. Indeed, life trajectories other than that of a person undergoing a transition are part of the transition.

Life Trajectories and Chains of Action

The final topic for this essay is the apparent parallel, but in reality deep divergence, between life trajectories and chains of action. In a recent book (Schatzki, 2019), I argue that chains of activity are one of the two chief dynamos of social change, the

other being material events and processes. Social change, I argue there, is the product of nexuses of such chains, events, and processes. The reason I presently address the divergence of life trajectories from activity chains is to locate lives and what the life courses literature calls "agency"—a person's construction through activity of her own life course, e.g., Elder et al., 2003; Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2017, Bernardi et al., 2019—in the causal order of society.

A chain of activity is a series of actions, each of which responds to the prior member in the chain or to a change in the world that that earlier member brought about. A conversation, for example, is a chain of actions that goes back and forth among the interlocuters; a supply chain, meanwhile, is a nexus of chains involving many people and material intermediaries. Chains of action are ubiquitous in society. Whenever an action responds to a previous action or to a state of the world for which a previous action is responsible, a chain is extended. People respond to others' actions and their effects all the time (think of being with your family, in traffic, at work, playing a sport, or doing political work). They also sometimes respond to states of affairs without being aware of who is responsible for them or that others are responsible for them at all: they pick up litter, swerve to miss objects on the highway, make investment decisions on the basis of price swings, and undermine august traditions. In all these cases, people extend chains of action.

One way a life trajectory differs from a chain of actions is that a trajectory—as a key dimension of a life—embraces the actions of one person whereas a chain contains actions performed by different people. Chains in effect cross—pass through—trajectories, linking them. Conversely, trajectories contain actions that extend chains. It is the multiplicity of trajectories that makes it possible for chains to continue via different people's actions.

Another difference between trajectories and chains lies in their relationships to causality. Chains of activity house causality. One type of causality involved is prior actions and states of affairs leading to subsequent actions, that is, subsequent actions reacting to them. (Discourses and institutions mold transactions, and thus phases and transitions, by shaping *how* people react to prior actions and states of affairs.) A second type of causality is activity directly effecting changes in the world. It follows that each link in a chain of activity is causal: chains of activity are lines of causality that snake through the practice plenum, passing through practices and crossing life trajectories. As lines of causality, such chains, as stated, are responsible for social changes, including changes in trajectories, phases, and transitions. Life trajectories do not house causal relations in this way. Activities that succeed one another as part of a life trajectory do not, for the most part, bear causal relations to one another (one can, of course, react to one's own past actions). They are, instead, different performances by one person at different moments or periods of time. The relations between them are largely noncausal, for example, temporal succession, being parts of the same larger actions (action stacks) and being performed by the same person. It follows that lives and their trajectories are not, generally speaking, causally responsible for the state of social affairs, including lives and their trajectories: they are instead crossing points of the causal strings responsible for these matters.

One final point. Activity chains are composed of activities, among other things. Life trajectories, too, are composed of activities, among other things. And practices, of course, are likewise composed of activities. In fact, one and the same activity can in principle be part of an action chain, an element of a life trajectory, and a component of a practice. One and the same activity is all three simultaneously whenever someone extends a chain in doing something that continues a given practice. This is not an infrequent event. Quite the contrary: it is the normal state of things.

This centrality of activity to chains, trajectories, and practices makes concrete how transitions are done: both the practices as part of which and the life trajectories through which transitions occur, like the chains of action that bear on these practices and trajectories, are composed centrally by actions.

Conclusion

Life trajectories are central to understanding a variety of human and social phenomena. They supply the actions that help constitute social states of affairs, including life phases and transitions, while themselves being molded by these affairs. They form a particular interest of biographers, historians, and poets. Contrary to the tenets of individualism, however, they are responsible for few social changes. Instead, causal determination in the form of chains of activity flows through lives en route to leaving changed social phenomena in their wake; it follows, incidentally, that activity chains are central to analyzing how social change affects life courses (cf. Elder, 1985). Yet, life trajectories also provide the activities that compose these chains. In thus providing much of the matter of social life, they are an indispensable presupposition, object, and point of intervention for the social disciplines.

The present essay has combined a phenomenologically-based account of life trajectories with a practice theoretical account of the constitutive social context through which they propagate. It thus sheds some light on what it means for lives to be "constituted" by practices. The advantage of a practice theoretical account in this context is that it provides a unified account of the variety of social contexts involved (including what Bernardi et al., 2019 call the "supra-individual level" of variables), for example, interactions with others, others' activities, organizations, institutions, social changes, and longer-term processes. It thereby spares the analyst the error of hypostatizing, or setting on a distinct "level," social entities such as organizations, institutions, and social changes and misconstruing how they govern. As a result, it offers to life course analysis a way of seamlessly integrating analysis of the phases and transitions of life with analyses of other social phenomena.

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Part II
Institutions and Organisations

Chapter 3
Welfare States as Transition Regimes: Reconstruction from International Comparisons of Young People's Transitions to Work

Andreas Walther

There is consensus that the institutionalization of the life course is related to the organization of modern societies as welfare states. In labor societies, the differentiation of age-specific roles centered around paid work resulted in standardization of what Kohli (1985) called the "tripartite" life course consisting of phases of pre-employment, employment and/or family work, and post-employment. The introduction of public education resulted in the creation of the "youth" phase as an educational moratorium to prepare the following generation for employment and life careers (cf. Zinnecker, 2000). With the development of modern welfare states and the introduction of pension schemes, "retirement" emerged as another distinct life phase, while social security secures employment careers and social services of people-processing and people-changing (Hasenfeld, 1983) make sure that individuals are willing and able to live "normal" lives (Böhnisch & Schröer, 2016).

If national welfare states are largely involved in the institutionalization of the life course and the transitions it includes, international comparisons of welfare states offer a way for the analysis aimed at understanding how welfare states have contributed to the constitution of life course transitions and the different ways in which they are being shaped (and still do). The chapter introduces the concept of "transition regimes," a comparative model developed for analyzing school-to-work-transitions. The aim is to question if and to what extent this model can contribute to the objectives of reflexive transition research that extends the research of how individual transitions progress to how they are constantly re-constituted. In detail, this implies relating the analysis of comprehensive constellations with the discursive, institutional, and individual practices involved in doing transitions (see Chap. 1 by Walther, Stauber, and Settersten, this volume).

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The chapter starts with a brief overview of the development of international studies of school-to-work-transitions. This is followed by a review of comparative welfare research and the introduction of the concept of transition regimes, which is then related to the concept of doing transitions. The conclusion explores the contribution of comparative analysis of transition regimes for reflexive transition research.

International (and) Comparative Research on Transitions into Training and Work

Young people's transitions from school to work have been a focus of social research since the mid-1980s. The Fordist program of economic growth, progress and full employment of the postwar period was replaced by a partial decoupling of education and employment and structural unemployment resulting from globalization and greater flexibility in production and work (Mayer, 2004). Youth unemployment especially turned into a challenge for the "integration promise" of the welfare state (Böhnisch & Schröer, 2016, p. 4). This structural crisis was referred to in terms of a potential "end of work," the "limits of welfare," or the declining sovereignty of nation-states and the growing influence of international political actors like OECD and EU. "Transition research" (used as a term in Germany for the first time by Brock, 1991) developed both nationally and internationally with international comparisons serving as an evidence base for the competition between national economies (cf. Walther, 2017).

Due to their orientation towards social and labor market policies, many studies were oriented towards institutional and normative criteria of "success" versus "failure" (like work versus unemployment), which has contributed to a "methodological institutionalism" of transition research (Schröer, 2015, p. 934). Success and failure were explained by categories such as social background, ethnicity, and gender and interpreted partly as individual or structural factors of disadvantage, the performance of regional labor markets, and the ways transitions are shaped by social, educational and employment policies. Comparative studies addressed organizational versus occupational labor markets (Shavit & Müller, 1998) or more versus less stratified and standardized education and training (Allmendinger, 1989) as independent variables of (youth) unemployment. However, structures and logics of welfare affect the social composition and the duration of unemployment, whereas they have less influence on how many people become unemployed (cf. Blossfeld et al., 2005; Pohl & Walther, 2007).

Gradually, also qualitative research designs focusing on the subjective aspects of transitions to work were introduced. Biographical analysis, especially, permitted researchers to reconstruct the subjective meanings that young people ascribe to institutional and economic aspects of work, their interpretations of discontinuous transitions, their experiences of labor market policies as well as their individual coping strategies. This contributed to weakening methodological institutionalism, but it

often implied a dualistic and oppositional conception of structure and agency suggesting that individual subjectivities are separated from rather than interactively related with institutional structures (e.g., Evans & Heinz, 1994; Heinz, 2000; Schoon & Silbereisen, 2009).

The studies of the European Group for Regional and International Social Research (EGRIS), which followed the political agenda of EU funding programs, aimed to reconstruct the interactions between institutional actors and young people. In country-based case studies, different actors' perspectives were comparatively analysed through secondary analyses, document analyses, surveys, and expert and biographical interviews. Main themes were risks of exclusion as side effects of labor market policies through stigmatisation and the "cooling out" of occupational aspirations (Walther et al., 2002). Other studies dealt with the divergence and convergence of such measures towards the activating welfare state within the EU, characterized by a shift towards expecting more self-responsibility of individuals even in precarious situations and thus emphasizing the relationship of disadvantage, participation, and subjective motivation (Pohl & Walther, 2007; Walther et al., 2006) or the role of the family in coping with uncertain transitions (Biggart & Kovacheva, 2006). This perspective was also applied to transitions into parenthood, into political, social, and civic participation, and in the context of migration (Pohl et al., 2011). An international comparative perspective allowed researchers to distinguish between general (European) and context-specific (national) aspects and to deconstruct apparently self-evident assumptions of normality through "pendulating" between internal and external views.

The critique of the dominance of institutional indicators of success and failure implied questioning an isolated and individualized view of discontinuous transitions. Rather than attributing them to social or individual problems, they were interpreted in relation to the context of late modern societies: the interplay of economic flexibilization, the individualization and pluralization of life conditions – and the de-standardization of the life course (cf. Beck, 1992; Heinz, 1991; Mayer, 2004). Consequently, models limited to explaining transitions as depending on the organization of education and labor markets deemed no longer sufficient. Instead, it seemed more and more necessary to subject these entities used as independent variables in studying transitions to a comprehensive analysis of how different ways of shaping transitions in the life course have evolved historically.

From Welfare Regimes to Transition Regimes

One concept that fulfils the criterion of a comprehensive analysis of how individual lives are coordinated through labor market and state institutions is the concept of *welfare regimes* (Esping-Andersen, 1990). This model compares levels of social security, access regulations, responsibilities between state, market and family, and the role of different actors, especially aristocracy, citizens, farmers, workers' movement, the church and the state, in the historical development of welfare states.

Esping-Andersen distinguished three types of welfare states: (1) a *social democratic* welfare regime in the Nordic countries with broad access on the basis of citizenship and a high level of benefits, (2) a *liberal* welfare regime in the Anglo-Saxon countries with a similar regulation of access but lower level of benefits (residual), and (3) a *conservative* welfare regime in continental Europe, where access to social security depends on employment and family status and level of benefits varies. This model has been criticized for its limitations and further developed, for example, with the addition of a familistic or sub-protective regime type for Southern Europe, the identification of mechanisms of doing gender and doing ethnicity (Ferrera, 2005; Gallie & Paugam, 2000; Pohl, 2015; Sainsbury, 1999, 2006), and the inclusion of social services (Lorenz, 2006). Nevertheless, this model still anchors comparative welfare studies because it conceptualizes welfare states as "modes of integration" (Schefold, 1996) or "programs of socialization" (Lessenich, 2013: 895). This applies even more if, following Anglo-Saxon or Nordic traditions, education is interpreted as an integral element of welfare due its role in allocating occupational and social positions (cf. Allmendinger & Leibfried, 2003).

Such a comprehensive understanding of welfare justifies reference to the notion of a "regime" (Walther, 2017). In political science, the concept of regime refers to constellations of principles, norms, rules, and procedures operating without sanctions, such as the notion of "governance without government" in international relations (Mayer et al., 1993, p. 391). A similar understanding of interdependencies of labor market, welfare and education that transgress regulation through the state can be found in Mayer's (1997) "political economy of the life course." A second strand of perspectives connected to the regime concept are theories of power derived from Gramsci's (1971) concept of "hegemony." The relationship between a life course institutionalized through welfare and shared representations of "normal life" contributes to a powerful complex of values, norms, and practices (cf. Lessenich, 2013). According to Link (2006), "normality" is constituted by the relationship of power and knowledge of how "most others" live and thus informs social control and the coordination of social action. Normalization consequently results from the interplay between discourse, welfare state regulation and individuals' everyday life practices. These reflections may explain why Esping-Andersen (1990) compared welfare *regimes* rather than "states" and why Kohli (1985) referred to a *life course regime*.

The concept of regime opens the view for the question *how* processes of social reproduction are being shaped – for example, how different welfare states or different institutional ways of regulating transitions reflect specific representations of family, individual, work, youth, or disadvantage (cf. Pfau-Effinger, 2005; Walther, 2017). The regime model implies an idea of social reproduction as the interplay between various actors and dimensions from which different normalities of the life course and transitions emerge (see Fig. 3.1).

Comparative research is concerned with "relating relations" (Schriewer, 2000, p. 495). In transition research, this does not only apply to the relations between institutional structures and individual trajectories but also to the ways that transition structures and their underlying rationalities have changed. Thus, the regime concept can be applied to distinguish different "ideal types" of shaping transitions. While
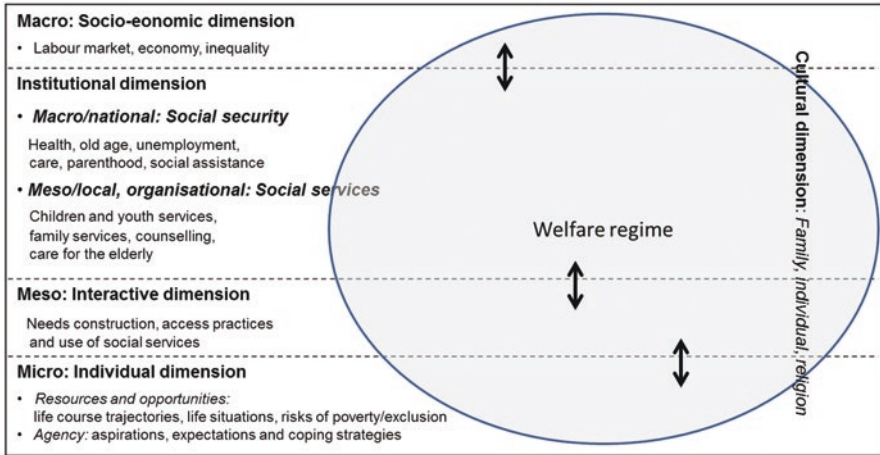
Fig. 3.1 Dimensions of welfare regimes. (Source: Walther, 2017, p. 289)

Esping-Andersen (1990) focused on access and levels of social security, the studies carried out by the EGRIS group (see above) aimed to elaborate regimes of school-to-work-transitions. This implied to include also other dimensions such as levels of public expenditure for education, labor market policies, and family, children and youth, degrees of selectivity and standardization of education and training (Allmendinger, 1989) as well as the aims and contents of schemes for disadvantaged and unemployed young people. In a next step, analyzing the differences between schemes for adults and for young people, especially by document analysis and expert interviews, allowed to reconstruct inherent cultural meanings and interpretations of "disadvantage" (individual versus structural) and representations of and expectations towards "youth." Figure 3.2 shows the development from welfare regimes to life course and transition regimes suggesting that also the ways in which other transitions in the life course are shaped and constructed may be referred to in terms of transition regimes. While there are analogies between life course regimes as developed by other authors (see for example Mayer, 2004) regarding the relevance of welfare, education and labor market structures, the transition regime concepts pay more attention to cultural patterns and to biographical agency.

In the research undertaken in the studies of the EGRIS network cited above four clusters of ideal-typical constellations of shaping transitions involving institutional, cultural-discursive, and biographical dimension were elaborated. In the following, these *transition regimes* will be briefly presented focusing on dominant representations and normalities of transitions from youth to adulthood (Walther, 2006, 2017):

- The *liberal* transition regime (e.g., UK, Ireland) is characterized by active labor market policies exerting control and sanction and reflecting the traditional expectation towards youth to become economically independent as soon as possible. However, the flexibilization of education and training has contributed to protracting and diversifying transition routes.
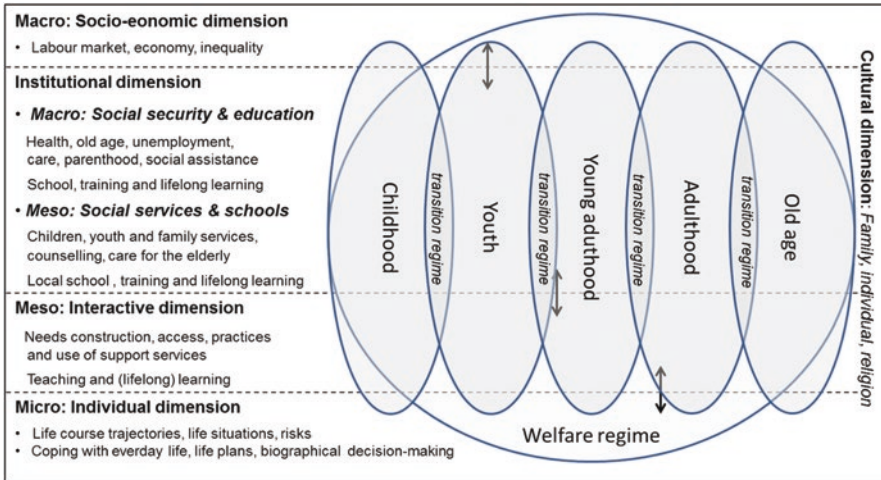
Fig. 3.2 Dimensions of transition regimes. (Source: Walther, 2017, p. 294)

- In the *universalistic* transition regime (e.g., Denmark, Sweden) a comprehensive education system, individual and universal access to social security, options for choice also regarding forms of institutional support schemes express the recognition and securing of growing up as a process of personal development and an element of the citizenship status.
- The *employment-centered* transition regime (e.g., Germany, France) is marked by the combination of selective school, standardized vocational training and segmented social security. Young people are first expected to qualify for and be allocated to occupational positions of unequal status.
- The constitutive element of the *under-institutionalized* transition regime (e.g., Italy, Spain) is the lack of reliable institutionalized pathways from school to work and of entitlements to social security in the transition phase. Young people for a long time depend on their families reflecting an institutional "status vacuum" of youth and transitions in these contexts.

The analytical dimensions of the model have also been applied to Central and Eastern European countries. However, due to the dynamics, the complexity and the diversity of transformation processes, these systems were neither subsumed to existing regime types nor additional ones were created (cf. Pohl & Walther, 2007). Another societal trend that has been taken into consideration has been the trend towards activation as a new welfare paradigm. The simultaneity of path dependency and transnational convergence reflects that activation has become a general reference for policy reforms which, however, need to start from existing institutional structures and normalities (cf. Pohl & Walther, 2007; cf. Serrano Pascual, 2004). A further challenge was integrating a biographical perspective into the model. Asking young people for experiences of support by the state, generated ambivalent responses both in Germany and the UK, where those with discontinuous transitions necessarily come in contact with state institutions, in terms of "Yes, but …" – too little,

hardly effective, implying humiliating conditions, and without options for choice. Young people in Southern and Eastern Europe mostly negated this question – like in Denmark, yet with different connotations: "What state?" respectively "We're alone, if you have family or friends, ok …" in Bulgaria or Italy. while young Danes did not give any further explanations. In fact, they referred to educational allowances paid by the state, independent from parental income and not repayable, as well as easy access to counselling in all instances from school to labor market policies not as support but as a right and thus as normal (Walther, 2017, p. 294).

Even if the strength of the model is more the focus on the ways in which transitions are shaped compared to how they evolve, relationships between regime types and life conditions of young adults can be identified, especially where they are directly influenced by welfare institutions like for example the level of education and training of young adults, the duration of unemployment or the income situation of young people (Eurobarometer, 2007; Pohl & Walther, 2007). Yet, the potential of the model to forecast overall development of unemployment as well as how life trajectories evolve is limited which has been criticized as a weakness (cf. Raffe, 2014).

However, the reception of "transition regimes" in international research reflects the usefulness and plausibility of a heuristic model that clusters how transitions are structured in correspondence with welfare states. Soler-i-Martí and Ferrer-Fons (2015) have used the regime model to elaborate different degrees of the centrality of youth in different welfare states. Chevalier (2016) extended the model by a cross-cutting dimension of individualization versus familialization.

Transition Regimes as Constellations of Doing Transitions

Transition and welfare regimes are "ideal typical configurations [of] ... "modes of integration"" (Schefold, 1996, p. 96) and help to understand the emergence and permanence of normalities according to which processes of social integration in different contexts occur and are legitimized differently (Walther, 2017). The regime concept provides a comprehensive view on how cultural, institutional, and biographical dimensions and processes of shaping transitions in the life course are interrelated, interdependent and thus contribute to the emergence of an integrated social context in which transitions emerge and evolve. The doing transitions concept, instead, takes a closer look into these interrelations and interdependencies, especially in terms of discursive, institutional, and individual practice, in order to show that and how transitions do not simply exist but are constantly shaped and constructed in complex interactions of multiple actors and factors (see Chap. 1 by Walther, Stauber, & Settersten, this volume). The following section addresses the extent to which the two concepts are compatible and complementary in providing useful lenses to understand how transitions in the life course are being done. For reasons of simplification, one might refer to doing transitions as zooming in and to transition regimes as zooming out or as a constellation of several practices interacting in the constitution of life course transitions.

Institutional Regulation, Organization and Ritualization of Transitions

In labor societies, transitions to work represent the primary gateway to social inclusion. Access to possibilities of gaining competence and qualifications ensuring labor market entry are regulated by institutions. In comparative analysis, such institutions play a central role because they mitigate the integration of individuals into social structures. In the development of the model of transition regimes, descriptions and analyses of institutional structures therefore served as a foundation: access to school, training, and social security, goals and designs of schemes for disadvantaged youth, and entry to employment (see above). Even though it represents only part of institutional regulations, state-regulated access can be interpreted as the institutional regulation of transitions *par excellence* in modern societies. State-related access relies on universal rights and responsibilities, has sanctioning power, and reflects a social context institutionalized as nation-state and related concepts of citizenship.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) define institutions as comprehensive constellations of expectations and as "habitualized actions, that are ... typified reciprocally by actors. Each typification performed in this way is an institution" (ibid., 1969, p. 58). Such a perspective differs from the structural functionalist interpretation of institutions as structures established to stabilize the process of social integration as social "facts" (cf. Parsons & Smelser, 1956). Neo-institutionalist scholars, like Meyer and Rowan (1977), focus more on processes of (de)institutionalization resulting from experience, routine, and usefulness in confronting social context than on stable structures and their functionality for exerting existing norms. Institutions are contingent but persist if they are not questioned in everyday life and have power through their self-evidence and normality. This is close to how practice theories conceptualize institutions: as routinized practice (Giddens, 1984) perpetuated across time and space, and as "knowledge which has been once conveyed and incorporated [and] tends to be applied by actors again and again and to generate repetitive patterns of practice" (Reckwitz, 2003, p. 294).

The institutionalization of the life course and the emergence of the youth phase have for a long time been interpreted from a structural functionalist perspective as an educational moratorium serving to organize the reproduction of an existing order of division of labor across generational change. At the same time, "youth" has become a distinct life phase only through its cultural appropriation by young people themselves and their youth cultural practice (cf. Turner, 1969). From a practice theoretical perspective, the historical distinction of youth from childhood and adulthood appears as the perpetuation of a practice that has proved suitable for different actors in particular socio-historical contexts.

Following a processual understanding of institutions, doing transitions may be operationalized into three forms of institutionalization: regulation, ritualization, and organization. *Regulation* refers to the establishment and exertion of shared norms. Rules mark requirements for and the timing of transitions (such as stage, status, or

competencies), fixed schedules and procedures of transitions secure preparation (especially conveying of necessary skills and knowledge and their assessment), the recognition that a transition has been completed and are controlled by gatekeepers (cf. Glaser & Strauss, 1971). *Ritualization* refers to practices of regulation that rely on traditional knowledge with a high symbolic potential. Anthropological studies of initiation rites or rites of passage (esp. Eisenstadt, 1956; Turner, 1969; van Gennep, 1977) analyzed how rituals enabled separation from the status of childhood, created the liminal phase in which initiates were separated from society and prepared for their new position, and finally incorporated into their new status as adults. Rituals share the function of perpetuating marks and rules, procedures, and schedules with particular *organizations.* Although rituals are often attributed to regulation of transitions in traditional societies, and organizations are associated with the functional differentiation of modern societies, this distinction neglects the blurred boundaries between traditional and modern societies and the persistence and constant re-emergence of rituals. Meyer and Rowan (1977) interpret organizations as social bodies that are in constant interaction with their societal environment and criticize dominant attributes of efficacy as legitimate "myths." From an ethno-psychoanalytical perspective, Erdheim (1982, p. 327) questions the assumption that in "Western democratic and capitalist there is no initiation at all" and the categoric distinction of ritualized and organized transitions: "The young person has to attend school, undergo training, serve in the army … It is the difficulty of the subject that makes the length of the preparation" (see also Heinrich, Klevermann and Schmidt-Herta, Chap. 6, this volume; Riach, Chap. 7, this volume).

The institutional regulation of transitions ensures and legitimizes that those who endorse new positions have the necessary skills and knowledge and exhibit "normal" conduct – which therefore involves pedagogical moments (Hof et al., 2014). This applies not only to explicit educational institutions like school but also to institution like pension, where the welfare state creates incentives to build lives of gainful employment and thus "educates" people to lead their lives according (cf. Lessenich, 2012).

Institutional regulation is embodied by *gatekeepers* who coordinate and supervise procedures and schedules (cf. Heinz, 1992). In formally organized transitions, these are often representatives of pedagogical and social professions who assess the fit of individuals for new positions and apply clinical logics of "maturity" (like "employability," Walther, 2015; cf. Stone, 1992). Following the insight that institutions need to be constantly articulated and reproduced, professionals have scopes of action that Lipsky (1980) has conceptualized as "street level bureaucracy": institutional prescriptions must be interpreted, they can be ignored or even be undermined to maintain the functioning of the organization itself. There are also informal gatekeepers such as family members or peers who are actively involved in mediating the regulation of transitions, especially ritualized transitions (see Wanka and Prescher, Chap. 10, this volume).

Research on the effects of transitions on life trajectories often reduces institutions to independent variables (like company- versus school-based vocational training, cf. Shavit & Müller, 1998). From a neo-institutionalist perspective, the

institutional regulations of transitions is contingent, even if power relationships and mechanisms of path dependency provide them considerable stability, and they cannot be separated from individuals using and moving through them. This perspective is fruitful for the concept of transition regimes for at least three reasons. First, it reveals why the institutional perspective is central in international comparative analysis. Second, it allows the analysis of both rituals and organizations as forms of perpetuating transitions. Third, it introduces a processual perspective regarding the (de)institutionalization of transitions and thus into their constitution through practices of regulation.

Normality of Transitions Through Discursive Practices

Existing empirical analyses of policies addressing youth unemployment have already revealed the relevance of cultural patterns for different forms of institutional regulation of transitions, for example different ascriptions of "disadvantage" and representations of "youth" (Walther, 2006; cf. Pfau-Effinger, 2005). "Governance beyond government" becomes hegemonial only if regulation by state institutions is linked with other modes of shaping transitions and if these figurations gain acceptance and become "normal". Consequently, welfare and transition regimes can be understood as constellations of normality and normalization against the backdrop of widely accepted life plans and expected life trajectories (see also Boll, Chap. 11, this volume).

Leaning on Foucault's discourse theory, social reproduction occurs in "fields of the normal," of what can be said and seen (Link, 2006, p. 51). Such fields of the normal are integrated by typifying knowledge to which all actors involved refer and which emerges from the amalgam of institutionalized special discourses (e.g., science) and basic discourses embedded in everyday life. However, discursive orders only become powerful in structuring social reality where they are articulated in social practice. *Discursive practices* are acts of speech that refer to and reproduce a specific order of knowledge and meaning (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014), like the different legitimacy of the claims and demands on individuals in different welfare regimes.

Discourses are involved in the marking of so-called normative transitions which – like entering school or employment – are not negotiable without risking exclusion from the normal field of the life course. Thus, discourses are involved in the reproduction of normalities and normativities reflected in judgments about the "success" or "failure" of transitions – and therefore in the implicit and explicit educational goals of institutions as they prepare individuals for transitions. Finally, discourses are manifest in institutional procedures and schedules because they inform gatekeepers about the legitimate and normal ways to perform transitions, the adequate professional standards for supporting them, and the justification of necessary resources.

Link (2006, p. 51) refers to the discursive process of establishing normality as a knowledge order of typification. "Protonormalisms" are rigidly fixed institutionalized marks, while "flexible normalisms" refer to situational modifications in the interpretation and exertion of normality. Normalization, instead, refers to practices of adapting individual behavior to normality. Normality and normativity are complementary because norms influence what practices are held as ordinary and average whereas normal practices that have proved successful sooner or later become norms. Thus, normality secures a quasi-normative field of unquestioned and self-evident belonging, inclusion, and participation.

Coming back to the example of school-to-work-transitions, in the German speaking countries the combination of "protestant work ethic" (Weber, 1958), standardized vocational training, and state employment regulation have influenced both companies' recruitment practices and people's life planning according to a predominant view of work as "vocation." Professional socialization not only requires certain skills but also subjection to a professional culture and identity (Walther, 2017). However, the motto "vocational training for all" (who are not entitled for access to higher education which applies to more than 50% of school leavers in Germany) has recently been questioned from three angles: First, since the 1990s, employers have withdrawn from the dual system of apprenticeship training, leading to a reduction of offered apprenticeships. Second, more young people, especially also among those with poor school qualifications, either prefer to stay in school and increase their qualifications (although opportunities to stay in the selective German school system are scarce) or accept precarious jobs to second-choice-training; also, because the "choice" not to accept training is often recognized as normal by parents and peers where options for choice are limited. Third, the trend towards the activating welfare state itself undermines vocationalism as job centers expect jobseekers to accept precarious jobs or schemes that do not lead to vocational qualifications (cf. Walther, 2015). International comparative analysis refers to discursive practices as cultural or "soft" factors, although they inform labor market structures, institutional regulation, everyday life ritualization, and – last but not least – individuals' life plans. Thus, comparative analysis – not only between countries but also between historical periods or different transitions – helps identify distinct "rationalities of transitions" (Karl, 2014) that help integrate the complex interrelations through which transitions are being shaped.

Biography and Coping with Life as Subjectivation

Combining an international comparative analysis of transitions with a biographical perspective implies two challenges: first, biographies are (re)constructed to a limited degree as national; second, transition research has long addressed biographical and structural perspectives as dichotomy (cf. Walther, 2017). Analyzing interrelations of discursive, institutional, and individual modes of doing transitions therefore requires understanding biographical meaning not as property of individual actors in

terms of subjective intentions but as evolving in processes of subjectivation. This leads to the question of whether the model of transition regimes is useful for a comparative analysis of transitions in terms of processes of subjectivation (see also Eberle, Lütgens, Pohling, Spies and Bauer, Chap. 9, this volume).

According to subjectivation theorists like Foucault (2005) and Butler (1997), individuals become agentic subjects through being addressed in the framework of what can be normally said and seen. The recognition individuals experience is never comprehensive or unconditional but is situationally and contextually bound to subjection to and enabling of specific subject positions – for example, as children, youth, adult, or old persons (cf. Ricken, 2013). However, positioning oneself toward and identifying with the norms involved in being addressed are not reproduced one-to-one but are contingent upon and open to variations in the process of reproduction (re-signification; Butler, 1997). Thus, subjectivation does not exclude the individual accumulation of biographical experience which, however, does not belong to a "strong" pre-existing subject but to a "subject *of* power (where 'of' connotes both 'belonging to' and 'wielding')" (Butler, 1997, p. 14). Identification with being addressed provides agency in a specific situation. This agency is limited by discursive normality to a particular scope but is at the same time contingent, also because social situations are characterized by complex, fragmented, and contradictory practices of addressing, which is also conditioned by previous experiences of addressation, recognition, and identification (Alheit & Dausien, 2002).

What in subject-oriented transition research has been conceptualized as biographical coping with transitions (see Walther, 2017), from a doing transition perspective may be interpreted as the permanent production of subjects in the interaction of addressation, recognition, and identification that is conditioned by unequal resources and possibilities. According to Böhnisch and Schröer (2016), *coping with life* is the constant reassurance of agency in dealing with concrete demands in the context of normality. Coping with life can be seen as a case of flexible normalism as individuals tend to "stretch" normality so that it can be achieved with the disposable resources and secure at least partial inclusion (to a milieu, a scene, or a community of practice; cf. Lave & Wenger, 1991). Also dropping out from education or rejecting second choice job perspectives can be seen as coping with life in the mode of normalization.

Addressing individuals as children, young people, adults, seniors, or as pupils, students, workers, parents or retired, indigenous or migrants – the list goes on – involves normative expectations in terms of stability or transformation (that is, normative transitions). "Addressing" is contextual. For example, Pfau-Effinger (2005) refers to different representations of the "individual" in predominantly protestant versus catholic societies. Therefore, the biographical perspective requires thinking in interrelations: educational or employment decisions are ascribed to individuals who are made accountable for their outcomes, even if resulting from powerful institutional demands, influenced by gatekeepers, lacking options for choice, and limited resources (cf. Walther et al., 2016). At the same time, processes of "cooling out," the lowering of aspirations induced by selective access to education and training, cannot be reduced to institutional regulation and deficit-oriented guidance by

professional gatekeepers. They remain incomplete if individuals do not make second-choice options their own choices, accepting that available status positions fit them best and are therefore what they "want" (cf. Goffman, 1962; Walther, 2015).

From a biographical perspective to the interrelation between discursive, institutional, and individual modes of shaping transitions, international comparative analysis framed by the concept of transition regimes may be understood as complementing Foucault's program of a "history of the different forms of subjectivation" (Foucault, 2005, p. 269).

Conclusion

The question whether the concept of transition regimes contributes to the reconstructive analysis of doing transitions in the life course is bound to the analysis of the interrelation between discursive, institutional, and individual practices through which transitions are shaped and constructed. Apart from understanding institutions as contingent but path-dependent processes of institutionalization, this requires conceptualizing discourses as practices that not only frame but are productive and inherent to institutional regulation and individual coping with life. This includes practices of typification and addressing people "as ..." – for example according to age and its cultural ascriptions and social expectations. Young people are addressed as "youth," or even "disadvantaged youth"; children are addressed as "still" being children and therefore dependent and vulnerable; adults are addressed as "already" responsible for their decisions, and older people as "still" productive or "already" demented. During transitions, such addressation turns into "no more" (e.g., young) but "not yet" (e.g., adult) and represents both transformation and inconsistent status. Thus, the life course represents a constant process of subjectivation consisting of phases during which individuals are addressed as members of an age group and periods in which they are addressed as being in transition. Put differently, the developmental process of ageing is structured by an institutionalized sequence of processes of addressation and identification.

Practices of addressation are always practices of recognition (and vice versa) forcing and empowering individuals to speak, act, and develop of concept of themselves "as ..." the things being called out (cf. Ricken, 2013). In this process, discursive, institutional (both organizational and ritualized), and subjective practices are intertwined in terms of addressation, recognition, and identification or appropriation. This is compatible with a governance perspective on social change and the restructuring of life course transitions, like the anticipation of transitions into school or work and the implementation of support mechanisms of young adults that neither result only from institutional nor from individual decision-making but from complex interactions (cf. Walther et al., 2016; Parreira do Amaral et al., 2019; see also Eberle et al., Chap. 9, this volume; Hirschfeld and Lenz, Chap. 4, this volume).

Finally, the contribution of transition regimes to reflexive transition research, and the concept of doing transitions, depends on its applicability to transitions other

than young people's transitions to work. It seems plausible to expect analogies between the constitution of different transitions within a comprehensive life course regime (Kohli, 1985) – which still need to be identified and analyzed empirically; for example, by questioning the extent to which there are analogies or mirror-inverted complementarities between transitions into and out of work. Are analogies or complementarities already visible in transitions to nursery or primary school? What about in transitions within adulthood such as job changes, unemployment, or family building? Referring to the German context, for example, this would imply an analysis of whether and how the combination of selective schooling, standardized training, and a normalizing organization of work as "vocation" is also reflected in structures of retirement or access to childcare. At the same time, studies on the activating welfare suggest that discourses of individualization, responsibilization, mobilization, and self-optimization increasingly address individuals in different ages (cf. Lessenich, 2013). Yet even if different transitions in the same societal context are shaped according to different rationales, the concept of transition regimes allows to analyze the different interplays between discursive, institutional, and individual logics regarding the social meaning and function of doing transitions differently within the same life course regime and its effects on life trajectories.

In sum, the concept of transition not only serves to organize international comparisons of how life course transitions are shaped and constructed but also provides a lens for the comprehensive interaction of different discursive, institutional, and individual practices involved in doing transitions.

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Chapter 4
Young People's Use and Construction of Institutional Support in Transitions from School to Work

Heidi Hirschfeld and Bianca Lenz

For many decades, young people who are considered socially disadvantaged (e.g., socially, educationally, materially) have been identified and addressed as a risk group in the transition from school to work. Many policy measures have been developed to support them during this transition. Based on attributions of individual deficits in terms of skills, knowledge and vocational orientation, these measures aim to increase employability through counseling, information and pre-vocational education and training. Despite being addressed as passive recipients of support, these young people are simultaneously held responsible if they fail to transition into (qualified) employment. Based on analyzes of the biographies of German adolescents in lower secondary school and young adults who receive basic provisions through the so-called "Jobcenter," this chapter examines how young people are actively involved in shaping their transitions. We show that the way they use institutional programs of career guidance and counseling varies greatly and that the differences are closely related to subjective meaning-making in the context of biographical constructions. This chapter focuses on how adolescents and young adults use institutionally offered support, how they (can) shape these offers and, thus, their transitions from school to work. It reveals that young people's modes of use are relationally interwoven with institutional-structural aspects and discourses.

First, we approach this subject theoretically from the perspective of reflexive transition research and discuss empirical results from two case studies: one

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associated with a transition assistance scheme called "Career Entry Support"[1] and another associated with the "Jobcenter." Both cases represent longitudinal research and are based on biographical narrative interviews. This chapter addresses the biographical relevance of transitional support for adolescents and young adults in transitioning from school to work and sketches the influence of welfare state modes of regulation on how young people view institutional assistance during the transition. Finally, we discuss similarities and differences of institutional modes of regulation and address the relationship between discursive attributions, institutional (access) regulation and biographical positioning.

Connections Between Welfare State Regulation and Subjective-Biographical Coping: Reflexive Transition Research

In this section, we develop a theoretical perspective on the relationship between welfare state regulations and subjective meaning-making in the context of biographical constructions. We will therefore, first, describe the significance of welfare state regulations in assistances with regard to life course transitions; second, we introduce theoretical aspects of biographical analysis; and third, we integrate both from the perspective of reflexive transition research.

From a theoretical perspective on transitions, the institutionalized life course (Kohli, 2017 [1985]) regulates life phases through institutional, socio-political and welfare state regulations along assumptions of normality (Heinz, 1991, 1992). This points to the lines of discourse immanent in the life course and to the temporality inherent in the concept of the life course linked to age. In Germany, social work acts as institutional social policy, increasingly in the sense of the activating welfare state and assumes the normal life course as a matter of fact (Kessl, 2009; Lessenich, 2013; Pohl & Walther, 2007). Social work measures intervene when fears arise that the "expected" life course, which is discursively produced and shaped by norms, will not be achieved (Walther et al., 2014). The welfare state is to be understood as an influence on the life course and as a framework for social work and social pedagogical action, and thus an institutional form of regulation. For the German context, this welfare state characteristic is reflected in transitional assistance in the form of the activation principle 'rights and responsibilities' (Kessl, 2009; Kratz, 2015) as well as in its preventive approach. Thus, welfare needs to be understood as one pillar of the life course; social work as an element of welfare (concerned with controlling and supporting people in staying on track of the life course) and activation as a change in the way welfare and social work address the life course. Through "doing biography" (Dausien & Hanses, 2016) – that is, examining the interaction between being addressed as an actor and author of an individual life history and the

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[1] The original German name of this scheme is "Berufseinstiegsbegleitung."

respective positioning and construction – biographers appropriate and update the institutionalized structural order of the life course. According to Völter et al. (2009, p. 7), biographies are a "social construct" that refer to individual patterns of processing experiences as well as to social rules, discourses and socio-economic conditions.

Against the background of these theoretical aspects, so-called disadvantaged young people are addressed as participants of transition-related support in the field of assistance in the transition from school to work, because they are less autonomous and have fewer chances to find vocational training and transition into employment smoothly. These ascribed deviations are to be dealt with and compensated for through (socio-)educational assistance, through schemes and projects of the so-called 'transition system' consisting of school-based and non-school-based schemes of transition support and counseling.

Together, these theoretical explanations clarify the structural framework conditions that young people encounter in transition. At the same time, the young people are not only at mercy of these structural framework conditions but are rather to be understood as co-producers of institutional support. However, it remains open how this is done. In order to investigate this and to reconstruct the interrelationships between different actors, processes and social regulations in the context of support and processing transitions through assistances, we will argue here from the perspective of reflexive transition research (Walther et al., 2020; see also the introduction by Stauber, Settersten and Walther to this volume). Following the concept of "doing difference" (West & Fenstermaker, 1995) and practice-theoretical perspectives, this research analyzes the social production of transitions in their concrete social realities (Hirschauer, 2004). It makes it possible not to interpret transitions as social facts, but to critically examine their practical implementation and their emergence and to question how transitions are produced and shaped in the relational interplay of discursive practices of articulation, institutional modes of regulation and subjective-biographical processes of coping (Walther et al., 2020; see also the introductory chapter by Stauber, Settersten and Walther, this volume). This makes it possible not to presuppose and accept transitions as existing facts, but to question "how transitions are shaped by different processes of constituting reality and are thus first made a social fact" (Wanka et al., 2020, p. 19). This means that not only young people are addressed as potential participants in institutional assistance in transition, but also that those who participate address (socio)pedagogical actors as those providing support (cf. Hirschfeld, 2021, p. 76). Social pedagogical assistance in transition is a social construct that, based on a fiction of a normal life, is intended to get young people to position themselves in an employment-centered society or to allow themselves to be positioned.

With regard to the question of the connections between welfare state regulation and subjective-biographical coping, transitions and social work are located at the intersection of institutionalization, the supposed achievability of a normal life course and welfare state regulation: transitions, because they mark "special risk situations" (Leisering et al., 2001, p. 12) and breaks that have to be overcome biographically; social work, because it can be understood as an institutional regulation

and coping support with which precisely these risk situations are to be overcome. Participants in transition-related support are co-producers, as they (co-)shape the assistance by attributing the significance of the support to their own transition.

Making and Shaping Transitions by Adolescents and Young Adults in the Context of Welfare State Regulation

Using two individual case studies, in this section we discuss how young people (can) shape their transitions to show how biographies are formed in interaction with welfare regulations and the process of support. The focus is on how young people use institutional career guidance and counseling programs. How do they position themselves in relation to the (imposed) support and schemes and which meaning do those institutional assistances have in the context of biographical construction? In both studies,[2] the narrative interviews were analyzed using biographical case reconstruction, which is characterized, among other things, by a sequential approach (Rosenthal, 2011). The interplay of discourse, individual and society and the significance of discourse in subject formation were taken into the spotlight.

"This is something for stupid people" – Producing and Forming Transitions in and Through the Program "Career Entry Support".

The first case study refers to Vanessa[3] who was interviewed three times over a three-year period between the ages of 14 to 16 as part of a longitudinal dissertation study using a narrative-biographical interview (Hirschfeld, 2021).[4] She was interviewed as a participant of the transition-related support measure "Career Entry Support"[5] addressing young people in the lower secondary educational during the transition from school to work. These young people are considered to be particularly disadvantaged and needy as a result of the selective structure of the German

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[2] The data basis of both studies was formed by (longitudinal) narrative-biographical interviews with young adults. In one study, the interviewees were participants in the transitional support "Career Entry Support." At the first interview, the young people were between 14 and 16 years old and attending school. Two further interviews took place, each about a year apart. At the third interview, the five individuals in the sample, two women and three men, were attending vocational school, were in training, or were also without employment. In the other study, the people interviewed were recipients of benefits from the "Jobcenter." 17 individuals between the ages of 16 and 24 were interviewed, some multiple times. Among them were eight men and nine women with different school-leaving qualifications (mostly low to middle school) as well as no school-leaving qualifications. The young adults were in different living situations (e.g., looking for work or training, in school, working, on parental leave, living with parents, married, single parent).

[3] Anonymized name of the young person.

[4] Within the framework of the dissertation, the relevance of socio-educational assistance for the production and design of transitions in the context of unequal educational opportunities was reconstructed.

[5] In 2009, the Federal Employment Agency implemented "Career Entry Support" as a pilot project in Germany.

tripartite school system and the standardization of training, which is based on school selection. Because of the selective structures, they are confronted with special challenges when transitioning from school to work, which are to be accompanied, dealt with and compensated for at an institutional level through various forms of assistance. The transitional assistance "Career Entry Support" is one such form of support that begins in the grade prior to graduation and ends after a maximum of 2 years. Counselors offer (socio-)pedagogical support to the young people and help them become 'prepared' for vocational training through work-related, school-based and real world offers, so that the transition from school to vocational training is as seamless and 'successful' as possible. A look at the legal framework of "Career Entry Support" shows an inherent problem with the assessment criteria used to select those young people who seem to have difficulties in the transition phase, perform poorly at school and/or have a migration background. At the same time, they must also have the potential to successfully transition into vocational training through the support of the program. Teachers and vocational counselors interpret the legal requirements and select the participants; here, a distinction is made between young people who need and deserve help. This means that in addition to poor school grades and 'wrong' or non-existent career ideas, the young people must be motivated and willing to accept the "rules of the game." On the biographical level of experience, it becomes apparent that the perception as well as the acceptance of help is influenced by the access to help and also by the way in which help proceeds, as illustrated by the following case study.

Vanessa is 14 years old at the first interview and lives in a small town in southern Germany. Her childhood was marked by fragile relationships and relationship losses: her father committed suicide, her mother's relationships failed, Vanessa moved several times and she lived with her godparents, her great-grandmother and later with her grandfather. Relationships, relationship losses and – nevertheless – a sense of belonging to her family are central scenes in how she presents her life story. Vanessa qualifies to participate in the "Career Entry Support" program in eighth grade. She is selected as a participant by her teacher. She is disappointed, cannot understand the selection and even sees it as a breach of trust by her teacher. She says: "At first I was against it because I thought 'This is something for stupid people'." (Vanessa, first interview). She also dislikes the counselor as a person and does not feel at all addressed by the ascribed need for help. This shows that young people view such programs as highly stigmatizing, fueling Vanessa's rejection of and resistance against the program.

Vanessa is unable to escape participation because of family pressure and her need to maintain her affiliation with the family. Ultimately, she decides to participate. In retrospect, she clearly tried to differentiate herself from the other participants, who, she believed, showed poor academic performance, behaved improperly, and were rightly selected for other reasons. She attests to their need for help, while she assumes that her numerous and fluid ideas for her profession ultimately lead to her being selected as a participant, which, however, sets her apart from the others in her perception.

Later, she begins to accept her role as participant and uses the program's offerings. This is made possible above all through the scope of co-design, in which she actively works to co-construct the offering. For example, a friend may come along, which means that the offer loses its stigmatizing character. She usually finds that her needs and conditions are accepted, and her wishes respected. This makes it possible for Vanessa to discuss family problems, experiences of violence with her mother's partner and her everyday life. She describes her relationship with the guidance counselor as follows:

> At the very beginning, I had a strange feeling, and then I really got to know her; […] we became really close, meaning I really had a close relationship with her. You could say it was really friendly. And really intimate. (Vanessa, second interview).

In the second interview, Vanessa has just finished general education and started a vocational school, she reflects on the advantages she gains through the support. She highlights that she is more confident and has more knowledge about the requirements for the transition. Even though she finds the guidance counselor to be a person with whom she can talk about real-world problems, for Vanessa, despite all difficulties, her family remains the most important support system during the transition, because it is not limited to a certain structure or time frame, but always available.

Shortly before Vanessa graduates from general school, the guidance counselor falls ill, quits her employment, and is replaced. With the change of personnel - the relationship with the first guidance counselor was terminated without notice - Vanessa's perception, attitude and acceptance of the program changes and she refuses to accept further support and stops attending. In this way, Vanessa experiences yet another loss of relationship, which she has to cope with. She does neither discuss the issue with her family, nor is she pressured to continue the program.

This insight into Vanessa's assistance process shows that the way in which she is being addressed as a participant shapes her access to assistance. In addition, biographical experiences are reflected in the course of help and also shape the ways in which it is used: Vanessa's family experiences and experiences of relationships shape her perception of institutional assistance. Her experience with relationships is that they require a great deal of work, are conditional and unreliable. For her, developing a relationship always involves the risk of loss and therefore she must balance the need for closeness and help with the risk of loss. The fact that Vanessa is able to build a sustainable relationship with the professional is also a result of the possibilities for co-design and the possibility to include relevant actors from her everyday life (like the friend coming along and influencing the form and content of support). Of all of the available offers, Vanessa reports having used formal support offers the most (writing applications, improving school performance). She said, she rejected offers that she considered to lack added value, yet without questioning the relationship with the counselor. At the same time, however, she says to have discussed everyday life problems with the professional and attributes her an added value in this respect. Her perception, attitude and acceptance of the help changes with the change of staff so that she leaves the program.

In retrospect, the program played an important role in Vanessa's transition process. The relevance she attributes to the counselor is ignited by the relationship that developed and that she experienced as trusting. This was possible because the guidance counselor understood her, offered opportunities to talk about real-world issues and supported Vanessa in the demands of a transition.

"I miss this helping hand that pulls me out of this swamp" – Transitional Support and Shaping Transitions in the Context of the "Jobcenter".

The second case study relates to Dennis.[6] Dennis took part in a biographical-narrative interview three times within 4 years, aged 21–24, in the context of the dissertation project "The right help!?" (Lenz, 2022). The study focuses on the production and forming of the transition from school to work in the strained field of the institutional standardization and regulation processes of the so-called "Youth Job Center" (Jugendjobcenter; JJC). The JJC is an alliance of various institutions of basic security, unemployment insurance and municipal social work and proclaims to support under 25-year-olds on welfare as individually tailored as possible in the transition from school to work.

Dennis becomes a beneficiary of the "Jobcenter"[7] because of his single mother's financial dependence on social benefits. In contrast to the "Career Entry Support," the "Jobcenter" is not only a support for young people in the transition from school to work, but the central institution for basic material security in Germany. As regards young people under 25 years of age, the focus of activities is on a transition from school to training or work that is as smooth as possible. According to the paradigm of 'rights and responsibilities,' they are to be offered schemes as quickly as possible with the aim of integrating them into the labor market – if they do not cooperate, they can be sanctioned by cutting their financial benefits. The declared political objective is long-term independence from state transfer payments.

Dennis consistently presents himself as a help-seeking person, who does not receive the support he needs. The analyzes show that Dennis is confronted with multiple life issues. At the same time, he emphasizes his strong desire to "just live a fucking normal life," which he associates with having a job, wife and child. Professionally, he has the ambition to study, preferably in the field of social work. During the survey period, he does not come closer to this objective on a formal level.

Corresponding to the outlined policy of 'rights and responsibilities,' Dennis goes through various job orientation and training schemes of the "Jobcenter" after finishing general school. In his view, these are "as far away from his interests and abilities as the earth is from Pluto." When Dennis is around age 20, he does "nothing" for about a year. This phase resulted from his then-girlfriend being unfaithful to him with a good friend and the subsequent break of their relationship. Even though

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[6] Name and case are anonymized. The following quotes all come from transcribed interviews with Dennis.

[7] In the interview, Dennis only makes reference to the "Jobcenter" (not the "Youth Job Center", JJC). As the specificities of the JJC do not play a decisive role, in the following this is applied in the text.

Dennis continues to be addressed by the "Jobcenter," these problems relevant for him at that point are not dealt with. It is unclear whether the counselor can recognize Dennis' situation. In Dennis' words, the support provided by the "Jobcenter" is like mass processing "one chicken after another at the butcher's." Moreover, the support is so clearly limited to the area of training and work that it is difficult for the young people to address other, real-world problems – either in terms of content or for reasons of time. Thus, Dennis "serves up" to his counselor what he supposedly wants to hear, without seriously grappling with the support offers and demands of the "Jobcenter," so that "they just leave me alone." Dennis is on his own with his most pressing problems. He has few family resources: he has an ambivalent relationship with his father, characterized by (emotional) distance; he disdains his mother. The end of this "hardest" phase of his life is marked by his self-reflection on future scenarios, should he not change his life: "If you go on like this, what-what about when you're 30? 35? Then you'll probably be hanging around with the junkies at the main station and begging or something like that." This makes Dennis receptive to support and he learns about a scheme. His declared goal is to find an apprenticeship – congruent with the objective of the "Jobcenter" and the scheme. In retrospect, he attributes the added value of the scheme to the way it was addressed by the counselor responsible for the scheme:

> For the first time I have the feeling that he [counselor] puts his heart and soul into it [...] maybe that is also a reason why I am so committed to it [...] I really have hope that I will come out of it with an apprenticeship, which was not the case with the last four or five. (Dennis, first interview).

This gives him perspective; it becomes a "last straw" that prompts him strive more fully for the normalizing course he desires. This points to the potential influence of an individual professional in opening one's perspectives and activating resources. Dennis' statement "why I am so committed to it" shows how institutional support is translated biographically. The program or scheme alone – despite its objective of tailored support – does not necessarily have the intended effect, but must be appropriated, integrated into his life situation and given subjective relevance by the beneficiary himself.

The further course of the scheme and Dennis' life reflect how resources and hopes that have been laboriously activated are negated at the level of the young people by institutional logic, because the scheme is discontinued after 1 month due to a lack of participants. The "Jobcenter" then delegates Dennis to a scheme focused on placement. The counselor now in charge also succeeds in establishing a form of working relationship with Dennis. Dennis reports appreciatively:

> Best man […] he was such a cool, easy-going guy with whom you could have stolen horses […] he wrote me the [laughing] nicest looking and really best application to date […] there's nothing uh so there's nothing in it in terms of content [laughing] but he re-packaged it as if I were the greatest president. (Dennis, 2nd interview)

Dennis considers his CV to have low value for an apprenticeship application. From his point of view, the caseworker nevertheless improves his CV by presumably concealing gaps and breaks in his biography and placing his achievements in the

foreground. Dennis' expression indicates enthusiasm and suggests that he felt recognized and supported in this relationship. For him, it is crucial to have met a counselor whom he can trust.

Dennis' application for an apprenticeship as a geriatric care assistant is successful. He evaluates how "wonderful" the training initially went. His "finally […] I'm off" shows that he equates the start of training with the start of a 'normal' life. However, a "turning point" occurs when his mother suffers a stroke. He uses this incident to justify having abandoned his vocational education – "partly […] willed […] partly […] forced." He describes and argues how his mother's illness and subsequent need for care changed his life, and how he has to take responsibility for the household and his mother. Dennis' path to a regular life is interrupted again. At this point in his life, there is no institutional support to alleviate the additional burden and overwhelming demands. Furthermore, the family network is thin: Dennis' uncle helps with the groceries, but his father does not take an active role. Dennis characterizes his life situation in the second interview as "[A]ttempt to somehow keep everything straight."

The excerpt from Dennis' life shows that institutional support in the transition from school to work can offer young people support (in stages) on the one hand, but, on the other hand, it fails and is not intensive and comprehensive enough. This is especially relevant for the support provided by the "Jobcenter," which is narrowly focused on school and work issues, when, as in Dennis' case, there are pressing problems to be dealt with in the family, among friends and in couple relationships. Dennis longs for a strong, appreciative relationship. His family network is weak and increasingly fragile; it actually causes new worries. The same applies to his circle of friends. He lacks a (male) role model. Institutional support can meet this need temporarily to get Dennis on a normalizing path – but he has (so far) not managed to follow this path to the end without intensive help, especially emotional help, in order to achieve the (formal) qualifications that would open up new options for him outside of the welfare system.

Discussion

Programs and schemes implemented in the field of transition from school to work aim to support so-called disadvantaged young people to make 'successful' transitions. From a welfare state perspective, this goes hand in hand with the assumption that a successful transition to training and work leads to financial independence from welfare state benefits and social participation. This definition of success is also reflected in the objectives as well as the approaches and ways that the guidance counselors act, which are greatly shaped by both (social) policy guidelines as well as discourses, which influence how counselors address the beneficiaries. The two case studies show, on the one hand, the complex relationship that young people form with the counselors responsible for them in the transition from school to work. In this context, Smith and Dowse (2019, 1338) refer to the importance of counselors

seeing these young people and recognizing their needs. On the other hand, it becomes clear that welfare state services, e.g., the transition-related services, are always (co-)shaped by the young people receiving them. This happens by way of the participation offer, but especially through an idiosyncratic and modified form of acceptance or rejection of the (individual) offers as well as through an individual way of using them. Even if this kind of 'support' never leaves the young people without a trace, it becomes apparent that given structures are simultaneously powerful and powerless, especially with regard to the politically intended effect. It is also evident across both cases that transitional assistance does not address them merely as participants, but always as needy.

We discuss the results in three steps: (1) addressing people as disadvantaged and needy is the starting point of institutional support in transition; (2) interpretation and appropriation of (need for) support, and; (3) support as interaction between attribution and addressing, use and positioning.

1. **Addressing people as disadvantaged and needy is the starting point of institutional support in transition**

Social pedagogical support in transition, at least in the context of the German welfare state (see the Chap. 3 by Walther, this volume), necessarily implies addressing young people as needy in order to be able to provide support at all. In the context of the "Career Entry Support," this is done by the institutional actors in cases of so-called disadvantaged young people deemed at risk of experiencing frictions in their transition from school to vocational training, denying them "training ability" (Ausbildungsfähigkeit) perceiving their parental support as too little or even non-existent, viewing their life course as fragile and judging them to have few prospects on the labor market. Such an assessment allows counselors to include the young people in the program. At the "Jobcenter," the young adults are first addressed as needy because of being dependent on welfare benefits – or for being children of parents being on benefits. If they are not in school, training or work, some form of counseling and, as shown in Dennis' case, (repeated) placement in schemes for so-called activation, vocational orientation and/or placement in training or employment also take effect here.

Across cases, the practice of addressing young people as needy and the practice of vocational orientation – which aims at developing *realistic* career aspirations (cf. also Walther, 2015) – points to the power of (socio)pedagogical support as well as to the influence of the welfare state's regulation of support, which has anchored normative notions of life, success and failure in transition. Thus, socio-educational and institutional support regulate transitions. Furthermore, power becomes visible in the form of more or less coercive conditions: young adults can only escape the "Jobcenter" if they accept the threat of sanctions such as cuts in welfare benefits, while "Career Entry Support" participants can end this support without sanctions. Yet, experienced vulnerability apparently makes it impossible to refuse help, and if so, then at the price of losing participation and belonging (Hirschfeld, 2021, p. 239).

The sanctions are also understood as part of the legal framework of the schemes, in which support is provided. However, this is not the only framework: the

counselors who move within this framework and impose sanctions also have a formative influence and shape the support in very different ways, in the sense of "street-level bureaucracy" (Lipsky, 1980). This can be seen, for example, in the young people's possible scope for shaping their lives, such as selecting schemes and having a say in appointments. Participation is a principle hardly ever practiced in the "Jobcenter," whereas the counselor of the "Career Entry Support" opens the possibility for Vanessa to make her own decisions.

It thus becomes clear across the cases that by being addressed as needy, so-called disadvantaged young people are forced to deal with negative attributions and normative expectations. From an institutional perspective, the assumption is that programs and schemes that are either opened up to or imposed on young people will either place them in training or enable them to advance to it. How young people deal with this and how they perceive support is discussed in the following section.

2. **Interpretation and appropriation of (need for) support**

The way young people perceive and accept institutional support is determined by their positioning vis-à-vis being addressed as needy. Positioning, understood as the assumption of a discursively produced subject position (Hall, 1990), can mean that the support offered is reinterpreted, resulting in a repositioning vis-à-vis the assistance. For example, Vanessa can only accept the support by interpreting it as a knowledge advantage and differentiation from others, whereby the stigmatizing character is softened or even lost. Dennis, on the other hand, positions himself very much as needy – which, however, also goes hand in hand with adopting hegemonically recognized ideas of the normal life course. In this respect, he takes on the offered or imposed subject position of a needy person but demands more intensive and comprehensive support than the institution provides and thus fills the position differently than intended by the institution. Furthermore, both cases reveal that the participants try to meet institutional as well as social expectations and map out normative life plans. This is also accompanied by the attempt to compensate for (ascribed) deficits by participating in transitional support in order to achieve such a normal life. Dennis, in particular, illustrates the high need for guidance and counseling as well as the burden of educational decision making on young people (cf. Walther et al., 2016), and that said burden of decision making also applies to life in general.

Both case studies show that the ways in which young people use the support are characterized by (the lack of) opportunities for co-determination, by (the lack of) support with everyday life problems outside of school and the working world (e.g., the immediate caring obligations for the sick mother, violence in the family, troubles in friendships) and by the nature of the relationship with the counselors, and depend on the extent to which the young people can make the services suitable for themselves and their current needs. In this respect, 'timing' or the availability of support over a longer period is also important (see the Chap. 8 by Sánchez-Mira and Bernardi in this volume). The quality of the relationship between the counselor and the young person has a special and often fundamental function (Hirschfeld & Walter, 2013). Vanessa shows that it is possible to establish a trustful relationship in which

biographically relevant issues can be discussed. However, this requires Vanessa to commit to the relationship, with the risk of further loss. This reveals the vulnerability that goes hand in hand with a trusting relationship as well as the challenge for young people to get involved in new relationships without knowing about their viability and value. Similarly, Dennis shows that a trusting relationship can be significant for accepting support. It also shows the difficulties of inflexible and narrowly defined assistance that do not (or cannot) react adequately to life events and biographical developments.

This reflects that the support is not experienced as adequate per se, but that the young people are challenged by being labeled as needy. This shows the powerless side of support, because what the young people "do" with the offer, how they interpret it, is only partly subject to the influence of the counselors.

3. **Support as interaction between attribution and addressing, use and positioning**

Support takes place in the interrelationship between attribution and addressing on the one hand and use and positioning on the other. Powerful structures, the coercive contexts – produced institutionally and discursively – force young people to position themselves in order to deal with the assignment as being needy and the assistance offered.

How the young people feel when the "Career Entry Support" or the "Jobcenter" identify them as needy, how they incorporate this label into their self-image and how they ultimately use this support is determined by biographical experiences, including their family, extracurricular and school experiences, their experiences during internships and schemes, their social role expectations, and tasks, but also by their responsibilities in their families. According to this, institutional assistance regulates the young people's transition into the working world or their attempt to do so, but the "how" depends on their biographical experiences and individual situation. The support or the biographical meaning of the support can thus only be understood if it is embedded in its relational framework between institutional contexts, discursive references, and the individual with his or her respective biography.

Support that focuses on the quickest possible transition to training and employment – such as the transition-related support provided by the "Career Entry Support" or the "Jobcenter" – is of great importance in the career orientation process of young people. These are interwoven with cooling-out mechanisms (Goffman, 1962; Walther, 2015). The institutional attribution of the need for help is linked to the fact that the "Career Entry Support" only promotes occupations that are considered realistic. The same applies to the "Jobcenter," where classic cooling-out mechanisms can be observed, and schemes often place people in low-skilled professions. This is also the case with Dennis, who was last placed in a training as a geriatric care assistant, but dreams of studying. Clark (1960) identified various counseling settings in the field of higher education in the USA as central instruments to minimizing demands but also the burden on individuals and the education system and to point out alternative career paths. Counseling settings initiate cooling-out mechanisms in the "Career Entry Support" program as well as the "Jobcenter."

It cannot be generally assumed that young people experience institutional assistance as appropriate and suitable for their needs. Rather, they are challenged to make the support suitable for themselves and to establish appropriate relationships. This should be understood as a process that has to be adapted again and again throughout institutional support (e.g., by reinterpreting support or developing new forms of support within the existing context of support). This process and its ongoing production can be influenced by the relationship with the guidance counselor. Recognition and opportunities for participation can have a positive effect on the relationship. However, unstable relationships do not necessarily lead to a rejection of support.

Conclusion: Power and Powerlessness of Institutional Support in Transitions

The results show that institutional assistance in transitions should be interpreted as interactive negotiation processes between addressing and attribution on the one hand and positioning and the production of fit by the young people on the other (Hirschfeld, 2021, pp. 242–248.). Transitions are, therefore, incomplete, and constantly recurring processes of production and shaping that can be understood as transitions with and through support. The explanations show that institutional assistance for so-called disadvantaged young people is both powerful and powerless at the same time: it powerfully regulates adolescents' and young adults' scope of action in the transition process through discursive social realities that are reproduced by institutions and their professionals. At the same time, their power is limited: Even in the space of the "Jobcenter," characterized by the application of harsh sanctions, the assistance can only have an effect in the interaction with the young people, which can also always lie outside the intended objectives of the scheme or program. The cases of Vanessa and Dennis illustrate the complexity, relativity, and processual nature of 'doing transitions' and thus contribute to a better understanding of transition processes in terms of educational pathways, as called for by Parreira do Amaral and Walther (2016, p. 284). Sanderson (2020, p. 1325) calls for "[a] more biographical, relational understanding regarding the ongoing changes young people are encountering [including] understand[ing] how policy and practice can best tackle youth unemployment today." The analyzes presented in this chapter begin to illuminate these dynamics.

Understanding support as an interactive negotiation process also means critically questioning the socio-political proclamation for tailored transitional support for so-called disadvantaged youth and young adults. Implementing support meeting such a claim seems not feasible due to the constantly changing and fluid needs of youths and young adults. Rather, transitions require support that focuses on the beneficiaries' life situations and needs – not merely vocational orientation and integration – and that offers space and time for the youths' problems in their lifeworld. In

particular, the young people in those institutional transition services experience "[i]ntersecting and overlapping forms of disadvantage [what mean] not only […] non-normative transitions to adulthood, they also experience multiple other system and service transitions" (Smith & Dowse, 2019, p. 1328). Transitional assistance cannot be viewed or designed exclusively from an institutional, welfare state perspective, because how young people relate to being in need of assistance lies outside institutional settings, is linked to their biographical experiences and requires biographical processing on their part. Professionals can provide the framework, open up room for maneuvering and opportunities for co-determination. This requires transitional support to be made more flexible, which requires more leeway for the counselors – absolutely presupposing their professional qualification and regular supervision – as well as for participating young people so that they can use and shape the support according to their needs. However, the addressed adolescents and young adults themselves are forced to produce fitting relationships and thus make offered support suitable for themselves.

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Chapter 5
Young Adults' Exclusive Educational Careers in the Transition to Higher Education or Employment: Key Findings of a Qualitative Longitudinal Study

Heinz-Hermann Krüger

As a result of educational policy discussions about support for elites and excellence, the advancement of highly gifted students, and how to achieve top international performance in the German education system, there has also been an increased horizontal differentiation in the gymnasium[1] education landscape, particularly over the course of the past two decades. Two key driving forces are behind these developments. First, the German educational system has undergone processes of internationalization and globalization in this period. Second, strategies of New Public Management along with the demand for and promotion of profile-building measures and competition between individual schools have resulted in processes of pronounced vertical differentiation and hierarchy formation between institutions of higher education (cf. Helsper et al., 2019, p. 13; Maxwell et al., 2018).

The new and increasingly exclusive institutions of higher education, which, however, represent only a small segment of the spectrum of secondary education, also include expanding numbers of international schools, gymnasiums for gifted students, and schools with specific talent promotion profiles, such as elite schools of sport or the arts (cf. Ullrich, 2014, pp. 186–193). Such schools are also characterized by specific admission and selection procedures, which, in the case of international schools, are based on habitual interviews with parents and their willingness to pay high school fees and, in the case of schools with special talent development profiles, on performance or aptitude tests (cf. Helsper & Krüger, 2015, p. 17).

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[1] In the German system, gymnasium comprises the final years of secondary education after which students are qualified for admission to a post-secondary institution. It concludes with the final qualification, Abitur, which is similar to British A-Levels or high-school diploma in other English-speaking countries.

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This paper examines the effects of changing modes of transition in a highly segmented educational system that also provides designated spaces for the education of internationally mobile educational elites and future functional elites in the social fields of sport, dance, music, and art. It focuses on a—at least in the German context—little-researched example of the institutional modes of doing transitions available to students on such exclusive educational pathways in their transitions from school to university or work. It is particularly interested in whether and how the provision of an exceptional school infrastructure secures corresponding career paths, the role that the interplay between institutional demands, regulations, and spaces of opportunity and young adults' biographical orientations plays, and how such transitions are embedded in different milieu-specific spaces of experience.

Despite the increasing importance of these schools, the corresponding research situation in Germany is rather limited, particularly in terms of the significance of such schools in students' transitions to university or work. In this chapter, I draw on the results of a qualitative longitudinal study on adolescents' educational careers from the tenth grade at secondary schools with different exclusive educational purposes until 2 years after graduation. The schools studied include: a privately run international school that awards the International Baccalaureate (IB) and promises on its homepage, among other benefits, its graduates access to renowned universities across the globe; second, two state-run gymnasiums with different profiles in the areas of dance, music and/or art, which cooperate closely with nearby art or music colleges and seek to prepare students not only for the "Abitur", but also, through additional course offerings, for a corresponding educational and subsequent professional career in the arts; and, third, a state-run sports high school, a so-called elite school of sport, which offers a broad range of athletic programs that aim at enabling talented young athletes achieve top athletic performance in the future while maintaining the potential that students can acquire (post-) secondary educational qualifications (see also DOSB, 2017).

In the following, I present the state of research including the longitudinal study's findings on the school-cultural demands of the studied schools (1). I then outline the study's theoretical and methodological frames of reference (2) and present the spectrum of the young adults' career trajectories and individual orientations particularly before and after their transition to higher education or professional careers (3). The article concludes with a discussion of the results of the longitudinal study against the background of research to date as well as the findings of current reflexive transition research (4).

Exclusive Profile Schools and Students' Later Careers: State of the Art

Although the history of international schools in West Germany goes back as far as the 1950s and 1960s, this type of school has experienced an enormous surge in the past two decades, especially in the wake of globalization and internationalization processes, not only globally (cf. Ball & Nikita, 2014) but in West German

metropolitan regions in particular. In 2019, for example, there were 84 schools offering one or more IB® programs; 55 of these are privately run (ibo.org, 04.12.19). These private IB schools are no longer chosen only by families of professionally transnationally mobile executives, but also by wealthy and powerful German parents who presumably hope that the acquisition of international school certificates will provide their children with optimal preparation for globalized education and labor markets.

Despite the expansion of these schools, research on the topic is limited. In addition to Hornberg (2010) and Hallwirth's (2013) systematizations of their historical development, organizational forms, and educational content and Zymek (2015) and Ullrich's (2014) secondary analytical studies on these schools' distribution in metropolitan regions, the longitudinal study at the center of this chapter investigated the school-cultural educational claims of an IB School, drawing on school documents and an expert interview with the school principal. In addition to the concept of lifelong learning and the promotion of international cosmopolitanism, the school principal specifically placed the concept of "academic excellence" at the center of his self-presentation of the school's programs. Specifically, he emphasized his school's preparatory function for those who plan to study at renowned international universities (cf. Keßler & Krüger, 2018, p. 215).

To date, students' educational careers at these schools have not been studied in Germany, especially in terms of the transition from secondary to post-secondary education. Research on the topic in the Anglo-American-speaking world is to some degree more developed (see overview in Resnik, 2012; Naudet, 2015). Hayden et al.'s (2000) somewhat older quantitative survey found that respondents associate "being international" with being open-minded global citizens as well as with respect and tolerance for other cultures, and that they prioritize students' attainment of internationally compatible university entrance qualifications. Kenway et al.'s (2013) qualitative study and Kanan and Baker's (2006) quantitative survey of international schools in Hong Kong and Qatar, respectively, further underscore that respondents primarily expressed a desire to study at Anglo-American universities, with a preference for business, engineering, and media studies.

Research on state gymnasia with a specialization in the arts and with, in some cases, a tradition extending into the nineteenth century is even less favorable (cf. Ullrich, 2014, p. 186). Here, field reports and advice literature dominate (cf. Becker & Wenzel-Staudt, 2008; Hartewig, 2013). Our analysis of two high schools with a dance, music, and art profile revealed that the school administrators did not refer to current educational discourses on elite and excellence in their educational claims, but rather implicitly linked their aims to older discourses on giftedness and talent development (cf. Krüger et al., 2015, p. 205).

Additionally, quantitative overviews point to the precarious labor market situation for professions in the cultural sector (cf. Deutscher Kulturrat, 2014). Quantitative overviews of the precarious labor market situation for professions in the cultural sector have further substantiated such findings (cf. Deutscher Kulturrat, 2014). Moreover, two qualitative studies have analyzed artists' career biographies (cf. Röbke, 2000; Schüngel, 1996) and one national and two international qualitative

studies have examined dancers' career biographies (cf. Jeffri & Throsby, 2004; Pfaff, 2017; Roncaglia, 2010). The latter studies do not, however, refer to dancers' school career paths and subsequent transitions into study or work, but focus instead on the course and end of their professional dance careers and the concomitant compulsion to reorient their professional lives.

By contrast, the 43 elite sports schools in Germany, which have been gradually established since the 1990s as successor organizations to the children's and youth sports schools of the former German Democratic Republic, have been studied more comprehensively. These schools offer athletic training conditions and school-based support measures to enable learners to simultaneously achieve top athletic performance and school success and thus aim for a dual career (DOSB, 2017). In this regard, two qualitative studies have dealt with the structures of network systems of youth sports development from a systems theory perspective (cf. Borggrefe & Cachay, 2014) and the school cultures of three elite sports schools from the perspective of cultural theory (cf. Pallesen, 2014). The present longitudinal study found that the school principal implicitly adhered to a functional understanding of the term "elite" and related it to the top athletic performance that schools must always achieved in order to secure the label of "elite school of sport" in the German Olympic Sports Confederation's regular evaluations (cf. Krüger et al., 2015, p. 204).

In addition to organizational theory studies, there are a few quantitative studies that look at individual cadre careers from an efficiency-oriented perspective. For example, Güllich and Emrich's (2012) study on competitive sports careers in seven Olympic sports and in national junior soccer programs point to the high turnover rates in these cadre systems, as athletes are replaced at a rate of 40 percent annually (see also Güllich, 2014). Longitudinal studies also find evidence of similar turnover rates in elite sports students' participation in such cadre systems, regardless of gender (see, for example, Baron-Thieme, 2014). Based on a quantitative retrospective survey of Olympic athletes, Emrich et al. (2008) also show that elite sports students do not differ from other students in terms of their level of athletic success and their school-leaving qualifications. They are, however, less likely to go to university and are more likely to pursue careers in the German federal police or armed forces.

In two older qualitative longitudinal studies, Richartz (2000) and Bona (2001) analyze the athletic and academic career paths of students at three Berlin sports schools based on a stress-theory framework. This study finds phases of particularly high stress at the transition to eleventh grade and in the period before the Abitur. It also depicts that parents and peers from the local community, rather than coaches or sports officials, offer important instances of social support in the realization or abandonment of a dual career. What is lacking, however, are current qualitative longitudinal studies that look at the athletic and educational career paths of young people who attend elite sport schools, not only during their school years but also after their transitions to university and professional sports.

Theoretical Frames of Reference and Design of the Longitudinal Study

It is precisely these research deficits that this study addresses. In addition to the above-described analysis of institutional educational aspirations (see also Krüger et al., 2015), the qualitative longitudinal study also investigated the academic and profile-related career paths of adolescents at these schools from tenth through twelfth grade until 2 years after their transition to post-secondary education or to employment.

In the analysis of the longer-term careers of these adolescents or young adults (age 16-ca. 21), social constructivist and praxeological approaches form the theoretical frames of reference. In accordance with social constructivist concepts of youth research (cf. Krüger & Grunert, 2021), adolescents and young adults are understood as active shapers of their environment who co-construct their educational biographies. In this context, they are confronted with specific biographical challenges in their adolescent life phase, which, as current transition research rightly points out (cf. Wanka et al., 2020, p. 16; Stauber, 2021), not only concern decision-making and processes of shaping institutional transitions from school to university or work. Instead, in adolescence and young adulthood, biographical transitions such as separation from family or the search for new friends must be mastered and shaped at the same time. In order to analytically understand the integration of the biographical trajectories and individual orientations of adolescents and young adults in milieu-specific experiences, the longitudinal study draws on praxeological theoretical approaches, particularly that developed Bohnsack (2017) in a micro-sociological reinterpretation of Bourdieu's theory of culture (cf. Bourdieu, 1993). In contrast to Bourdieu, who locates the genesis of an individual and collective habitus in the context of macrosocial conditions such as different capital configurations, Bohnsack's concept attempts to uncover the formation of habitual orientations in different milieu-specific stratifications. Accordingly, the longitudinal study focused on social interactions in schools and universities, in the family, and in peer worlds.

Methodologically, the longitudinal study primarily employed a qualitative approach. This was preceded by a quantitative survey of students in the tenth grade in order to select a contrasting sample of 17 students at the international school and 25 adolescents with a dual career (12 in sports, 5 in dance, 2 in music, 6 in art) for biographical-narrative interviews in the study's first phase, who were then each interviewed again when they were in the twelfth grade and 2 years after they had graduated. Of the students at the international school, 10 out of 17 young people participated in all three surveys and of the young people with a dual career, 20 out of 25 young people participated in all three surveys (cf. Krüger, 2019, p. 12). To analyze the interviews, we drew on the documentary method (cf. Bohnsack et al., 2010; Nohl, 2006), and further developed it for a longitudinal perspective, which requires remaining longer at the level of individual case reconstruction when analyzing the continuity or change in the young people's individual orientations from the beginning of high school to 2 years after graduation before case-contrastive analyses are subsequently completed for each case (cf. Leinhos et al., 2019).

Educational Biographical Pathways in the Interplay Between Family, School and Peers

The following section explores whether and how adolescents from IB schools and high schools with an arts or athletic focus realize an exclusive educational career or a high-achievement dual career. In this context, I am interested in which socialization instances or experiential spaces interact and how they influence young people's biographical pathways.

Separated according to transnational educational careers and profile-related careers, I present two cases for each grouping, which were selected according to field-specific career criteria, with each representing maximum contrasts. The two students from the International School differ in terms of their own conception of "world citizen" and, above all, in terms of their transnational educational careers' different trajectories. For the profile-related career grouping, I have selected two cases that differ significantly in regard to the students' professional careers. Following the individual case studies, I will return to the entire subsample of the longitudinal analysis and make some generalizations about the spectrum of the students' biographical pathways and the contextual conditions of transnational educational careers and profile-related careers more generally.

Young Adults with International Educational Careers

My first case refers to Gwyn 1), who lived in Germany from the age of six until he began his post-secondary studies. He has attended an IB School continuously since his primary school years. His parents are from Southern Europe and his family is part of a culturally diverse social network both there as well as in Germany. His father is a professor in the field of natural sciences while his mother studied economics and was unemployed at the time of the survey. The investment in an expensive, "internationally" oriented school and university education for their son can be interpreted as his parent's desire to offer him the possibility for a transnationally oriented future anchored in their familial experiences of transnational mobility.

In the first two surveys, Gwyn identified with the school-institutional codes of cosmopolitanism and lifelong learning. He integrated curricular-based social engagement into his frame of orientation between learning opportunities and social integration. He was part of a culturally diverse school space, engaged in school-based service-learning projects in Africa, and identified with a tolerant cosmopolitanism that critically reflected on its own privileges. This was later documented in his studies as well as his intercultural university involvement.

Regarding education and learning, Gwyn's orientation toward self-directed learning of new things and the comprehensive and creative acquisition of knowledge and world understanding was continually and dynamically reiterated across all three surveys. Already in the tenth grade, Gwyn was not only one of the top scholastic

performers at his school, but his educational orientation also went far beyond school learning, for example, writing poetry or composing music in his free time. Gwyn continued his orientation toward a comprehensive acquisition of the world in the 12th grade as well as currently in his BA studies at a renowned college in the U.S. where he is taking courses in sociology and anthropology in addition to his linguistics degree program and pre-medical studies because he plans to study psychiatry afterwards.

> *I have developed an interest in psychiatry because somehow I am interested in the brain, it was through linguistics that I asked myself how does language come about at all? What happens in the head? … and if you want to study psychiatry here, you must first complete a medical degree and then decide to specialize in psychiatry* (Interview 3).

Gwyn's self-determined choice of subject and place of study was at the same time accompanied by massive conflicts with his father, which were already evident in the study's first phase. His father had long wanted him to study science instead of linguistics. Because of these conflicts, Gwyn's father initially did not want to finance his studies. It was only after his mother intervened and the university promised a financial grant that he accepted Gwyn's degree choice. Additionally, Gwyn hopes that once he completes his Doctor of Medicine after his bachelor's degree at an elite American university, he will better fulfill his father's ambitious aspirations, and thus 'make him happier' and receive greater recognition from him.

In contrast to Gwyn's mother, who provided her son with emotional and practical support in choosing his intended field of study and university location, peers played no role in his transition or his decision-making, as Gwyn was an outsider at school and had only a few loose friendships. It was not until the beginning of his post-secondary studies that he successfully established closer peer relationships, especially one with an American student, which offered emotional and professional support to Gwyn during his studies. His student advisor at the International School was far more important for his process of choosing a course of study.

> I applied to different universities in the United States //hm hm// and um we have in the school um there was a man who helped us sort of as an advisor who told us fill out forms like this and then he recommended different universities in different countries to us and um he recommended the United States to me (Interview 3)

Accordingly, Gwyn followed the recommendations of the counselor hired specifically for this purpose at the International School and, quite naturally, looked primarily at exclusive universities in the United States when choosing where he would study.

The maximum contrast to Gwyn's hitherto successful international educational career is certainly that of Anton. Although we were only able to interview him during the first two waves, his case highlights the importance of the family dimension and the limits of schooling. In contrast to Gwyn, Anton's school biography is characterized by his father's—who is an American citizen—frequent career changes, his parent's separation, and multiple international relocations (Germany, USA, Austria, USA, Germany). After his return from the United States with his mother, he entered the tenth grade at an international school at the age of 17. Because of his lack of

German language skills, this was the only way he could participate in the German education system. Anton identified very strongly with the institutional educational claim of world citizenship and socialized with those who were also subject to their parents' mobility. Although the international school's support function was central for him, he had to leave the school after just a year because his mother's friend stopped paying his school fees (cf. Keßler et al., 2015, p. 120). With this loss of support, he was hardly able to enact his ambitious orientations towards learning something new, and, against the background of his constantly changing location and schools, his peers offer no significant stability for him. Its emotional and content-related support notwithstanding, the international school was unable to act as a long-term cushion or even as a springboard for an exclusive educational career as Anton currently experiences great difficulty in obtaining a school-leaving certificate at all at the international private school he is now attends in another large city.

In the context of the subsample of the international students who participated in the study, Anton's case is an exception. Of the ten young people whose educational biographies that were followed from the 10th grade to 2 years after their graduation, nine are now studying at international universities, most of them renowned and primarily in the Anglo-American region. Like Kanan and Baker's (2006) findings, they have chosen to study subjects such as engineering, medicine, politics, sociology, or media studies. In terms of subject choice, it is apparent that young men tend to prefer subjects in the technical and scientific fields, while young women appear to prefer creative or social subjects (cf. Jörke & Lenz, 2017, p.148). In their university studies, too, most of the young adults we studied were financially supported by their parents. Peers tended to be less significant in their university selection. During their studies, however, their mostly newly made friends represent an important support community in dealing with questions of content or emotionally tense moments in the context of the young people's transnational study biography.

Young Adults with Dual Careers

In the following, I focus on those young adults who have pursued or are pursuing dual careers in dance, sports, art, or music. Julian represents an example of a successful dual career, as he was able to obtain both a place at his desired dance academy and quickly obtained employment with a dance company. He lived with his parents in a village and moved to a big city in the 11th grade to attend a high school with a focus on dance. His father is an engineer, his mother is a secretary. Dance has been anchored in Julian's biography since his early childhood: "I was always a dancer" (Interview 1). In the 10th grade, he transferred from his rural school to one with a focus on dance.

After graduating from school, Julian studied at a dance academy in a major German city. As early as mid-2016, he decided to accept a job offer as a dancer in a company and thus began his professional life as a dancer. With this decision, he was able to put his orientation towards personal and professional development in dance,

which was continuously documented over the course of the longitudinal study, into practice. At the same time, he maintained his strong educational and academic orientation towards success. This was documented in the study's third phase, for example, in the fact that he still expressed his desire to complete his BA although he had already transitioned out of school into a dance company. Julian is also integrated in a group of dancers at the university and continues to be close friends with Freya, a fellow dancer. Throughout all three study waves, he enacted his second central orientation, social inclusion, but this, however, became repeatedly fragile during transitions, especially when he transitioned to the dance-focused high school and when he entered university. The reason for this lies in the tension he experienced between his increasing pursuit of professionalization in dance and his search for social embeddedness, which was particularly evident in the third interview:

> but in the end, I am also the soloist and I dance the most //mh// and then when I complain about something then it's Julian you have nothing to complain about, you have the solo […] and since that I can't fall back on anyone else, I don't have any friends around me (Interview 3).

Over the course of his studies, Julian was repeatedly selected for solos and had been given various opportunities to work with choreographers who helped him develop his skills.

Julian negotiated his decision to study dance at a dance academy as a given: he applied while he was still in the preparatory phase for his Abitur. In so doing, he very consciously looked for a profile that fit his orientation, which was decisively shaped by the high school he had attended and the dance training it offered. After he was accepted by three universities in Germany and abroad, his decision to choose a particular university was closely linked to his central orientations and he selected a university in a large city in central Germany because its educational program corresponded exactly with his interests in personal development and social inclusion:

> As I saw the big city, saw this school, saw this dimension, I said (.), here, here is where the competition happens that I need (.) because there are simply more people here from whom I can profit (.) and […] the balance was simply good between //hm-hm// between here its own, here is where things are going on (.)//hm-hm// but I am also (.) secure her' (Interview 3).

Across all three waves, Julian's family played an emotionally supportive and grounding as well as relaxing role. Similar to his family, his peers have an emotionally supportive and, moreover, professionally supportive significance, even though, over the course of the three study waves and against the background of his increasing professionalization, his relationships became less related to groups and more to friendship dyads. His high school and its dance focus which combined modern and classical dance are significant for Julian's dance orientation and his chosen university.

Athlete Philipp, who has been attending an elite sports school since he was in the 5th grade, represents a maximum contrast to Julian. Phillip had been pursuing a professional athletics career since his childhood and exhibited both a strong performance and success orientation and high-level professional ambitions already in the first wave in the 10th grade. By the second wave, his performance orientation had

been unsettled by his lack of athletic success. Additionally, across all three waves, no peer relationships supported him in his career pursuits. Instead, his relationships with predominantly male friends in the town soccer club or in the gym represented an action- and fun-oriented parallel to the world of competitive sports for him.

Across all three waves, his academic orientations also contrasted his high-performance athletic orientation, as he only strived to achieve the required high school diploma or, later, a college degree in electrical engineering at a technical college. In the third wave, a massive conflict emerged between him and his national coach over his non-inclusion on the relay team at the German championships, which catalyzed a biographical crisis and led him to abandon his athletics career. Moreover, Phillip has strong regional roots and had little ambition to become nationally mobile for his athletic career. Across all three waves, Philipp's parents offered support for his athletics career ambitions, but they were also nonetheless unable to prevent his career from coming to an end. Philipp identified with the concept "elite" as a sporting elite, which is also anchored in the label of the school he attended, but only for as long as he was involved in the world of high-performance sport. With the end of competitive sports, however, he began to critically distance himself from this concept.

Looking at the entire subsample of young people with dual careers in dance, sports, arts, and music studied over the course of the six-year longitudinal study, of the 20 adolescents or young adults who participated in all three waves of the survey, a total of only five (including Julian) continued their professional careers after graduating; 15, on the other hand, discontinued their profile-related careers during this period and now pursue their dance, sports, art or music interests recreationally. This confirms other studies' findings (see, for example, Güllich, 2014) regarding the high turnover rates and dropout rates in the field of dual careers. Thus, a dual career is only successful if an individual has a strong biographical fixation on the profile-related career and if the career is also compatible with other central—for example, academic—orientations and when significant others, such as parents, peers, teachers or trainers, play a supporting role.

Profile Schools as Springboards for an Exclusive Educational or Profile Career?

The answer to the question formulated in the introduction about the interplay between different experiential spaces within students' educational biography and schools' significance for their transnational study career or profile-related career in the fields of dance, sport, music or art turns out to be rather ambiguous. The infrastructure at the IB school as well as the three high schools with a dance-music, artistic, or sports profile, with their specific additional personnel in the form of study advisors or coaches or lecturers from neighboring universities as well as their curricular focus, offer students good starting points for the transition into an

international university or an artistic or sports career. How these career paths actually take shape, however, depends crucially on the interplay between these institutional services and the now young adults' biographical orientations and their integration into differentiated spaces of experience. How significant others support them as they pursue their career paths is also rather important.

The family experience with its respective milieu-specific embedding is a central influencing factor. Thus, with the exception of Anton, all of the young people from the studied international school, who come from economically privileged transnationally mobile families or, more recently, increasingly from well-to-do German families, receive significant support from their parents, not only professionally and emotionally but also, above all, financially, in realizing their school education and pursuing their post-secondary studies at mostly renowned international universities. The young people who were pursuing dual high-achievement careers, most of whom come from academic families (cf. also Faure & Suaud, 2009), received extensive advice from their parents in making their career decisions to date, in choosing their profile school, and in searching for a suitable university program along with associated changes.

Additionally, significant others also play a role outside the family, such as the study advisors at the international school who offer students advice on various studying abroad options or the motivating dance company leaders and sports coaches who can play a decisive role in whether the young people continue or—as Philipp's case shows—abandon their high-performance athletic careers. In addition, a lacking sense of achievement, injuries, motivational problems, and associated biographical crises or even precarious employment opportunities on the labor market for cultural professions or in some segments of competitive sports led many of the young people we studied to abandon their profile-related high-performance careers after, at the latest, they graduated from school (cf. Baron-Thieme, 2014; Bona, 2001; Deutscher Kulturrat, 2014; Güllich, 2014).

Compared to the socializing factors already mentioned, peers tended to play a lesser role in the formation of a transnational educational career or a dual high-performance career. The IB students' high level of global mobility, the high training loads in terms of time, for example, in the areas of sports and dance, and, most importantly, the transition from school to university studies or associated changes in clubs or troupe further intensified the fluidity of peer relationships. Nonetheless, the studied international school students manage to form new mostly dyadic friendship relationships after their transition from high school to university. Such friendships function as intellectual exchange and emotional support communities, which also allow international educated elites to work through issues of privileged identity together (Howard et al., 2014). The studied adolescents who continue to pursue a high-performance career in dance or soccer after high-school graduation remain involved in partly new peer networks from their training groups' social environments, which offer significant support for their careers (cf. also Borchert, 2013). By contrast, for young people who drop out of their dual careers, peers tend to have the character of a parallel world to their respective career area, in which relaxation and fun-oriented activities take center stage.

The graduates' biographical references to and constructions of elite notions show interesting similarities and differences. The high-performance athletes continue to refer positively to a functional understanding of elite sport performance, which is also manifested in the school program, as long as they themselves move into the world of top-level sports. The alumni of the high schools for the arts, on the other hand, are characterized by individually different and less contoured understandings of being elite, which also corresponds to the longitudinal study's empirical findings that the two studied schools' less clear institutional references to elite concepts (cf. Krüger et al., 2015, p. 205). All alumni of the international school deal critically with a concept of elite and its association with social origin and economic capital and the accusation that they attended a "*Bonzenschule*" (a bigshot school). In their argumentation, they counter this with the idea of a responsible elite that values its own privileges. In their communicative knowledge and their biographical self-image, they thus refer to the myth of their former schools' tolerant cosmopolitanism. On the level of their factual educational trajectories, however, their exclusive international university careers turn out to be pathways for social status reproduction for the old and, above all, new transnationally mobile academic upper and middle classes (cf. Reckwitz, 2019, p. 92).

Finally, if we relate the empirical findings presented to the basic assumptions and findings of current reflexive transition research (cf. Wanka et al., 2020), two aspects in particular should be noted. First, in the case reconstructions it became clear that institutional modes of doing transition from school to college or work are always embedded in complex biographical transitions and contexts even in this exclusive segment of the educational system (cf. also Stauber, 2021). For example, the self-determined choice of study program and international university can further exacerbate already existing family detachment conflicts or the transition to a professional career in dance or sports in these highly competitive fields can lead to a loss of friendships and the need to build new peer networks. Second, the empirical findings show that institutional and biographical transitions, even in the field of exclusive education, can only be comprehensively understood if the interplay between institutional demands, regulations, and enabling spaces and subjective shaping and coping processes, as well as their milieu-specific anchoring, is considered in a multidimensional perspective (cf. Wanka et al., 2020, p. 23).

Note

1. The cases presented in this chapter are based on the results of the analysis of biographical interviews, which were collected within the framework of the DFG-project, "Exclusive Educational Careers and the Significance of Peer Cultures". For reasons of data protection, all names, locations and/or parents' occupations were anonymized.

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Chapter 6
Organizations as Collective Subjects in the Formation of Transitions Over the Life Course

Eva Heinrich, Nils Klevermann, and Bernhard Schmidt-Hertha

The connection between transitions, organizations, and education is evident. Transitions during the course of life take place largely in and through organizations. Transitions are reasons for educational action (Hof et al., 2014). Organizations are thus decisively involved in structuring the curriculum vitae. The life phase of childhood is largely determined by kindergarten, youth by school and the youth club, adulthood by associations, political organizations and institutions and companies for gainful employment, and in old age by nursing homes. Transitions take place both in the joining of an organization and by leaving it. The dominant organizations of each phase of life will prepare people for the transition to the next phase of life and organization. A typical example is preparation for school enrollment (Andresen et al., 2014). But organizations can also be identified throughout the course of life: for example, institutions of faith into which one enters and leaves through ritual practices. Both research projects were also able to show that the transitions in the organizations with their norms and requirements of normality (such as integration) must always be considered in relation to other areas of life.

Some organizations have rigid boundaries and explicit memberships (such as companies or schools) and there are organizations whose boundaries and memberships are fluid (such as migrant organizations and youth centers). Even these

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boundaries and memberships however are not natural, but the result of organizational action. Organizations do not represent autonomous or neutral social structures. They must, just like subjects, always be produced through practices. Thus, organizations can be defined as "goal-directed, boundary-maintaining, and socially constructed systems of human activity" (Aldrich & Ruef, 2006, p. 4). These systems depend on recognition and acceptance from within and without to secure their legitimacy. From a neo-institutionalist perspective, this is achieved, among other means, by organizations taking up normative requirements of their environment and anchoring them in their internal structures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) or at least trying to create this appearance (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), the resulting structural similarity of organizations - also referred to as isomorphism – is constituted by three mechanisms: (1) "Coercive isomorphism" refers to changes forced, for example, by legal requirements; (2) "Mimetic isomorphism," on the other hand, emphasizes orientation toward other, highly successful organizations and their structures, which are imitated; (3) and finally, "normative isomorphism" emphasizes the influence of normative expectations from society or social subsystems on organizations. The latter in particular also seems to be of central importance in the two empirical studies described in this chapter.

Research on the life course highlights the constitutive importance of organizations for the institutionalization of that life course (Kohli, 1985, 2003). Looking at transitions during the course of life, it is striking that a large portion of these transitions is organized in and through organizations: organizations themselves produce transitions, e.g., by people joining or leaving an organization; they are also supposed to help manage transitions successfully, such as the transition from kindergarten to elementary school, but they are also supposed to compensate for the failure of transitions, e.g., when the transition from school to work is unsuccessful. At the same time, it would be short-sighted to understand organizations merely as entities that organize individual and collective transitions. They also represent entities that carry out transitions. Looking at organizations from this perspective as well shows that they are required by their institutional environment to make organizational changes. They are expected to make transitions in order to be recognized socially as (transition-)relevant organizations. Modern societies depend on organizations, so organizations can be understood as agents of transition.

This superficial look at the connection between transitions and organizations makes it clear that the question of transitions in the course of life always also address questions of organizational learning and learning in organizations. On the one hand, transitions are occasions for pedagogical action within organizations, and on the other hand, it is pedagogical organizations themselves that produce and shape transitions and must themselves cope with transitions. Thus, the formal and informal learning processes of individuals in organizations should be considered (see Chap. 3), as well as the learning processes of organizations in their institutional environments (see Chap. 2). Organizations cannot only be considered as conditions of and contexts for learning, but also as learning entities with a status as actors (see Göhlich

et al., 2018). Based on the idea of learning organizations (Senge, 1990), organizations as collective subjects can be observed in their idiosyncratic development and as thus going through processes of transition themselves.

Based on this perspective on learning and organizations, we explore the question of how these two perspectives on organizations can be theoretically conceptualized and empirically researched within the production and design of transitions in the course of life. Moreover, we then want to ask what insights can be obtained from the interaction of these two dimensions. To this end, we draw on two empirical works. By combining them, we want to work out how, on the one hand, transitions are organized within organizations and, on the other hand, how organizations are asked to organize transitions from the outside.

Organizations as social structures that pursue a permanent goal and have a formal structure, and with the help of which the activities of the members should be aligned with the goal pursued (Miebach, 2012, p. 11), can be seen as entities with their own patterns and dynamics, governing their members in turn. Other definitions of an organization put more emphasis on the role of individuals inside the organization, understanding organizations as a system of coordinated action between subjects with their own interests, dispositions, and knowledge. From this point of view, organizations present a way to arrange cooperation, mobilize resources, and coordinate efforts for their own survival and the benefit of their members (March & Simon, 1993, p. 2). This view of organizations puts the individual subjects to the front and stresses their coordinated interaction. 'Organization' here is not so much an entity in and of itself but a construct to describe coordinated actions, and therefore could be rather dynamic and volatile. The former idea of an organization stresses the continuity of structures and goals, and takes them to be a rather stable system of conventions quite independent from its members. Both perspectives are equally reasonable yet (somewhat) deficient in their different views of organizations. Some authors describe the identity-building dynamics of organizations in which individuals act and feel as a 'we' (Holmberg, 2017) and so can be seen as a collective subject. This feeling of 'we' is what Mathiesen (2005, p. 241) describes as collective consciousness. Collective subjects in his philosophical approach require three features:

> (1) Plurality, i.e., the collective is constituted by a number of separate conscious subjects; (2) Awareness, i.e., the individual members of the collective are aware of the contents of their genuine intentional states; and (3) Collectivity, i.e., collective subjectivity is distinguishable from individual subjectivity—it binds people together in a social group.

Following this idea, organizations become collective subjects when they not only investigate discursive practices of confession in the sense of Foucault (1998) but members are aware of and committed to their collective goals. Even if this awareness in some instances always exists only in a limited sense and single individuals might not be aware of all goals and activities of an organization, they are probably aware of at least some of these aims and tasks and have a feeling of belonging to this organization. In this sense, we see organizations in the following cases as collective subjects.

Collective subjects interact with each other by political and discursive practices, which are also confessional practices in the sense of Foucault (Olsson et al., 2014, p. 95). Following Holmberg (2017, p. 39), confessional practices of collective subjects include the dimensions 'truth' and 'government', understood as "those 'acts of truth' that the confessional practice demands as well as the securing of permanent obedience by and through the subjectification process of the individual." Confessional practices are relevant inside an organization to form the identity of its members, but also the organization itself is formed by confessional practices from other actors and thus develops its organizational self-conception. The balance of internal and external confessional practices can be observed in very different types of organizations. We have selected two examples of organizations with very different goals (political participation vs. profit maximization), levels of obligation (voluntary membership vs. employment contract), and tasks (engaging for migrant interests vs. management consulting). Moreover, we look at organizations from different perspectives. Asking how collectives become transition-relevant organizations in a society, we probe in the first part the external confessional practices and transitions of migrant organizations. In the second part we focus on the internal confessional practices and transitions within an organization, exploring how the transition from parental leave back to employment is made (as a transformative process) within a relational framework.

Organizational Transitions

Organizations must fulfill a variety of conditions to recognize themselves as transition-relevant organizations and to be recognized as such organizations by the institutional environment. In doing so, these organizations sometimes manage transitions themselves. When the expectations of the institutional environment change, the organization has to learn to meet these new expectations. This is because the organization has to meet expectations in order to be recognized as relevant in making and managing transitions. The organization learns.

In this first empirical case study, we want to look at civil society organizations as learning organizations. We want to show how organizations try to meet the conditions. For this purpose, we look at organizations whose primary goal is to strengthen political participation, whose commitment is characterized by voluntary membership, and whose goal is to improve the (living) situation of (post-)migrants in the country of arrival. Organizations that are referred to as those representing migrants (migrant organizations, sometimes also called immigrant organizations) fulfill these characteristics. These organizations are of interest for the analysis of the changed conditions under which they are recognized by the institutional environment because we can through them observe a shift in the external confessional practice of politics and administration, as well as in the organizational structure.

Migration has always existed. But especially in the context of the recruitment of foreign workers in Germany in the late 1950s and 1960s, both formal and informal groups of these migrants emerged. Migrants organized themselves to help each other in everyday life and to be politically active in both their country of origin and country of arrival (on the migrant organizing process see Vermeulen, 2006). Since the beginning and especially in the 1980s, migrant organizations in Germany were classified as one of the reasons why the existence of parallel societies increased. The assumption was that migrant organizations led to social and cultural isolation, preventing the opportunity for social advancement (e.g., Esser, 1986). Integration, as the transition from one society to another, could not succeed as a result. What exactly was and is meant by the term "integration" remains unclear. However, we can locate a break in this understanding in the 1990s when migrant organizations started to be addressed as essential actors in integration. The political and scientific communities considered them to be indispensable for integration (Schrover & Vermeulen, 2005; Vermeulen, 2006, p. 11). The promise was that migrant organizations helped migrants to integrate into the host country. They therefore supported a transition from "non-integrated" to "integrated" subjects. In addition to these effects at the individual level, there are implications for society. Migrant organizations are considered central actors for an integrative society. Accordingly, they are encouraged to offer integration courses or seminars for parents. Furthermore, it should not be overlooked that migrant organizations also draw attention to migration-based transitions. Migrant organizations have been fighting for more political power since the beginning. On the one hand, they have pointed out the difficult conditions under which migrants live in Germany. On the other hand, they have fought for the recognition of their potential for integration.

This change in the assessment of migrant organizations in their contribution to managing the transition (so-called "integration"), exemplifies that the expectations of organizations are by no means constant and unchanging. Rather, they are an expression of sociopolitical and organizational contestations. Whereas the organizational identity of migrant organizations - what constitutes the organization - used to inhibit the transition of migrants, a discourse can now be discerned in which they are assigned an integration-promoting function. Migrant organizations have consequently had to align themselves with other norms and discourses since the 1990s in order to be recognized and seen by state actors. As a result, they themselves are making a transition. Based on this description, we now want to answer the question of how migrant organizations become recognized organizations in establishing and shaping transitions in the life course. Therefore, we try to reconstruct how migrant organizations are currently treated by public administration (for a detailed discussion see, Klevermann, 2022). To reconstruct these practices, we adopt a perspective on the development of organizations inspired by the theory of subjection (Butler, 1997b). For the empirical operationalization, we therefore consider the analysis of addresses/interpellations. By "addressing" we mean "interpellations". The practice and manner with and by which subjects, and collective subjects are addressed directly or indirectly. These can be oral or written forms of address, such as in

speeches: addresses that directly address concrete subjects and collectives. Addresses can also have no specific addressee, such as legal texts. We want to examine the concrete conditions that state actors put forward under which organizations become important in managing transitions.

In addition, we look at an empirical example in a second step.

Addressing Theory Considerations for the Analysis of Expectations from the Institutional Environment

To gain an analytical understanding of the development of organizations under current integration policy, the interdisciplinary theory of subjection is helpful. According to Foucault, subjection means to be subjected by someone and to subject one to oneself. Foucault explicated this research intention to create a history of how "human beings are made subjects" in our culture (Foucault, 1982, p. 208).

Following Foucault, as Alkemeyer and Bröckling (2018) already mentioned, collective subjects, like migrant organizations, can also be analyzed as effects of practices of subjection. The key aspect of their praxeological approach is the rejection of any essentializing assumptions about collectives. If we follow this tradition of research, the constitution of collective subjects as being historically and culturally determined comes into view. Collective subjects do not simply exist, do not have and are not given an essence. Instead, the performative production of collective subjects in social practices is considered. As an effect of performative practices, organizations can be understood as a specific and permanently based regime of practices. From this point of view, the question described above about the emergence or learning of organizations arises: what modes or methods make migrant organizations transitional organizations, and how are they subjected?

The power effects of practices of subjection are characterized as a paradox double effect (Butler, 1997b, pp. 1–2). Subjection does not only mean restrictive subjugation; it also simultaneously means shaping and activating. The (collective) subject must submit to power in order to be recognized as a subject. These are not separate acts. In line with this research tradition, the status as a (collective) subject and agency depends on subjection (Rose & Ricken, 2018b, p. 65).

To illustrate this paradoxical process of subjection, Butler discusses Althusser's concept of invocation or interpellation (Butler, 1997b, pp. 106–131). It offers a theoretical possibility to explain how the collective subject is created in the context of discourse and thereby maintains its social existence. A dominant order materializes in these interpellations so that how the collective subject is produced along hegemonic social norms can be explained:

> To be hailed or addressed by a social interpellation is to be constituted discursively and socially at once. This interpellation need not take on an explicit or official form in order to be socially efficacious and formative in the formation of the subject. Considered in this way, the interpellation as performative establishes the discursive constitution of the subject as inextricably bound to the social constitution of the subject. (Butler, 1997a, pp. 153–154)

Rather, the norms expressed by the invocation are the condition for being recognized by the politics and government authorities as a collective subject. Typical interpellations, for example "Brückenbauer" (bridge builder) is an intelligible subject position; as it offers a status of viable subjecthood and also marks which organizational characteristics are not recognized. Organizations are challenged to follow a powerful interpellation such as this. This interpellation brings forth the claim that migrant organizations should see themselves as organizational actors that should assist in the integration of so-called migrants. But we cannot understand these requirements in a causally or even deterministic way in which collective subjects are passively and inevitably shaped. Migrant organizations must respond to these appeals and relate to them. As is evident both historically and currently, organizations could, as in the past, resist or follow these imperatives only strategically.

To operationalize the process of becoming an organization for empirical analysis, we would like to draw on some aspects of the addressing analysis elaborated by Rose and Ricken (2018a). These methodological considerations provide an approach to exploring the emergence of subject positions. The question format allows an analytical approach to the process of subjection of organizations. With this perspective, it is possible to work out which norms are invoked in interpellations, and in this way, it is possible to work out the conditions to which not only subjects but also collectives have to submit in order to be recognized by the interpellants.

Following the elaborated addressing analytics, we ask how an organization is addressed or spoken to under specific circumstances (by whom and in front of whom), and how this organization deals with and reacts to this (Rose & Ricken, 2018a, p. 160).

An interpellation calls upon the addressed collective subject to follow the norms that materialize in the concrete address and to inscribe them into its self-concept. For example, with the frequent interpellation "Brückenbauer" (bridge builder), organizations are called upon and situated to interact between policy or public administration and "migrant communities" and to transfer and translate information and expectations from one side to the other. Therefore, addressing means re-articulating orders of recognition. These orders define the norms under which collective subjects must submit in order to become visible and recognized as subjects at all. This means that expectations of recognition to become an intelligible subject are articulated through interpellations. The perspective of critical migration research makes it necessary, as Castro Varela and Mecheril (2010) mention, to reflect critically on this order. If we think about recognition, there is always the risk of establishing and accepting existing circumstances. Because recognition is always the recognition of existing differences and identity, it is necessary to understand and deconstruct identity and differences as a product of performative practices. When organizations are addressed as migrant organizations, they are always addressed as the 'others.' Thus, they are not part of the majority society. Rather, they are made a minority by these addresses. This leads to a repeated distinction between migrant and non-migrant organizations (in the sense of unmarked organizations), regardless of whether this is meant in a positive or a negative and potentially discriminatory way.

With these insights, we turn to an empirical example: a concrete interpellation in the context of a city's current integration policy. We ask how the addressed organizations are constructed and positioned in front of a symbolic horizon to answer the question of which categories offer recognition and thereby the status of the "collective subject."

The Organizational Development of the Collective Subject as a Commitment to Integration Work

The following text is an excerpt from a speech given by the mayor of the city of Bielefeld in 2017 at a symposium on the topic of possible networking and cooperation of migrant organizations with other municipal institutions. It concisely illustrates the conditions under which migrant organizations are supported by local government: "In addition, the city of Bielefeld supports migrant organizations and initiatives that sustainably pursue the goal of improving the integration of migrant people in Bielefeld." (Stadt Bielefeld, 2017).

This quote is an example of the positive characteristics with which migrant organizations are addressed. Accordingly, migrant organizations are considered worthy of support and assistance if they support the integration of migrants. Migrant organizations are thus called upon to position themselves as promoting integration. Consequently, they are under pressure to identify and legitimize themselves through sustainable integration. These addresses lead to a shift in responsibility for the integration of a group of people into the organizations. At the same time, it becomes clear for which group of people the integration is necessary. By differentiating between migrants and other persons, the need for integration is exclusively coupled to the migrants. It is they who are framed as the problematic (disintegrated) group. Through this binary opposition, a social order is created in which the two social groups are placed in an asymmetrical relationship, which devalues the group of migrant people as needing of integration.

As this example illustrates, the organization's intelligible subject status depends on the commitment to integrate so-called migrants. If the organizations fail to credibly demonstrate their integration-promoting effect, they lose their subject status. In practical terms, this means that they cannot apply for public funding, are not allowed to offer (educational) measures and are not invited to participate in local decision-making and decision-making processes.

The example demonstrates a further aspect in the consideration of organizational addresses. It shows that the organization is understood as a relay station of power. First the organization must be subjected to integrate the single subject in turn. By addressing the migrant organization as responsible for the integration of migrants, the organization can address the individual subject as in need of integration. To be recognized by politics and administration, organizational practices must be geared

towards integration. The imperative of integration should determine the organizational life of the migrant organization. If the organizations fail in this, they risk losing their status.

As can be seen in these examples, current interpellations address migrant organizations, while differentiating between migrant organizations and non-migrant organizations/normal German organizations and also by differentiating between the 'integrated' and the 'non-integrated' parts of the society to promote these organizations in integration policy. Migrant organizations are addressed as important organizations to govern in a political and administrative manner. They are addressed as organizations, which promote, tend to, and guide migrants. Under the imperative "Be an integration-promoting organization", certain organizational practices are encouraged, while others are inhibited or sanctioned. Migrant organizations must therefore permanently identify themselves in their integration-promoting potential. Other subject positions are not granted to them. Recognition as a migrant organization can only be achieved by referring to its integration-promoting effect. The reputation as social intelligibility is tied to the submission to the recognition order of the integration regime.

In summary, this first section has shown that collective subjects are fundamentally dependent on an outside of which they are comprised. In this non-ontological approach, the forms of collective subjects are "profoundly socially conditioned" (Rose & Ricken, 2018b, p. 64). They are produced by heterogeneous norms and discourses that are in constant conflict. However, because of this constant conflict of norms, other subject formations are in principle possible. In addition, it must be noted that the institutional environment of organizations is characterized by different actors (state, economic and civil society actors). By looking at the conditions of the institutional environment, it how organizations participate in the institutionalization of transitions can be shown. With them and through them, transitions are institutionalized.

At the same time, it would be insufficient to explain organizations and their identities solely in terms of interactions with the institutional environment. Even within organizations, different norms and discourses are in conflict. Within them, the expectations of the institutional environment and the expectations of organizational members must be negotiated. Both dimensions must be understood as relational. Therefore, in the following, we want to focus on transitions within organizations. Thus, we will ask how transitions are produced and shaped within organizations. To do this, we will use a case study that makes it particularly clear that there are different expectations within organizations that need to be negotiated.

Transitions Within Organizations

There are several different transitions that take place within economic organizations, starting with the transition from outsider to organization member, followed by individual role development within the organization (e.g., from employee to

manager), to a temporal leave (e.g., due to illness or parental leave), or even the transition from organization member to outsider. Although the transitions mentioned above always focus on their individual execution by a single subject, they are created and designed in the context of and in interaction with the organization. It is precisely this interplay of the individual as subject and the organization as collective subject that this chapter focuses on, using the transition from parental leave back to gainful employment as an example.

The study focuses on the question of how the transition from parental leave back to employment is produced, carried out, and shaped in a transformative process within the relational structure of different individuals within an organization. In the course of this, the transition is not understood as the starting point for questions about function and mode of action, but rather as a contingent phenomenon that needs to be researched in relation to its production and design. The focus is neither isolated to the perspective of the person in transition nor to that of the supervisor or the employer, but rather on their relational interaction, i.e., the multifaceted and presuppositional interconnectedness of relationships in the context of different modes of production of the transition. This asks how the transition is "shaped by different processes of constituting reality and thus first made a social fact" (Wanka et al., 2020, p. 19). The fact that different institutions take on a regulating and shaping function and highly normative notions of what is to be mastered when and how, but at the same time individual and collective formations of the transition show themselves in idiosyncratic practices, thus implies the aspect of production.

The project uses two central frames of reference for its research: firstly, transition research and, secondly, life domain research by focusing on the specific transition from parental leave back into employment. Both strands of research are driven from different disciplines against the background of different questions. There is often a specific focus on a particular level, such as the societal, the institutional, or the individual level. Within this diversity of perspectives, this paper locates itself within the discipline of pedagogy and looks through a practice-theoretical lens at an individual transition that is accomplished within and framed by an organizational framework. It is not the individual execution that is of interest, but rather the phenomenology of transition.

The basis for this example is a practical-theoretical study (Heinrich, 2021), which explicitly focuses on the execution of transition within the consulting industry. In the course of the empirical study, expert interviews were conducted with HR managers who bore the formal responsibility for accompanying the transition. Furthermore, consultants were questioned during and after parental leave about the transition through problem-centered interviews. In this context, the role of the direct manager was repeatedly made relevant. As a consequence, problem-centered interviews were also conducted with managers with experience in accompanying the transition. The practice-focused analysis made evident that the transition as a moment of "in-between" (Walther, 2015, p. 36) is highly organizationally framed and relationally performed. The practice of negotiating borders turned out to be the central, key category for creating the transition. In the course of this, the interaction between affected consultants as subject and the organization as collective subject became particularly evident.

Negotiating the Differentiation of Areas of Life: The Interplay of Collective Subjects and Individuals

Due to their business model and the specifics of the industry, management consultancies place special demands on their employees. The variable customer projects demand a high degree of time flexibility, spatial mobility, and engagement from the consultants (Lippold, 2016, p. 6). New employees commit themselves to this when entering the organization via an employment contract and dedicate themselves to the common tasks of the management consultancy in order to contribute to the collective goal of organizational profit maximization. This collective organizational goal can be considered on an individual level as part of the area of life of work. In contrast, the private area of life also addresses its requirements and obligations to the individual subject. Since the areas of life are connected by mechanisms such as spillover, compensation, segmentation, resource drain, congruence, and conflict (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000), they influence each other. It is conceivable, for example, that moods that have arisen within one area of life are transferred positively or negatively to the other area of life (Staw et al., 1994), or that resources (such as time or attention) that have been used up in one area of life are no longer available to another. As a result of this mutual connection, the individual subject is in a conflict of tension of different requirements, needs, and goals. These affect the individual subject, but not only on an individual level. Rather, they also affect the superordinate level of the collective subjects to which the individual subject belongs (e.g., management consulting, but possibly also other collective subjects such as the family or a voluntary organization). To ensure a minimum level of consideration ("good-enough approach," Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2007, p. 4) the respective requirements, needs, and goals in the area of conflict between the different areas of life at the different levels, boundaries are negotiated between them (behavioral tactics for permeability at the interface of the life areas; Kreiner et al., 2009). It is precisely this negotiation of the differentiation of areas of life that takes place in the interaction between subject and collective subject and is particularly visible in the transition from parental leave back to gainful employment, as this represents a particularly sensitive moment of work-life balance.

In order to illustrate the interaction of the individual as subject with the organization as a collective subject, the negotiation of a spatial boundary is explained in the following using the case of Lena, a young mother and management consultant (Heinrich, 2021). While the focus in this case is on a negotiation of spatial boundaries typical of consulting, other cases focus on temporal boundaries and interpersonal boundaries as well as personal boundaries.

Lena has been working as a management consultant for several years and knows the requirements of the consulting business. Up to now she has been flexibly employed in national and international customer projects in Germany and abroad and has also seen this as an opportunity for rapid career development. Before she was able to take the next career step, however, her two sons were born in close succession. This changed her life situation immensely. This became particularly clear

when she returned to her consulting work and asked her manager to assign her to a project close to home, which better reflected both her private and professional requirements. Through the communicated request, Lena tries to initiate the shift of the once spatially flexible border in favor of her private life situation. By understanding the request correctly and translating it into corresponding actions, i.e. by checking to what extent a project assignment close to home is possible, her manager shows a basic willingness to consider private concerns. Finally, by identifying a possibility from currently open projects that matches Lena's expertise and level of activity, planning it for her and informing her accordingly, the manager effectively manifests the new, changed spatial boundary through her targeted assignment close to home. Due to a chain of unforeseen events, the start of Lena's project was then delayed indefinitely, leaving her without project employment for several weeks. Since she was aware of her privately induced spatial restrictions and saw their conflicting relationship to an uncomplicated and career-promoting new project assignment, she toyed with the idea of terminating her employment with the management consultancy. In order to counteract this, her managers actively sought to talk to Lena and solicited her to take on a challenging foreign project, which would help her achieve her desired promotion. At the same time, an implicit competitive situation was created by her managers, as they pointed out that the willingness of other colleagues to take over the project would also be examined. On the other hand, it was repeatedly stressed that this extremely valuable foreign project was limited to a span of a few months. The transgression of the newly established spatial boundary of proximity to home was tried to be legitimized by the time limit of the project. By attempting to take over the foreign project, Lena herself crosses the newly established border close to home. With her final project approval and participation in the kick-off, she reproduces the previous valid spatially flexible border and manifests it in its very nature.

Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion

In negotiating the demarcation of areas of life, Lena can be seen in conflict between private and professional requirements. She makes individual decisions about minimum standards in respective areas of life and sets priorities, which she tries to manifest through the interactive negotiation of boundaries. The setting of such limits is always accompanied by differentiation. In the example described, this would be the differentiation of a spatially mobile and a spatially immobile consultant. Even though such differentiations may be more or less obvious, they are always accompanied by individual positioning in the direct environment, in this case the management consultancy as a collective subject. Thus, the willingness to be spatially mobile speaks to submission to the collectively-represented logic in order to fulfill the task of management consulting and the goal of profit maximization as unrestrictedly as possible. The enforcement of spatial restriction, on the other hand, could be seen as resistance to the collective goal. In the example described, this is also implicit in the

promotion logic, in that career advancement seems to favor the taking on of a foreign project over a project close to home. The negotiation and enforcement of limits thus seem to be inevitably accompanied by dynamics of individual inclusion or exclusion in the superordinated collective subject. If the collective logic, task, and goal are fully adhered to, then complete inclusion in the collective subject is given. Resistance, on the other hand, leads to a certain degree of exclusion, possibly through a lower or more marginal position in the structure or even to complete exclusion from the collective. Although the collective subject subjugates and pre-configures the individual possibilities of action with a certain stability, it is precisely the individual subject in the execution of their actions (here the borderline negotiation) and their aggregation that offers the potential for changing the collective.

In summary, for this second section, collective subjects rely not only on the previously described constitution from the outside, they also constitute themselves from the inside via individual subjects and their interactions in continuously reproduced or performatively transformed practices.

Conclusion

Both the research examples presented in this contribution underline the meaning of collective subjects in processes of transition. From inside and outside, collective subjects address their members respective to other collective subjects and are addressed by them as well. Organizations play a key role between individuals, collectives and communities, and larger institutions like umbrella organizations, the state, economic and other sectors. In this sense, collective subjects are formed by their members and the way they address them as well as by actors from outside who express their desires, expectations, and attributions to the collective subject. In the last case presented above this means that a company as a collective subject is developing its identity by reacting to and dealing with the expectations and attributions of its employees, which becomes visible when these employees return from parental leave with a more or less fundamental change in balancing their different areas of life. Interacting with discourses and other collective subjects (e.g., government, quality agencies or trade unions) the new needs of members can also start a transitional process of a collective subject, as we have seen in our first case in particular. Migrant organizations change their self-conception by dealing with the invocations of other organizations and their public image on the one side, as well as with the changing needs and expectations of their members and clientele on the other side. This transition process includes an ongoing negotiation with other actors regarding the roles, competencies, responsibilities, aims, and functions of these migrant organizations. At the same time migrant organizations provide an institutional surrounding for individual transitions in the life courses of their members.

To approach the organizational learning process analytically, it is helpful to refer to the concept of organizational legitimacy (not just for voluntary organizations) (Gnes & Vermeulen, 2018). Organizational legitimacy "fulfills its most vital

function for organizations as a *mediated resource*, providing access to other resources such as funds or labor" (Gnes & Vermeulen, 2018, p. 205, emphasis in original). This became particularly clear in the first case: migrant organizations are supposed to produce and shape the transition of migrants according to the expectations of politics and administration, so that migrant organizations can only legitimize themselves before politics and administration by doing so. It became clear that organizations have to legitimize themselves before their environment or relevant audiences on the one hand and before their members or employees on the other: „it is about how the normative assumptions of specific organizations are justified – or not – within a particular normative context and in relation to the expectations of particular audiences "(Gnes & Vermeulen, 2018, p. 206). However, these normative requirements may differ depending on the audience and also with those of the members, perhaps even contradicting them. In the second project, on the other hand, the focus is not on organizational legitimization externally, but internally: in the course of negotiating individual boundaries, it is not determined (situationally and thus changeably) which access to individual resources of the subject is permissible by the organization as a collective subject. Organizations are then permanently faced with the challenge of negotiating heterogeneous expectations. Organizations and organizational development must always be considered in the context of different audiences.

Depending on the respective research focus, different powerful relationships of collective subjects, their members, other actors, and discourses in the field become visible. The question of who is addressing whom in a powerful manner is answered differently from different points of view. However, the focus on doing transitions determines the research perspective insofar as a transition of an individual subject or a collective subject has taken center stage. Looking at organizations as collective subjects then opens new insights as organizational activities are seen as collective practices of its members, which form the identity of the respective organization and thus its interaction with its members and other collective subjects. Both research approaches can thus make it clear that the respective organizational identity does not determine action but results from organizational practices. Finally, it becomes understandable that collective organizations are dynamic entities. In this way the research focus changes from the explicit strategies and aims of organizations, from what Argyris and Schön (1978) called the shift from "espoused theories" to "theories in use." These "theories in use" are understood as "the theory that actually governs […] action" (p. 11) and thus can be found in practices that build those collective subjects. Social practices in this sense might be framed by espoused theories and other forms of discourses – but cannot be determined by them (Reckwitz, 2002).

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Chapter 7
Aging Transitions at Work: The Embodied Experience of Becoming Older

Kathleen Riach

This chapter explores how employees experience growing older at work, with a particular focus on "older workerhood" as a transitional space experienced in and through the body at work. I situate the body as central to the experience of older workerhood transitions, not simply as a passive vessel which is the "target" for aging, but an active site in how we come to understand, make and relate to the world and those that inhabit it. After discussing how this is central to the subjective experience of aging transitions, I provide some empirical reflections on a study of employees working in the financial services sector to show how transitions into older workerhood are experienced in and through the body.

We begin the chapter by considering how we might understand transitions into older workerhood in the context of the workplace. We then turn to understanding this experience as profoundly embodied whereby the world-making sense of our selfhood is inextricably situated in expectations and experiences in and around the workplace. To explore how these dimensions play out, we provide some examples of how older workerhood transitions are experienced within one professional setting, highlighting how individuals negotiate, reproduce or resist this process in their everyday actions within an organizational context. Finally, we close by reflecting on what this mode of aging transition might tell us more broadly about transitions as we grow up and older within the workplace.

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Older Workerhood as a Transitional Space

In late capitalism, the workplace is one of the most important public settings where we encounter aging. Workplaces are where we experience changes and forms of age-based recognition that can distance us or propel us towards an older worker subject position. These forms of recognition are not simply about the workplace in which we are currently working when we "become" older, but rather emerge out of our engagement across many teams, organizations, sectors, and even professions throughout working life. Within this setting, workforce policies and everyday workplace practices seek to 'organize'. In other words the value we attain through cultural and social scripts of aging mix and mingle with ideas about value, productivity, and performance (Riach & Kelly, 2015). Age is often called into action in explicit ways, for example, pension or redundancy eligibility and corporate celebrations of time served. These mark out people according to a point on the working life course. However, it also manifests more implicitly within a range of workplace practices. For example, initiatives such as change management or corporate culture programs are sites where age norms become a corollary for behaviors deemed more or less valuable. Within this context, employees must negotiate their own subjective experience of aging while ensuring they tend to the material and practical concerns surrounding a successful career and financially secure future.

While we are all always aging, transitions into organizationally sanctioned age-based categories such as "older worker" carry particular consequences for individuals. Despite what Phillipson (2019, p. 629) calls the "social organization of work and retirement" changing significantly over the past 40 years, older workers are often subject to a variety of cultural, organizational, and institutional mechanisms that produce inequality or have marginalizing consequences for those positioned as "old/er." At an interpersonal level, stereotypes and biased perceptions can undermine their value as workers or prevent them from being viewed as a source of "talent" in organizations (Harris et al., 2018; Turek & Henkens, 2020). Organizations may also indirectly marginalize people by sending cultural messages about who "fits" in relation to branding and reputation. Other scholars have shown that even when there are explicitly positive perceptions of older workers in a workplace, they are negative impacted by broader age-biased systems (Cutcher et al., 2022). And at a structural level, studies using age 50+ as a benchmark for who is an older worker suggest that these workers are disproportionately impacted by redundancy, and once out of the workplace, find it more difficult to get back into paid labor than other cohorts. This is compounded by broader policy-oriented norms that propagate a "cult of youth" (Taylor, 2017), an anti-aging agenda (Marshall, 2015) or a neoliberally-infused notion of "successful" or "productive" aging (Moulaert & Biggs, 2013).

While the studies above highlight that the older worker is a stigmatizing subject position within the labor market, less focus is given to how individuals experience the transition into becoming an older worker, and how this might happen long before their "arrival" at an older worker identity position. Understanding this

transitional space – what I will call "older workerhood" – is particularly important as it is the location whereby we begin to experience the possibility of becoming an older worker and thus subject to unfavorable ascriptions associated with aging. Specifically, conceptualizing older workerhood as a transitional and socially-situated process of change is comprised of three features.

First is that older workerhood transitions are a dynamic process that signal an awareness of moving towards becoming more susceptible or vulnerable to negative experiences in the labor market. Yet this movement is unevenly experienced depending on how age intersects with other social categories. For example, the negative or denigrating aspects of aging and the associated "discourses of decline" are experienced unevenly across by gender (Trethewey, 2001), and sexuality (Riach et al., 2014). Even localized socioeconomic geographies can mean that individuals may enter into older workerhood at different times or in different contexts, despite being the same chronological age. For example, I currently live in Glasgow, which is a post-industrial city in Scotland, UK. Here, a man who is 45 from Calton (an area of the city where the life expectancy for men is 54), and who works as a call center operative after being made redundant as a welder, is more likely to be perceived as an "older worker" compared to a man who is 45 from Bearsden, (an affluent area of the city 7 miles away, where life expectancy is 85) and is a barrister about to become a judge. Their experience of older workerhood differs empirically and also temporally in ways that go far beyond chronology.

Second, older workerhood as a transitional space is contextually dependent on the sector, occupation, type of work (such as manual or white-collar), organizational culture, and local team composition, as well as an individual's work biography. Older workerhood is constituted by the variegated practices, policies, cultures and informal interactions and other labor market dynamics that we come face to face with when engaging with forms of paid work.[1] The signification and signs around older workerhood transitions are often realized in relation to colleagues or peers. This might be becoming aware through colleagues asking unprompted if you need extra help with the new IT program, someone giving up their seat on your commute to work, or when you are seen as a candidate for an early retirement policy. Such dynamics swish and swirl around our daily experiences of aging to antagonize, deny, reveal, present or validate the subject positions that constitute an "ideal worker." In other words, these policies and work-related practices serve to "organize" our experience of aging and subsequently older workerhood transitions.

Finally, older workerhood highlights how the experiential quality of aging transitions is relational and iterative: it is not just about our own subjective experience of our aging selves, but also the experience of perceiving others around us. Yet this also suggests a particular *quality* to older workerhood transitions that speaks to the

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[1] Due to space limitations, I focus on work as defined by the direct exchange of a wage for a mode of labor, or effort, noting that this brings an immediate limitation of not considering what Glucksmann (1995) refers to as the 'Total Social Organization of Labour,' whereby we recognize the direct and indirect ways other forms of labor such as caring, domestic work and volunteering plays a vital role to the economy.

conceptual nature of the phenomenon. While some transitions include a range of symbolic and material markers or socially sanctioned ways of telling us we have come out the "other side", it highlights the need to consider older workerhood beyond a traditional stage-transition-stage model (i.e. going from younger – transition – older) and instead emphasize the complex and variegated journeys and experiences that constitute this transitional space. This is certainly the case for older workerhood whereby the stigma of being an older worker means there is a never-ending "doing" within older workerhood transitions. Here, individuals seek to craft the older worker they want to become while delaying a feeling of "landing" at the inevitable destination of being an older worker. In this sense, the organizationally situated identity work that is undertaken surrounding older workerhood is replete with legitimizing, stymying, denying, resisting, or upholding aging identities as part of the transitional space. And central to this process is how we encounter and negotiate the world through our bodies.

Older Workerhood as an Embodied Transition

From the above introduction to older workerhood, we can see how older workerhood is a contextually situated transition that is "done." This performative process must take into account how contexts coalesce with our own unique inhabited "aged self" as an embodied subject. Embodiment as a concept seeks to move away from ideas of the body as either an inert objective biological entity (often associated with Cartesian mind-body dualism), or an object solely constituted through discourse. Instead, it is considered as an active "lived" site through which we both experience everyday life and is the way we come to know ourselves and the world. This is important when considering aging bodies at work, as they are both "work sites", in the sense that the labor we undertake shapes, affects, and changes the body over time, but also "sites of work", in terms of being a locus for how we make sense of what work means and how ourselves and others are constituted as "workers" in various forms. For example, Cunliffe and Coupland (2012) highlight the centrality of the body in sensemaking practices at work, while colleagues and I have looked at menopause as an aging experience through which the embodied self and work comes together in particular ways (Jack et al., 2019). Elsewhere, Gilleard and Higgs (2014) explore the fleshy materiality of the body as central to ways we understand the world around us and ourselves, while Pilcher and Martin (2020), amongst others, explore embodied aging as at gendered phenomenon.

Older workerhood as an embodied experience is best understood as relational. This suggests that the relationship between self and world is one that French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty would understand as highlighting our inherent interdependence in the world whereby "I borrow myself from others; I create others from my own thoughts" (1964, p. 159). Developing Husserl's ideas surrounding intentionality, phenomenological reduction and the body, Merleau-Ponty moves from Husserl's ideas of the body as a "thing inserted between the rest of the

material world and the *subjective* sphere" (1913, p. 161) towards *the active* thing that constitutes the world. Merleau-Ponty (2013) situates the body's "intervolvement" as simultaneously engaging with social norms and values, but also doing so in a position as a particular body from which these ideas are perceived and re/created or challenged. In this sense, nothing is possible to detach from experience: a sentiment that is central to the term "lived experience." The concept of lived experience has a particular meaning to a phenomenological approach to aging. It highlights that we are never bystanders to aging perceptions, motivations, ideas or events, given that "we must live things in order to perceive them" (Merleau-Ponty, 2013, p. 340). In other words, not only is it impossible to escape our own aging as a bodily experience that comprises part of how we come to know the world, but we can also never escape the experiences that aging brings us as a socially situated subject.

This gives us a better idea of how we "grasp" the embodied experience of older workerhood as a transitional space. Here we can consider a phenomenological experience of older workerhood which assumes the body as a locus of "being *of* the world", rather than "*in* the world." This occurs through a bodily schema: habitual bodily actions and practices that situate us through our ongoing "doing." Bodily schemas involve constantly re/orientating out selves in the world in order to calibrate who we are with how the world sees us. Bodily schemas are particularly important here as they situate our selves through a temporal constellation of our interactions, perceptions, experiences: a mode of "incarnating the past" (Morris, 2012, p. 69) while projecting into our future. In other words, our aging bodies are in many ways a time-served site that is part of the broader anchoring of us to the world in a particular way.

However, these bodily schemas are often realized through the capacities that are afforded in a workplace context. "Capacities" does not just refer to what *we* feel we can or cannot do, but rather how the world informs us about what we *should* be doing or *can* do by virtue of being a particular kind of body. Central to this is how we are identified as different bodies, in terms of accumulative and intersectional aspects including gender, ethnicity, and morphology, tall, short, fat, thin, nutritionally deprived and so on. These are not only morphological features but are culturally encoded, often against a benchmark of some socially sanctioned, normative standard. Within the workplace these standards are not only about social ascriptions of what looks "better" but whether this signifies particular value related to productivity. Bodily capacities are therefore how we come to find ourselves, interact with, encounter and make sense of an environment that is imbued with dynamics of power, status, and order.

Bodily capacities are an aged matter. For example, gendering practices within organizations situate older women's bodies as problematic, cantankerous or matter out of place (Irni, 2009; Jack et al., 2019), while older men's bodies are still seen as holding some potential value and power within an organizational context due to masculine discourses surrounding leadership (Muhr, 2011). In other instances, classed, racial or socioeconomic aspects may be etched onto the body, in ways that constitute part of the bodily schema. Certain occupational illnesses are more or less

likely to impact manual or professional workers, which subsequently impacts how their bodies are both harmed and also silenced or unable to resist. Alaimo's (2010) analysis of the racialization of silicosis (a disease of the lung caused by breathing in silica dust often within construction work) provides an excellent illustration of this, highlighting how workers' bodily capacities are limited not only in terms of their vulnerability as contingent workers, but by their lack of access to healthcare assessments that would facilitate workers compensation. These aspects cannot escape the context of a time-served, aging body.

Yet the experience of older workerhood transitions highlights how bodily schemas and capacities are dynamically experienced. On the one hand, our bodies are always changing and "soaking up" different experiences which means an ongoing negotiation with how we are situated in space and time – our past, presents and future embodiement. If the body provides a "certain hold upon the world" (Merleau-Ponty, 2013, p. 482), this hold must contend with shrapnel from our own past experiences and biographies, along with broader positions and cultural messages about growing up and older. On the other hand, we must also negotiate organizational practices that seek to place us as more or less valuable at different times or in different spaces.

As such, the phenomenology of older workerhood means that our fleshy experience of changing through aging, and organizational or cultural scripts surrounding growing older "gear into each other" (Merleau-Ponty, 2013, p. 79). Older workerhood therefore involves a daily ontological dance whereby our bodies are the site for negotiating, reproducing and resisting the terms and parameters through which we are recognized and valued in the workplace. The quality of older workerhood experience transitions involves a move towards (but perhaps seeking to never fully "become") an "older worker" subjectivity and requires us to situate and assert our own biographies against a myriad of organizational functions, policies and cultural practices.

To explore this experience of older worker transitions in a bit more detail, I will now turn to some empirical illustrations of experiencing older workerhood.

Researching Transitions into Older Workerhood

The illustrations I draw on here form part of a larger qualitative study into the experience of growing up and older in the financial services sector in the UK, which took place over 10 years (2010/11–2020/21). It began by spending just under 6 months in one London-based hedge fund, observing day-to-day practices, sitting on various parts of the business, and talking to those who move in and out of the office every day. During this time, I also interviewed around 50 of the staff who worked there, from receptionists to those managing multimillion-pound portfolios. In this early stage of the research, questions were very open and sought to gain as much insight into their broad experiences of aging as possible. Two years later I returned to the hedge fund to spend around a month observing and undertaking another round of

interviews with those from the original sample. At this point, some staff had moved on, and I decided to also contact them, developing a follow-the-people (rather than follow-the-organization) approach. This proved to be rather fortunate as the hedge fund subsequently closed, meaning that participants scattered across the city, country and globe, moving into different hedge funds, parts of the financial sector or other quantitatively-driven occupations, with some changing careers completely. Given the emphasis here on workplace context, the focus will be on those who predominantly stayed within the financial services sector.

Hedge funds have regularly drawn criticism for reproducing inequitable workplace cultures that subsequently feed into financially unsustainable or aggressive investment strategies, enabled through different regulatory structures to regular banking services given that only accredited investors can use them. While they are often seen as part of the "shadow" financial industry, the past 10 years has seen a tightening up on their practices, and increased regulation such as the EU's AIFMD Directive 2011/61/EU, which was brought in in part to prevent significant disruptions and instability to the market more broadly. Nonetheless, the images of extreme and aggressive behaviors – both in trading floor practices and in workplace cultures more broadly – have endured in the public imagination through autobiographical accounts such as *The Wolf of Wall Street* (Belfort, 2007). Aging plays an important part within these imaginaries where people either "burn out" through stress and extreme lifestyles, "win big" and retire earlier as multimillionaires, or "settle down" into a less aggressive environment, such as mainstream banking. In other words, hedge funds are not places where one expects to grow old, with many seeing the "cut off" point as 50.

By comparison, day-to-day life on the HFUK work floor was very different from the images proliferated within popular culture and in many ways looked like any other computer-based, white collar professional city work. While still highly masculine in culture, these were on the surface relatively tame compared to the extreme forms of socialization discussed in accounts of trading floors in the 1990s. The building itself was highly aesthetic with contemporary art on the walls and stylized furniture, while the office comprised of rows of people on computers, often communicating via internal chat systems, occasionally meeting between themselves and investors in glass offices. While I want to distance and value attribution to a chronological age, it is useful to note that when I began the research project, the average age of employees in HFUK was around 37. This was seen as relatively "old" for the Hedge Fund sector, highlighting that attribution of "older" or "younger" as relative to the career trajectories and cultures of the sector. In particular, in private investment, there was the expectation of either retiring very early (around 50) or moving into a more "stable" job within the mainstream banking industry. The composition of the workforce was seen as being more gender-equal than other hedge funds, although disproportionately skewed towards mem, with female employees being concentrated in the 25–40 age range. This was an important feature for many women, who discussed the lack of role models around, with one commenting that "Most women don't seem to grow older in the city – they simply disappear." This in

part contributed to the women I talked to often being more aware of growing older and older workerhood transitions at a chronologically younger age than male participants.

This setting carries specificities in terms of being a white-collar, professional cohort of workers undertaking relatively high-status work – all these factors will impact the experience of older workerhood as a transitional space. However, in many ways the condensed career trajectories of those working in the hedge fund sector provide a fascinating context for exploring how individuals can experience older workerhood at a relatively early chronological age. To consider this further, I concentrate on the experiences of 20 participants (13 men, 7 women) who were aged between 35 and 45 at the time of the first interview. This sample is in many ways participant defined as it was within this group that discussions surrounding becoming an older worker began to emerge within the research interactions. As such, it provides an apt context to reflect on how older workerhood as a transitional space was constituted through a "mode of embodiment, the manipulation of the presentation and performance of the body, which must be maintained to become and remain an employee of a particular organization and to 'embody' that organization" (Tyler & Hancock, 2001, p. 25).

Older Workerhood at HFUK

In an organizational context where bodies are expected to reflect the fast-paced, lean and competitive nature of financial markets, individuals entered into the sphere of older workerhood through a heightened awareness of their body, which for some had previously been something they "hardly thought about." Many referred to feeling that the years of early starts, late finishes and weekend working were "catching up with them", or that they were not being able to bounce back from intensive periods surrounding deadlines as easily as they used to, or as easily as others in their team seemed to. Part of this was due to work now being part of a busy portfolio of other commitments, and also lifestyle (such as family) changing priorities over proximity to work, for example. As Will explains, it was a constellation of these factors that fed into a feeling of becoming older:

> I used to work 12-hour days and sleep all weekend when I first started working. And now I work 12-hour days, have a massive commute and don't get to sleep at all at the weekends.

Others were aware that they had begun to "offset" in ways other members of their team might not have to in order to maintain their status on the work floor. Speed was central to this. Aidan, for example, spoke about being aware of seemingly innocuous practices such as being late for meetings being interpreted differently as you grew older, and taken as an indication you were "slowing down." This could involve having to make sacrifices over what they chose to do outside work, such as ensuring they had early nights and did not consume alcohol during the week. As Aidan said,

"sometimes, it's about adjusting your own expectations before others adjust theirs about you."

Older workerhood for others was marked by a growing intensity of the labor required to upkeep the look of being professional. Here the idea of being "on top of your game" and able to thrive in highly competitive markets could be read on their bodies and through corporeal performances. Anna mentioned that she had begun to have anti-aging cosmetic procedures in her late 20s to get rid of lines, stating that "my friend's dad is a doctor and he said you should start botox when you're twenty-six", while Kim indicated that gaining weight was often viewed as a women "going to seed" in the city (a pejorative idiom for growing older). Similar interventions were mentioned by men but usually framed more about correcting the impact of hedonic or alcohol-fueled lifestyles. That said, they also mentioned they would consider hair implants or "sorting out" their crow's feet (wrinkles around their eyes). Finn discussed how he had dabbled with certain cosmetic procedures:

> Would I have Botox? I don't think so, no. I mean I do things, I've had my teeth bleached before now. But again that's an aging thing where, I mean, I like a glass of red wine and a cup of tea and coffee, so particularly on my lower teeth you get some staining. That can make you look older, when you get people with bad teeth. When you're younger, wonky teeth look quite cute.

Some chose to deliberately focus on health pursuits, often events marked by endurance or competition or what Riley referred to as "fitness challenges." For example, the male members of one team within the office had agreed to participate in a triathlon, and regularly discussed their progress in training successes on the trading floor, although some had confessed privately to me that there were also strains and aches that were less publicly shared. One of the team, Isla, who was not participating, saw this as directly connected to trying to perform a professional persona of exuberance and stamina:

> You know, when you're in your twenties you don't see people on bikes. It's only in their forties when they feel like no good, got to keep up… People are running, they're going for something more extreme. And it's got to do with age definitely. In your twenties, you're doing something else. In your thirties, you're doing something different… So does age matter? I think so.

Such experiences render visible the boundary conditions and thresholds of tolerance that serve to organize and bind bodies into being seen as older, younger, nubile, fertile, "over the hill", or other age-related body-based identifiers. These identifiers carried particular modes of valuation meaning that certain bodies were assumed to be a locus of agency and privilege and correlated with being successful in the workplace, while others were the site of subjection and negation, and not being able to "keep up."

The competitive context of private banking was important in making older workerhood a site for the intensification of body work. Yet organizational or sector-specific practices, symbols or sanctioned rituals were also central in jolting respondents into the realm of older workerhood and reorientations surrounding growing older. Jamie, for example, talked about how the advent of automated

trading had resulted in traditional traders and brokers who were edging towards 50 leaving, but also made others aware of their age. One broker admitted that automated forms of work had "made me feel a bit slow…all the skills I had gained over the years just evaporated." Others such as Riley spoke about the need to offset looking older by keeping abreast of new, sometimes radical, developments in the sector. He referred to this "future-proofing" as helping to negotiate his own older workerhood transition through avoiding being viewed as out of date or "too old":

> It's a fully automated fund, everything is driven by code. We've got quite an interesting makeup that I might have told you last time. We've got 300 researchers in offices all across the world. Most of those people have got PhDs in either science or maths, engineering, they're heavily numbers-focused, … our firm's techniques are pretty sharp. I've had to learn some code just to understand how our trading systems work, so I'm moving along that front and then I've had to understand a bit more about the portfolio management side as well in our model of portfolio management where humans don't get to make decisions. So I didn't really have a choice in that but having made that transition I think I've kind of future-proofed myself a bit… Any new technique or way to execute I have to know about.

Other less discernible markers constituted the movement and momentum into older workerhood. One such example was the ambivalent experience of negotiating older and younger subject positions within the workplace. On the one hand, they were aware that they may begin to be viewed as older workers by virtue of the stream of younger bodies coming into the workplace (such as new graduates), and the increasing absence of employees older than them. In other words, by virtue of the age composition of the workplace, they were in danger of being propelled into older workerhood. Aaron spoke about how informal conversations and interests differentiated him from others in the team:

> As much as we can have a bit of banter about football or tv, I'm aware that the conversations we have are very different. I don't know where the best pubs are to go to, especially as I know life in *** (suburb of London, approximately 40 minutes by train). And I am also aware that many of them would be shocked if I told them how much I spend on my cycling gear or various gadgets that I have. I'm not criticizing them, I imagine they think my conversation would be pretty dull, and I would feel a bit of a spare part (like an outsider) when they are talking about what they got up to at the weekend.

On the other hand, *not* having some distance from the "junior" younger bodies was also problematic, as Conner suggested when discussing why he had begun to feel older:

> I'd say, to be brutally honest, (my career's) going nowhere. Being honest, I should probably do more to find something else or do something else, but here it's kind of flat. Everyone's the same. No one does anything. There's no progression. So it's just very flat, and as you get older you realize that that's quite important, that you've got friends who are managers, and this and that, and whether the title means something or not it doesn't really matter, they're just going up that steady… You know, when their boss quits they take their boss's job, and so on. It's all linked really, you know.

Older workerhood transitions were connected to promotion or being further up the hierarchy: achievements that distanced them from youthful subjectivities and junior or lower status positions. In this sense, for Conner and others, transitioning into

older workerhood held an affective quality. It sharpened awareness of failing to ascribe the normative accoutrements of career success, and in doing so, could be accompanied by a sense of shame. Others had similar reflections about what a successful transition towards becoming an older worker should feel like, such as feeling in control at work, and a sense of mastery over your job, although these expectations were often highly gendered. For example, many women referred to learning to balance work and family as being an indicator of a successful older workerhood, part of which involved careful attention to diet and wellbeing exercises. Lynne spoke about practices such as yoga and detoxes as giving her the "energy and vibrancy" to maintain a career after "becoming an older mum." By comparison, discussions with men would often refer to the pressure or the pride of having a salary that could support a family as features of successful older workerhood.

Transitions into older workerhood as projects of success or failure required attention, even in the most minute or ubiquitous embodied interactions. For respondents, success required an ongoing negotiation between resisting the pull towards older worker subject positions by others, while becoming attuned to one's own corporeal changes. These aspects interlocked together in situ, meaning that the office space itself and the seemingly innocuous bodily actions that took place there became an important site for older workerhood transitions. To give an example of how office spaces themselves are an active setting for such transitions, I want to close this section by sharing a short episode I was privy to during observations:

> It was early evening, and all of a sudden, Barry, who liked to think of himself as a bit of a key character and leader in the team, roles back his chair, and loudly stretches making a bit of a loud groan. However, this does not have the effect he was perhaps desiring. "Feeling a bit done in Barry?!"
>
> "Yeah, maybe getting a bit past his bedtime – anyone got a tartan rug and flask[2] for Barry here" Everyone laughs. Someone says "Nana Barry"
>
> Barry stops half stretches, his arms poised in the air like he's doing a Mexican wave, as if caught in headlights, a flash of panic goes through his eyes where his physical alpha male taking up of space becomes a visible manifestation of him not being able to hack it. Then he seems to have a brainwave.
>
> "Nah mate, just feeling the pain of that earlier (gym) session. Hey, I've been done hours ago, got a really good result on the (name of a trade) – I fancy a drink, any of you up for it?"

Barry's actions – which may have been intended to be a masculine performance of establishing territory – become part of a process of misrecognition, requiring a quick reparative performance, through discussing going to the pub. At this moment, the amalgam of the chair, his body, his actions, the team around him, and the aggressive and competitive performance culture of the financial services "gear into one another", to refer back to Merleau-Ponty's phrase. This episode seemed to pass without incident, although Barry did refer to it at a later point during one of our interviews, reflecting on being on the cusp of older workerhood:

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[2] Both a tartan rug and flask as material objects associated with older people, with a stereotypical image being a 'granny' sitting in a wheelchair with a rug over her legs, sipping from a flask of tea.

I mean me personally, I guess probably in the last year I have become a lot more aware of age because I'm getting a few more grey hairs and, do you know what I mean? It's just, you do, you just become suddenly a bit more aware, you look in the mirror and think 'Oh god, I am my Dad!' and I suppose it does make you think "Well, what have I achieved?" Maybe you don't sit there every night thinking about it, 'What have I done?', and I have become a little bit, not obsessed with it, but I've become a lot more aware of it.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to introduce how older workerhood as a transitional space is experienced in and through the working body, even by those who are, relatively speaking, a "young" chronological age. While we are always aging while in the workplace, given that being an older worker carries significant costs and penalties in terms of stereotyping, discrimination and unemployment, it is important to explore how individuals experience and negotiate ageing transitions this realm, and the various embodied practices and strategies that are involved. The negotiation and struggle individuals had over claiming their own experience with older workerhood as one transitional space that occurs over the working life course is highly complex and were subject to discursive systems that shape organizational life. These logics also shape and stitch together aging, and have material consequences through dictating which bodies are more or less valuable. Aging bodies at work are therefore not an individual or private pursuit, but intertwined with ordering, power and status that in turn affects the way we perceive and engage through our aging bodies in the world. In the empirical illustrations we can see how practices and processes do not simply organize our work, but also organize how one comes to know working bodies as "older." They can make us more aware of embodied changes, feelings and affect, make us feel closer or further away from a particular subject position (such as "older worker"), and provide ways of articulating the implications of these changes in ways that correspond to our value within the labor market.

The experiences that constitute older workerhood discussed above are similar to accounts of other life course transitions we experience at work, such as becoming a working parent (Gatrell, 2013) or retirement (Wanka, 2020). However, older workerhood as a transitional space is usually a more iterative and incomplete experience. While other social-sanctioned practices or rituals might aid our transition into different aged social locations, such as a birth of a child or a celebratory party, for example, older workerhood is a far more ambiguous experience with fewer rituals or socially sanctioned ways of knowing or articulating what we are experiencing. For this reason, paying attention to corporeal experience as a way of making sense of older workerhood could be even more important, providing us with the cues to try and prepare for, or offset, some of the more negating and discriminatory experiences we may face in the future. While these bodily experiences may be interpreted differently depending on professional or work context, as we move towards

becoming older workers, most of us are compelled to engage in various projects in and on our bodies in order to maintain organizational credibility and recognition.

Finally, considering "older workerhood" as a transitional space worthy of conceptual inquiry provides opportunities to explore how we age and change over time within a workplace context. While we have predominantly focused on the precarities that come with becoming an older worker, future studies of other professional contexts may highlight how such transitions also provide more productive opportunities for recognizing and enjoy our bodies as they change. For example, it may afford the capacity to metaphorically "dip our toes" into growing older, catching a glimpse of how we might reorientate or reconcile our selves within a different social position or location. In this sense, while older workerhood may not be the most affirming or joyous transitional journey we experience during our working lives, recognizing it as an important part of negotiating aging provides space to pause and reflect on who we are – and who we might become.

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Part III
Times and Normativities of Transitions

Chapter 8
Relative Time and Life Course Research

Núria Sánchez-Mira and Laura Bernardi

Life course research (LCR) is intrinsically temporal, but this literature often draws on an unproblematized and undertheorized treatment of time (Wingens & Reiter, 2011). Time in mainstream LCR, particularly when taking a quantitative approach, is viewed as a marker—a container where changes can occur and through which they can be tracked—but not a matter of examination itself. Time is generally understood as a linear and unidirectional construct, tied to the chronological clock and calendar, proceeding at a uniform pace, and providing an analytical frame for the phenomena under study without being part of them. In this way, time becomes a reified, absolute structure to pigeon-hole life course processes. Chronological time and age are indicators of underlying social and psychological phenomena in various life domains and their dynamic association. A linear understanding of time is also generally linked to an understanding of causality where causes lead to consequences in an orderly sequence.

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Yet, linearity, unidirectionality and uniform pace do not correspond to the way in which individuals experience time in their lives (Strauss, 1997 [1959]; Neale, 2019). Contemporary social science commonly acknowledges that time is multiple and diverse, including natural time, social times and lived times (Adam, 1990). As in physics, time is relative because it depends on the position and disposition of the observer (Rovelli, 2018). Under a relative perspective, time is not merely an external structure within which lives unfold but is subjectively defined and context dependent.

The notion that time has a dual nature, one absolute and universal and one relative and subject or context-dependent, is a common theme in temporal theorizing. This is so from the classic distinction drawn by Aristotle in the Physics (book IV, 10–14) between the abstract Chronos-time and a meaningful Kairos-time (Rämö, 1999), to more recent distinctions between *objective* and *inner* time (Schutz, 1962) or *events in time and time in events* (Adam, 1990). All such distinctions refer to the fact that there would be an absolute, *universal measurable time* and *a perceived, relative array of times* and they are both useful in understanding the unfolding of events and transitions for they all feed into empirical realities. Many disciplines ranging from philosophy to neuroscience, including sociology, economics, psychology, or narrative studies, are confronted with the issue of how to account simultaneously for *absolute* and *relative time*. That is, how to account for the objectivized, chronological, and linear passage of time in the physical world of events, and the experiential, subjective perceptions of time in human understanding. Such ideas have been developed in parallel across disparate literatures and have now achieved a wide currency in social research. Yet, much LCR, particularly in the quantitative tradition, appears impermeable to these discussions and it has predominantly, although not exclusively, used an *absolute* conception of time.

This chapter highlights the need for a more comprehensive and explicit theoretical conceptualization of time in LCR and we argue for a broader vision that goes beyond an absolute understanding of time to encompass notions of relative time. We propose a novel tripartite conceptualization of relative time that integrates interdisciplinary insights to define the multidirectional, elastic, and telescopic nature of time as its key characteristics. We argue that incorporating relative time alongside and in interaction with absolute time into LCR is necessary to understand the temporal processes that shape lives.

Relative Time in Life Course Research and Beyond

Most LCR tends to situate events and transitions "in time" and chart changes "over time", adopting an absolute time perspective. Concepts such as timing, sequencing, duration or spacing are used to describe life events, transitions, and trajectories (Settersten & Mayer, 1997). Event history modelling focuses on the timing of occurrence of a given event (Morris, 2017). Studies based on sequence analysis draw on the measurement and ordering of states representing a trajectory within a

single (Zimmermann, 2020) or multiple (Aisenbrey & Fasang, 2017) life domains. Recently, a combination of sequence and event history modelling has given rise to Sequence History Analysis (Rossignon et al., 2018). While these studies illustrate the mainstream understanding of time in quantitative LCR, there are alternative approaches within and outside this literature that inform our understanding of relative time.

Past, Present, and Future: The Temporal Orientation of Human Agency

Mead's (1932) understanding of time as constituted through emergent events has been very influential for biographical studies and for discussions on the temporal nature of human agency. For the author, people live in the ever-passing present that shapes interpretations of the past and the future. The past is continuously reinterpreted as the present unfolds and is at the same time a resource to make sense of the present and to imagine the future. Anticipation of hypothetical future worlds of possibilities also influences present lines of action.

This notion of the complex interactions between memories, present circumstances, and future expectations have been very much central in biographical research (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984). Mead's theorization of time is also at the core of Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) proposal for a reconceptualization of agency in sociological research. The authors define agency as a temporally embedded process of social engagement involving the constitutive elements (iteration, projectivity and practical evaluation), which correspond to different temporal orientations (past, future, present). Actors are always simultaneously living in the past, future, and present as they "continuously engage patterns and repertoires from the past, project hypothetical pathways forward in time, and adjust their actions to the exigencies of emerging situations" (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 1012).

Similar ideas have been developed in discussions of human agency within LCR (Bernardi et al., 2019; Hitlin & Elder, 2007). The notion of "shadows of the past" refers to biographical experiences shaping an individual's "good reasons" to act and is linked to the idea of path dependency, whereby an existing biography feeds into decisions that delimit future pathways. The "shadows of the future" allude to how actors are influenced in their current choices by their anticipation of the future consequences of their decisions (Bernardi et al., 2019). The interpretation of one's past experiences and present circumstances influence individuals' perceived capacity to influence their own lives and project themselves into the future (Bidart, 2019).

Some parallels to these ideas can be identified among psychologists, although these have hardly been integrated in mainstream contemporary psychological research (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Lewin's (1951, p. 75) definition of time perspective included "the totality of the individual's views of his psychological future and psychological past existing at a given point in time." Nuttin (1985, p. 54) expanded on Lewin's work to argue that "future and past events have an impact on

present behavior to the extent that they are actually present on the cognitive level of behavioral functioning." Recent research in the neurosciences supports Mead's theories, showing important similarities between brain activation involved in remembering the past and in imagining the future (Schacter et al., 2012).

The Temporal Horizons of Agency

The idea that agency is inherently anchored in a temporal frame of orientations has been a central tenet of biographical research, which has distinguished between everyday orientations and lifetime perspectives or horizons (Kohli, 2019). According to Alheit (1994), most of our activities are organized within a routinized and cyclical everyday temporal horizon, while a lifetime frame links our past experiences to current situations and conceivable futures under a linear framework, seeking biographical continuity and coherence (Alheit, 1994).

Inspired by Flaherty's (2003) notion of the experience of time within situated activity and Mead's "fundamental present-ness of social action" (Hitlin & Elder, 2007, p. 177), Hitlin and Elder (2007) distinguish four types of agency, which correspond to various temporal foci dictated by different types of situations. *Pragmatic agency* refers to actions requiring heightened attention in the "knife's edge" of the present moment, when habitual responses to patterned social actions break down and *identity agency*, which follows established ways of acting and role enactment, cannot operate (Hitlin & Elder, 2007, p. 177). *Life course agency* relates to extended time horizons and *existential agency* alludes to one's general ability to act. This conceptualization has proven particularly valuable in a recent analysis of the challenges for individual agency triggered by the uncertainty and situational exigencies associated with the COVID-19 pandemic (Sánchez-Mira et al. 2021b).

For Kohli (2019), everyday orientations are characterized by uniformity and repeatability, while lifetime orientations are characterized by change, progression, and inevitability. Irreversibility and the shrinking horizons associated with ageing may create pressures to take stock of one's life and make changes. Inversely, adopting a lifetime backwards gaze may lead to a reinterpretation of one's trajectory. While Hitlin and Elder's (2007) life course agency refers to the capacity of individuals to orient themselves toward the future, biographical research has tended to incorporate extended temporal horizons into the past as well (Kohli, 2019). Applying a life course time frame to the assessment of past events can be related to perceptions of self-efficacy – Hitlin and Elder's (2007) *existential agency* – and, in turn, affects the vision of the future (Kohli, 2019).

Authors in other disciplines have also dealt with notions of how the individual's temporal foci differ across immediate or longer-term frames. In management studies, Bluedorn has used the concept of "temporal depth" to describe "the distance into the past and future that individuals and collectivities typically consider when contemplating events that have happened, may have happened, or may happen"

(Bluedorn, 2002, p. 114). Temporal depth is different from temporal focus in that it is not about whether an individual is more or less past, present, or future oriented, but about how far into the future or how far into the past people think as they go about their lives (Bluedorn & Standifer, 2006).

Jones et al. (2019) have fleshed out notions of temporal depth by analyzing the temporal structure of projected futures, showing that individuals distinguish between distinct segments of the future with qualitatively divergent properties. People's attention and degree of optimism and confidence is not evenly distributed across these temporal frames (Jones et al., 2019). Their findings mirror those of temporal construal theory in psychology (Eyal et al., 2004; Liberman & Trope, 1998), which posits that more abstract features are likely to be used in construing distant future events and more concrete features will govern near future events. Desirability considerations and pros are emphasized when construing distant futures, while the feasibility of the action and cons govern the near future (Eyal et al., 2004; Liberman & Trope, 1998). In all, these studies show that individuals zoom-in and out over temporal horizons and that these different temporal foci mediate decision making in the present.

Temporal Agency in Life Narratives

Biographical research has analyzed how time is experienced, constructed and controlled within life narratives, with a specific focus on the maintenance of temporal coherence (Köber & Habermas, 2016). Research in social psychology has seen life stories as important components of the self. "Integrative life narratives" (McAdams, 2005), whereby we selectively reconstruct the past with our imagined anticipation of the personal future, provide our lives with some degree of unity and purpose, which we reconstruct as they evolve. As people accumulate new experiences or change their motivations, the meaning they attribute to past events may also change, with some gaining salience and others fading into the background (Hareven & Masaoka, 1988). These ideas connect with Flaherty's (2003) notion of "time work" in social psychology, which refers to individuals' efforts to promote or suppress particular forms of temporal experience by controlling or manipulating duration, frequency, sequence, timing and allocation.

Perceptions of Time Passage and Time Left in Life

Psychology has a long tradition of studies showing that the linearity of time, duration, and temporal order are distorted through subjective perceptions (James, 1890). This literature argued that pace and tempo of time varies across the life course as time seems to pass by more rapidly with age (Fraisse, 1967). Recent studies have

nuanced this finding, showing that impressions of recent time passage of older and younger people do not differ from each other (Droit-Volet & Wearden, 2015). There are two main explanations for time's apparent speeding up with age: memory distortions and those created by the perception that the end of life is approaching.

Memory distortion is supported by evidence that people are less able to recall instances when they were busy or had to rush in the distant past than the recent past. With the impression that they are currently experiencing more time pressure, they will have the feeling that time has recently passed more quickly (Janssen, 2017). Life appears to speed up as people become older because they underestimate the flow of remote time, which also occurs when looking forward to the remote future (Löckenhoff, 2011).

The second set of studies argues that the acceleration of time in old age can be attributed to perceptions of the time remaining in one's life (John & Lang, 2015). Such arguments follow socioemotional selectivity theory, which states that ageing is associated with changing perceptions of the amount of time left to be lived, which affect goal definition and motivational processes (Carstensen et al., 1999). Shifts in motivational priorities are due to the perception of time left to live and not about age *per se*, so that social goals can also change for young people in contexts that limit subjective future time (i.e., illnesses or war) (Carstensen, 2006). However, more recently it has been argued that age-related changes in time horizons and age-related time acceleration may combine in ways that produce an exponential increase in emotionally meaningful goals across adulthood (Giasson et al., 2019).

Research in neuroscience is also advancing our knowledge on how the brain integrates events over time (Wittman, 2011). Cognitive sciences have underlined that time perceptions are heavily affected by contextual elements both internal (i.e., emotional states) and external (i.e., the rhythm of wider activities) to individuals (Droit-Volet et al., 2013).

Time Perspectives Inventory

A broader and multifaceted conceptualization of time perspectives should include not only the quantity of time left to live but also how such future time is qualitatively evaluated (Liao & Carstensen, 2018), an aspect which Zimbardo's framework has significantly contributed to (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Temporal perspectives are the cognitive processes "whereby the continual flows of personal and social experiences are assigned to temporal categories, or time frames, that help to give order, coherence and meaning to these events" (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999, p. 1271). These categories are mobilized in the encoding, storing, and recalling of experiences and in the formation of expectations, goals and future scenarios, thus influencing people's actions (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Individuals tend to emphasize or underuse particular temporal frames and an empirically informed scale has been used to measure such orientations and the values attached to them (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2008).

Zimbardo's work brought past orientations into the picture, while much previous psychological research had focused on the effects of present versus future orientations for behavioral outcomes, such as risk-taking or health behaviors (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999).

Temporal Discounting

In economics, ideas about the relativity of time go back to the work of Commons (1934), who argued that the causality inscribed in human activity does not follow the chronology (past-present-future) of events but reflects an experiential past-*futurity*-present loop. The past generates a *futurity* (a reasonably imaginable future), which in turn conditions present activity oriented towards the future. Some economists have criticized the premise of linear time because it assumes that there is no distortion in perception of future time intervals and that all future choices are linearly connected to present choices (Lapied & Renault, 2017). Taking subjective perceptions of time into account offers new insights into theories of choice and decision making (Gislain, 2017; Lapied & Renault, 2017).

The growing literature on inter-temporal choices addresses decisions involving trade-offs among costs and benefits occurring at different times. Individuals show high time discount rates, that is they "pay more attention to the opportunity costs of choosing larger, later rewards than to the opportunity costs of choosing smaller, sooner ones" (Read et al., 2017, p. 4277), but such "impatience" in decision making declines as the time horizon gets longer (Malkoc & Zauberman, 2019). Temporal self-regulation theory has also underlined time perspectives when explaining unhealthy or risky behaviors, which are associated with high long-term costs but relatively more benefits in the short run (Hall & Fong, 2007).

Insights from economics and psychology have been recently brought together in cognitive and behavioral sciences to bridge theories on time perceptions and inter-temporal choices and to highlight the non-linearity of time perceptions in human and animal decision-making (Namboodiri et al., 2014).

The Duration of the Present and Its Division from the Future

Most research assumes that action presupposes a fundamental division between present and the future: at some point in time, the former must yield to the later. Yet, individuals' actual perceptions of the division of present and future is still an emerging field, with so far nonconclusive empirical results but promising research avenues. On the one hand, Chen (2013) posits that the way a language encodes time will influence how its speakers perceive a divide between the present and the future.

Comparing languages that require future events to be grammatically marked when making predictions from those that do not, he showed that speakers of the latter were more future-oriented across several monetary and non-monetary indicators (Chen, 2013). Pérez and Tavits (2017) yielded similar findings in their study of bilingual speakers of Russian and Estonian. On the other hand, from a psychological perspective and in an experimental setting, Hershfield and Maglio (2019) analyzed to what extent the division between present and future is perceived as more or less sharp across individuals and where in time this division exists. They showed that a perception of a sharper division leads to more future-oriented choices particularly when it is coupled with a sense of a relatively short present (Hershfield & Maglio, 2019).

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Our non-exhaustive review of the literature shows that relative time is partially recognized and promoted within, but ultimately not effectively integrated into mainstream LCR. The lack of dialogue with the advances on time conceptualization in the broader social sciences may explain why it is not yet part of the fundamental theoretical concepts of LCR. In sum, the review of existing research shows the need to think of agency as a fundamentally temporally embedded process and obliges us to propose a broader conceptualization of time in LCR.

Defining Relative Time for Life Course Research: Multidirectional, Telescopic and Elastic

We have shown that notions of relative time can be found scattered throughout a variety of research fields, but a systematic integration into a unified framework is still missing. We propose to build such integration around a definition of relative time based on three main characteristics: *multidirectional, elastic, and telescopic*. In this section, we define such characteristics and outline how these are informed by the literature's interdisciplinary insights.

Multidirectional Time

The first characteristic captures the omnipresence and interrelatedness in the temporally oriented actor of past, present, and future temporal gazes in any given situation. This characteristic draws on Mead's [1932] notion that time is constituted through emergent events in an ever-passing present, requiring a continuous refocusing of the past and the future and relies on Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) ideas on the temporal embeddedness of agency. Notably, that different temporal orientations

(past, future, present) correspond to the constitutive aspects of agency (iteration, projectivity and practical evaluation) and may predominate in any given case. In short, the multidirectionality of time captures the idea that the remembered past and anticipated future are integrated into present decision making and that some actions will be more or less oriented towards the past, the present or the future. The definition is twofold and involves a dimension of orientation and one of focus. The latter connects with Zimbardo and Boyd's (1999) idea that some individuals will be more past-, present- or future oriented and will attach different values to such temporal frames.

The multidirectionality of time is also informed by recent discussions on agency in the life course (Bernardi et al., 2019; Bidart, 2019) and criticisms to the linearity principle in the economic literature (Commons, 1934; Lapied & Renault, 2017). Finally, it is supported by research in neuroscience documenting similarities between brain processes involved in remembering the past and anticipating the future (Schacter et al., 2012).

Telescopic Time

The second characteristic of relative time describes the idea that individuals' different temporal foci over closer or more distant objects influence decision making in the present. People draw on different reference points when they reflect on their experiences or consider which actions to undertake, as if they were zooming-in or zooming-out on their lives. Telescopic time encompasses immediate time frames, alongside short, medium, and longer-term horizons that stretch into both the past and the future. This definition draws on Mead's notion of temporal horizons as a form of "distance experience" (Mead, [1932] in Mische, 2009). Following Bluedorn and Standifer's (2006) distinction between *temporal depth* and *temporal focus*, telescopic time differs from multidirectional time in that it is not about the temporal direction or orientation, but about how far into the past or into the future people think when making judgements and choices. Similar parallelisms can be drawn with Mische's (2009) notion of *reach*. This second time characteristic also relies on LCR highlighting the importance of temporal foci for human agency (Hitlin & Elder, 2007; Kohli, 2019).

We can also highlight parallelisms with the conceptualization of everyday and lifetime horizons in biographical research (Alheit, 1994; Bertaux & Kohli, 1984) or the focus of socioemotional selectivity theory on perceptions of limited versus expansive time horizons (Carstensen, 2006). It can be linked to the literature on intertemporal choices or temporal self-regulation showing that people's attention to opportunity costs is contingent on the time frame for the action (Hall & Fong, 2007; Read et al., 2017). Last, this category encompasses research on perceptions of the division between present and future (Hershfield & Maglio, 2019).

Elastic Time

The third characteristic of relative time—elastic time—embraces the notion that individuals do not perceive time as continuous, uniform, or linear, but that time can be experienced at more or less intensive tempos and paces. Perceptions of time progression remain largely unexplored in LCR (for an exception, see Neale, 2015), despite being a central issue of psychological research for over a century. Our definition of elastic time is thus informed by studies in psychology and cognitive sciences showing that linearity, regularity and duration are distorted through subjective perceptions, which are contingent on the processes of recall of the past and projection into the future (Janssen, 2017; Löckenhoff, 2011). Distortions in time perceptions also reflect the adaptability of our internal clock to the events occurring around us (Droit-Volet et al., 2013). These discussions are mirrored by recent empirical research in psychology and neurosciences on how the brain integrates events over time (Wittman, 2011).

Relative Time at the Intersection of Biographical and Social Times

The three characteristics of relative time outlined represent analytical distinctions to understand the subjective perception of time at the individual level of experience. However, time perceptions and orientations are not merely a product of individual forces but are constructed through intersubjective processes (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998) and should thus be analyzed as relational, cultural, and historical. Mead's ([1932] in Emirbayer & Mische, 1998) notion that actors are simultaneously embedded in multiple, nested, and overlapping temporal-relational resonates with a conceptualization of the life course as a "multifaceted process of individual behavior", characterized by interdependencies across time, life domains, and levels of analysis (Bernardi et al., 2019, p. 2). By considering multiple, heterogenous, asynchronous temporalities, time can be understood as multidirectional, multidimensional, and multilevel, just as life course processes are (Bernardi et al., 2019).

We may think of several ways of looking at relative time as co-constructed. The degree of present-ness of a situation is, *per se*, relationally defined. The individual disposition to be more or less future, past, or present oriented is developed in interaction with others throughout the life course. Impressions of time passage may be influenced by the perceptions of others, just as these may expand or restrict our temporal horizons.

LCR has dealt with some of these issues, notably those concerned with the intersections between biographical and social times. The concept of an institutionalized life course emphasizes the effects of legislation and policies on shaping the life course, and notably the timing of transitions (Mayer, 2004). Cultural "age" norms

can also have a structuring effect on individual lives (Eliason et al., 2015; Settersten, 2003). These studies illustrate that time can be heterogeneous across levels of analysis such that individual and social tempos may reflect different degrees of (a)synchrony. If we look at the heterogeneity of time through our tripartite characterization, we can systematically analyze other ways in which tempos, temporal orientations and horizons differ across life domains and levels, and the perceived synchronicities or disjunctures between these different temporalities.

Different life domains have parallel, asynchronous timings, reflecting varying degrees of coherence or conflict, some of them being more rigid than others. The domains of education and employment have been characterized by a strong degree of temporal structuring, given that these are more regulated by social policies, which define the passage through these institutions over time and by age (Settersten, 2003). These domains often operate at faster paces and impose stricter deadlines compared to the family domain, where trajectories are less predictable and more structured informally, through subjective age deadlines (Settersten, 2003). Besides heterogeneity in tempos and paces operating across life domains, there may also be differences in in temporal orientations or horizons. For instance, a focus on the employment domain may carry a stronger future-oriented focus and longer-term horizons.

Research on the heterogeneities of time across levels of analysis has also shown how temporal asynchronicities between biographical, family, or historical times can lead to potential ruptures in life trajectories (Bidart, 2019; Nilsen, 2019). Discontinuities between personal times and mainstream times, or the subjective experience of "living out of time", can occur through major changes or life events (i.e., migration, bereavement, illness, retirement) (Shirani & Henwood, 2011) or changing social tempos producing an individual sense of dislocation (May & Thrift, 2001). Research has only begun to show how the massive disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic favored temporal destructuring and asynchrony in family life (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021a).

Finally, evidence from outside the life course tradition points at the relevance of analyzing differences in temporal orientations, horizons, and perceptions of time passage across social groups and cultural and historical contexts. By way of example, concerning the multidirectionality characteristic, marginalized groups with a history of prejudice and discrimination have been shown to integrate personal and collective pasts into the present and future differently (Jones & Leitner, 2015). With respect to telescopic time, poverty and economic insecurity restrict our temporal horizons, with the future shrinking in favor of present or past time perspectives (Fieulaine & Apostolidis, 2015). Concerning the elasticity of time, age norms may operate differently across contexts or social groups. Ethnic minorities and working-class groups refer more to temporal, earlier deadlines, which has been interpreted because of their more limited opportunities and the fact that advantages and disadvantages accumulate over time, with "clocks thus ticking faster" for these groups (Settersten, 2003). In all, there is much to be learnt about the specific temporal orientations, horizons, and perceptions of time passage of specific populations (across gender, cohort, race, class, or culture) and for specific kinds of experiences.

Discussion and Implications for Life Course Research

LCR needs a more comprehensive and explicit theoretical conceptualization of time. Time perceptions and orientations have only rarely been stressed in LCR despite being studied widely in other disciplines. These insights have not been adequately integrated, whether it be at the level of conceptual development or interpretation of research findings or at the level of research design and data analysis. We propose that LCR—with its biographical approach and a focus on the timing of lives—is best suited to integrate the knowledge produced by tracking facts in time under an absolute framework together with relative time approaches. An actor-based model of life course processes (Bernardi et al., 2019) considers the salience of time perceptions and orientations for biographical agency, while integrating a multilevel and multidomain perspective that other disciplines have largely omitted.

We have argued that much LCR conventionally draws on an absolute understanding of time (i.e., linear, chronological, uniform). We built on multidisciplinary contributions to propose a broader definition that incorporates relative (i.e., multidirectional, elastic, telescopic) understandings of time. The agentic actor is simultaneously temporally oriented towards the past, present and future in any given situation, reflecting the multidirectionality of time. Individuals continuously shift across closer or more distant temporal horizons that emerge through the telescopic nature of time. Time is "dense" because it is experienced at varying tempos and paces reflecting the elasticity of time.

These three characteristics of time constitute analytical distinctions, but they may be partially overlapping and interacting with each other. Different time horizons (telescopic time) may be associated with different perceptions of tempos and paces (elastic time), as studies on the interaction between perceptions of time remaining in life and aged-related time acceleration suggest (Giasson et al., 2019). A more future-oriented person (multidirectional) may also have more extended time horizons (telescopic). Or a more present-oriented person (multidirectional) may perceive time as passing more quickly (elastic).

Our focus on biographical agency has drawn us to develop concepts for addressing relative time at the individual level of experience. However, we do not ignore that perceptions of time passage, temporal orientations and horizons are the product of relational processes, and it is thus crucial to address how they may differ across life domains and levels of analysis, and the perceived synchronicities or disjunctures between these different temporalities.

In short, this chapter has argued that incorporating relative time perspectives alongside and in interaction with absolute time is necessary to produce a comprehensive understanding of the temporal processes that shape lives. The implications for LCR are multiple and important.

First, the multidirectionality of time indicates the need to consider expectations about the future and interpretations of the past as core components of current life course events and transitions. To what extent we are past, present, or future-oriented may influence our choices or moderate their consequences on well-being. Time

perspectives mediate psychological outcomes (Jones & Leitner, 2015) while life course experiences can change our temporal orientations with implications for resilience (Gray & Dagg, 2019).

Second, an understanding of time as telescopic highlights the need to model assumptions about which time horizons individuals are evoking when making decisions, from immediate actions to longer-term orientations that may extend over the lifetime and beyond. The extent of the temporal depth, perceptions of horizons as limited or expansive, and the sharpness of the division between present and future horizons can make individuals more or less focused on advantages of desired choices versus the feasibility of their actions, they can shift motivational priorities or make choices more or less oriented towards the future. Life experiences may in turn change the boundaries of temporal horizons, with critical events or societal crises making the future appear more uncertain (Mische, 2009; Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021b).

Third, the elasticity of time encompasses the idea that experiences of time passage are distorted through subjective perceptions. These distortions are linked to memory biases and other cognitive processes influenced by internal and external factors. Differences in time perception could affect behavior, with individuals perceiving quicker temporal paces rushing more in their decision making. On this point, the elasticity of time connects with the perceptions of asynchrony across individual and social times, as in the literature about age norms. More research is needed on how feeling early, on time or late with respect to life course roles affects whether individuals engage and disengage certain goals, and which strategies they implement to achieve them (Settersten, 2003). Moreover, when using past experiences as part of explanations for current actions, these should not only be weighted according to the objective time distance since occurrence, but also to perceived duration.

While we have insisted on the need to incorporate relative time into LCR, both absolute and relative understandings of time need to be integrated to produce comprehensive explanations of lives which are based on biographical agency. For instance, a characteristic of relative time (elasticity) may be bound up with an attribute typically associated with absolute time (cyclicity). As certain biographical elements peak cyclically in conjunction with some recurrent temporal patterns, time may be perceived to "expand" in these moments. In a lone parent household, the other parent's absence is perceived as much more critical at particular times of the year, such as the beginning of the school year or at times of family celebration, where injunctions towards a normative two-parent family are displayed and reinforced, creating a sense of disjunction from mainstream social practices.

Integrating relative understandings of time into LCR also has strong implications for the definition and measurement of its basic units of analysis: events and transitions. Conventionally, the building blocks of LCR rest on the principles of linear time. Turning points are commonly defined as events or decisions occurring at time *t*, producing change from one state to the other, and provoking disruptions in the trajectory (Holland & Thomson, 2009). Yet, change in life is often incremental. It can come about because of an accumulation of multiple experiences—it can be

gradual, and it can reflect a non-linear evolution, drifts, or random and sometimes contradictory developments (Saldana, 2003). Ruptures in biographical narratives often constitute moments of redefinition of oneself and the social relations in which we are embedded (Bessin, 2009). Hence, the multidirectionality of time, or the simultaneous assessment of past, present, and future life circumstances, operates in the definition of *trigger points* as moments instilling changes in an inner biographical disposition (Strauss, 1997 [1959]); Neale, 2019). *Tipping points* (Gladwell, 2000) are the result of an accumulation of experiences that eventually reach a point of no return, beyond which a new state is finally reached. This relates to the telescopic nature of time, as the irreversibility and the shrinking horizons associated with lifetime horizons create pressures to take stock of one's life and make changes eventually turning gradual transformations into a (self-defined) change of state. In short, both multidirectional and telescopic time help us understand how varied contexts and circumstances are interpreted retrospectively as producing change, and how their meaning may change over time.

Similarly, relative time requires new ways to think about transitions, notably through the lens of elastic time. Research has shown that boundaries between life stages may be more blurred than generally assumed (Bynner, 2007). Transitional stages often unfold gradually, making it difficult to identify a starting date or a relevant marker, as parallel, asynchronous timings can govern different aspects of a transition (Bernardi & Larenza, 2018). It is thus necessary to question the principles of timing and measurable duration (from event X to Y) upon which conventional definitions of transitions rest. As highlighted in the introduction to the volume, this raises questions about the meaning of sequencing or spacing. Transitions can also be perceived as more or less dense depending on the tempos and accumulation of events occurring within a given period. Moreover, the temporal markers, boundaries, and paces for transitions can be revisited at different times in life. Applying a life course time frame (i.e., telescopic time) may lead us to assess previous life periods differently, which reflects how the different relative time characteristics interact in shaping the processual nature of both turning points and transitions. These arguments are in line with Adam's (1990) insight that events do not occur in time, but that they constitute time.

These theoretical considerations should not only speak to qualitatively oriented scholars. An empirical integration into quantitative research certainly poses operational challenges. However, interpretation of life course patterns could include considerations of the ways in which relative time intersects with absolute time to shape processes of change over the life course. In the meantime, prospective qualitative research is still the best suited through successive waves of data production to compare the various pasts, presents and futures narrated at given points in time (Schütze, 2008). Such research can show how individuals recursively revisit the past and the future as different time horizons are applied and perceptions of paces change, enhancing our understanding of the complex mix of objective and subjective dimensions of temporal processes that shape life courses.

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Chapter 9
Biographical Articulation in Transition

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Biographical research approaches have been relevant for the analysis of transitions in the life course for a long time. A biographical perspective allows an analysis of how individuals act in transitions and how they describe their ways of coping with institutional expectations and normative orders in different phases of their life course (c.f. Hof, 2020, 103). A biographical-analytical approach is therefore based on the assumption that in biographical narratives, subjective perspectives and individual patterns of action can only be reconstructed against the background of concrete socio-structural and socio-historical conditions and daily life experiences (c.f. Hof, 2020, 106). From the beginning of the social science-based analysis of (auto-) biographical narratives, "biography" as concept was oriented towards understanding the "relationship between the development of individual identity, on the one hand, and the biographical work of shaping collective phenomena of all kinds as relevant for one's life history "on the other (Schütze, 2014, 225 et seqq.). In this sense, talking about biographical experiences is also connected to discourses and discursive orientation patterns. But collective phenomena in biographical research have been examined with a focus on institutional aspects of the life course. Only in the last few years have the possibilities and methodological implications of analyzing the relationship between discourse and narrative analysis and biography been discussed more intensely (Spies & Tuider, 2017). At this point, using the concept of

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"articulation" appears to be an interesting approach in order to be able to grasp this connection more systematically in biographical analyzes. Articulation – in this sense – is a concept which was developed by the British social scientist Stuart Hall. It attempts to construct a link between discourses and subject positions, described as a suture between the two. Following from this, Spies has worked out how articulation can be integrated into biographical analyzes and linked with biographical-analytical perspectives. This modified concept of "biographical articulation" (Spies, 2009, 2017) is based on the idea that one can always find different forms of articulation in biographical narratives. In the following we refer to these considerations and use the concept of "biographical articulation" to ask how articulations "take place" in biographical narrations about relevant transition experiences in a life history. Which modes of articulation can we find in narrative interviews that are related to important decisions and processes in the lives of interviewees? Based on the re-analysis of three narrative interviews which are linked to different biographical research projects, we try to explain three modes of articulation which emerge in their life stories and which show examples of how interviewees develop new ways of self-positioning, legitimize important decisions, and give direction to their further course of life. To introduce the theoretical frame of our re-analysis, we first explain the most important basic assumptions of articulation in the sense of Stuart Hall (2). After this we present our findings alongside three cases which illustrate how individuals refer to transitions in their life courses by using different forms of articulation. The first research project, that of Andrea Pohling, is based on narrative interviews with people who have suffered sexual violence. The re-analysis of one of the interviews describes how articulation allows the interviewee to be able to speak about experiences of sexual violence and to construct a narrative identity as an affected person as "mode of recognition and recall" (3.1). Noreen Eberle, in the second project, studied decision-making processes of people who have tried to get a higher qualification by attending night school. The case study shows how the interviewees decision-making was accompanied by distancing herself from perceived normative ideas of her family and her religious community. We put the "mode of detachment from and attachment to subject positions" as a way to initiate a large transition but also as an example of the precarity of finding new subject positions in transitions (3.2). The third project, that of Jessica Lütgens, deals with the biographical development of young people who are politically active and who describe themselves as "left-wing" in a political sense. The example of "Sascha" illustrates how politicization can be developed as a mode of searching for alternative political perspectives, which is connected to an extensive process of identifying a new social positioning (3.3). At the end of the article, we shortly discuss the three different modes of articulation and try to compare them in a more systematic manner. All three modes of articulation illustrate the complexity and variety of social positioning and articulation in the sense of Hall. They also underline that it is necessary to understand how articulations are biographically based and, vice versa, how they initiate transitions and move forward important turning points in the life course (4).

Biographical Articulation

The concept of articulation as it is discussed here was developed mainly by Stuart Hall. Beginning in the 1980s, he dealt with the connection and intersection between identity, ethnicity, and culture, and with the influence of hegemonic discourses and structures of dominance. For Hall, identity refers to "the meeting point, the point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate', speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken'" (Hall, 1996a, 5). In this respect, identities are points of temporary attachment to subject positions, positions that can be taken within discourses in order to be able to speak. Hall calls the resulting connection articulation, a "'chaining' of the subject into the flow of the discourse" (Hall, 1996a, 6).

Hall here refers to Althusser's concept of interpellation (1977) and to the concept of articulation by Laclau and Mouffe (1985). However, Hall emphasizes more strongly the difference between individual and subject/position: subject positions emerge from discursive practices and must be taken by individuals so that they are able to speak out (c.f. Spies, 2010, 114). Moreover Hall assumes that different discourses generate different subject positions, so the resulting connection is or can be of short duration. No subject can be reduced to one single subject position. The variety of different discourses corresponds to a number of distinct subject positions, whereas individual positions can definitely be inconsistent with one another (c.f. Angus, 1998).

When people are *interpellated* they are constituted as subjects (c.f. also Butler, 1998, 42 et seqq.). This does not mean – as Althusser (1977) already pointed out – that there is something like an "empty space" (Hall, 1985, 101), because individuals "are 'always-already' subjects" (Hall, 1985, 109): "Actually, we are spoken by and spoken for, in the ideological discourses which await us even at our birth, into which we are born and find our place." (ibid.)

The relation of subject and discursive formations Hall understands *as an articulation* – a "connection that *can* make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions", but this "so-called 'unity'" can also "be re-articulated in different ways" (Hall, 1986, 53).[1] "We are" – according to Hall – "confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one of which we could identify with – at least temporarily." (Hall, 1996b, 598)

Individuals are not constrained to one single position but can take up variable positions within different discursive contexts, especially when discursive contexts change – for instance, in the course of time or due to "biographical turning points"

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[1] The term ‚articulation' has a double meaning, as Hall always emphasizes in this context: On the one hand to "'articulate' means to utter, to speak forth" (Hall, 1986, 53); on the other hand one can speak of an "articulated" lorry on which the front cab and the back trailer can be connected to each other. But the linkage can also be broken (ibid, c.f. Hall, 1985, 113).

such as the appearance of new important people in the environment or changing institutional placement, as a result of which one can narrate new stories about oneself and take up new positions.

Therefore, *difference* is an essential part of every identity. With reference to Derrida, Hall leaves "identity" in its unifying meaning behind. At the same time, he distances himself from Derrida's conception of *différance* that Hall calls an "enormous proliferation of extremely sophisticated, playful deconstruction which is a kind of endless academic game" (Hall, 1991, 50). For this reason, he refuses the idea of fixed identities, but also struggles with the conception of the utterly shifting, endless sliding of signifiers. Hall stands for the tension between what is positioned but still not fixed in this position:

> We have then to go on thinking beyond that mere playfulness into the really hard game which the play of difference actually means to us historically. For if signification depends upon the endless repositioning of its differential terms, meaning in any specific instance depends on the contingent and arbitrary stop, the necessary break. (Hall, 1991, 50 et seqq.)

With the idea of such a break, a cut that constitutes meaning, Hall refers again to Laclau's and Mouffe's discourse theory (1985). In a situation of undecidability the subject is condemned to choose. Each position into which the subject is interpellated or "summoned" entails a decision (c.f. Laclau, 1999).

> […] to say anything at all in particular, you do have to stop talking. Of course every full stop is provisional. […] It is not forever, not totally universally true. It's not underpinned by any infinite guarantees. But just now, this is what I mean; this is who I am. At a certain point, in a certain discourse we call these unfinished closures 'the self', 'society', 'politics', etc. Full stop. OK. (Hall, 1987, 45, see also Hall, 1995)

Such a "full stop" that makes meaning possible is by no means natural and permanent, but – and this is central to Hall's line of argumentation – we have to be positioned and we have to position ourselves in order to speak. In this regard Hall compares identity to a bus ticket: to arrive anywhere, you have to first get on. In doing so it is clear that the ticket you carry can never represent the whole of you, "but you have to buy a ticket in order to get from here to there" (Hall, 1995, 65), in exactly the same way you have to be positioned somewhere to say anything at all. "Even if you are positioned in order to unposition yourself, even if you want to take it back, you have to come into language to get out of it." (Hall, 1991, 51).

So a moment of agency is already inherent in the concept of interpellation, but when taking "articulation" into consideration agency is even more precisely conceptualized: Subjects are never constrained to one interpellation; no one can be reduced to one single subject position, e.g., as "immigrant" or "black" (Hall, 1985). At different moments and throughout our existence, in relation to specific discursive formations, we remain open to be positioned and situated in different ways (c.f. Hall, 1985, 106): "[T]here is no essential, unitary 'I' – only the fragmentary, contradictory subject I become." (Hall, 1985, 109) In addition, Hall's critique on "the endless repositioning" points to the necessity of decisions: in order to speak,

(apparently explicit) positions have to be taken. This in turn implies a second moment of agency: if subjects have to be positioned to say anything at all, that means – and this is another advantage of the concept of articulation – that positions can be abandoned to take another, new, contradictory position. Every such position has to be understood as "strategic" – in Spivak's sense – and arbitrary.

Empirical Approach: Different Forms and Aspects of Biographical Articulation

In the following we present three different approaches to biographical articulation which illustrate and empirically illuminate different forms and aspects of the concept of articulation based on the introduced biographical research projects.

The Case Study of Susanne: The Modus of Articulation of Recognition and Recall

The case study of Susanne comes from a study which deals with the transition from not speaking to speaking about experiences of sexual violence in childhood and adolescence from the perspectives of the affected people.[2] It addresses the questions of how they transition to talking about their experience(s) in their life courses and how they shape these narratives in the context of their life histories. In doing so, it places a central focus on the influence of media-social discourses in this process. Regarding the context of the study, it should be said that after a long history of silence and de-thematization, the phenomenon of sexual violence against children and adolescents in Germany has, since March 2010, been increasingly represented in the media-public as well as in the political-scientific discourse. In the following, the life story and case study of Susanne will be presented in condensed form and the respective form of articulation of sexual violence in childhood and adolescence will be presented: the modus of recognition and recall.

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[2] "Articulations of sexual violence. Biographies, discourses and the transition to speaking" (Pohling, 2021). Within the study 12 biographical narrative interviews were conducted and three case reconstructions were created using a modified "discourse-informed" version of biographical case reconstruction (cf. Rosenthal, 1995, 2015; Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann, 2004; Keller & Bosančić, 2017: 38 f.). In addition, a methodical examination of the question of how the topic of sexual violence against children and adolescents has been and is being dealt with in the public media in Germany took place. For this purpose, a content-analytical preliminary study of 14 newspaper and magazine articles, but also of prefaces and introductory texts of (scientific) publications between 1907 and 2019 was made, in order to work out specific discursive patterns of interpretation and subject positions of the discourses.

Susanne is born in 1956, the second daughter of her parents. She grows up together with her siblings in a small West German town. Her father is well-respected in the town, as he runs a medium-sized company. Only 1 year after Susanne's birth, the fifth child is born. It can be assumed that Susanne's mother takes care of the children and manages the household, so the parents almost certainly lived and worked in the traditional distribution of gender roles, deviation from which is hardly imaginable at this time. Her father runs the family business and has the role of the family breadwinner. Since childcare outside the home was also an exception in West Germany at this time, Susanne probably does not go to kindergarten and spends a lot of time in her parents' home in the care of her mother and older siblings. Susanne remembers that friendships or contact with children outside the family were very rare. In the narrative of her childhood, Susanne describes various forms of physical, but also psychological violence by both parents: "My childhood was also overshadowed by a lot of violence. We were beaten a lot. There was no-no warmth." (Interview with Susanne, line 201). Additionally, Susanne's father sexually abused Susanne since her earliest childhood, which she began to remember at the age of 48. In the narrative of her life story Susanne recalls feelings of fear of death and revenge that she experienced as a child in the context of sexual violence. She reports vaginal and oral sex with her father, but also with her uncle, as well as seemingly "non-violent", consensual sexual experiences with her father, which she only of late and reluctantly also classifies as sexual abuse. In the analysis of the life story of Susanne it becomes clear that in telling her life story follows the sequence of events most relevant to her and does not orientate herself to a chronological narrative structure assumed to be collectively valid (c.f., Bukow & Spindler, 2006, 6). She begins the narration of her life story neither with her birth nor the place where she grew up, but with the recollection of sexual abuse by her father. Susanne's expectation of herself is formulated right at the beginning of the main narrative when she expresses the hope of remembering "everything", i.e. to tell as comprehensive and supposedly as complete a memory story as possible regarding the abuse. It can be shown that in her life story, like in a jigsaw puzzle, she puts her abuse story together piece by piece. Susanne's life story narrative is therefore structured by her memories and insights regarding the "double", i.e. sexual and financial abuse by two male figures central to her.

To sum up, it can be shown that the articulation mode of recognizing and remembering is based on the experience of many years of severe experiences of violence in various dimensions in childhood in the family context as well as on the experience of dissociative amnesia. The biographer began her transition to speaking about her experiences at a time when there were only a few public forms of engagement with this topic beyond a marginal, scientific discourse. The mode is based on biographical practices and strategies of processing these experiences with the help of confronting the abusive parents and working with self-help groups for many years. It is interwoven with a positioning with which the biographer distances herself from a psychological-medical subject position of an "incurably ill" person. On the one

hand, she positions herself as a person affected by severe trauma and dissociative amnesia, while simultaneously and in contrast, she distances herself from the accompanying discursive pattern of the psychological-medical interpretation that she is thus quasi-incurably ill. In contrast, the experience is thematized as something that can heal and help others.

> Well, I think many doctors say that trauma can't be cured or that it can't be healed or something. That's just not true, is it? So, in any case, I say that trauma can be cured. (Interview with Susanne, line 2325)
>
> […] I have the feeling that you can outgrow it, this abuse, and then you also become stronger in a certain way. So, the/ um I wouldn't have been able to talk like that before, yes? I can also help others now. (Interview with Susanne, line 2206)

The research, of which Susanne's story is part, identified and described three forms of articulation used by persons affected by childhood sexual violence. These forms of articulation of sexual violence, condensed on the basis of the case reconstructions, answer the question of how those affected speak about their experiences and how they refer to social discourses by doing so. They not only provide information about the individual transition to speaking after sexual violence, but also about the time-dependent, discursive, and social influences which affect the way people express themselves as affected by this form of violence.

Within the framework of the discourse sketch, it could also be made clear that discourses on sexualized violence tend to be circular rather than progressive and are permeated by gender-specific, individualizing, as well as stigmatizing patterns of interpretation and bodies of knowledge, which point not only - but also - to the dominance of psychological-medical, but also pedagogical professional discourses. Possibilities of identification and positioning beyond normative and stigmatizing patterns of interpretation and subject positions, such as – in Susanne's case – that of the incurably traumatized person who only "late" in life remembers the sexual violence experiences of childhood, seem rare for those affected. However, it was possible to show alternative positionings and refer to them. The study shows that articulations of sexual violence as results of disclosure processes are as diverse as the life-historical transitional processes to speaking that underlie them. It thus also highlights the diversity of the ways of experiencing, dealing with, and articulating experiences of sexual violence.

The Case Study of Maria: Detachment and Attachment to Subject Positions

The following part focuses on the question of how detachment from and attachment to subject positions is processed in biographical narrations. The empirical example discussed here is extracted from the unpublished study on interdependencies of educational choices using the example of persons returning to school in adulthood in

order to obtain a high school diploma.[3] In light of educational inequalities based on social background, Noreen Eberle analyzes how people for whom achieving a high school diploma and attending university was not self-evident – that is, those for whom a standard education was assimilated with a lower secondary education or a secondary school certificate followed by professional training – embed their decision-making processes around making up their high school diploma (*Abitur*) later on. Accordingly, their biographies are particularly suited to demonstrating the negotiation and construction processes between (1) preconceived social role models, (2) institutional restrictions and (3) the reproduction of inequalities when it comes to educational decisions.

Through case reconstructions it became apparent that the interviewees both implicitly and explicitly emphasized their abilities to act and decide, along with their self-determination, throughout their biographical narratives, namely in decision-making processes regarding transitional phases in the life course and in non-standard transitions that are not necessarily expected in the "normal life course" (as described by Kohli). During the case reconstructions, the analytical question of how to theoretically embed and describe decision-making processes in biographical narratives arose. Martin Seel's concept of self-determination (Seel, 2002, 2014) has proven to be a fruitful theoretical approach which grasps decision-making processes as multi-agential, socially embedded processes. Although Seel does not explicitly refer to biographical articulation and "subject positions" in the sense of Hall (see part 2), his concept of "decision making processes" is analytically connectable to these. Seel outlines that subjects cannot think and act either freely or determinately, but in dependency structures of recognition: in decision-making processes we are subsequently "[...] guided by possibilities in which we have open margins. In determining, we allow ourselves to be determined." (Seel, 2014, 7 et seqq.)

These possibilities do not exist in a vacuum, but unfold in a historically and culturally predefined world "[...] in which all biographical experience is always in a context of social experience." (Seel, 2002, 293). Subsequent possibilities "[...] cannot be invented straight away, they have to be found through conscious interaction with the world. Letting oneself be addressed by possibilities of the respective historical world is thereby not only a prerequisite and a consequence of practical determination; and it is more than just a procedure; it is almost its whole meaning." (Seel, 2002, 291).

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[3] "Passing the high school diploma in adulthood. A biographical study on interdependencies of educational choices" (Eberle, 2021, manuscript in preparation); Between 2017 and 2018, a total of 16 biographical-narrative interviews were conducted (according to Rosenthal, 2015) with persons of mostly non-academic backgrounds who, at the time of the interview, were either in a programme to obtain the high school diploma or who had already passed the exams (through vocational high schools, evening classes, colleges, etc.). For the detailed case reconstructions, three interviews of persons were selected who had attended the *Abendgymnasium* – night school – alongside a full- or part-time job. Through individual case reconstructions and a detailed analysis of biographical narrative interviews (following Rosenthal, 2015), the main focus lies with the question of how educational decisions - understood as multi-agential, socially constructed processes – are interlinked with social backgrounds (c.f. El-Mafaalani, 2017, 103).

Whereas Seel does not explicitly refer to discourses which constitute subject positions, his concept of "being addressed by possibilities" shows remarkable similarities to Althussers' concept of interpellation.

The question to be dealt with in the following empirical example extracted from the case reconstruction of Maria is how and to what extent the ability to make decisions (c.f. Seel, 2002, 2014) is marked in biographical narratives, in light of sometimes restrictive institutional settings and notions of normality, and under which premises detachment from and attachment to subject positions takes place.

Maria grows up in a fundamentalist Christian community and remains an active member until the age of 30. The incorporation of cultural capital and (school) education is attributed value within neither her family nor the religious community. As a woman in this religiously conservative environment, she finds no recognition for the acquisition of educational capital that she is striving for. Maria's earliest memories of her childhood are already marked by experiences of rejection because of her striving for education:

> And you don't strive for higher school qualifications like the Abitur (slaps the table with the flat of her hand), although there are people 'who aren't stupid', um, but they were all such worldly things, that you don't need (Interviewer: "Yes."). The men become craftsmen or women something (quite) normal (Interviewer: "Mmhm."). Um-, you just have your, your, uh your, you have your family and ne, and the community, and that's enough (speaks faster). (Maria, 2017, interview 1, p. 8, l. 8–13)

Later in her life Maria works in the administrative field and describes the constant switching between the attributed subject position by the strict family structures on the one hand and her job in the public sector on the other as a balancing act between "two parallel existences" (Maria, 2017, interview 1, p. l. 12, 5–6). Since her early childhood Maria has incorporated the ability to work hard physically in the household – a field of competence she cannot put to use in her everyday professional life as an administrative specialist, and she fails to compensate for her self-attested lack of professional profile through hard work. Her intellectual abilities are neither encouraged by her employer nor recognized by the community or family.

Maria links her narratives regarding the decision to enroll as a pupil at night school to processes of detachment from both her family and religious structures as well as her work environment: Maria can neither act out her joy of intellectual activity within the family/church setting nor in her job. This lack of a suitable counterpart leads to dissonances between external and incarnated structures (c.f. El-Mafaalani, 2017) and finally results in her leaving the religious community, breaking off contact with her family, and seeing a therapist who attests to her above-average talent. Through the processes of detachment from the church and family milieu, the external reassurance of her intellectual potential, and her enrollment in night school, Maria succeeds in (re)establishing a sense of self-determination:

> And then it was one of those spontaneous decisions and I knew that I was going to make it (Interviewer: "Mmhm.") [...] And then I... uh, I registered [at night school, note from the author] and went there with the idea, I... stop when I want (?). I do it as long as I enjoy it (Interviewer: "Yes.") and when I don't want to go there anymore, I decide to stop and then I've decided to stop and then I've decided about it and not anyone else. (Maria, 2017, interview 1, p. 5, l. 19–22)

The self-determined aspects she focuses on in the interview with regard to attending night school can be identified as a counter to the control that she felt was exerted upon her by her family, religious community, and work environment. Although Maria ties the acquisition of the Abitur to the possibility of being able to study medicine, the joy of intellectual activity appears as taking precedence over the principle of achievement ("I'll do it for as long as I enjoy it").

Despite the institutional setting of the evening high school, which she describes as restrictive, Maria uses her catching-up school time as a space where recognition is granted, both with regard to her person and her intellectual abilities: "Um, and of course it makes me happy to get feedback now at school, from the teachers and so on (speaks faster). That, to be seen and and the potential, um." (Maria, 2017, interview 1, p. 25, l. 28–30).

Maria describes her time at night school as a space for development, in which she experiences being "seen" and recognized for the first time in her life. The time at night school is identified as a catalyst for emancipation processes, (re)orientation, and demarcation from others.

In the presented case study, the narration on the decision to acquire a high school diploma is accompanied by narrations of detachment from (overcome) subject positions that are no longer perceived as coherent and attachment to (new) subject positions that seem to be more appropriate. It is shown that attributed subject positions (e.g., by family, friends and peers as well as institutions) do not necessarily run in one direction, but rather, processes of distancing oneself from perceived normative ideas coming from the biographers' environment take place. In order to continue her educational journey, Maria has to negate the subject positions attributed by her milieu of origin; she can adopt new subject positions only for the price of giving up overcome subject positions, which ultimately means breaking off contact with her entire milieu of origin. The empirical example shows that these processes of detachment and appropriation can sometimes be painful and precarious. Subsequently decisions were neither made "freely" nor "spontaneously", but within complex (social) interdependencies of recognition, acceptance and appreciation.

The Case Study of Sascha: A Search for Alternative Social Positioning Within Politicization

The third empirical example is focused on the process of biographical articulation as a search for alternative social positioning within politicization on the left, and is taken from a study analyzing how and why young people become politically active on the left. To answer this question, narrative interviews with politically active young people who positioned themselves as active in different segments of the left wing were conducted and analyzed. Even though the study did not have a discourse-analytical approach, the concepts of articulation as described here (see part two of this article) can give some insights into the structural aspects of biographical articulation as a search for alternative social positioning within politicization. In the

following, the case of Sascha will be presented. Some of the structural aspects of politicization will be illustrated using this case, and then those aspects will be reframed by "articulation". A short summary of the process of searching for alternative social positioning within politicization will be presented as a form of biographical articulation.

Sascha grows up in a family of low education in a rural area. In his young life he faces violence within his family and the separation of his parents. Furthermore, he experiences bullying by the boys in his football club and school and sexual violence by a friend of his parents. During this period of time, around the age of 13, Sascha becomes involved in the punk movement. After his mother's remarriage when Sascha is 15 years old, the family moves to a bigger city where Sascha spends some time in a psychiatric hospital. A few weeks after he is released, he becomes active in a left-wing youth organization, and comes into contact with the queer and antifascist radical left. He describes his life being completely transformed by that experience. At the time of the interview, Sascha is 21 years old, has started studying in the social sector, identifies himself as "herself", as a woman, and lives in a leftist housing project.

Sascha has been in his young life confronted with exclusion and violence, especially in institutions such as family and school. In school, she explains, she has been bullied, "because suddenly I belonged to the uncool ones; [...] no one wanted to spend time with me, I walked around all alone and hoped that no one would see me, no one would hear me, and that they would just ignore me." In her youth Sascha felt as though being a 'real man' was something demanded of her, and when she was unable to live up to or conform to what that role entailed, was physically violated. As a 10-year-old, Sascha had been isolated and vulnerable and had no adult or peer group with which he could talk about his experiences. His life thereby starts with the inability to take part in a "normal life" and with the struggle to fit in as a boy in a male-dominated environment, as well as with the experience of failing when trying to speak about his experiences.

At about 13 Sascha starts to listen to punk music and wear clothes with spikes. He becomes politically active, in a sense, through aesthetics and music, and says: "Somehow I had colorful trousers, Doc Martens boots, listened to punk music all day long in my little village, and swore [...] against God, the state and the nation." (Interview with Sascha). This sequence shows how Sascha transforms through the youth subculture of punk from the young boy who was not able to participate in his environment into a person who does not want to. The researcher thereby concluded that in some cases politicization is performed by the "articulation of Not Taking Part" in groups, institutions, and ideologies that represent exclusion, discrimination and violence (c.f. Lütgens, 2021, 153 et seqq.). It could also have been read – following the concept of articulation – as Sascha starting diffusely to searching and try out other subject positions than the one into which he had been called to participate. These new subject positions allow him to show resistance to his environment.

Sascha's life changes completely after he moves and becomes politically organized. Sometime after he becomes a member of the nationwide youth organization "Young Left", Sascha is introduced to the queer wing of the left. There he comes

into contact with theories about gender, sex, and sexism and recounts: "'Gender' was becoming very important in my friendship-circle [….], that I started [….] to think about the deconstruction of gender […] and everything changed quite quickly […]." (Interview with Sascha). Sascha learns during this time that the events that shape his biography, are coming together in the silver lining "gender": his father attacking his mother, the boys bullying him, the man abusing him. Deconstructing gender and supporting LGBTIQ* thereby becomes the goal of Sascha's political activism, and later Sascha will break from gender norms by becoming a woman. What the researcher reconstructed in her study of politicization as the "appropriation of transformative learning-experiences" (c.f. Lütgens, 2021, 161 et seqq.) could also be read – following the concept of articulation – as the process of applying a new, in this case political, discursive framing to her biography, and within that process choosing another subject position than the one into which she was previously a part.

Around the age of 20 Sascha is becoming highly active in the left scene and lives in a queer and antifascist housing project. She tells us about her collective:

> These people have the same ideas on living-together, communication [….] to try to deconstruct society […] and to live these ideas as an example. [….] Because every time someone is facing [….] utopian ideas, saying , "That will not work," […] but when you just […] make it possible to live these ideas, then this argumentation is not working anymore. Cause you can say "Look, there it is!" (Interview Sascha)

This sequence shows how Sascha is now together with her group, producing and living new ideas on politics, forms of living, and being in relationship to one another. Politicization happens by "the making of solidary relationships" (c.f. Lütgens, 2021, 156 et seqq.); but in the light of articulation, this sequence could also be read as the process of Sascha producing and establishing those new subject positions not just for herself, but also with and for others.

Applying Hall's concept of articulation, biographical articulation can be read as a search for alternative social positioning within politicization. This process is performed in four structural elements: firstly, the biographer is making experiences of being called into a subject position and affectively expressing the attitude of Not Taking Part. Secondly, he/she is diffusely searching for other subject positions by trying out other discursive framings for biographical experiences. Thirdly, she is choosing another subject position within a political discursive framing for oneself and, fourthly, she is establishing those new possible subject positions collectively with and for others as a way of "doing" politics. Politicization as a continuous, diachronic, and interdependent biographical transformation process of articulation does not stop, but goes on and on; there are new experiences to be made, new calls to take subject positions, to get experiences and new potential positions, etc. Politics, from this perspective, could be read not just as something one consciously does to make an impact on or influence society, but also as individual and collective transformation of established subject positions and the production of new subject positions by articulation, positions that in this case support marginalized individuals and collectives in their attempt to live in and survive society.

Conclusion

The results of the three case studies underline the assumption that discourses are powerful opportunities to gain a voice, to be able to speak and/or to transition into new subject positions. In the empirical cases three dominant modes of biographical articulation as nurturing discourses and subject positioning were discovered:

In the first example, the case of Susanne, the process of articulation is understood as the possibility to construct an identity-forming and progressive positioning as a person who is affected by sexual violence. In confrontation with discourses on the necessity of investigating sexual abuse, the linking of one's own person with these discourses opens up the possibility of speaking. At the same time, the confrontation with these discourses requires affected persons to position themselves in the face of potential attribution of a victim status, making it necessary to defend themselves against being pathologized by the medical discourse and social stigmatization.

The second example, the case of Maria, showed that opposing subject positions can also become precarious. In this case self-initiated biographical change becomes visible as something in which the abandonment of no-longer sustainable subject positions is felt as a painful process. Articulation in Maria's case goes hand in hand with parting and the loss of strong family ties. Even though articulation can be understood as something that refers to a wide range of possibilities in the alternation of articulating and rearticulation, this biographical case shows how much articulation is related to the structures of and the struggle for recognition.

In Sascha's case we can see how articulation can be understood as testing and creating new subject positions by taking on a pioneering role. Living in a collective framed as politically left-wing gives Sascha the chance to position herself in a radical new way within an intertwining of an individual and collective politicization process. The case analysis also underscores that political collectives still hold to the idea that the private is political (and vice versa) and that articulation could thereby be read as one personal and collective step in changing the society, for example facing and confronting gender identities.

The recourse to a concept of biographical articulation requires carefully identifying and justifying the biographically relevant positioning processes against the background of a diverse universe of other possible subject positions and offerings. Three different modes of articulation were identified in the empirical cases: in the first case *recognition and recall*, in the second *detachment and attachment* and in the third the *search for alternative social positioning*. These three modes of articulation can be read as patterns of biographical articulation and have in common that they work as engines for transitions in the life course. Through the change of reference points, such as discursive fragments, appearances of new peers and new institutional settings, different modes of articulation open up. The reformulation of biographical patterns as forms of articulation refers significantly to the possibilities of taking up new subject positions in a life course, especially in biographical turning points, but always in relation to social (im-)possibility structures. Specific discourses open up possibilities at the price of becoming entangled in some and

detached from others. In a biographical context, articulation can therefore be described as a way of finding a new language for existential biographical questions, the searching and following of a path and while doing so and repositioning oneself in a different way in order to accomplish transitions.

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Chapter 10
"Everything But Ordinary"? Reflections on Extra-/Ordinariness in Life Course Transitions

Anna Wanka and Julia Prescher

Transitions in the life course imply a multitude of changes – what we have previously experienced as everyday life is interrupted, apparent certainties are questioned, new practices are learned, social positions change and everyday life transforms. Here, we provide insight into the ways in which the relationship between ordinary and extraordinary are constitutive in practices and processes that mark transitions as something *special*, unusual or new.

We draw upon the notion of extra-\ordinariness as a heuristic for different modi of marking transitions as special. With this, we understand extra−/ordinary as an open and mutually relational conceptual bundle that sensitizes us to focus transition research on the most diverse aspects and phenomena of transition and transformation, and how they relate to one another. From a *Doing Transitions* perspective that sensitizes us to the social practices of 'doing' transitions, we aim to reconstruct how extraordinariness and ordinariness are involved, and related, in transitional practices and processes. Against this backdrop, we ask: How does everyday life change in transitions through the relationality between the ordinary and the extra-ordinary? Which practices mark the extra−/ordinariness of life course transitions and are there different modes of extra−/ordinariness?

The first part of this contribution reflects upon the existing literature on theoretical understandings for extra−/ordinariness in transitions. We outline how a relational and practice-theoretical understanding of transitions is linked to extra−/ordinariness, formulate theoretical considerations of how this concept represents an heuristic improvement and discuss changes between ordinariness and extra−/

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ordinariness as a mode of transformation. Our aim here is not to present a fixed, ready-made concept, but rather to first identify incentives and perspectives, formulate them into central questions, and use empirical examples to suggest the possibilities of such a perspective.

The second part illustrates practices of extra−/ordinariness in doing transitions with two research projects on transitions at different points in the life course: the transition between childhood and adolescence or adulthood, using the example of the *Jugendweihe*[1] as a rite of initiation; and the transition between adulthood and old age, using the transition to retirement as an example. The third part discusses how the relational constitution of extra−/ordinariness can be understood as a particular practice of differentiation that both produces and performs change in life course. Finally, we argue for the use of this concept in a relational and reflexive transition research.

Extra-/Ordinariness as a Relational Heuristic

Concepts of ordinariness are found across disciplines and come in different shapes and forms. The same is true for the category of the non-ordinary or extra-ordinary. In sociology, ordinariness has often been equated with mundane aspects of everyday life. For example, Norbert Elias (1978, p. 22) wrote to the concept of everyday life that it is *"heavily laden with the weight of theoretical reflections". But [...] Quite seldom is uttered what is actually conceived as "non-ordinary".* It seems important to consider these categories in relation to one another to understand their involvement in transitions.

Let us first turn to the concept of the ordinariness in everyday life: Here, Dücker shows in the etymology of the term that the composition of "every" and "day" "[...] bring the social meaning of the collective, common and the temporal of regularity and repetition" (Dücker, 2007, p. 122). Everyday life in this sense is profane, trivial, average and ordinary. *Everyday/ordinary refers to what everyone has to do [...] and cope with emotionally on any given day, which is usually performed and expected in a particular present and therefore does not usually attract public or media attention. (*Dücker*, 2007, p. 123).*

The notion of attention, the making visible and public of something that attracts attention, is a fruitful concept in this regard. Donna Haraway (1988) situates this making visible in her essay on situated knowledge with the mirroring practices of seeing. Applied to everyday life, we can infer: Everyday life is seldom *made visible* and seldom seen – it often unfolds below the radar of our attention – and refers to what is done on a daily basis, i.e. the practices of shaping everyday life. These

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[1] In Germany, Jugendweihe is a ritual practice or a secular rite of initiation and a way to celebrate and create a transition between childhood and adulthood. The practice dates to the second half of the nineteenth century. The most common English translation is youth consecration, which shows the special historic and discursive relationship between secular and religious rites.

include not only the "what", but also the "how", the "when" and the "where". Ever since industrialization introduced a spatial, temporal, and qualitative distinction between "work" and "leisure", work has become increasingly legislatively standardized. Despite this statistical standardization, which can be seen not only in time-use data but also, for example, in the electricity or water consumption of households, "everyday life" also diverges according to socio-demographic characteristics and corresponding living situations. With this Relations between different categories, it should be reflected, that

> 'everyday life' comprises a multitude of socially established, possible and individually used forms of realization […]; overall, gender, age and social class have an effect on everyday life. Given their own everyday lives, some often consider the everyday lives of others to be rather non-everyday. (Dücker, 2007, pp. 123–124)

With this perspective and the reflexive perspective of doing transitions everyday life and ordinariness (also their opposites) must be thought together with normalities and normativities, and the bound of doing transitions and doing differences (Stauber, 2020).

Transitions have both their intrinsic value as complexes of practices and processes, but they also recur to something that frames and is referred to as "temporary" – the states that bound them. These states are constructions that refer to a "normal" social order, and for van Gennep (1909) or Turner (1969), to a social structure as a more or less temporally and institutionally stabilized arrangement of positions. The starting points for transitions, understood as states, are socially (re)recognizable positions and bundles of characteristics, to which a relative stability is attributed (e.g., old person, child). In terms of practice theory, they obtain this stability through the fact that certain practices of their production are repeated, routinized and, in turn, normalized in everyday life, whereby a relative normality is ultimately ascribed to them. If transitional subjects change between these "normal states", i.e., if they change from children ("normal state A") to adolescents ("normal state B"), then a phase of re-adjustment, rehearsal and routinization of a new normality is necessary in between. These transitional phases are read as non-ordinary solely because they are always also temporally limited by the states they delimit.

This becomes clear, for example, in the differences between (extra-ordinary) festivities with their rituals and everyday life with its rituals. Ordinariness and extra-ordinariness are relational, which, according to Dücker (2007), presupposes a "functional commonality" (ibid., p. 124), "In this way, rituals secure experiential situations that make visible to the everyday world its meaningful, value-based foundation, as well as its perspective of origin and continuity."

Such a ritual framing and corresponding exaltation was and is also granted to (some) transitions in the life course. The rhythm of ritual action is made recognizable through certain repetitions, for example at special times (cyclical) or occasions (occasional) (Dücker, 2007). Through the repetitions, a starting point for identities or biographies is laid or a temporal-social relationship is marked as generational. In a life course reference, rituals receive their structures through the life stage norms, in which they are embedded, among other things. They hold the claim of conveying

dispositions for subsequent actions in everyday life: youth dedication as a contested educational institution (Gehring, 2000; Griese, 2000) reflects exactly this aspect; the interest of adults in influencing how adolescents grow up and that of adolescents in co-determining this process under their own rules of the game. That will be discussed later in the paper, together with empirical data.

Ritual practice is thus *one* manifestation of the extra-ordinary that creates and shapes transitions. Another, more postmodern manifestation is studied in event research – from the Love Parade to wave-gothic gatherings, pilgrimages, and so on. Events comprise a special form of aestheticized, public community experience and, according to the thesis of event research, replace rituals as traditional forms in a wide variety of places. In connection with rituals of transition, reference is often made to mechanisms of modernization as "eventization" (Gebhardt et al., 2000; Hitzler, 2011). The "communalizing force" no longer lies in a common life situation or life goals:

> Events are the social places and periods of time at and in which the members of postmodern forms of society (such as scenes), which in comparison to traditional (such as families) or classically modern forms of society (such as associations, clubs, parties) are disproportionately looser and less binding (cf. Hitzler, 1998), find at least particular and momentary awareness of themselves. Here they find the opportunity to experience belonging and to develop an ego-stabilizing identity by emphasizing their own particularity and by setting themselves apart from others – largely through aesthetic stylistic means. (Gebhardt et al., 2000, p. 21).

The subsequent question could be, how eventization and doing transitions go together? Do we also find extra-ordinariness outside of such clearly defined phenomena as rituals or events? With that we should also think about, how far "outside" subjects and formations can be of what counts as order, as a position in or part of social structure and also ordinariness (Turner, 1969, 1998). Dücker emphasizes that traffic regulations also apply to Carnival (Dücker, 2007, p. 41–42). For categorizing more subtle differences and determining the different aggregate states of the particular, he suggests, for example, "immanent to everyday life, transcending everyday life, and away from everyday life" (cf. Dücker, 2007, p. 125; Thurn, 1980). As this categorization suggests, there are forms of extra−/ordinariness that are strongly embedded in everyday life and sometimes also stabilize it (immanent to everyday life), while others reach beyond everyday life (transcending everyday life), and still others alienate everyday life (bridging everyday life). Below, we will discuss the extent to which these play a role in transition processes.

Transition research can generate the analytical question of how practices of producing and shaping transitions make change as such visible and public. Often, ritual practices of doing transitions refer to everyday together with an old 'before' and a new 'after' in a special normative way (Dücker, 2007). With link to a life course, we could ask how extra−/ordinariness (re-)create and (re-)present un/doing differences and normativities. Clary Krekula et al. (2017) refers to – especially age-specific – normalities of shaping everyday life as "norma/temporality" – and also transitions between different states and statuses. Elizabeth Freeman's (2010) concept of "chrononormativity" describes the practices of shaping everyday life that are socially

framed as normal and their divergences according to the respective phase of life as "age-coded". While chrononormativity guides when a person is supposed to do or have achieved specific steps in life – e.g., finish school, have children, retire – norma/temporality deals with the mirror-image associated normalities at the level of everyday life. If one wants to be considered an "adult," for example, one has to work according to chrononormative requirements. This is accompanied by a specific norma/temporal organization of everyday life – and also transitions. If we follow this conception, we should think about extraordinariness in everyday life and transitions together with normativitiy, but we can use chrononormativity also to ask empirical when extraordinariness becomes important while doing transitions and which discourses are bounded, e.g., with traveling and retirement or family celebrations during *Jugendweihe*.

Extra-/Ordinariness in Transitions: Two Empirical Examples

This paper raises the central question of how, when and where extra-\ordinariness occurs, is constituted when attributions, identifications and representations change, and how this differs between different transitions in the life course. In doing so, we take up the underlying theme of this volume, which is centrally concerned with life ages as social constructions and categories of both social (Nassehi, 2017) and cultural differentiations (Hirschauer, 2017) in the life course. Accordingly, people in different life phases experience different transitions: children do not retire, and pensioners only go to kindergarten because of their grandchildren. Schooling starts at age 6 or 7, not at age 18; parenthood happens in adulthood, not at age 90 or 9. In this paper we focus on two such transitions, namely from adolescence to adulthood and from adulthood to old age. Both will be done by analyzing very concrete (transitional) events, namely the youth dedication ceremony and retirement.

The research project *"Doing Jugendweihe. Ritual Practices of Transition"* (Prescher, forthcoming) ethnographically approaches the questions: how youth initiation is practically carried out and which differentiations constitute the transition, who and what is involved in youth initiation and in which time-spaces it takes place. The study refers to grounded theory approaches (Mey & Mruck, 2011; Strübing, 2010) and considerations of practice-theoretical methodologies. A total of nine adolescents were accompanied for up to 1 year in the preparation, implementation and follow-up. Central research methods are the ethnographic interview (Spradley, 1979), participant observation, document and artifact collections (on image and video analyses Hoffmann, 2016). For analysis, this project uses situational analysis (Clarke, 2012) and methods of ethnographic collage (Friebertshäuser et al., 2013).

The project *"Doing Retiring – The Social Practices of Transiting from Work to Retirement and the Distribution of Transitional Risks"* focuses on those constellations of practices that constitute and shape the transition to retirement and asks who and what is involved in these practices, where they take place and which differences they constitute. To this end, we methodologically combine a qualitative longitudinal

study, in which 30 individuals are followed between the employment and post-employment phases over 3 years with episodic interviews (Flick, 2011), photo and activity diaries, and observations, with statistical analysis of quantitative secondary data. This paper draws on the first two qualitative waves of the survey (2017; 2019).

Neither example focuses on the process of changing in everyday life-practices while doing transitions, such as using time or doing breakfast differently while transitioning to retirement (Wanka, 2019). Instead, they focus on variations of (ritual) practices, which are creating extraordinary times, spaces and things of transformation in transitions. In comparison, we see that not only (mostly) established ritual practices like *Jugendweihe* are involved in doing transitions and that transition practices can include different forms and qualities of extra−/ordinariness. Extra marked spaces and times are part of shaping transitions and discursive and performative ways to transform the transition subjects from an old to a new state or status (Van Gennep, 1909, 1986, 2005).

Extra-\Ordinariness in the Transition to Retirement

For the exemplary analysis of extra-\ordinariness in the transition to retirement, we single out a specific practice complex that every participant mentioned as a theme in their own transition: transitional travel. Travelling is certainly not the only extra-\ordinary practice in the transition to retirement, but it is a very explicit one. In general, traveling represents a form of social organization of extra-ordinariness (cf. Schäfer, 2015). In the context of transitions, however, traveling acquires an even more specific quality of extra-\ordinariness: it is often longer in duration, more expensive, further away, and in general different from 'normal' vacation.

Whereas we can see this quality in manifold transitions, like honeymoon travel after a wedding or the notion of 'traveling the world' after graduation, late life travel is peculiar. Older people are one of the fastest growing groups of travelers (Eurostat, 2016), due to both demographic aging as well as the specific propensity of the Baby Boomer generation to travel (Day et al., 2018). In addition to this generation's improved financial and health resources, on average, and their biographical experience of leisure travel, studies suggest that Baby Boomers also exhibit a specific consumer orientation that focuses on meaning-making and self-exploration, rather than expediency (see Gilleard & Higgs, 2007; Green, 2006). Travel during the transition between working and non-working phases is a specific and growing phenomenon in this context.

Based on the project results, it can be argued that travel as a practice in the transition to retirement has a dual and seemingly paradoxical relationship to extra-\ordinariness in the process of transition: First, traveling practices that directly follow the end of employment establish the extra-ordinariness of the liminal phase that follows. Many research participants undertook a trip (more or less directly) after their employment ended, and this trip was often planned well in advance, long in duration

and to a far-away place. Asked about how he experienced his first day in retirement, Tom answers:

> We went on vacation immediately then [...] practically without a gap. So I quit one day and the next day we went down to Spain. For four weeks. [...] So for me that was also very important and that was also a very good decision now, also in retrospect, to take a vacation here right away. Yes, so, and to have the distance then, yes. That was good. That was nice. (Tom, 2nd interview)

These trips, which directly follow the employment phase, differ from "normal" leisure or vacations in several respects: they are particularly long, the destinations are particularly far away and/or secluded, and they often involve extreme physical and mental experiences, such as demanding hikes, bike tours, or long periods of solitude. Depending on financial resources, examples of these trips included three-month trips through Australia and New Zealand, vacations in southern Europe or trips within Germany. The "distance" that Tom mentions in the quote above was accomplished by various means. Tess, for example, went to a Canary Island for 2 months directly after her last day of work,

> Not in this all-inclusive place where I usually go, but to really look for this solitude, to realize that everything is okay like this, that I am at peace with myself. I found that incredibly important and I enjoyed it so much that I asked myself, why do I actually have to turn 60 to allow myself something like that? (Tess, 1st interview)

Jan spent 6 months in a silent monastery after his (involuntary) departure from his last job, experiencing a very different form of extra-ordinary daily life:

> Get up five thirty, meditate six to seven, seven to eight gong, eight to nine mindful breakfast, nine thirty to nine forty-five chanting and circle dance [...] 9 p.m. shift and then get up again the next day five thirty. (Jan, 1st interview)

While all participants discussed travel, some viewed this topic negatively. Roland assessed the extensive retirement travel in his circle of acquaintances as an "escape from dissatisfaction" and Petra, who herself traveled a lot after her employment, described this behavior as an "escape to the future". Harald, for example, described two couples who were friends and who had each spent several months traveling through Australia and Eastern Europe in a camper van, respectively, and whose travels he followed via their blogs, but immediately distanced himself from such a life:

> I think it's great, I couldn't (laughs) but anyway. Oh, I, so, no. So five months away from home, uh, no. There we have, I don't know, too much, what's it called, down-to-earthness or home attachment or something like that. (Harald, 2nd interview)

However, it was not so much the *one* trip at the transition to retirement that was devalued, but the fact that traveling can become part of everyday life for many retirees. This refers to the second dimension of the relationship between traveling at the retirement transition and extra-\ordinariness: Traveling can also become part of a 'new normal' of the retirement phase, a restlessness of everyday life in this new life stage that still structures time and thus partly takes the role of the former *Zeitgeber* employment. Those study participants who traveled extensively, even years after

retirement, spoke of travel giving them a certain structure in their daily lives, and the annual passing of time. When asked how they had experienced the past year, many interviewees said that their travels served as memory stops to structure what they had experienced so far in a linear and chronological way. For many, travel thus went from being a mode of transition to a mode of integration; an 'integration aid', as it were, into the state and everyday life of a retiree.

In summary, the example of travel in the transition to retirement shows how changes in space and time can mark and constitute both extraordinariness and ordinariness, as well as the relationships between them. Traveling creates a space and time outside of ordinariness, outside of everyday life, to mark the difference between old and new status, conditions and lives. The same holds true in earlier life stages, as the following example of *Jugendweihe* shows.

Doing Jugendweihe – *Extra-/Ordinariness in Marking the End of Childhood*

The next example uses practices of doing *Jugendweihe* as a (secular) ritual transition from childhood to adulthood to show different aspects of extra/−ordinariness and the importance for the practices and processes of doing transitions. *Jugendweihe* or "youth dedication" practice as a ritual shaping of a transition stands as an initiation under the imperative of uniqueness. This uniqueness is a very ambivalent construct in *Jugendweihe*. On the one hand, it means the uniqueness of the subject, the principle of individuality. On the other hand, there is the convention that youth dedication takes place "once in a lifetime" – so it should be something "special" and in order for the youth dedication day to be special, it has to be different rather than usual. The special arrangement of eating during a family celebration and the process of styling for the special ceremony in front of an audience show how different practices are bundled to create "extraordinariness" and how they are related to a performative changing or transformation of the subjects of transitions. Second, it shows which practices include normative orders, which are must haves, and which are more optional, uncommon or normative usual. Third, it displays how the ritual practices refer to everyday life and build a mark to change.

Jugendweihe practices know a whole range of visualizations of specialness on the day of the *Jugendweihe*: In the normative ideal case, families rent a location, purchase catering and have musical entertainment, which turns youth dedications to family celebrations to a "large event" with many guests. Due to the celebration with guests, the table order is arranged differently, and food is served differently. Decorations and furnishings immediately change a room into a completely new, different space (tent in the garden or the renting of party locations). And also, to figure out, to get and to embody the *Jugendweihe* outfit[2] marks the transition from

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[2] These outfits are similar to prom dresses.

child to adolescent a visible, socially recognizable form through practices of particularity. The outfit is discursively marked as the visible sign of the transition. The ritual subjects wear their outfits at the ceremony, together with other attendees and their families, and later at the private celebration. The outfit should be festive and underline how someone has gotten older. In doing so, dressing demands a confrontation with age, gender and aesthetic differentiations. In the ritual, the transitional subjects are supposed to (re)produce themselves as "no longer children, but also not yet adults," which is reflected on advertising posters in combinations of ball gown and sneakers, champagne glasses and teddy bears.

Another example shows how ordinary practices, and new or special practices go together in creating the extraordinariness of *Jugendweihe* as a transition: eating together with a special person in a fast-food restaurant – a practice that may be "everyday" for others. What is special is not just the setting, but the time that might not otherwise be devoted to a person. For Leon, who lives in a residential care home, what was "special" about his *Jugendweihe* was eating or ordering fast food from a restaurant twice a day, the presence of his mother and caregiver beyond a setting such as the help plan, and the time spent together with his mother that did not occur in this way in his everyday life because he lives in the group home and also comes home to many siblings during trips home. Thus, looking back, he talks more about everyday practices than the "out of the ordinary" celebration:

> *[…] at one to four was then this ceremony where we then stood there and got our certificates and these flowers and where we were then just accepted into the circle of adults then we have there still briefly grilled, then everyone has got a sausage […] then I'm with my mom to the cinema so before to the pizzeria, we have eaten pizza, so ne family pizza [.] then we went to the cinema, [..] then we celebrated here in the evening a little bit, then we ate supper, I think it was kebab or something […] then we watched TV. (Leon, 1th Interview)*

The last example show how extraordinariness can be normative in the way which special practices are allowed and which (normally) not. *Jugendweihe* traditionally involves the ritual consumption of alcohol, which, as the first intoxication, symbolically completes the acceptance into the circle of youth and adulthood but not smoking. Smoking is also included in *Jugendweihe* but not in family or public celebrations. It takes place in separate situations such like parties with peers in the evening after the *Jugendweihe* ceremony. Leon's *Jugendweihe* is again different because of a shared cigarette instead of alcohol that realizes extra-ordinariness for him and build a link to a different ordinary and status:

> *Leon: I also smoked the very first cigarette together with my mom for my youth dedication.*
> *Interviewer: Really? […] and how did that feel?*
> *Leon: Good because you know you don't have to hide anymore. (Leon, 1th Interview)*

What this excerpt also makes clear is the assignment of the transition-from-to logic combined with age differences. *Jugendweihe* transitions children into adolescents on the one hand but declares this adolescence from the adult perspective as preparation for adulthood. This functional definition, however, stands directly next to an understanding of youth that emphasizes their intrinsic value, the youth-cultural practice (Prescher & Walther, 2018).

Discussion

Retirement and *Jugendweihe* are examples of how extra−/ordinariness is involved in transitions that happen at different points in the life course. Transitioning as a practice process implies oscillating between the ordinary and the extraordinary, everyday life and extraordinary worlds (Szabo, 2018). These extra−/ordinariness-related practices build up 'special' times and spaces as well as body-related gaps and connect states, such as childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age, that are marked differently and occupied by special differences.

In summary, the results on extra−/ordinariness at transitions presented above identify central commonalities and differences as well as derive conclusions for reflexive practice-theoretical transition research. In doing so, we revisit the following questions that we posed in this paper:

How is extra-\ordinariness woven into those practices and their situations that constitute and shape transitions (and thus changes and differences)? How, when and where does extra−/ordinariness take place when attributions, identifications and representations change?

What added value does the concept of extra−/ordinariness bring to reflexive practice-theoretical transition research? Which theoretical, methodological and empirical questions arise from this?

Ad 1) How, when and where does extra-\ordinariness take place when attributions, identifications and representations change in transitions?

Taking the transition to retirement, extra-\ordinariness manifests itself, for example, in the practice of travel. The project shows that an extra-ordinary trip at the end of working life fulfils several transitional functions: First, it marks a transition by apparently deviating from other, "normal" leisure or vacation trips: they are particularly long, the destinations particularly far away and/or secluded, and they often involve extreme physical and mental experiences. Taking oneself out spatially, temporally and socially characterizes the extra-ordinary nature of the journeys undertaken by the research participants. However, this also indicates that transitional journeys, secondly, are themselves transformative: They break through everyday routines, change structures of practice, and confront foreignness (and one's own self). In this way, they can help ease the transition between practices of everyday work and everyday retirement, but they can also help break one's self-concept and identify with a new state. The extra-ordinariness of transitional travel thus conditions follow-up practices of merging into a new ordinariness. In the process, travel as a practice is in some cases woven into this new ordinariness and serves to structure life in retirement.

In the example of *Jugendweihe*, too, the two "transitional functions" mentioned above can be found in the many types of staging extra−/ordinariness: On the one hand, these stagings mark the transition; on the other hand, they themselves have a transformative effect.

In altered attributions and addressings, identifications and representations (Wanka et al., 2020), the importance of differentiating in the context of transitions (Stauber, 2020) (e.g., "different from," "from-to," "before-after") becomes apparent. These altered attributions and addressings, identifications and representations, also in this example, lay the bridge to the adjacent condition of the adolescent who may now drink and smoke, travel alone and party. These formerly "special" practices also eventually become – at least ideally and during the adolescent phase – the new normality and help to structure everyday life (e.g., cigarette breaks, partying on weekends). However, the chosen example also makes clear that extra-\ordinariness is not only life stage-specific or "age-coded" (Krekula et al., 2017), but also dependent on the social life situation or "class-coded": For example, going to a restaurant with family can be completely commonplace for some, and highly extra-ordinary for others. These intersectionalities must also be taken into account when researching extra-\ordinariness.

Ad 2) What added value does the concept of extra-\ordinariness bring to reflexive practice-theoretical transition research? Which theoretical, methodological and empirical questions arise from this?

What does transition research gain from considering the conceptual pair of extra-\ordinariness alongside the conceptual pair of state and transition? On the one hand, this analysis provides a new perspective on the "peculiarities", similarities and differences in the processes of various transitions, and, on the other hand, we gain the possibility of looking at these changes with different forms and relationships, without having to use classical classifications such as ritual or event. Thus, the field of transitions deals with different aggregate states of how ordinariness and extraordinariness relate to one another and thus with constructions of reality that make a difference. And since transitions as social changes of state form attributions, addressing's, invocations and the like, that something moves into a limited intermediate position of change, the question arises how every day and non-everyday life relate to one another in these processes, mutually constituting each other as a new, changed everyday life. For transition research, then, the ambivalent poles of ordinariness and non- or extraordinariness in connection with an ambiguity of state and transition are further relevant. The relational concepts of ordinariness and extraordinariness are interdependent and exist only against the background of each other or at least something else. And with transitions it seems important to look for conceptual possibilities to see the fundamental difference that is denoted and constructed with transition itself, namely change and difference in the context of practices of transformation, of transferring. In this sense, the notion of extra−/ordinariness offers binoculars with which we can focus on a process of differentiation that is peculiar to transitions and (according to one thesis, anyway) specific to transitions. In this respect, then, extra−/ordinariness is (at least) threefold:

a mode of producing, shaping and (discursively) marking transitions that operates via the production of a performative, public and visible contrast (difference)

a difference that is itself constituted and shaped in the change of and the change
    between states, i.e., is constituted in transitions

an ambivalent/ambiguous pair of terms that ultimately only exist in relation to each
    other and with which normativities and ascriptions of normality can be reflected.

From this understanding, extra−/ordinariness is not a mere "staging form" of transi-
tions, but a mode of their production and shaping. Thus, extra−/ordinariness simul-
taneously contributes to shaping transitions and is itself part of the production of
transitions. Transitions and extra-\ordinariness are in this sense co-constitutive, i.e.,
one co-constitutes the other and cannot be without the other.

    How, when and where does extra-\ordinariness take place when attributions,
identifications and representations change? And, if we assume non-linear processes:
How do ordinariness and extra-ordinariness alternate in transitional processes, and
how does one co-constitute the other, since transitions also operate with continuities
and connections to ordinariness?

    This contribution highlights different dimensions, facets and phenomena that can
be made fruitful for the analysis and reconstruction of practices and processes of
producing and shaping transitions in the life course under the term extra−/ordinari-
ness. Extra−/ordinariness can be used as an access to understand the transforming
of attributions or demands in transitions as a process that is published and ultimately
brought to visibility and recognition through arrangements of things, actors, institu-
tions and spaces. Even though the empirical examples discussed in the article focus
primarily on the extra−/ordinary, the concept of extra−/ordinariness always simul-
taneously sensitizes us to the everyday. The phenomena that can be analyzed with it
range from small, almost invisible changes in the everyday to clearly visible stag-
ings of the extra-ordinary to the 'return' to a new ordinariness.

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Chapter 11
Becoming '(Ab-)Normal': Normality, Deviance, and Doing Life Course Transitions

Tobias Boll

What does it mean to live a 'normal' life? In everyday life, it might mean that you go about whatever you do in a perfectly unremarkable way: you get up, eat, work, eat, sleep, and get up again. Overall, you don't do anything exceptional (except maybe occasionally), you do not make choices beyond what is commonly considered 'everyday' (a normal life as *ordinary*). A 'normal' life may also be described in numbers: your income and spending, number of kids or sex partners, or weight or calorie intake may be within typical statistical parameters (a normal life as *average*). Or, finally, living a normal life may mean you do explicitly not engage in dubious activities like randomly shouting at strangers in public (a normal life as *conventional*).

Another way to look at a 'normal life' is to consider the life course. When assessing if we or others live a "normal, expectable life" (Neugarten, 1969), we may not only look at what they do on an everyday basis, but at what they have done at and during certain times in their lives or at a particular age and in which order, and compare it to some standard version like the "institutionalized life course" (of the global north-west) analyzed by Kohli (1985), or even to models of psychosocial development stages. Levy (1977) introduced the term "normal biography" (*Normalbiografie*) to describe a standardized, ideal-typical life course shared by a social group that is 'normal' in the sense that it applies to most of its members but also fits normative expectations concerning that group. This normal biography is essentially a "status biography": the individual, it is assumed, is moving through a social structure of

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status-role-configurations (p. 31). Such conceptions of normality provide patterns of orientation for individuals and societies, with the flip side of being potentially restricting and coercive.

Broadening the focus of Levy's concept, living a life can be seen as a constant process of moving not only through status positions and social roles but through cultural categories in a wider sense. With Hirschauer (2017b, 2021) and colleagues (Dizdar et al., 2021), a social life can be understood as a constant process of "un/doing differences": of drawing, re-drawing, and suspending or revoking distinctions between kinds of people. Such "human distinctions", like gender, ethnicity, or age, are seen as results of practices of "human categorization". Distinctions comprise a specific set of categories into which individuals are sorted in the course of their life.

The concept of "doing transitions" is closely linked to this, since life course transitions can mark not only passages between phases or stages in life but also between human categories. In the course of their lives, individuals move in and out of categories, move through some, but never leave others. Some transitions are one-way, some go both ways. Some are considered progress, some a setback. With such passages between categories, and along with their categorial affiliations, individuals change who and what they are, in an ongoing process of becoming.

This chapter examines how life course transitions between human categories are culturally observed in terms of their 'normality' or 'deviance'. Particularly, it asks how framings and doings of such transitions as (not) 'normal' are related to those of individuals in transition. After a brief introduction of the concept of human categorization in relation to doing transitions (1.), and some remarks on 'normality' and deviance (2.), the chapter attempts to understand ascriptions of 'normality' as results of affiliations to human categories, their combinations and of doing transitions between them (3.) before concluding by briefly addressing the question: How – and why – does one become '(ab-)normal' (4.)?

A Life in (and Between) Categories: Un/Doing Differences and Doing Life Course Transitions

Human life is a life in categories. Even before we are born, we are observed through categories and sorted into them. When we enter the world as embodied individuals, this process continues and takes our bodily appearance, abilities, or behavior as grounds for further categorizations. We enter institutions that subject us to processes that categorize us by measures like performance, intelligence, etc. Gradually, we progress from being mere objects of such categorizations to becoming classifiers ourselves, not only of others but also of ourselves.

Commonly, affiliations to human categories are seen as qualities or traits of individuals or their bodies. Another way of looking at these traits is to see them as results of an ongoing process of drawing distinctions, constructing categories, and sorting people into them – of *doing and undoing differences* (Hirschauer, 2021): we

do differences by creating and reproducing categories, and by sorting ourselves and others into them. Thus, we become kinds of people – who we are. Conversely, such categories and differences between (kinds of) humans can be suspended or revoked and be temporarily or permanently *undone*.

The crucial point about living is, obviously, that we move around in and between categories. This is where transitions come in: moving through categories implies transitions between them. *Un/doing differences* and *doing transitions* are closely linked: *Doing* implies that both differences and transitions do not merely exist, but are produced, enacted, and processed in and through social practice. This "doing" transitions (or *a* transition) between human categories is both the practical work of crossing a boundary between them, and of marking this *as* a "transition" and qualifying it in some way. Hence, doing transitions, like un/doing differences, is nothing people do individually or alone; both involve discursive representations, institutional regulations of affiliation, practices of individual identification, and their interrelations (Settersten et al., Chap. 15, in this volume). As much as we move through categories, categorial boundaries can move through us. Doing transition(s), then, can be one way of un/doing differences, as marking something as a transition can imply human categories as points of origin and destination, and thereby (re-)produce them. Part of doing differences, in turn, is determining the categories they comprise and the logic of their relations, which may include a trajectory of moving through them.

In the course of our lives, what and who we are changes over time because our categorial affiliations do. At the risk of sounding a bit new age, life can be seen as a constant *becoming*. This is not meant in a directional, teleological sense, but in the sense that we hardly ever stay the same as we progress in life, be it in micro or macro time (i. e. a situation vs. a life span). This is also not to suggest that humans are in a constant state of flux. Indeed, our everyday experience is different, and the concept of 'identity' claims just the opposite. From an everyday-viewpoint, we stay the same, our self, over time – but what that means changes. The notion of 'becoming' employed in the title of this chapter is not meant to imply actual constant change, but the theoretical assumption that any current state is in principle contingent.[1]

In this process of becoming, of shifting categories and affiliations, not all categories and distinctions are equal. Human distinctions come with different sets of categories, in number (gender: two or more, age: potentially countless, etc.), size (gender: 50/50-ish, class: many poor, few rich, etc.), etc. Also, not all transitions between categories are equal. We move differently through different kinds of categories. Some are sticky and have rigid boundaries, some have revolving doors and slippery floors.

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[1] This thought echoes basic ideas of relational sociology, which does not take fixed substances or entities as a starting point of inquiry, but social relations (for an overview see Dépelteau, 2018). However, my aim here is less to engage in the related ontological discussions, but to highlight un/doing differences and doing transitions as one aspect of how individuals and social groups come into being in cultural practices.

Let us consider some examples: *Age*, understood as *chronological* age,[2] is inherently transitory, and the categories in which a lifetime is socially structured are passageways: We more or less involuntarily move through them. *Gender* is more rigid and static. At least in the Western world, we are sorted into a sex category (West & Zimmerman, 1987) at or before birth and, even today, mostly expected to inhabit it for life. However, transitioning is, in principle, possible. Age and gender are probably the oldest classifications in cultural history, and both are key dimensions of social organization (Linton, 1942). Like gender, one is perceived to be born into categories of '*Race*' or *Ethnicity*. Unlike gender, switching categories is not an option (Brubaker, 2016). We are mostly born into categories of *Class*, but there is room for movement – both upwards and downwards. People can be born into the category of *Disability* (that is: sorted into it before birth), but also be thrown into it by illness, injury, or accidents. Once in the category, it is hard to leave. Apart from these 'big five' there are myriad others that belong to specific areas of life (education, employment, sports, sexuality, etc.). They all come with specific parameters for entering, leaving, and moving between them.

In addition, we hardly ever inhabit just one category, let alone are defined by just one distinction. We 'are' not merely our gender, nor 'our' ethnicity, nor 'our' dis/ability.[3] We are the proverbial 'all of the above' – our categorial affiliations are multiple and simultaneous, and we share them with others. However, we are not 'all of the above' at all times or in the same intensity (Hirschauer, 2017a).

Against this backdrop, let us revisit our initial question: What does it mean to live a 'normal life'? A preliminary answer is: It has to do with the interplay of un/doing differences and doing transitions; with the categories we live in, how we inhabit them and how we move through them, as well as how they relate to one another. That is, what living a life is. But what makes it a 'normal' one? And how does that relate to our personal 'normality'?

What Is 'Normal(-ity)'?

Before looking at how the distinction between the 'normal' and 'deviant' relates to human categorizations and doing transitions let us first briefly consider 'normality'. Normality is a complex and fluid concept. 'Normal' is an umbrella term that denotes many and often contradictory things, and there are many different approaches to defining and assessing normality.

In his essay on "normalism" Link (2009) notes that the "normal" is both a platitude in modern societies and a key concept for understanding them. Link's interest lies in theorizing the normal and normalization as fundamental phenomena of

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[2] For a discussion of the various social and subjective meanings of age, see Settersten and Godlewski (2016).

[3] Although especially people who are sorted in some of the mentioned categories are often reduced to this affiliation as a "master status" (Hughes, 1945).

modern Western societies. In this vein, he distinguishes his understanding of normality from other meanings such as aesthetic banality, everyday routine, normativity, and social standardization. For Link, "normalism" is a complex of discourses and practices which (re-)produces normalit*ies* – in the plural – by defining normal zones and their boundaries for various areas of life in specialist discourses and fields like medicine, psychology, sociology, and the like. These normalities are integrated into more general cultural notions of normality which are then, in processes of "normalization", taken up by everyday individuals (or imposed on them) as orientations for their own life (p. 20).

Link's distinctions help grasp the scope of the 'normal' as a concept. However, from a sociological viewpoint, and for our question about normality and the life course, his definition of normality is too narrow. Indeed, normality has been a core interest of Sociology from its beginnings, since one of its main interests is understanding how the orderliness of everyday life is stabilized. When we talk about a 'normal life', the everyday understanding of normality – which does include all the varied things Link explicitly excludes – matters. How can we grasp that?

With Goffman (1977), we can understand the normal as a *frame*, an interpretation pattern and a way for people to organize and make sense of everyday experience. The 'normal' typically lies beneath the threshold of perception: it is so obvious, self-evident and taken for granted that it stays invisible as something remarkable (Zerubavel, 2018). This is possible because, in everyday life, we mostly go by *assumptions* and *fictions* of normality. Rather than actively checking and assuring that everything goes according to standard, we mostly assume that what we encounter will be pretty much as usual, until we have good reason to doubt it. This is what Schütz and Luckmann (1973) refer to as the "natural attitude" towards the everyday lifeworld: to assume its naturalness and unquestioned givenness. As far as other people are concerned, we mostly rely on typified perceptions of them and typically reach a sufficient understanding by assuming their typical motives (pp. 229–242). As Goffman (1971) aptly observes, most of the time, we present and *are* "normal appearances" for each other: "present but of no concern" (p. 257). Sacks (1977), in turn, has shown that a large part of everyday life and of 'being present but of no concern' is the job of "doing being ordinary".

Besides these foundational expectations of normality, about how things will *probably* be, there are more normative expectations of how things (and people) *should* be: ideas about normality carry cultural beliefs about what is wrong or right, desirable or undesirable, obligatory or unthinkable. If these expectations are not met, and sanctions follow, notions of normality become *norms*. As Foucault (1976, 1977) has observed, norms are an integral part of cultural efforts of normalization – of bringing subjects to conform to cultural standards of normality through techniques of discipline. Their prescriptive character also links them to cultural recognition and disdain. Herein lies a source of stigma and cause for discrimination and ostracization, and the feeling of being discreditable (Goffman, 1975).

Whether the 'normal' appears as the given routine of everyday life or a normative rule, what is considered or treated as 'normal' (and what that implies) depends on context (geographical, historical, situational) and changes over time. Expectations

may differ between social milieus, generations, and cultural environments. And finally, expectations and definitions of the 'normal' depend on point of view and perspective. Several, possibly even contradictory versions of normality may co-exist.

As varied as notions of normality are its counterparts. They range from the uncommon, the exceptional and extraordinary, to the deviant and the 'abnormal'. Degrees of deviance are charged with meaning to different degrees and are valued and sanctioned differently. Think, for example, of deviations from what is considered a 'normal' body weight. A little jiggle here and there may be commented on, a considerably higher body weight might be labeled "morbidly obese" and be followed not only by harassment but by medical procedures. Not every deviation from the 'normal' is deemed negative, however; some deviations are normalized themselves and barely perceptible in everyday life (say, intellectual capacities just slightly below or above average), some even celebrated (as "high giftedness"), while others become painfully palpable (as "mental disability" which can be followed by stigmatization and exclusion from the job market etc.). Sanctions depend on the binding quality of the expectations a deviation irritates (cf. Dahrendorf, 1960).

The 'normal' is not a fixed social category, and much less are 'the normal (ones)' a fixed group of people. It is a category whose population is in constant flux. At some point or another, most people will make their way in and out of the normal zone, or rather: will be sorted in and out of it. The (normal) life course may itself be considered a mechanism of normalism in that it prescribes an ideal(-typical) way of and trajectory for living a life which people are oriented towards through socialization. Transitions may then be considered both points and processes of normalization or its counterpart, of staying or getting on track or deviating from it.

Such transitions can occur between life phases, developmental states and stages, social roles etc. As such, they are always also transitions between affiliations to human categories. The following section will investigate how notions of normality and categorizations as 'normal' or 'deviant' are related to un/doing differences and doing transitions.

Un/Doing Differences, Doing Life Course Transitions, and Un/Doing Normality

This section presents three ways in which the distinction of 'normal' and 'deviant' and human distinctions and categories can intersect: (1) categories *as such* can be considered 'the' normal or deviant in a set of categories, (2) affiliations to categories of different human distinctions can be considered normal or deviant in their *combination*, (3) *transitions* between categories of a single distinction can be considered more or less normal. The examples given in this section are not meant to be exhaustive, but a starting point for further examination. Also, they need to be simplified for the sake of illustrating different logics of differentiation. There will always be variations and different perspectives in lived reality.

Categories

Human distinctions are themselves rarely considered normal or deviant. It is mostly the categories they comprise, which are organized by this distinction. Of course, human distinctions can also be neutral with respect to normality, such as the distinction between people with or without their wisdom teeth: it is of no or low social significance and consequence in most of everyday life and it would be considered odd to draw such a distinction at all.

Human distinctions that have greater social significance may be more or less organized by normality and in different ways. Some distinctions entail a clear and dichotomous distinction between what is considered 'normal' and what is not, often with one way to be normal and many ways to be deviant (e.g., the distinction between 'able' vs. 'disabled'); some will envisage the normal and abnormal as poles of a gradient and allow for 'more or less normal' categories (heterosexuality and degrees of sexual 'deviance'); some will designate a 'normal zone or range' in which several of their categories fall (intelligence, height, number of sex partners, …), and the boundaries of that normal zone can be more or less fuzzy. These different logics of normality can also change over time.

When differences entail a normal zone or pole, categories are not merely descriptive but are often endowed with more or less value. Frequently, whatever is considered 'normal' is valued higher. Hence, distinctions of the normal and the deviant often also mark power asymmetries. Although the notion of normality is not per se linked to statistical prominence, oftentimes the category used for a minority is also deemed 'not normal' and functions to stabilize the unmarked 'normal' state of the majority (Zerubavel, 2018). A classic example of this is the distinction between hetero- and homosexuality. Preferring sex partners of 'the other' gender is still considered normal, while being labeled as homosexual is mostly still being labeled as outside of the norm, at least as remarkably different. The organization by the (ab-)normal is not always that obvious. Some differences appear to be purely descriptive at first glance. The distinction between 'men' and 'women' is primarily descriptive, yet the two sides of this distinction are not equal in their consequences for the people in them.

Another aspect is how people 'inhabit' their categories. Hirschauer (2017a) speaks of "degrees of purity" of social affiliations. Being in a category not only means to be placed on one side of a distinction but in a "more or less central or peripheral zone within the category" (p. 49): One can be an 'ideal', a 'prototypical', an 'average' or 'marginal' exemplar of a category's population. Classic archetypes of deviance are the 'effeminate man' or the 'infantile adult': They are deemed deviant because they are breaching expectations about the appropriate behavior for membership in a category by filling their category in a way that would be deemed appropriate for a member of another (or *the* other) category. They irritate the logic of differentiation by moving *gradually* between poles that are differentiated *categorically*, they 'lean into' other categories and their prerogatives and duties. Normality and deviation here have less to do with transitions between categories

than with *transgressions* of their boundaries. However, not all transgressions are observed similarly. To what degree a transgression into the "category-bound activities" (Sacks, 1995, p. 241), behavioral styles, or aesthetic expressions of another category will be socially overlooked, tolerated or even celebrated, differs between differences and is an open empirical question.

How does this relate to living a 'normal' life and being a 'normal' person? People who are sorted in one of the categories considered deviant in one distinction tend to be identified (or often identify themselves) with that category. It has often been observed that falling into a deviant category in one respect can lead to being considered not-quite-normal *overall*: Living a 'normal' life and being a 'normal' person, then, is the task of staying out of the wrong categories. In addition, it is about staying within the parameters and boundaries of those categories and inhabiting them in the 'right' way, keeping a good eye on how much one transgresses into other categorial territories and finding the 'right' place within a category. This aspect of combined affiliations to different categories is explored further in the following section.

Combinations

A second way the distinction of the normal and the deviant organizes human categorization is related to combinations of social affiliations. Affiliations to different human categories are connected in different ways.

1. ***Hybridity.*** A first type of combination is the double membership in categories of the *same* distinction. Examples like androgyny, bisexuality, or intersexuality all combine categorial affiliations that are often deemed mutually exclusive. Such "strong hybrids" (Hirschauer, 2017a, p. 49) do not transition between categories and cross their boundaries but blur the boundary itself. Such cases of ambiguity are often met with scepticism or rejection because they irritate a cultural urge for categorial purity (Bauman, 2007). The framing of their double membership and transgressions is connected to *doing transitions*. Bisexuality is sometimes (disparagingly) considered transitional – 'just a phase'. Here, doing transitions is both a way of de-normalization (in that categorial transgressions are marked) and normalization (because a restoration of categorial order is envisaged). Similarly, intersexuality at birth has until recently been taken as grounds for surgically transitioning individuals to a state of categorial unambiguity. Double affiliation tends to be viewed as an identity of individuals whose personifying categorial ambiguity becomes grounds for their categorization as outside the norm. Ideas about categorial unambiguity are connected to cultural recognition, which, as Nederveen (2001) states, "stretches or revalues social boundaries but does not transgress them" (p. 219). *Becoming (ab-)normal is about crossing and not crossing the right boundaries.*

2. ***Couplings.*** Another case of combinations concerns categories in *different* distinctions. Some categorial affiliations or even entire distinctions are reserved or designated for members of particular categories: *you can only be x once you're y.* A good example is age categories. While age is considered linear and continuous, it is culturally divided into categories. Along with membership in a specific age category come ideas about categorial affiliations in other distinctions: a child is commonly not thought of as hetero- or homosexual but is not supposed to have a 'sexual orientation' at all. Similarly, you likely will only be considered a 'mother' when you are also a 'woman', etc.

Some categorial affiliations are linked to categories of other distinctions: *when you are x you are also expected to be y, but not z.* A common theme here is 'congruence' – the idea that affiliations to some categories go together, and others do not. Its opposite has been described as 'status inconsistency': a situation where a person's social status is different or contradictory in different respects. While some inconsistencies have been normalized (artists can be high in prestige yet low in income and that is just what they are expected to be), others are marked as deviating from the 'normal'. Not always is this about social status in the sense of prestige but in the sense of 'being x'. For example, being in both the categories 'gay' and 'parent' has been unspeakable (yet a reality) historically, is becoming increasingly common today, but is still considered outside the norm, at least not unremarkable.

How links between categorial affiliations affect (attributions of) normality is also indicated by how expectations about *how* to inhabit a category 'correctly' can change with other affiliations. While gender is expected to stay the same over the life course, it is expected to be 'done' differently with age: As a teenager, it is perfectly fine to be obsessed with one's gendered body and gender performance – but not in one's late forties. Here, doing transitions is *part of* doing difference: Part of doing gender 'correctly' is doing age transitions 'correctly'. Other distinctions, in turn, remain untouched – ethnicity and its performance, for example, are not expected to change with age.

Concerning living a 'normal' life and being a 'normal' person, we might say that *becoming (ab-)normal is about coordinating one's memberships in categories as to reach or maintain congruency.*

Transitions

The two aspects addressed so far focused on *being in* categories. However, as stated at the beginning, life is just as much about *moving through* and *between* human categories. Such passages between human categories happen *in the course of* life course transitions and they *are* life course transitions. A third way the distinction of the normal and the deviant organizes human categorization is in these transitions and in how they are 'done', i. e. accomplished and framed. Most human distinctions

come with a specific logic as to how one is to move or not move through the categories they comprise. Becoming '(ab-)normal', then, is a question of sticking to or deviating from this logic.

1. ***To Transition – or Not?*** A first question is whether *transitioning itself* is deemed normal. Depending on the distinction in question, categorial transitions may be considered automatic, obligatory, welcome, optional, undesirable, or even impossible.

   Let us again consider age. Nothing seems more unremarkable as ageing – after all, you age while you read these lines (sorry!) without actively doing anything, really. Yet, while your lifetime count goes up automatically, progressing through age categories is different. While continuous transitions are mostly overlooked *as* transitions and are normalized in their everydayness, transitions across categorial boundaries carry potential for attributions of normality and deviance. Consider adulthood: In Germany, for example, when people celebrate their 18th birthday, they not only move from one category in a questionnaire or dating app to the next – they also transition into a different legal category of citizenship with rights and duties reserved for people in that category and above. That, however, does not imply that they abruptly feel or see themselves as "adults", as a different kind of people, but that they enter a life phase in which they move towards a new identity gradually (cf. Arnett, 2000). While the transition to adulthood is 'done' on a legal, institutional level, it needs to be done on a level of individual behavior, too. This is where normality in a different sense comes into play. As members of a certain age category, individuals are expected to behave in an 'appropriate' manner. Transitions shift expectations, and subsequently, behaving according to these expectations can shift individuals from one category to another: *Doing transitions*, in this case, lies (amongst other things) in the shifting of expectations through discursive or institutional practices, but is also accomplished by *doing being x* in the 'right' way on an individual level. Deviating from this logic can, in turn, be deemed as a failure to transition, and subsequently lead to attributions of being outside of the norm: *Becoming (ab-)normal is about inhabiting a category in the right way.* This has to do with another aspect: *Becoming (ab-)normal is also about progressing through categories in the right order or direction.* People are expected to transition through age categories *in order*: ageing should, up to a certain point, follow a logic of progress and development. In fact, the logic of the transition and the quality of the categories the transition connects, are related: While transitions between 'states' may be considered mere 'change', those between 'stages' are considered 'progress' – and vice versa.

   Unlike the supposed naturalness and normalness of transitions between categories of some distinctions such as age, but also phases of educational of professional life, other transitions between categories are culturally marked as unusual or deviant. Rogers Brubaker (2016) compares the two prominent cases of Caitlyn Jenner and Rachel Dolezal whose transitions between categories of gender (Jenner) and *race* (Dolezal) were met with markedly different reactions. While Jenner's coming out as transgender was met with a positive response and

appraisal, Dolezal's outing as being *white* was met with a moral outcry. Brubaker's analysis shows that the acceptance and considered normality of transitions between categories differ between distinctions. While it is increasingly considered normal – or at least 'normally deviant' – to transition between gender categories, there is no such cultural option for ethnicity or *race*. This differential treatment of transitions can itself be considered *doing transitions*: Transitioning between gender (or rather: sex) categories is considered at least possible, while *race* is deemed unchangeable and attempts such as Dolezal's are sometimes even deemed 'unreal'. To deny Dolezal's claim to a specific categorial affiliation is, in a way, to 'undo' her transition in the sense of declaring it impossible. The normality or deviance of transitioning between categories *at all* is related to the quality of the distinction at stake: it affects its openness or resistance to change.

2. ***How to Transition?*** A second question concerns *how* a transition is made. Firstly, the biographical *timing and duration* of transitions may be made relevant with respect to normality. Some transitions are expected to be made at certain points in time (=life), and there are expectations about how long some should take. The case of infant development is striking here: parents, like doctors, like nursery staff, are constantly monitoring whether a child is developing 'normally', that is: at the same speed and at a same or similar age as others. Learning to eat with a spoon at 6 years old and being able to read at 2 years old will both be considered not normal. But other, less obvious cases might also have to do with timing. For example, the supposed behavioral and sexual deviance of LGBT*IQ people might stem from a temporality issue: commonly, puberty is perceived as the phase of life in which an excessive preoccupation with one's gender and sexuality is deemed 'ordinarily abnormal'. In LGBT*IQ people it can be prolonged or postponed due to societal conditions and inhibitions in place when people were younger and of supposedly "appropriate" age for being preoccupied with their sexuality. As Wanka (2020) notes, cases of "transitional deviance" (p. 194) with respect to timing are quite common and do not necessarily lead to negative consequences but are even necessary for stabilizing normativities: ignoring some deviations makes the norm as such less prone to disruption while sanctioning others exemplifies the norm. *Doing transitions* through defining and marking their ideal timing and what are ignorable, tolerable, or inexcusable deviations from it is a way of defining zones of normality and thus of controlling categorial transitions.

Secondly, the *mode of transition* can be made relevant. While some transitions are seen as merely 'occurring', others are seen as something that must be actively and practically *done* – performed or accomplished, maybe even be marked by rites of passage that make a transition accountable. Part of *doing transitions* is determining the parameters for how a transition is to be done. For example, in Western societies, the transition between gender categories cannot just be decided by an individual but must be practically *done* by several parties (through individual behavioral changes, administrative procedures like a name change, medical treatments like hormone-therapy or surgery, etc.). This process is then

also framed *as* a *transition*, i. e. as a process in which an individual changes category but stays essentially the same person. Normality comes into play in different respects: Transitioning between gender categories requires those transitioning to at least temporarily cross the boundary of the normal zone, e. g. by undergoing psychological evaluation and accept ascriptions of a "gender identity disorder". The successful passing as a member of the new gender category is, in a way, also a way of shedding ascriptions of deviance by a kind of 'undoing doing transitions': by covering one's tracks and making transitional efforts unaccountable.

The three ways in which un/doing differences, doing transitions and un/doing normality can intersect presented in this section are, of course, not a finite list. The entries on it are subject to historical change and, as will have become apparent, to specific points of view. Research into these processes and logics of how attributions of '(ab-)normality' are linked to ways of un/doing differences and un/doing transitions, and especially into other forms beyond the ones mentioned here, will shed light on the ever-shifting normative orders of societies.

(Ab-)Normal People in Transition(s)

This chapter started out by asking how we can conceptualize a 'normal life'. It offered reflections on the role of doing life course transitions and affiliations to, combinations of, and transitions between human categories for cultural definitions of normality and deviance. How, finally, is living a 'normal' life related to becoming and being a 'normal' person? I have suggested an understanding of 'becoming (ab-)normal' as an ongoing process of affiliation to human categories and of doing transitions. Part of doing life course transitions as transitions between human categories is determining their (ab-)normality with respect to timing, direction, mode, etc. How, then, do attributions of normality to life course transitions affect those engaged in them? To think about this, it may be helpful to understand individuals or kinds of people as *products of transitions*, rather than *units transitioning*. When and why, we could ask, are individuals or types or kinds of people, as cultural phenomena, produced as co-products of doing transitions?

According to Simmel (1908) individuals emerge at the intersections of social circles. What makes them uniquely themselves is, somewhat ironically, the combination of affiliations to categories they share with others. We could imagine the 'normal' and the 'deviant' as another set of circles, with blurry outlines and of ever-changing size, that form new overlaps with the categories, combinations and transitions underneath, like floating bubbles over the social pattern of multiply overlapping circles, through which some things appear 'normal', and others do not. We could then picture 'normal' and 'deviant' *people* as emerging when normality and deviance are attributed as a quality to categorial affiliations, their combinations, and as part of doing categorial transitions.

Foucault, in his study on the history of sexuality (Foucault, 1977), analyzes how 'the homosexual' was historically constructed both as a *kind of people*, a sexual "species" (p. 47), and as a distinct *kind of individual*. This cultural production of a

'perversion' and a population 'belonging' to it addressed a societal problem: The assumed relational sense of the gender distinction lost plausibility the more men and women were declared to be fundamentally different beings. The restoration of relations between men and women as normal and natural required the marking of relations between men and between women as unnatural, and the "implantation" (p. 41) of this desire in individuals outside the norm(-al). On a much smaller scale, Smith (1978) offers a reconstruction of how the deviance of a single individual is produced in her study on "K" and how she ends up being categorized as "mentally ill" by her college flatmates. K's being labeled as deviant is not only a way for them to make sense of her behavior, but also a way for the teller of K's story to ascertain their own normality.

So, we may say that individuals of a certain 'type' or 'kind' may occur, as *a solution to irritations of expectations of normality and social order*. Concerning doing transitions, it appears that some ways of transitioning between human categories are considered normal, and that extends to the people transitioning. Transitions that are considered normal are seen as status changes of individuals, while 'deviant' transitions further push individuals into a special category for those involved in them, thus (re-)producing them as kinds of people.

Of course, understandings of what it is to be 'normal' and how we value it change over time and with context. Indeed, in late modernity, being outside of the norm might even be considered appealing (Reckwitz, 2017). But again: this does not hold for all kinds of being outside social norms or cultural normalities. Things are more complex. Notions of the 'normal' differ between human distinctions, categories and transitions, and so do valuations of them. Figuratively speaking, even more bubbles are floating into the picture.

With all these iridescent bubbles floating around, it is easy to overlook that many of them will not burst and dissolve into nothing at the slightest touch, but that the game of distinctions addressed in this chapter has very tangible consequences. One is that since those who are classified are always themselves classifiers (Bourdieu, 1984), the arrangement of kinds of people and individuals in a social space that is structured along the axes of normality and value positions individuals and groups in positions of varying recognition and power. Some kinds of people and individuals lose their own rights to participate in the game of establishing normality gradually or completely, while others tend to gain more influence in it.

It may precisely be the underdetermined meaning and value of normality that hints at its cultural function. Since there is no absolute definition of what 'normal' means, it is best to understand the distinction of the normal and deviant as a principle and motor which drives and organizes the un/doing of human distinctions and social affiliations, a kind of *meta difference* that crosscuts other human distinctions. And it might be the undetermined value of the 'normal' that allows for incentivizing or de-incentivizing categorial transitions and change and hence (de-)stabilizing social and normative order.

Tracing the complex interrelationships between definitions of the normal and deviant and valuations and devaluations, as well as further conceptually grasping the relations between normality, human categorization and doing life course

transitions will require a more comprehensive and systematic investigation. This chapter aimed to present some first reflections on these complex relations. Empirical studies of actual cases of co-productions of normality and deviance and kinds of people may both profit from and help elaborate an understanding of these relations and help understand 'becoming (ab-)normal'.

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Part IV
Materialities and Transitions

Chapter 12
The Multidimensionality of Materiality: Bodies, Space, and Things in Transitions

Deborah Nägler and Anna Wanka

> Those who think they find social reality overestimate their perception, those who think they invent it their imagination. (Hirschauer, 2008, p. 175)

Life course transitions are often researched as predominantly temporal phenomena – as phases, stages, or processes. With this contribution, we aim to explicate that this temporality is deeply entangled with materiality. Reflexive transition research, as proposed in this book, raises the fundamental question of how transitions in the life course are constituted and shaped in social practices, and how social order and stability are (re)produced in this process. As social practices are inherently material (Shove et al., 2012), a practice-based perspective on transitions sensitizes for the material dimension(s) of life course transitions. This contribution addresses how and why materiality matters in doing transitions.

In the past decades, many research fields in the social sciences have undergone a *material turn,* emphasizing the importance of materiality in the reflection and analysis of social reality and practice. Approaches within this turn tend to criticize existing theories first, for maintaining (and reinforcing) the Cartesian dualism of body and mind, and, second, for focusing primarily on human actors, human actions, and human agency. Such perspectives, they criticize, veil the power of different forms of materiality within processes of formation, continuation, and change of social phenomena (Barad, 2003; Schatzki, 2002; Reckwitz, 2002). Instead focusing on materialities opens up a view of social phenomena beyond language, and thus of "what takes place as a silent process: wordless, inarticulate, 'illiterate'" (Hirschauer, 2001, p. 430). The material turn has manifested in different research fields in various

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forms and shapes. In this chapter, we will limit ourselves to new materialisms. New materialisms can be understood as a nexus of theories formulated mainly in gender studies and feminist Science-and-Technology Studies (STS). Approaches and concepts such as *agential realism* (Barad, 2003), *Deleuzian materialism* (Braidotti, [1994] 2011), or *posthumanism* (Haraway, 2007) understand discourses and materialities as inextricably linked within "material-discursive practices" (Barad, 2003, p. 818), that is: every social phenomenon that we might perceive as a stable and fixed entity with clear boundaries is actually a process of continuous, entangled becoming and co-constitution. They assume that 'we' – as people living in the social world, but also and in particular as researchers – continuously participate in practices of boundary-making and agential cuts (Barad, 2003) with which we delimit, shape and constitute social phenomena in the first place.

New materialist perspectives imply that the emergence of the social can be understood neither through the substantial setting of autonomously and intentionally acting subjects, nor through the explanation of the overwhelming power of structures and discourses behind them, but rather as a relational interplay of different actors and elements that co-constitute each other continuously. Thus, the focus of observation is on relations, dynamics, processes, and the "reciprocal constitutional relationship of the social and its subjects" (Alkemeyer et al., 2015a, b, p. 15) – and, we might add, objects. In this context, transitions – powerful and complex phenomena that can be thought of as producers and stabilizers of social order on the one hand, and as socially constructed, manufactured, and thus always contingent phenomena on the other – require a relational style of thinking, which includes materialities (Rieger-Ladich, 2020).

Despite the growing popularity of materialist perspectives in the social sciences and humanities, they have not yet spread across transition research. However, in applying a new materialist perspective to the phenomena of life course transitions, we can identify several respects in which reflexive and relational transition research could profit. First, the "gain of this metaphysical abstinence [...] is its turning to the world of things and objects, spaces and bodies" (Rieger-Ladich, 2020, p. 209). Consequently, this chapter focuses on three different dimensions of materiality – bodies, spaces, and things –, which form social practices as "three-dimensional arrangements" (Reckwitz, 2012. p. 252), as they become relevant in different life course transitions. Second, these dimensions of materiality are relational and co-constitutive – both among themselves and in regards to life course transitions. Hence, by deploying a perspective that is sensitive towards materialities to life course transitions makes us see how bodies, things and spaces *matter* in and hence co-constitute and shape processes of subjectivation, changing practices of identification, adressation and representation, or the (chrono-)norms, expectations and motivations that are so central to transition research.

Social practices as the units of analysis at the core of a 'doing' transitions perspective, however, do not only unfold in abstract power relations, but in concrete, material life realities, spaces, and situations. Social practices, consequently, always involve both material *and* discursive, human and non-human elements (Barad, 2003; Latour, 2007). From a reflexive, anti-essentialist understanding neither

transitions nor social status positions, nor materialities themselves are fixed and stable entities, but processual and multi-dimensional constructions. As anthropologist Florent Bernault (2010) argues, this multi-dimensionality of materiality can dissolve essentialist notions of substance, integrity, and individual agency. As Karen Barad (2003) puts it, material phenomena emerge just as other (discursive or social) phenomena do; their boundaries are drawn in practice. Hence, a human body is, for example, not a fixed material-biological entity, but an assemblage of material-discursive practices and, as Barad puts it, the agential cuts we draw around it in the construction (and analysis) of the social world. Consequently, the chapter focuses on the complexity and multidimensionality of materialities for the analysis, reflection and re/deconstruction of life course transitions. Thus, the paper demonstrates the added value of a relational, reflexive perspective on materiality and its multidimensionality in transition research.

To do so, we provide a theoretically guided reflection of three dimensions of materiality – bodies, spaces and things – and illustrate their role in transitional processes with empirical examples from two research projects. Based on this data, we draw three conclusions for reflexive transition research regarding (1) the relations of multiple dimensions of materiality in the co-constitution of transitions, (2) the relations of different ('linked') transitions through materialities, and (3) the relations between multiple materialities and temporalities in the life course.

Bodies, Spaces, and Things in Life Course Transitions

In the following sections we discuss selected empirical material from two research projects studying transitions in childhood and later life: First, the project "Growing up in an Individualized society" (2017–2022) deals with transitions during childhood. The empirical analysis refers to children aged 9–12, an age range which, apart from entering puberty, involves the transition from primary to secondary school. In Germany this implies differentiation to different tracks of different status whereby for all actors involved (teachers, youth workers, parents and the children themselves) social inequality becomes visible affecting further educational and life chances. Data collection consisted in participant observation in two socio-pedagogical settings located in socially deprived areas and aimed at supporting children in their growing up by means of non-formal education in both school and leisure activities. Second, the project "Doing Retiring" (2017–2021) follows 30 older adults in Germany from 1 year before to 3 years after retirement, combining episodic interviews, activity and photo diaries, and participant observations. Relating transitions in childhood and older age has been conceptualized as "linking ages" due to its heuristic potential in analyzing the complementarity of transitions into and out of middle adulthood referred to as the productive stage in the modern life course regime (Höppner et al., forthcoming).

Because the two projects use multi-method approaches, they provide data that reveals different dimensions of materiality from multiple perspectives – for

example, observations of corporeality and place appropriation and narrations on bodily perceptions and affective relationships to things. Below, we draw upon empirical material that sheds light on the three dimensions of materiality outlined above – bodies, spaces and things – in life course transitions in childhood and later life. And even though we will, in the following, discuss these three dimensions separately, this separation is purely analytical, whereas in fact, the different dimensions are constantly interwoven, co-constitutive, and entangled in dynamics of social practices.

The Role of Bodies in Life Course Transitions

One, if not *the most,* important dimension of materiality in the study of transitions might be the body as "we always carry it with us" (Goffman, (1967) 1997, p. 152; as cited in Burghard, 2018, p. 554). It is probably the most prominently discussed dimension of materiality which at the same time has been neglected for a long time in debates about life course transitions.

The body is a constant part of social practice, and thus becomes significant as an object of attribution, addressing and staging processes under which the body is constituted and thus made relevant as a 'corporeal object' of transitions. This is "marked, habitually shaped or aestheticized by social, categories generating inequality such as gender, ethnicity, age […]" (Burghard, 2018, p. 564). It can subsequently be stated that bodies are constituted and formed in and through social practice – "structures of social inequality (as well as power and domination) are inscribed in bodies" (ibid.). These inscriptions also become effective in producing change. This relevance becomes particularly visible and perceptible through bodily changes and physical development processes (such as losing one's teeth in childhood or older age, physical growth, or changes in motoric competences).

In the "Doing Retiring" project, the body is mainly made relevant by research participants in terms of its abilities, or much rather, the lack thereof: Decreased functionality and inability to be as productive as it used to, the body can interfere with working life. In this, the body marks the 'right timing' to retire, both to 'it's subject' and (significant) others. Monica, formerly employed in the financial sector, remembers:

> And the superiors see that you no longer achieve as you used to [...] and if the expectation is a minimum of ten hours, because all the others, who are healthy and young, are still doing that somehow, then it is of course obvious that you also stand out somehow.

Throughout the whole transitional process, the body is thereby granted its own agentiality and even a kind of stubbornness – "If my body allows it" is a frequently used phrase in the "Doing Retiring" project. In this, the functionality of the body – whether it "allows" for working, climbing a mountain, travelling, or maintaining sexual relationships – is not only crucial for determining the 'right timing' to retire (Wanka, 2019), but also for envisioning and planning one's future retirement life.

The body is made relevant in different stages of the transition process and, again, operates with multiple temporalities. Loss of physical capability, care-dependency and, finally, death, are widely feared potential hindrances to these that are all connected to, or located in, the body. Talking about entering a new romantic relationship, Petra recalls a recent conversation:

> Someone from the choir said to me the other day: 'I would only marry a younger woman.'
> I say: 'Why?' 'Well, if I become care-dependent at some point, at least I will have someone.'

But the body can not only be understood as an object of attribution and addressing. Furthermore the body is the main material through which the social world and transition processes within it are subjectively, affectively and sensually experienced and incorporated. Hence, the body is the main point of reference through which subjects perceive and express transitional processes, and through which transition researchers can access these experiences. Transitions are processes that people deal with "in a conscious way, on the cognitive-linguistic level, but also and especially on the sensual-bodily" level (Villa, 2004, p. 72). The body thus becomes not only the object of social norming, addressing, and attribution under which it is constituted. It also becomes the site of the pre-reflexive anchoring of implicit knowledge, social patterns of interpretation and incorporated structures. The body is thus conceived as a pre-reflexive reservoir of experience and knowledge and, following Pierre Bourdieu and his habitus theory, can be grasped via the concept of the "hexis" (cf. 1987) of the habitus, as a 'somatization' of social relations. The bodily hexis forms the somatic dimension of social practice, and makes the pre-reflexivity of action explicable (cf. Villa, 2011, p. 67).

Following the insight that people are part of social practice not only with their bodies, but rather as their bodies (cf. Alkemeyer et al., 2015a, b, p. 18), the interplay of incorporated structure and positioning within a social order and the (somatic) sense of self becomes accessible. An understanding of vulnerability unfolds through this ambivalence, which, we argue, is especially marked by the body. Understanding transitions as special phases of vulnerability – as an in-between – which may well include bodily development and the self-perception of this as well as changing addressing and expectations, the examination of the body allows to understand not only its physical, but also its sensual-bodily dimension. Thus, through the body, an access to the complexity of the subjective structure of experience – not only in its conscious, but also unconscious, sensual form – is made possible.

This can be illustrated especially in relation to the transition from childhood to adolescence since not only the body and the perception of it by the subjects themselves changes, but also the forms of addressing it and thus the orders of recognition under which it is perceived, evaluated and positioned. This perspective can be illustrated by an exemplary situation observed in one of the socio-pedagogical projects analyzed in the "Growing up" study. On one occasion, the social workers take a group of girls to the river to collect shells. While the social workers remain on the shore, the girls, together with the researcher, move further and further away into the water:

> We all go deeper and deeper into the water and find a place where many seashells appear. The place is a long distance away and I wonder if the girls would be allowed to go that far, If I were not present. The place is on the shore, but not visible for Joseph and Bernhard [social workers]. In addition, many waves occur as soon as a ship passes by. I ask the girls if they are allowed to be alone here and Lara says yes, if they are very careful.

If one understands the transition from childhood to adolescence also as a conflict between dependence and independence, this scene and the role of the body provide a more sensitive understanding of these negotiation processes that mark the transition. Based on this scene, we can unfold the relevance of the body on different levels: First, the danger that emanates from the river explicates the vulnerability of the body, its exposure to and physical dependence on the world that surrounds us - especially in relation to childhood and the bodies of children, as becomes evident in the researcher's addressing of the children (and their bodies). Second, the scene reveals the perception and understanding of one's own vulnerability and negotiation of personal responsibility in relation to the protection of one's own body. In the statement "if we are very careful", a reflection of the perception and handling of one's own vulnerability becomes apparent and the importance of others with whom we share the world – in this case peers – becomes delineable. Through collective action, the vulnerability of the individual is contrasted with the shared practice and the inter-subjectivity inherent to it. The body in its development and individual temporality and vulnerability in transition thus enables an understanding of its dependence on others and the world. It is not only interwoven in multiple temporalities, as exemplified above, but also linked to other bodies, people and things. It therefore brings insights into social relationships and trust, which can be unfolded through the body and its vulnerability as a connecting element.

The processes in which transitions are done throughout the body are complex and multi-layered. The body is a product, a recipient and a producer of (future) change, a means of experience and expression, and a reservoir of (past) transitional experiences and forms of knowledge. Thereby, the body opens up a level of reflection for the stability and dynamics, or the structuration and contingency – and thus the temporality – of social practice in transitions. The multidimensionality of materiality can therefore be seen as the examination of how the body and its materiality – in transition – is shaped and constructed in social practice, in socio-spatially situated, specific ways, thus becoming the hinge between the subject and the structure (cf. Villa, 2011).

The Role of Spaces in Life Course Transitions

As illustrated above, bodies always move in and through spaces – something that is also elucidated in the term transition as movement from one place to another. Life course transitions materialize, thus, not only in changing bodies, but also changing spaces. And in analogy to bodies, the processes in which transitions are done as spatial practices are multi-layered and complex: They form the spatial context in which transitions take place while at the same time they are constituted in

practices – and are thus object of transitions; they play an active role in shaping, producing, and enacting practices in transition; and form the reservoir, the materialized memory of past and the materialization of planned (future) transitions. Thus, similar to the bodies that move in and through them, spaces, "are not absolute entities, but constantly (re)produced fabrics of social practices" (Kessl & Reutlinger, 2010, p. 7; see also the chapter by Freutel-Funke & Müller, Chap. 14, this volume).

Bourdieu's concept of (incorporated) habitus cannot be thought of independently of the social and physical dimensions of space (cf. Bourdieu, 2018a, b). From such a perspective, social structures materialize in two co-constitutive aggregate states: "in materialized, objectified form (= habitat) and in incorporated, subjectified form (= habitus)" (Rieger-Ladich & Grabau, 2016, p. 108). Just as the bodily hexis can be understood as the product of social conditions and relations, the space or habitat can be understood as their product as well. Hence, and in opposition to a 'container' model of space, spaces "are not neutral protective shells [that] merely react to an elementary anthropological need: They are part of the "second nature" that humans construct, and thus at the same time a social fact" (ibid.).

Precisely because spaces are not independent of socio-cultural conditions, it must be reflected that "the social power relations that inevitably come into view [...] do not remain external to the designed spaces" (ibid.). Thus, in dealing with spaces, there is also a need for an "understanding of the social processes that manifest themselves spatially and of the socially structuring power of spatial orders that takes into account relations of power and inequality" (Manderscheid, 2008, p. 168). Hence, spaces are strongly entangled in the (re-)production of social inequalities which 'spatialise' and may eventually lead to social and physical segregation (Löw, 2008) expressed in both the spatial-physical as well as symbolic arrangements.

Emphasizing the relations between the different dimensions of space outlined above – the material, the social in relationships and structures, and the symbolic-discursive, the actual practices and the imagination, the planning and building as well as the appropriation of space (Lefebvre, 1991; Löw, 2008). Spaces are both part of social practice and act in social practice, they are both products and producers. As Reckwitz (2012, p. 252) puts it:

> Just as every complex of social practices arranges its artefacts and is arranged by them, every complex of social practices – organisational, private, public, subcultural etc. – produces its own spatiality: office spaces, public spaces, private spaces etc.

Space thus represents a multi-layered research phenomenon in reflexive and relational transition research that might encompass varied research projects. Hence, spaces can be products of transitions in the sense that they are shaped and constituted through social practices in the course of transitions, as much as they themselves may shape and co-produce transitions.

They thereby, on the one hand, form the material memory of past transitions as well as the material prospect of planned (future) transitions – exemplified as much in the cemetery as a place of memory of the last transition in a person's life as in the house being built to found a family. On the other hand, spaces are not only the product, but also the co-producer of transitions, as they might limit or broaden action

scopes and possibilities and form the material arrangements in which certain practices are more likely to happen than others. In the case of retirement, spatial practices visibly mark the boundary between work and retirement, for example refurbishing one's home, relocating, or retirement travel. Many research participants went on such a transitional journey directly after their last working day, as Tom, a former developer, remembers:

> We went on holiday straight away [...] practically without a break. So I stopped one day and the next day we went down to Spain. For four weeks. [...] That was also very important for me, and in retrospect it was a very good decision to take a holiday here straight away. Yes, and to have the distance then, yes. That was good. That was nice.

Travelling is not unique to retiring, but is part of the temporal-spatial structuring of many transitions, as exemplified in graduation trips or honeymoon vacations. Going on a holiday has even become a normalized part of annual transitions, like that from one half of the year to the other (and institutionalized, one school year to another). However, transitional travelling in general and retirement travel in particular differ from *ordinary* vacations in several aspects: they tend to take more time and lead to particularly remote destinations, from monasteries to far-away islands (depending on the financial resources). It is in these journeys that the *extra-ordinariness* that is so crucial for marking the transition as such in the first place (see the chapter by Wanka & Prescher, Chap. 10, this volume). Moreover, however, changes in place are also transformative themselves and thus co-constitute transitional processes, for example by inducing self-reflection in remoteness. Thereby, transitions not only spatialize (and thus materialize), but also spaces can be transitional.

Such transitional spaces become apparent in the following example from the project "Growing up in an individualized society". The socio-pedagogical children and youth facility in which the analysis took place offers an open space that the children can use for themselves in different ways. It is accessible and they do not have to register. The observed situation refers to the arrival of the children in the facility. In front of the door of the facility, a dispute arises between the children, which the researcher describes as follows:

> After some children have entered the institution, I hear loud voices and then screaming from the entrance hall, then I hear someone crying loudly. As I stand in the hallway, I can see that it is Nesrin who is crying and refuses to enter the building.

The scene takes place in front of the building of the children and youth facility with its voluntary offer. It remains unclear what the conflict is about and who is involved. Obviously, Nesrin has become a part of it, which is visible through her crying and her refusal to enter the space. Her refusal to enter the building can be interpreted as the expression that it is too painful for her, whether this is due to the situation taking place outside or to the facility itself. In any case, the conflict is powerful enough to interrupt her movement to enter the facility. Her crying while being immobile allows an understanding that she finds it too difficult or no longer attractive and helpful to enter despite the voluntariness of the offer. At the same time, she does not leave the place either, she does not simply give up and leave after the dispute. In fact, she appears stuck in a situation, which does not dissolve.

Particularly in a neighborhood that can be seen as deprived, an understanding for the importance of places that can be used with others of the same age emerges, especially in the time of early adolescence and the increasing importance of peers. Spaces thus also become understandable through the intersubjective relationships that unfold in them and give them meaning. This refers to the complexity of spaces not only in their material but also in their symbolic dimension. As a consequence, the relationships between bodies and spaces can be understood as interdependent. The socio-pedagogically designed space can be understood, following the scene, as a place of transition, it becomes an important place of experience and interaction and of the reality of life and one's own biography. In this it can be stated that spaces not only symbolize or mark transitions, but in their subjective meaning also become significant places of transition.

The Role of Things in Life Course Transitions

Regarding things and transitions, we can refer above all to the work of Bruno Latour (2007) and the emphatically emphasized importance of non-human actors in social practice, which we want to argue also holds true in transition processes. When we therefore, again, approach materiality as multidimensional and things as complex and relational, things become relevant in different ways: as objects in transitional practices that shape them and make them visible, as products of transitions that memorialize and document them, or as transitional objects that can exert their own agential power in transition processes.

Their importance as objects in transitional practices, like a tuxedo or ball gown worn for a transition ceremony, can be explained by the fact that objects become effective as cultural and thus significant artifacts in social practice. Here, one can follow the argumentation of the French sociologist Bourdieu (2018a, b) and his emphasis on the relational embeddedness of materiality arguing that it is not arbitrary which things are valued and how they are used, i.e. how taste is constituted. This also reveals the relations between the different dimension of materiality discussed, namely bodies, spaces and things, as objectified taste is related to social space, habitat, and incorporated habitus, and thus also to structures of power and domination.

As bodies and spaces, also things carry meanings – emphasizing, again, that all practices are material-discursive in nature. Following Alfred Lorenzer, in recourse to Marx and Freud, "[n]ot only figures of speech, but also objects [...] function as carriers of collectively agreed meaning" (1981, p. 157). In this context objects can be interpreted and understood as in their "collectively agreed form" (ibid.) and as "coagulated social practice" (ibid.). In this, they are not neutral – instead, they convey social meaning, symbolic orders and cultural imperatives. But they can also be appropriated (differently), given subjective meaning and individual meanings, and become an expression of one's own person and history, but also of transitions.

This can be exemplified with regard to a situation in the project "Growing Up in an Individualized Society" observed during a leisure time excursion of the (adolescent) girls' group to the swimming pool:

> I notice that Lara begins to cry loudly and some of the group is already with her to comfort her. Social worker Joseph also comes to Lara to ask her what is wrong. It turns out that Lara has brought two bikini tops instead of a bikini top and a bathing trunks and therefore cannot go swimming [...] Even when Joseph offers her one of the boys' swim trunks that Joseph is carrying in a bag (these are old trunks that previous participants forgot) and suggests that Lara could try one of these, she doesn't calm down, instead insisting that she can't go swimming.

Here, we want to focus on the gendered artefact of a boys' bathing trunks and its significance for the social practice expressed through it. First of all, it needs being kept in mind that even if the situation is part of a leisure trip the overall framework is supporting young people from a disadvantaged context in in growing up 'normally' (see the chapter by Boll, Chap. 11, this volume). Growing up includes the demand to position oneself in the gendered order which especially in the phase of adolescence is a challenge which is compelling and risky. In this context, the socio-pedagogical work within a gender-separated group of girls can be understood as a special support for this process. Second, a swimming pool is a place in which bodies are visible and positioned in this gendered order in a particular way. Third, Lara's social position as an 11-year-old girl on the onset of puberty and her subjective experience in this situation is insecure and vulnerable. in such a situation the object of bathing trunks is far from being neutral (even more if offered by a male social worker) but acts as a powerful symbol of this gendered order. For Lara and her still developing body, putting on a gendered object like boys' bathing trunks is perceived as too ambiguous and as risk of being attributed a 'wrong' gender. Obviously, she would rather renounce to going swimming than exposing herself to an uncertain gender affiliation.

The vulnerability and insecurity of gender belonging, as symbolized by the bathing trunks, and of one's own gender identity can thereby – and following the perspective of the chapter – also be described in connection with the body and space and emphasized in their mutual production. Lara's refusal to put on the bathing trunks designed for boys provides access to her personal ambiguity, insecurity and vulnerability, but, moreover, also to the underlying gender order that structures her transition.

Such objects, then, can also become memories and documents of transitional practice – like the wedding gown that, once the wedding day has passed, might only serve as a material memory of that ritual as "objects that seem to hold one's own history in contexts in which the individual is lost" (Emcke, 2016, p. 63). In their temporal dimension, objects can thus contain collective as well as individual (memories of) experiences and meanings; cultural imperatives and subjective occupation become effective in them and thus also meanings and contexts that can be used and reflected upon as an explanatory approach for the stability as well as for the dynamics of social practice. Things, thus, not only render visible the relation between different dimensions of materiality (bodies, spaces), but, secondly, the relation between

materiality and temporality, and thirdly, the relation between different life course transitions. The story of Harald is illustrative here: At age 63, multiple transitions have cumulated in his life: He developed a serious illness, had to retire from work, his father died and his mother, whom he and his father had cared for, moved to a nursing home. Hence, Harald felt he had a lot to deal with and reflect upon: his own past, resembled in the transitions his parents had just gone through, his future, resembled in the new life stage ahead of him, but also his worry about whether or not his body and health would allow him to live it the way he wanted to. For Harald, all of this was materializing in his parents' house. When his father died, and his mother decided to move to a nursing home, Harald inherited their house – the same house he had grown up in as a child. For the following year, Harald would spend his retirement cleaning, sorting out old stuff, looking through memories, and making plans for the future. He recalls:

> For a year we have been cleaning out my parents' house. That starts with a rag that you can easily throw away, and goes to photo albums, memories, or the cupboard filled with glasses and tableware.

In the future, Harald wishes that his daughter and the two grandchildren may move in at the basement:

> The house, and the cleaning out – it reminds me that I have a past here; and when my children and grandchildren will move here, too, also a future.

Hence, the inherited house provides an anchor that links past, present and future, as well as the transitions of his parents, himself and his children. Moreover, it is agential in inducing relocations: The house, too big and unhandy for one care-dependent person, 'makes' Harald's mother move away, and might 'make' Harald's children move closer to him. Hence, the case shows how materiality does not only provide an intersection for linked transitions, but it also actively engages in the practices of linking them. Finally, following Latour (2007), we can ascribe things as non-human actors their own agency in transition processes, which can also take different shapes and forms. Some things might induce the right timing for a certain transition – like a (digital or analog) calendar detecting and reminding of somebody's birthday or the days on which a person might get pregnant. Others might enable or prohibit certain transitions – like a passport that grants the right to work, a condom that prohibits pregnancy, or a pacemaker that both allows for certain new transitions as well as reduces the risk of others (e.g., serious illness or death).

Conclusions

This paper set out to demonstrate the added value of a relational, reflexive perspective on materiality and its multidimensionality – in bodies, things and spaces – in transition research.

Informed by the empirical examples from two projects studying transitions at two different margins of the life course, we could unveil how bodies, spaces, and things, and their relation matter in life course transitions. Speaking with Alkemeyer et al. (2015a, b, p. 9), the epistemic as well as empirical perspective of the article, when considering transitional processes, "allows us to explain social orders and their implicit as well as explicit normativity […] differently". Hence, it can be noted how productive the theoretical and empirical examination of the multidimensionality of materiality is, how it can open up new ways of understanding and perspectives and offer more explanatory approaches than the mere reference to the contingency and stability of practice.

As the article has shown, bodies, spaces, and things can be interwoven into the practice of transitions in multiple and diverse ways. Their materiality can be understood as part of transitional processes, but at the same time they are produced as a product of these very processes. In addition, materiality also produces transitional practices as active agents. Simultaneously, practices of transition must also always be understood as those of time, which materialize in them as past and future transitions.

Even if the complexity unfolding in this could only be shown in its outlines within the article, Table 12.1 shall visualize and give a deepening impression of the possibilities unfolding above:

Table 12.1 Dimensions of materiality and how they matter

Dimensions of materiality/How they matter	Bodies	Spaces	Things
As part of transitional practice	Example: The body is made relevant in decision making practices on whether or not to retire	Example: Childhood transitions take place (inter alia) in institutional spaces, like social work facilities	Example: Bathing gear can be a contested part of negotiation practices in transitions to adulthood
As product of transitional practice	Example: The body is trained, slimmed, and/or staged as male/female in the transition to adulthood	Example: People refurbish their homes in the transition to retirement	Example: a photo album is one product of transitions across the life course
As active agents in transitional practice	Example: Bodily decline of functionality signals the right timing for retiring	Example: a seemingly dangerous space renders visible the vulnerability of the body	Example: The inherited house induces relocations of multiple persons
As materialization of past and future transitions	Example: a handicapped body hinders the future prospect of entering a romantic relationship	Example: The workplace as materialized memory of a past transition of retirement becomes inaccessible for retirees	Example: The inherited house is full of memories of past transitions, for example furniture, photographs

   Through this understanding, the body, in its complexity within social practice as well as in its role in processes of transition, becomes significant in particular ways and in relation to change: In life course transitions, the way the body is addressed as an object and thus constituted as a material entity changes, just as boundary-setting practices around the body change; the body as an idiosyncratic, biologically evolving agent can initiate or hinder transition processes as they advance or come to a halt; the body stores transitional histories (including across generations) and is also the main resource for future transitions. This also applies to spaces and things: On the one hand, they are materialized history. They form the contexts and frames in which transitions take place. At the same time, as part of social practice, transitions are always constituted through space and things; thus, they also form the materialized memory of past and the materialization of planned (future) transitions. On the other hand, things serve as "memory keepers" and, at the same time, enact their own kind of temporality on people's lives by anchoring them to a material thing (and often to a particular place as a result), thus structuring the ways in which their transitions can unfold. They can be products, initiators, and documents of transitions. Through them, lives that intersect in materialities and touch different generations connect past, present, and future transitions. Thus, they pave the way for and narrow down the space/scope for negotiation/agency of human actors involved in doing transitions. Whereas bodies, spaces and things might matter differently in transitions, our empirical examples have also shown how heavily entangled and related these three dimensions of materiality are: Bodies move through spaces and act with things; the spatial arrangements of bodies and things constitute places; and all three dimensions together can mark or hide, facilitate or hinder, materialize and memorize life course transitions of the past and the present, and structure those to come in the future. Hence, we can conclude that not only these different dimensions of materiality are entangled among each other, but these dimensions of materiality are also entangled with different dimensions of temporality (past, present, and future). In materiality, and this can be described as a realization of the considerations, different and many-sided temporalities are thus always expressed. The Life course and its transitions are often perceived as predominantly temporal (phases, processes, timelines) – on the backdrop of our results, however, and through a materialist and practice-theoretical lens, we propose to theoretically acknowledge and empirical grasp the connections between the multidimensionality of materiality the complexity of temporality. This is particularly significant for reflexive transition research. Materiality, thus, makes transitions transcend time. Transitions and the multidimensionality of both materiality *and* temporality are entangled in complex ways, together creating tempo-material processes of practice change.

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Chapter 13
Bodies in Transition. Gendered and Medicalized Discourses in Pregnancy Advice Literature

Janne Krumbügel

Pregnancy is a time of transition in many respects. The birth of a child changes familial status and relations: Couples become parents, parents become grandparents, children become siblings, siblings become aunts and uncles. It also affects lifestyles and daily routines: Work arrangements and division of labor change at least temporarily, as well as sleeping and eating habits. From structural aspects to self-concepts and world views, expecting and raising a child is life-altering. In this respect, the transition to parenthood is a common research topic in life course studies, concentrating on biographical and social structural aspects, and the "outcome" of transitions (Wanka et al., 2020, p. 12). In contrast, pregnancy as an embodied transition is rarely considered and conceptualized in transition research (Neiterman, 2012, p. 373).

In general, bodily and material aspects tend to be naturalized and consequently regarded as mere facts or background to social research: The body has been "largely taken for granted" (Cregan, 2006, p. 1). In the last decades, there has been a growing interest in the body in social, cultural, and historical sciences, and the idea of the human body as a stable and natural entity has been challenged. This development coined as *body* or *corporeal turn* (Gugutzer, 2006; Sheets-Johnstone, 2009) opened a new perspective on the body as a culturally and historically changing and

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contingent concept. Additionally, the attention shifted from the body as an entity to social processes and practices surrounding and including the body. In this perspective, "it is important not to reify 'the body', but to treat embodiment as a process […]. [E]mbodiment is a life process that requires the learning of body techniques – walking, sitting, dancing, eating, and so forth" (Turner, 2008, p. 245). Bringing this perspective together with the concept of "doing transitions", I conceptualize pregnancy as a body-centered and embodied transition performance, intertwined with cultural ideas, norms and ideals of pregnant bodies and pregnancy behavior, as they are represented in advice literature.

Elena Neiterman describes "doing pregnancy" (2012) as an active and constant performance, adapting the concept of "doing gender" (West & Zimmerman, 1987), taking on a praxeological and anti-essentialist view compatible with the "doing transitions"-concept (see introduction to this volume). Neiterman observes that "pregnant women are expected to 'do' pregnancy, actively performing socially established practices that signify the status of the body as pregnant" (Neiterman, 2012, 372f.). A major part of this performance is "learning to be pregnant (by reading relevant literature and listening to the advice of others" (Neiterman, 2012, p. 373), and taking on daily routines of behavior adapted in accordance with advice that they perceive as relevant. In an ethnographic study, Schadler (2013, p. 85) found that choosing sources of knowledge such as advice literature is a central practice within the social process of "becoming parents-to-be". In this chapter I focus on recent German advice literature. Following two major lines of discourse surrounding the pregnant body – medical risk discourses and gendered discourses – I examine how concepts of the pregnant body are employed in advice addressed to parents-to-be as notions of how to do pregnancy and how to be pregnant the "right" way.

This contribution is structured in three parts: The first section is concerned with the relevance and the field of pregnancy advice literature in Germany. The second section analyzes how concepts of the pregnant body in risk discourses, originating in the context of prenatal care, translate into advice to the readers of pregnancy advice literature, instructing pregnant persons[1] to manage their "risky" bodies and minds, and fathers-to-be to control the risk management of their pregnant partner. The third section shows how advice literature problematizes gender identities and roles in the transition to parenthood, in the form of gendered evaluations of pregnant bodies and narratives about male pregnancy.

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[1] Not all persons who are pregnant identify as women. Consequently, I will use the term "pregnant woman" only when specifying how the analyzed advice discourse employs binary gender ascriptions and norms, although advice literature usually denominates pregnant persons as pregnant women.

Analyzing Pregnancy Advice Literature

When analyzing advice literature in social sciences, the question of relevance comes to mind. Pregnancy advice literature looks back on a long tradition in Germany. The first book addressed to pregnant persons was published in the early sixteenth century (Rößlin, 1513), giving information about the bodily processes of pregnancy and childbirth, as well as behavioral advice and cures for common ailments, complications and diseases in pregnancy, during and after birth. Today, getting informed is perceived as essential to responsible pregnancy behavior and becoming parents responsibly. Accordingly, pregnancy advice literature has become a widely disseminated genre.

Although we cannot assess the immediate effects that the advice books have on parents-to-be, the discourses produced and reproduced via their content and images are nonetheless powerful. In Judith Butler's words: "Discourse does not merely represent or report on pregiven practices and relations, but it enters into their articulation and is, in that sense, productive" (Butler, 1995, p. 138). Accordingly, I understand discourses on the pregnant body and connected advice as a subjectivation offer. Advice does not have to be followed, but it positions itself and those who follow it within the realm of reason and acceptability. At the same time, there are various and contradicting subjectivation offers beyond the discourses in advice literature, for example, the advice given by doctors, friends, and family (Neiterman, 2012, p. 374). Doing pregnancy entails navigating these often-contradicting sources of advice and choosing which advice to adapt or reject.

The field of advice literature is vast. So, when searching for a book for oneself or for friends, partners, and relatives, what kinds of advice books are there to choose from? Most books are written by gynecologists or midwifes, and almost exclusively address pregnant persons. These books give detailed information about medical procedures and exams, behavior, and nutrition during pregnancy, but are not limited to medical and risk-related topics. They also inform about legislation and financial aids, as well as psychological aspects of becoming parents. Fathers-to-be are a topic in these passages, but in most cases are not addressed as readers.

Since the 1970s there are a growing number of advice books written by lay persons, sharing experiences and giving advice from the personal perspective of experienced parents. At the same time, advice books entered the market for fathers-to-be. Many of these advice books are humoristic and designated to serve as entertaining presents, while others offer more practical and serious, including medical, advice. The advice given in these books takes on a distinctly gendered dimension: The authors announce an honest talk "man to man" or "woman to woman" based on their personal experience, problematizing life changes during pregnancy and after birth as a challenge to gender identity and relations.

Another group of advice book focuses on the development of the unborn child. These books are published mostly by psychologists and assume a mental connection between the pregnant person and the fetus. The advice concentrates on prenatal communication with the unborn child, and often takes on threatening tones when

addressing adverse effects of lacking emotional investment in the relationship or physical protection before birth, thus forming a bridge to medical risk discourse. Typical examples of the discourses in these three types of advice book will appear in the following sections.

Managing Risky Bodies and Minds

Pregnancy is a strongly medicalized bodily phenomenon. Bodily changes in biographical transitions are often medicalized, especially when they are addressed as specifically female. This not only concerns pregnancy, but also puberty and menopause – all linked to a concept of female bodies as ideally reproductive. Pregnant persons in western society are expected to visit gynecologists or midwifes regularly and take part in prenatal care programs, and almost all do (Sänger, 2015, p. 108). Unsurprisingly, most guidebooks directed at pregnant persons are written by medical practitioners. However, medical discourses and images of pregnancy are by now so common that they are also taken up in advice books written by lay persons, as mentioned above. In this first empirical section of the contribution, I will talk about how medical risk discourses and concepts of the pregnant body are linked with interpellations of pregnant persons and their partners in advice literature.

The Two-in-One Body

Let us start with the description of a series of book covers to illustrate a very common concept of the pregnant body. New editions of pregnancy advice books are often released with minimal to no changes to the content, except for the cover pictures. To signify to potential readers what to expect of the book, pregnancy advice literature mostly shows some form of image hinting toward the topic of pregnancy. What first comes to mind as a symbol of pregnancy is a rounded abdomen. The first edition of a book titled "The Secret of the First Nine Months"[2] (Hüther & Weser, 2005) shows the abstract silhouette of a pregnant body, but without a head. The second edition switches the perspective from the outside to the inside of the pregnant body, showing a fetus, seemingly sucking on its thumb. The umbilical cord is visible, as well as a round shape in the background which might be interpreted as the amniotic sac or the indication of the round abdomen of the pregnant person. The third edition shows a close-up of the same picture, eliminating the round shape. The latest edition, published in 2015, shows a fetus, floating in a luminous space. It appears to be smiling contently and playfully grabbing a foot with its hand, very

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[2] All book titles and quotes from German advice literature translated by the author.

similar to pictures of born babies. The unborn is depicted as a person, independent of the pregnant body, which disappears into a blurry background. Physical connections like the umbilical cord or the placenta are missing.

This series of book covers illustrates a tendency that Barbara Duden described as "disembodying women" (Duden, 1993) in favor of the unborn in the context of medical risk discourses. Like these cover pictures, the pregnant body is often left out of view, or is represented as a mere vessel or environment, and the unborn as its "precious cargo" (Lupton, 2012). While the head of the pregnant person is usually visually cut off, the fetus appears as a "whole" and largely independent person. This visual discourse of fetal personhood and sociality of the unborn is rooted in medical visualization technologies used for diagnostics like ultrasound but has taken on meaning in practices and discourses beyond the medical context of prenatal care (Lupton, 2013). Ultrasound images are anticipated as "baby's first picture" (Mitchell, 2001) and are utilized as powerful emotional tools in anti-abortion discourses and practices (Taylor, 2008, p. 162).

The concept of the pregnant body dominant in medical discourses but developed beyond it, is a "two-in-one body" (Lupton, 2013, p. 53): physically connected, but also independent as persons, like Russian dolls, with the focus of attention on the inside, the unborn child. It is an ambiguous and potentially conflicting body concept, as

> the unborn body and the pregnant body are thus both anomalies according to accepted norms of "proper" individuated and contained embodiment. They are ambiguous and unsettling in their blurring of boundaries between Self and Other. Where does the pregnant body/self-begin and the unborn body/self-end? (Lupton, 2013, p. 53)

The cover pictures of the advice book show this difficulty to find images for the complexity of pregnant embodiment, and, at the same time, show that the focus often shifts toward emphasizing the personhood and bodily integrity of the unborn.

How does this ambiguous body concept translate into advice to pregnant persons? The advice book with the discussed cover pictures is written by a neurobiologist and a psychotherapist and focuses on prenatal influences on human development. Readers are warned that prenatal development is a sensitive phase that has consequences reaching far beyond birth. The pictures of a translucent, vulnerable fetus resembling a baby underline this priority of the book. The following quote specifies which factors they assume are involved:

Is she unduly burdened or can look forward to having her child light-heartedly, does she smoke during pregnancy, drink alcohol, or take medications, is she physically or mentally ill, does she move a lot or little, is she overnourished or undernourished – all this, as we know today, influences the development of the unborn child. (Hüther & Weser, 2015, p. 142)

All factors described here as influencing the development of the unborn are connected to the pregnant person's bodily condition, as well as their mental state and their behavior. Body and mind are put under scrutiny and are treated as potential risk factors for the unborn. The pregnant body is thus understood as an environment

which can be nourishing or harming to the unborn child, depending on the pregnant person's willingness to reduce potential risks and to adapt behavior (and mindset) accordingly. As in this example, social factors like poverty, unstable or unhygienic living and working conditions or the behavior of partners and family members are usually not addressed. Rather, this is an example of the often exclusive and all-encompassing responsibilization of pregnant persons for the development of the fetus in the context of risk discourse between medicalization and naturalization of pregnancy.

Medicalization and Naturalization of Pregnancy

Most advice literature starts by positioning the content of the book explicitly towards the medical system and recommending a specific attitude. Those positions cannot be simply divided into medical or non-medical, affirming or rejecting the medical system. I am going to present a few examples of how this complex positioning works.

Pregnancy as a bodily process is presented as generally unproblematic in advice literature; the popular saying "pregnancy is not a disease" can be found in most publications in some form. Even advice books authored by gynecologists emphasize that

> pregnancy and birth are well adjusted procedures which theoretically run unproblematically even without the influence of midwife and doctor. Strengthen your confidence, it is you who can shape pregnancy and birth positively. (Nolden & Kainer, 2009, p. 21)

In addition to informing about behavior in pregnancy, the book guides pregnant persons toward a level of concern deemed normal.

The movements of the fetus are an example of this. They are often discussed as an indicator of the progression of pregnancy, as in this example: "If you observe yourself and your body attentively, you will repeatedly find signs to indicate that your baby grows continually and develops well" (Nolden & Kainer, 2009, p. 68). The reader is instructed to observe their body for signs of a regular development, which, on the other hand, might not show: By implication this also means you might find signs that the fetus does *not* develop well. Readers are encouraged to keep a pregnancy diary. On a page designed like a fill-in-form, they are asked about fetal movements and to write down which events might have triggered those movements, like loud music or stress. They are encouraged to take notes about their weight, the circumference of their stomach and any unusual discomforts. And there is a space designated for an ultrasound picture (Nolden & Kainer, 2009, p. 69). Like this, they are encouraged to monitor their body in daily life. At the same time, the book distances itself from the practice of self-monitoring it introduces:

> Normally you would feel your child at least ten times per day. In countries without suffi-
> cient medical care, it is recommended to count the child's movements.[3] But this method is
> utterly unreliable, and that's why you should not do it. Try to simply enjoy the movements
> of your child. Leave the judgement on the child's condition to your medical advisor. He has
> the more reliable means. (Nolden & Kainer, 2009, p. 68)

The message is ambivalent: "Relax" vs. "be alert". Fetal movements are marked as
disquieting *and* reassuring at the same time, as they can be interpreted as a sign of
health or life and a sign of stress. Pregnant persons are expected to observe discom-
forts and search for signs of complications, but ultimately their body signals are not
seen as reliable, so that they are demanded to go see a doctor or midwife regularly.
The problem is shifted towards the attitude of the pregnant person: Monitoring the
pregnancy is presented as desirable, while worrying too much isn't, as it might
mean stress for the fetus.

In the introduction to an advice book written by a gynecologist and a midwife,
we find another example of this mediated position between pregnancy in need of
monitoring and natural process:

> Consider your pregnancy as a natural, healthy condition that a woman's body is well pre-
> pared for. […] Stay relaxed, composed, and trust your own rational assessment, but also
> your gut instincts. Well informed, you will be your own best counselor! (Höfer & Scholz,
> 2014, p. 7)

In German, the word for gut instincts is "Bauchgefühl", in literal translation, a
"belly sense", which alludes more strongly to the topic of pregnancy and a meaning
of an instinct which is founded in being pregnant. These instincts or gut feelings of
pregnant persons are presented as an addition to or based on "rational", scientific,
medical information. In this way, notions of pregnancy as a "natural", non-
pathological bodily process and as a risky condition in need of medical monitoring
are consolidated. As we saw above, these bodily signs and the pregnant person's
sense of the body are not always assumed to be reliable, consequentially putting the
final judgement back in the hands of medical experts. By trying to establish exper-
tise, advice books tend to nourish uncertainties.

The practice of medicalizing pregnancy and childbirth has been repeatedly ques-
tioned by feminist scholars, prominently by Anne Oakley (1984) in "The Captured
Womb. A History of the Medical Care of Pregnant Women", and more recently by
Deborah Lupton (2012). The authors historicize the practice of risk-oriented prena-
tal medical care: Pregnancy has not always been under such public and professional
scrutiny. A primary point of criticism in this perspective is not the general availabil-
ity of medical care, but the excessive control of pregnant bodies and the pressure put
upon pregnant people to reduce risks – blaming them for anything that might go
wrong in the development of the unborn child and marginalizing their own needs
and their social situations, while the unborn is treated like a person early in

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[3] The German word "Kindsbewegungen" translates literally as "child's movements". Speaking of
a child instead of a fetus emotionalizes the discourse about risks and potential harm through the
pregnant person's behavior and thus operates as a discursive tool of responsibilization
(Krumbügel, 2015).

pregnancy. As we can see, repercussions of this discourse are noticeable in current pregnancy advice literature as an effort to consolidate the understandings of pregnancy as risky *and* natural, but critique of unbalanced responsibilization is usually not taken up.

Involvement of Fathers-to-Be in Risk Management

Recently, fathers-to-be, as mentioned above, are increasingly addressed by advice literature, and become more and more involved in pregnancy. There are very few advice books directed to fathers-to-be which are written by medical personnel. Nonetheless, prenatal care, birth preparation, and behavioral, health-oriented advice play a certain role in books directed exclusively to fathers-to-be as well. What role do these books assign them during pregnancy, considering that they are not pregnant themselves?

Fathers-to-be are mostly addressed as supporters and helpers of their partner in advice literature. They are asked to get informed about adequate nutrition and diet of their pregnant partner, and to help them avoid food and substances which might cause harm to the fetus by adhering to the same diet. Most books ask fathers-to-be not to consume alcohol and nicotine in the presence of their partner, and to carry heavy things for them. They are encouraged to accompany their partner to doctoral appointments for emotional support, and to be present at birth as mediator between their partner and medical personnel. In some advice books though, men's involvement in health- and risk-related practices is described as control rather than help and support.

One advice book, for example, states that fathers-to-be must "know everything anytime" (Busemann, 2010, p. 20) concerning medical information and discomforts of the pregnant partner and should be able to recognize complications. It informs the father-to-be about a list of possible medical complications, amongst other things addressing rubella embryopathy which can be caused by the rubella virus. A vaccination against this virus is not possible in pregnancy. The author's advice is this: "If she has no immunity to rubella, play the tyrant and lock your wife up at home. You don't want her to get infected." (Busemann, 2010, p. 31) In the following sentences, the meaning of this advice is detailed as keeping her away from places with high contact to small children which might carry the virus. While the overall tone is humoristic, similar shifts between caring support and control rhetoric are continued throughout the book. The father-to-be in the advice discourse thus assumes not only the role of supporter, but also the role of controller and gatekeeper concerning the exposure of the pregnant body and the future child to potentially harmful substances and environments. Concerning the consumption of alcohol and cigarettes by the pregnant partner, one author states pointedly: "I am the controller!" (Euler-Rolle & Rinnerhofer, 2009, p. 27)

These claims of controlling involvement in pregnancy are often accompanied by justifications problematizing the "ownership" of the pregnancy. While

acknowledging that his partner *carries* the child, the author states: "It is our child, and it wouldn't exist without me. So: *We* are pregnant" (Euler-Rolle & Rinnerhofer, 2009, p. 27). Similarly to risk discourses in the context of institutionalized medical risk management, the pregnant person is again addressed as the carrier of the fetus and the child, but not to be trusted entirely with the care for the unborn. This discourse on claiming pregnancy and controlling involvement of fathers-to-be in medical risk management also takes on a gendered dimension. The pregnant person is presented as a potentially "bad mother" to the unborn child, while the father-to-be figures as the strong man, protecting his partner, but foremost his unborn child. While vulnerability of fathers-to-be and feelings of powerlessness are addressed in some advice books, the overall ideal of the father-to-be is supportive, strong, and protective, sometimes in opposition to the pregnant person in favor of the unborn child.

Bodily Changes and Gender

This second empirical section focuses on discourses about bodily changes during pregnancy and connected gendered attributions and subject positions in pregnancy advice literature. First, I will look at how pregnant bodies are evaluated in terms of attractiveness and will problematize the sexism of this discourse on bodily changes during pregnancy. Then I will examine narratives about male pregnancy, exploring their function between involvement in pregnancy and calibrations of gender identity in the transition to fatherhood.

Gendered Evaluations of Pregnant Bodies

The most visible bodily change during pregnancy is the growing belly, so that it is often placed in the center of book covers, as mentioned above. Other changes in appearance which are discussed in advice literature are a general weight gain and growing breasts. These changes of body shape are mostly discussed in terms of attractiveness. Their evaluation changes in the course of pregnancy, as we can see in this quote from an advice book written from personal perspective: "In the first weeks you might still like your new femininity and maybe even enjoy your extra curves. But in the 7th, 8th month at the latest you will think: This is enough" (Heil, 2008, p. 31).

In general, advice books promise a gain in femininity through bodily changes in the second trimester of pregnancy and address a threat of losing femininity in the third trimester. Weight gain and changing body shapes are almost always linked to a normative concept of femininity and ideals of feminine bodies which are assumed to be accepted by pregnant persons and to be their personal concern. An advice book published by a gynecologist and a journalist for example states: "Some women feel

too fat and deprived of their femininity" (Gebauer-Sesterhenn & Villinger, 2012, p. 121). Accompanying these statements there are invitations to accept the changing appearance of the own body, as well as encouragements to make an effort to look good and attractive, no matter what the pregnant person feels about their changing body. As one book puts it: "Having a baby is not the end of style" (Dannhauer, 2017, p. 67).

Changes of the body during pregnancy and after giving birth are also heavily discussed in advice literature directed at fathers-to-be. The topic is usually connected to explicit discussions of sexuality, which takes up considerably more space than in advice books addressed to pregnant persons. In these chapters, pregnant bodies and bodies after birth are assessed in terms of appeal and fitness for sexuality. Several advice books written from the perspective of experienced fathers use disparaging language. The following passage is an extreme example from a book addressed exclusively to fathers-to-be and written by an author who presents himself as an experienced father. Under the headline "My wife is human again", readers are instructed to take an active part in "restoring" the body of their partner: "The responsibility is partly yours to tinker the worn out, mangled, probably female being with whom you created a real human back into a presentable, halfway passable, daylight-fit person" (Busemann, 2010, p. 196). In this passage, the pregnant person is presented as barely human anymore because of bodily changes. The reader is put in the position of having a right to an attractive (and recognizably female) partner and the responsibility to claim this right. Sexuality in this discourse is styled as a test of courage, as "amateurs have no business here" (Busemann, 2010, p. 82). While this is an extreme example, there are several books stating a right to an attractive partner who is "fit" for sexuality and use deprecating language in varying degrees.

Not all advice books present this attitude, but recommend a supportive and understanding role, as in this quote:

> Many women need an extended period of time to feel "at home" in their body again, to accept its maybe changed appearance and to learn to love it again. […] Tell your partner repeatedly and spontaneously what you like about her looks, that she feels good, smells good, you like the sound of her voice… and that you love her. (Richter & Schäfer, 2014, pp. 155–156)

This passage though is also part of a chapter about sexuality, which remains the dominant context of discourses on changes of the pregnant body and bodies after birth in advice literature addressed to fathers-to-be. The problematization, as lacking "fitness" for sexuality, is maintained.

Although not all advice books directed to fathers-to-be contain disparaging language, almost all of them assess pregnant bodies in respect to femininity and attractiveness, and it is very common to compare pregnant persons to animals, both in advice books directed to fathers-to-be as well as to pregnant persons. The objectification, (selective) sexualization and devaluation of bodies in relation to their degree of perceived femininity might not be a phenomenon restricted to pregnancy (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), but becomes very evident in this context. It is safe

to say that there is a strong tendency to objectify pregnant bodies and to selectively sexualize or desexualize them, distinguishing between favorable (growing breasts) and unfavorable changes (weight, stretch marks). The changes of the pregnant body thus partly collide, partly agree with the represented ideal of female bodies, emphasizing normative, gendered body concepts in often sexist language.

Male Pregnancy

Another version of discourses on changing bodies and gender during pregnancy we find in the advice books is male "pregnancy". Narratives about male pregnancy are very common in advice literature and appear in most books which also or exclusively address fathers-to-be. In most cases, these narratives serve as an introduction to passages discussing the role and experiences of partners during pregnancy.

One example is a title page with the caption "We are pregnant". There is a drawing of a couple leaning back-to-back. Both the pregnant person and the partner hold their hands around their own round stomach. Under the shirt of the father-to-be, part of a pillow is visible (Maiwald, 2014, p. 8). This visual mirroring as a mimicry of pregnancy symbolizes the involvement of the father-to-be in the experience of pregnancy, presenting the time of pregnancy as meaningful to both partners. There are variations emphasizing a male quality of the experience or a male subject position, for example a soccer ball stuck under the shirt of the father-to-be (Meier, 2011). In this case, the round abdomen as symbol for pregnancy relates to the soccer ball as a symbol for masculinity, representing an activity that is often perceived and framed as "typically" male.

Other advice books address male pregnancy as a medical phenomenon. In a section with the headline "Co-Pregnant?" one book elaborates:

> Daddy's belly is getting bigger, too? This is not unusual, and can even be accompanied by tiredness, nausea, food cravings and indigestion. Extreme cases are called 'couvade syndrome' [...] Is this the expression of a particularly intensive emotional involvement in the pregnancy? Or does papa just put on belly fat because he spends more evenings having a nibble on the sofa rather than exercising? […] no, the hormonal balance of fathers-to-be changes, too: Testosterone, the hormone of belligerence, decreases, and prolactin, the caring hormone, increases up to 20% until birth. Sounds like a useful brooding program of nature! (Weigert & Lütje, 2018, p. 171)

Other advice books vary the reason for this hormonal change, attributing it to "sexual attractants, so-called pheromones, exuded by your partner. […] they make him occupy himself with the equipment of the baby buggy instead of the optional extras of the company car" (Maiwald, 2014, p. 12). This way, pregnancy symptoms in fathers-to-be are explained effectively by "infection" and are further medicalized. At the same time, it is presented as in need of explanation why fathers-to-be should care about pregnancy and the preparations for the baby. Here, a narrative of male pregnancy serves to naturalize an ideal of involved and caring fatherhood, starting before birth. At the same time, it becomes clear that emotional involvement and

concern with the impending life changes are considered less self-evident than for mothers-to-be. Hormonal changes are used as an explanation for caring behavior of the father or father-to-be. Hormones are associated with emotions and behavior toward the (unborn) child, and in this discourse must change so that the father-to-be is able to adopt a caring and emotionally invested role, albeit concentrated on technical activities. This way, the narrative remains in the logic of hegemonic division of "natural" feminine and masculine behavior, while "allowing" men to show emotions and caring behavior toward the unborn and newborn to a certain degree.

There are other positions rejecting the idea of male pregnancy. A paragraph titled "Pseudo-pregnant? Why men could be but shouldn't" states: "Men are not pregnant. Just to be very clear: The pregnancy of your wife is no excuse for you to grow a fat belly and complicate your already strained relationship with moody behavior" (Wiechmann, 2008, p. 151). Here, male pregnancy is seen as optional and deliberate behavior, in contrary to the medicalized accounts of couvade syndrome discussed above. Behaving pregnant is considered unnecessary and counterproductive in the process of becoming parents. Passages like these are often linked with an admonition to "man up", so that behaving like a pregnant person is associated with a loss of masculinity. Another author looks down on men behaving "pregnant":

> Some men flee to work, others lean towards phantom pregnancy. These protagonists often feel more pregnant than a woman could ever be and suffer bitterly. The author knows such cases only from cinema or TV-comedies. But still: Allegedly they exist. Most men try to master the situation rationally. (Wittmaack, 2008, p. 16)

Here, the author distances himself (and the people he knows) from fathers-to-be who show emotions, contrasting the latter with "rational" behavior. In the following text though, there are descriptions of hormonal changes in fathers-to-be, chaotic feelings and helplessness, and the author distances himself from fathers-to-be who are not worried about their pregnant partner and the unborn child, marking sensitivity as a positive trait (ibid., p. 46). The dividing line drawn between an appropriate and an "unmanly" approach towards pregnancy is behavior: Feeling pregnant is marked as okay, behaving pregnant is not.

In comparison to the discourse about changes of the pregnant body and femininity, it is striking that gender identity is not problematized in men gaining weight during pregnancy. There is also no discussion of attractiveness concerning weight gains in fathers-to-be, only calls to be alert because men would not lose weight automatically after the birth of the child. The body of the "pregnant" men are not scrutinized and assessed as strongly as those of their pregnant partners. This is not satisfyingly explainable through the position of the authors, as there is a considerable amount of self-deprecative language in advice literature written from a personal view by mothers. Pregnant men are assessed mostly by their behavior and their (voluntary) mindset, staying in tune with the hegemonic phenomenon "that women are being identified or symbolically associated with nature, as opposed to men, who are identified with culture" (Ortner, 1974, p. 73), positioning women being their body and being ruled by their body and instructing men to rule with their minds.

In conclusion, we see that gender identity is presented as being at stake in pregnancy advice discourse. Bodily changes during pregnancy are problematized as potentially irritating to concepts of feminine and masculine bodies and female and male identities. Advice literature instructs parents-to-be to navigate those challenged gendered subject positions. While there is irritation in the integrity of binary gender identities and body norms, this does not lead to a dissolution, but to a new calibration of hegemonic gender ideals and norms. Even the figure of the pregnant man constitutes a discursive effort to consolidate the emotional and practical involvement in pregnancy and baby care with hegemonic ideas of masculinity (Connell, 1995).

Conclusions

In this contribution, I aimed to explore discourses on the pregnant body in recent German advice literature, focusing on two major lines of discourse: Medical risk discourses and gendered discourses. While the examples presented in this chapter offer only a partial insight into discourses surrounding the pregnant body, it became apparent that pregnant persons are clearly positioned as not only *being* pregnant, but also managing the process of a pregnancy – as *doing* pregnancy. This entails navigating the advice given with the goal to manage pregnancy risks and to consolidate gender ideals with the changes of the pregnant body.

We saw that there are tensions between concepts of pregnancy as a natural bodily phenomenon and as a precarious process in need of medical control. Pregnant persons are addressed as protectors of their unborn child's wellbeing and at the same time as potential risks to their own pregnancy. These interpellations may seem contradictory at first glance but have a powerful effect in discourse: While preserving the idea of pregnancy as a generally natural and unproblematic bodily process, they create uncertainty and thus link the ideal of natural pregnancy and childbirth to medical concepts of the pregnancy as risky and in need of monitoring and control, resulting in a strong responsibilization of the pregnant person. Medical risk discourses entail the idea that prenatal influences have consequences reaching far beyond birth. Consequently, parental responsibilization is moved to the time before birth or even conception.

This not only concerns the pregnant person, who appears as a potentially "bad mother" to her unborn child, but indirectly also the father-to-be, represented as protector of the unborn child. Here, medical risk discourses overlap with gendered discourses on the hegemonic ideal of the father as active and protective. The involvement of the father-to-be in pregnancy is strongly expressed in the figure of the pregnant man. On the one hand, this discursive figure serves to justify caring activities deemed as unmanly, on the other hand, it constitutes a claim of power over the management of the pregnancy. The distinctly sexist narratives concerning changes of the pregnant body also constitute a discursive tool to restabilize binary and hegemonic gender relations. While gender relations and gendered subject positions are

temporarily discursively destabilized in pregnancy advice literature, they ultimately remain within a binary frame of feminine/masculine and strive to reassert those gendered subject positions.

To sum up, pregnancy advice literature discursively (re)produces concepts and ideas of bodies, gender, and biographical transitions, and with them, power relations. What do we take from this exploration of advice discourses on pregnant bodies? Pregnancy is more than a physical state, and more than a time of individual transition. Several bodies transform and several persons transition together, undergo changes in interaction and interdependence (Schadler, 2013). Looking at body concepts, norms and ideals opens the perspective on transitions as a relational, processual, and social phenomenon (Stauber et al., 2020, p. 289). When transitions are not given facts but are being done, they can be changed. Advice texts can be powerful tools for reproducing inequalities, one-sided responsibilizations and gender norms – or for challenging them. Understanding how concepts and ideas of the pregnant body serve to support specific gendered or medicalized power relations, reproduce, or reinforce inequality and sexism, is a prerequisite for challenging hegemonic discourse.

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Chapter 14
How Spatial Sensitivity Enriches Understanding Transitions in Childhood and Later Life

Tabea Freutel-Funke and Helena Müller

In the cluttered rooms of apartments, the busy streets of neighborhoods or the comforting greenery of the city park, daily life *takes place* in physical structures of concrete, wood, glass and soil. Space and person are so fundamentally connected that the two cannot be separated (cf. Kruse, 1974). Yet, in traditional transition research, the element of space remains underexposed, even after a paradigm shift towards space as a cultural entity in the cultural and social sciences (*spatial turn*; e.g., Lefebvre, 1991; Löw, 2001), and is often reduced to the physical properties of an external environment. Instead, we conceptualize space as a relational arrangement, i.e., a complex net of interdependent relationships of people and spatial features (cf. Andrews et al., 2013). We propose the idea of *spatial sensitivity*, or general attention to and acknowledgment of complex relationships between people and physical aspects of environments, as a fruitful research perspective. This kind of sensitivity does not require an explicitly space-related research object but can be applied to a wide range of topics to both broaden and deepen analyses by exploring this key element of human life.

As space holds significance across the life course, we exemplify pursuing spatial sensitivity by following spatial relationships during transitions based on two empirical studies of two life stages: childhood and later life. These studies address (a) transitions to children's independent mobility (CIM) and (b) transitions of older adults into multigenerational cohousing with backgrounds in (a) dispositive analysis (following the tradition of Foucault, 1986) and (b) environmental psychology (following the tradition of Lewin, 1936). These transitions share specific common

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features: a non-institutionalized framing, a strong spatial component and a brief history of related research. Although these topics are already space-related, we argue that especially in transitions, which lack institutional regulation, the spaces involved are prone to gain additional power and meaning. Applying a *Linking Ages* perspective,[1] we connect the findings of our two projects, which traditionally would not have been combined due to the borders of age-specific disciplines. While mid adulthood is commonly perceived as "normal," both childhood and later life are marked and marginalized as deviant (Blatterer, 2007). A common perspective on space and both groups (children and elders) emphasize immobility, dependency, barriers, and limited action range (e.g., Mollenkopf & Flaschenträger, 2001), often framing space as a physical structure that individuals either can or cannot use.

We challenge these perspectives by following two different transitions from their beginning to their end, highlighting selected moments, from which we extract cross-age as well as age-specific relationships between individuals and spaces in transitions. In doing so, we go beyond the scope of traditional space research (which focuses on physical structure) as well as traditional transition research (which focuses on changes in social roles). We identify issues of identity, sociability and empowerment in the relationship of space and transitions in childhood and later life. In addition to the private space of the home, these analyses also include open and public spaces of the neighborhood.

This chapter focuses on the diverse roles and relevance of space in transitions. We (1) outline transition research on childhood and later life to show the peripheral position of space in research to date; (2) briefly introduce the research questions and methods of the two projects to set the stage for further interpretation; (3) based on our empirical data, define and introduce four key constellations of space and transitions to show its manifold roles; and (4) discuss how *spatial sensitivity* can shape, alter and enrich research on transitions across the life course.

The Need for Attention to Space in Traditional Transition Research on Childhood and Later Life

Before addressing the role of space in transition research, we take a closer look at the definition of the term "space" as it is used here. In environmental psychological and environmental gerontological approaches, space is seen as part of transactions of person and environment (Kruse et al., 1990; Wahl et al., 2012), which dates to Lewin's fundamental equation of person-environment relationships (Lewin, 1936).

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[1] A. Wanka, T. Freutel-Funke, H. Müller, D. Nägler and M. Lehnert conceptualized and introduced "Linking Ages" at a workshop for early career researchers in 2018. As a social category of difference, age shapes our positions in society, our lifestyles, attitudes and ambitions even more so than other categories of difference, like gender or class. "Linking Ages" introduces a new perspective to link research on childhood and later life by rethinking theoretical concepts, methods and research challenges.

People and environments are not seen as merely self-contained, mutually opposed entities. Rather, people and environments together form an inseparable whole that changes over time and encompasses physical as well as psychosocial aspects (Altman & Rogoff, 1987). Other fields of research such as spatial sociology (e.g., Löw, 2001), practice theories (e.g., Shove et al., 2012) and human geography (e.g., Ingold, 2000) share comparable assumptions. Such relational approaches (e.g., Andrews et al., 2013) mark an attempt to do justice to the complexity of life as well as transitional reality.

In educational research and childhood studies, transitions in educational institutions appear predominant. Traditionally, starting school at the age of six or seven was considered the beginning of the "serious" life and for a long time marked the central institutional transition (e.g., Andresen et al., 2014; Hanke et al., 2013). Later, the beginning of kindergarten (e.g., Griebel & Niesel, 1999) became increasingly relevant for scholars and the transition to crèche (under 3) has been a subject of study since the start of the millennium (e.g., Roßbach, 2006). Additionally, the field of social work focuses on "successful" transitions "in" and "out" of care institutions, foster families, support programs, etc. during childhood and youth. Research on transitions in later life still often focuses on topics such as retirement, widowhood as well as care dependency (cf. Franke et al., 2017; Munk, 2014). While matters of aging in place and change of living arrangements in later life have received more attention in the last decade (e.g., Ewen et al., 2014), spatial transitions in terms of relocations are still mainly addressed as relocations to institutional settings (i.e., care homes; e.g., Lee et al., 2013). Although most older adults live in private households (Kremer-Preiß, 2012), research on relocations from one private home to another in later life – as recognized in this article – remains scarce (e.g., Oswald et al., 1999).

Even though transitions are repeatedly characterized as individual or "social changes of state" (Stauber et al., 2020, p. 290), what occurs during transitions cannot be isolated from material aspects such as space. For example, van Gennep (1909/1986) examined transitions in the spatial sense by describing spatial rites of passage of different cultures (e.g., showing one's passport when crossing the border, decorating the doorstep with lucky charms). Thus, transitions can also show in spatial (e.g., no longer using an office through loss of employment; Oswald & Wanka, 2020) and material changes. However, mobility-related transitions or spatial aspects of transitions have not been prominent on the agenda previously, which is unfortunate as mobility offers wider insights into the marginalized position of children and older adults within society: "Unequal social relations reproduce themselves through mobility and thus reinforce their differences, whilst mobilities further enable and perform social relations" (Adey, 2017, p. 123). While some objects and spaces indicate or are even explicitly planned for and dedicated to transitions (e.g., prams or strollers for infants and toddlers, hospices; Depner et al., 2016; Wanka, 2020), we argue that an unexpected variety of transitions might take place in spaces unrelated to their original function. At the same time, a transition may involve an unexpected variety of spaces, both resulting in gained importance and meaning of spaces. While people are expected to die in a hospice, they could also fall in love there. Alternatively,

a delivery room is the setting in which one expects to become a parent, but this process takes place in a wide variety of spaces before and after this event (Schadler, 2013). Yet, to the best of our knowledge, transition research with spatial components has, until now, mainly focused on the planned function or mere change of spaces being used instead of following a transition through space.

In sum, little is known about the significance of physical environments for the experience and shaping of transitions as well as the material reflection of transitions (Oswald & Wanka, 2020). This chapter is explicitly dedicated to how space matters for life course transitions, which we aim to examine based on two empirical research projects on two transition phenomena: transitions (a) to children's independent mobility (CIM) and (b) into multigenerational cohousing.

Bringing Together Two Research Projects on Space in Transitions

The first project addresses children's independent mobility (or CIM, Hillman et al., 1990), which Mayer Hillman first put on the research agenda in the 1970s and is defined as "the freedom of children to travel and play in their local neighborhood without adult supervision" (Shaw et al., 2015, p. 4). Numbers of children walking or cycling (active school travel, AST) to school without adults steadily declined during the last decades, a trend which is interesting for research on traffic, health, sustainability, and children's rights as well as the public, such as debates concerning "helicopter parents". The first listed author (Freutel-Funke) conducted the project "Time to walk alone – A comparative study on the transition to CIM in New York City and Berlin," a qualitative study meant to uncover and compare the multiple elements, actors and spatial features involved within this non-institutionalized transition to highlight the multifaceted experiences of space. Researching CIM, Freutel-Funke combines questions and traditions from urban ethnography (Duneier et al., 2014; Pink, 2012), childhood mobility studies (Christensen & James, 2017) and transition research (Kullman, 2010) with the theoretical framework of Foucault's (1986) power-sensitive thoughts about dispositive (also referred to as "apparatus" in English). The choice of the best-fitting research method is closely linked to the theoretical frame and phenomenological perspective on space as well as to the specific expectations on qualitative research methodologies "for" children (Christensen & James, 2017). The walking interview with a Polaroid camera offers children a variety of possibilities to express their views alternatively to verbal expression or how Nansen and colleagues showed "by embedding research in movements and routes of travel, they have been shown to produce data unable to be captured in more discursive or static methods using surveys or focus groups" (Nansen et al., 2015, p. 471). Within three neighborhoods, Tabea Freutel-Funke conducted a total of 11 walks with 14 children between the ages of 4 and 15. Besides a small interview and mapping of their everyday locations within their neighborhood, they walked

together to important places and children took nearly 100 Polaroid pictures of subjectively important locations in total. Further material for the dispositive analyses were historical studies and documents, parent and expert interviews as well as participant observation within the neighborhoods.

The second research project addresses multigenerational cohousing. This form of housing represents one new housing option in later life, given increasing life expectancies, a predominant preference of elderly people to age in place, and yet increasingly widespread as well as non-traditional social relationships (Wahl & Steiner, 2014). The term "multigenerational cohousing" signifies self-selected groups of people who decide to move together and form an "intentional neighborhood" (Durrett, 2009). Additional shared spaces complement the dwellers' own apartments. Beforehand, the group usually comes to an understanding about mutual support in everyday life and joint activities (Hieber et al., 2005). Although a relocation into multigenerational cohousing is still an unusual transition in later life (< 1% of people aged 65 years and older in Germany live in cohousing; Kremer-Preiß, 2012), the societal relevance of housing and intergenerational contact as well as the potential psychological benefits of this form of housing (e.g., Gierse & Wagner, 2012; Müller, 2021) has awakened interest in environmental psychology. This is addressed in the research project "UMGEWOHNT – Umzüge in gemeinschaftliche Mehrgenerationen-Wohnprojekte [Transitions to multigenerational cohousing]" by the second listed author, Helena Müller, who chose a multimethod approach to capture the complexity in how people decide to move into cohousing, how these transitions take shape and which changes go along with them. Seven movers (49–74 years) participated in structured interviews and 54 (measurement point 1) resp. 33 (measurement point 2) movers (26–70 years) participated in an online survey at two measurement points 1 year apart, i.e., before and after moving into cohousing. All of the interviews took place in the interviewees' homes. Apart from psychological variables, diverse aspects of the housing environment (e.g., selecting belongings to take along, space use in the apartment, furnishing behavior, housing biography) were also captured.

Besides the marginalized societal position of their participant groups (children and older adults), the two research projects both study a transition that is non-institutionalized. While one of these transitions is highly expected (CIM) and follows strong normativity, the other one is more exceptional. However, research has hardly – if at all – addressed both transitions until now. Following the transition unfolding in space, both projects pay special attention to spatial configurations, meanings and roles.

Empirical Findings: Tracing Space in Transitions

Building upon our understanding of space as a relational concept and our research methodologies, the following section provides insights into our empirical findings that elaborate relationships between space and transitions.

Space as a Trigger or Barrier of Transitions

Transition research often raises questions about their starting points and focuses on events and age-related norms, while overlooking spatial elements. The following examples from both research projects show how consistent or changing elements of spatial arrangements may stimulate or hinder transitions. Ben, a 6-year-old boy from Berlin, does not yet walk around the city alone. Since this is still considered the norm in Germany for children beginning school, i.e., aged 6 or 7, his mother aims to teach him the way to school but sees spatial elements as hindering it:

> The only real problem is this really big crossing, he would have to pass six traffic lights, with stopovers. Between the big roads. And this worries me – not that he is not able to (.) but you know drivers (.) cross the tramways or just miss their exit and (.) or this worries me, but Ben would be capable, (.) definitely. (Lisa)

Although convinced that Ben would be capable of managing his way, his mother fears the unpredictable reactions of the opponent user: powerful car drivers. Besides difficult street crossings, temporary changes of the urban environment, such as maintenance work and construction sites, could also influence children transitioning to CIM as either pedestrians or passengers of public transportation. Construction sites may alter routines (changes in traffic lights), reduce visibility for drivers and present unknown obstacles, e.g., a closed road, for the child. Parents and children stated similar fears in New York City, where changes of bus stops or unpredictable train routes led to insecurity and worries. On the other hand, they offer challenges for children, which when faced successfully improve their problem-solving abilities, train social interaction (e.g., in asking for the way), and their capability to make decisions in real-time independently from their parents: a set of qualities which may be of interest individually as well as for society. An opposing phenomenon can be found in an example concerning the speeding up of the decision to move to a new home in later life. Here, spatial features of the former housing environment are likely to become push factors (i.e., reasons to leave that environment). For example, Ms. Vogel describes the increasing noise caused by car traffic in front of her apartment as an important reason for moving:

> The traffic here outside has increased, increased, increased. So, to the back, in summer, I can hardly tilt the window at night, because it's just too loud. And there is little green around, especially in this area. (Ms. Vogel)

Due to the effort required in planning the project, movers into cohousing often consider this relocation as "the last relocation in life". Therefore, relocating to cohousing can be seen as a self-determined relocation "while one still can" to prevent later, involuntary relocations. Accordingly, Ms. Meier explains how she considered future physical housing needs that guided her decision to move into cohousing:

> And that is of course very important, that one can imagine spending the next years here without any problem. Of course, one considered that. The elevator is something worth considering. Or local public transport. (Ms. Meier)

The elevator makes her vertical mobility within the building easier, in anticipation that the stairs would be increasingly difficult to take as she gets older. In addition, the proximity of the public transportation system offers a connection to the neighborhood and beyond regardless of car ownership or the ability to drive. Links to relying on public transportation (e.g., gender, financial aspects, age, environmental awareness, loss of driving ability) prompt further considerations on the role of space and mobility in transitions. As such, the physical environment – among other aspects (e.g., resources, opportunities, social support) – can slow down or accelerate transitions depending on the extent to which conditions meet people's psychological and physical needs.

Individual Transitions Changing Relationships with Spaces

While passing the driving test, for example, brings about a direct change in person-environment relationships, other transitions or events have a more indirect or delayed impact. Following Ms. Meier through the spaces of her apartment, she indicated that she no longer used nor maintained one room: Her late husband's study. Not only did her use of space change with the death of her partner – leaving one room abandoned (in German "verwaist," a term also used for children whose parents died) – but this change in her situation is also reflected in the way she thinks and feels about her apartment and about leaving it:

> My partner then had the room back there when he was sick. [...] And for that, certain areas are then also somehow occupied. Of course, they are now abandoned. Yes, the back room is practically only a storage room, so I actually don't [go there] – it is also no longer heated. […] For me, I think it's also important that I move out of this apartment, so that I can distance myself from this relationship, that I can manage it better, because here I'm not able to live this down, you know? […] That is different now and that must somehow manifest itself outwardly. So not outwardly, but for me inwardly. So the external environment must become a different one and it must be such that I made it myself. (Ms. Meier)

This quote reveals how the transition to widowhood through illness and grief is intertwined with parts of the spatial environment through use and maintenance as well as cognitive and emotional evaluations. With the shared home environment being inseparably linked to the loss of her husband, the change of this environment offers an opportunity for coping and self-care. At the same time, individual transitions may also lead to new, enjoyable spatial experiences, e.g., the freedom of exploring space on one's own. As Hayley, a mother of three, states in an interview about her children coming home independently from school instead of being picked up by her:

> They loiter a bit in the parking lot, walk with their friends slowly or go to a store and buy a drink. Every time between three and four is fine. (Hayley)

Through the transition to CIM, her children get the chance to decide spontaneously which elements will be included within the choreography of their way home after school. This transition leads to a new experience and perspective on the parking lot

as a meetup place for play and peer interaction, the way to school as a path to walk along with friends involved in conversations and games, as well as the local store as a destination to buy something unsupervised following their desires. Accordingly, tracing links between space and the individual might not only deepen our understanding of well-researched transitions but may also lead us to discover "new", i.e., less prominent or not yet acknowledged, transitions in the life course.

Space as Social: Sharing Space During Transitions

Space is also linked to physical relational qualities such as proximity. Especially being in the same place, being in eyesight, or just around the corner influences possibilities of social interaction in transitions. The two examples show how proximity and distance can both be ways to show social support during transitions. Concerning the transition to CIM, proximity, and distance are made extremely relevant. Prior to the transition, especially the physical proximity to their parents or caregivers, holding hands, being "reachable" or at least "within eyesight" directs the relationship to and the range within space for children. The terms to be "hands off" or "to give space" are common metaphors used in the context of social relationships and education and refer to the need for balance between the two poles. The following sequence from an interview with a mother of two in North Manhattan Inwood shows how relational and fragile these small steps are and how they may even differ within the same family, based on their children's needs and capabilities.

> I'll leave the oldest one [age 8] like if the- like sometimes the younger one [age 4] would have school or maybe he'll be sick, I'll leave him in the apartment if I'm going to go down to do the laundry or something, and he seems to be okay with that. I'll ask him if he wants to come with me and he'll be like, 'No, I want to stay here.' So, it's just like his comfort level, and as he gets older if he wants to stay while I go to the store. Sammy it's not like his comfort level, like he's afraid of staying. I wouldn't make him stay, but if he's like, 'Okay. Yeah. You can go to the store and I'll stay here by myself,' then I would be okay with that. It's just his comfort level I think. (Tessa)

An interview of a mother of two in Berlin raising children in the 1980s and 1990s illustrates a "care from the distance practice" during the transition.

J: And I always cared for, that they themselves, autonomously walk to school, first accompanied, then observed and then alone. But already in the first grade they, because the school was always (.) the school close to home, so in the afternoons they would have their social environment, friends and so on. (.)

I: How did you "observe" them?

J: Dressed up

I: No? (laughs)

J: Grandma, my mother, (.) she went behind them with a woolen hat, big sunglasses and so (laughs) […] Yes, yes. Seriously. And walked after them, if everything worked out ok, yes mhm. Yep, and then also walked along a bit herself, at a distance.

Aside from the high value and normativity related to children being independent – or at least feeling like they are – this caring practice allows children to develop their relationship to space, step by step. At the same time, the notion of controlling or surveying points to the caretaker's ambivalent experience of letting the child go out alone, emphasizing social relations reflected in spatial transitions. An opposing perspective of visible social support during transitional periods can be observed in the following example by Ms. Sommer:

> Well, we've already moved several times as family [–] or as a couple, family, [–] um, I always have that in good memory, so I thought it was actually nice how we did it. […] So you're still a long way from being finished, and still your friends come and you sit in between, already drinking some wine and, well, and chatting. […] Yes, so it was not only moving, but it was always at the same time living friendship, you know? (Ms. Sommer)

Another woman, Ms. Lang, also describes her friends' support during her move to cohousing:

> I had already commissioned a, I don't know, small haulage company […] plus my partner and a friend. Who, from her own experience, is very experienced in moving. She moves all the time. And (laughs) comes from far away but said, 'I'll come, I'll help with your move.' […] And then we unpacked the boxes. From Friday noon, that was the move itself, until Saturday noon, when she had to leave. But the boxes were unpacked. Almost all of them. (laughs) This woman is really phenomenal. (Ms. Lang)

As different as the spatial practices described here are, they share a common feature of care focusing on family ties as well as friendship. In all three examples, familiar and appreciated people act as – immediate or hidden – *companions* of the transition. As the transitions in question entail changes in use of space, the social participation of others is based on accompanying the transitioning person along the way, helping to break up and build new person-environment relationships (e.g., through assembling furniture) or from a distance allowing children to find the way on their own.

Shared Right to Define the Completion of a Transition

Comparable to the questions raised about starting points of transitions, the completion of transitions is of high interest as well. Yet, considering a transition completed can vary widely depending on whether the person asked is in transition themselves or an outsider reflecting on someone else. In contrast to an unequivocal A to B logic, transitions offer an inner and outer perspective. In the example of CIM, a mother refers to her husband's reaction when talking about her daughter's transition.

> And then my daughter, she went shopping alone, it was just out of the house, a small organic store at the corner (.) it must have been at the end of kindergarten, she was five. At this time Daniel conducted his professional training, two houses down the street and I think he told me that he saw her and was really touched by his child walking down the street alone – it wasn't far. (Anja)

Interesting about this passage is that also spatial transitions are not realized or evaluated only by the transitioning individuals themselves but by a process of reflection, which might be initiated by someone else through another person's comment or item. In an example from relocation to cohousing, a mover describes how she could partly shape the new space in cohousing by taking things from her old housing environment to the new one. In doing so, she maintained the relationship with these things, which enables personal continuity and an "immediate" feeling of home despite spatial change.

> In these completely new surroundings, being able to put the furnishing from another context together again in another collage works out really well. So, I immediately feel at home. (Ms. Meier)

Yet, it also shows that the transferred possessions do not guarantee feeling at home. Rather, there may be a discrepancy between the attachment to the former home and physically being in the new space, i.e., an *inner vs. outer relocation*.

> In terms of feeling, it was like, once my plants are here, I'm here. But I've just had an incredibly hard time settling in here. And it's still not quite 100%. (Ms. Vogel)

Although all of her belongings were moved into her new apartment, Ms. Vogel still does not quite feel at home or *in place* at the new location. As the spatial and social environment remains new, the adaptation and psychological habituation can take different lengths of time. The outside view of a transition and its thereby alleged end or closing (e.g., watching a child go to the store alone, completely furnishing the new apartment) may differ significantly from the subjective, "inner" perception of the transitioning person.

Conclusion

What can we conclude from these findings for the role(s) that space(s) can play in transitions? Applying a perspective informed by cultural sciences and environmental psychology allows discovering and acknowledging space not just as a stiff external environment or mere projection surfaces but as active elements in the complex nets that are peoples' lives and transitions. As such, we work out examples of possible influences of space alongside different transition processes. We find that spatial features can trigger, accelerate or slow down transitions, and that transitions can influence peoples' relationships to their environments, that accompanying other peoples' transitions in physical (seen or unseen) proximity can strengthen social ties, and last but not least, that the outer view of the completion of a transition can differ significantly from an inner perspective.

To be more specific, what can we derive from these findings for theory, methodology and practice in the field of transition research? Although both of our projects were based on transitions directly related to space from the outset, a more space-sensitive perspective could enrich the research on transitions in general. We plea for a space-related concept of transition based on the following considerations:

(a) Space takes an active role in transitions and should not be reduced to a level on which effects of transitions take place and become visible. A different neighborhood (e.g., with fewer crossings, reduced street traffic) or a different apartment (e.g., with an elevator, ramp, or helpful amenities) could lead to very different trajectories of "the same" transition. We aim to follow the transition to the spaces that it is involved with instead of looking for transitions in a given space. As such, different expressions of a transition might emerge (e.g., dealing with widowhood at the workplace vs. in the family garden).

(b) Transitions within the life course also change spaces (e.g., from study to sickroom, or babyproofing an apartment). Not every transition influences space to the same extent, but closer inquiries of spatial relationships could also reveal "hidden" (parts of) transitions that are reflected in space (e.g., becoming a working parent).

(c) Research from a space-related perspective could shine a new light on well-researched, institutionalized and normative transitions (e.g., from kindergarten to school, from working life to retirement), which could further deepen and extend the understanding of these transitions. From there, new research questions can emerge, such as: Which spaces gain and lose meaning for a child transitioning from kindergarten to school and how does access to certain spaces influence this transition?

From a methodological angle, searching for new links between space and the individual, i.e., explicitly analyzing spatial elements, may highlight new transitions across the life course. Doing so from a relational perspective also allows us to shed the idea of almighty humans in favor of blending into a greater whole. Transferring these considerations into research methods would entail giving space the chance to be heard (and seen) through visual methods (e.g., photography, artifact analysis, walks, sketches) across age groups. When applying verbal methods (e.g., interviews or group discussions), explicit and detailed questions about space and spatial practices can broaden the scope of transition research as well. Consistently pursuing *spatial sensitivity* in research projects would also be reflected in a conscious selection of where research takes place (e.g., a researcher's office, an interviewee's home, a café, during a walk, in a laboratory) and considering how these spatial configurations possibly affect the collected data (Elwood & Martin, 2000).

As space can actively co-constitute transitions, the current findings may also contribute to applying a space-sensitive perspective in intervention and practice. For example, integrating people's perceptions and space-use patterns into the planning phase of the construction process moves beyond one-size-fits-all solutions and promises more truly user-oriented buildings (e.g., Rambow & Rambow, 1996) and neighborhoods. Acknowledging space in transitions also allows for a differentiated understanding of opportunities, triggers and worries in the transition process that can be addressed and assisted (e.g., narrowing down safe routes for children to walk).

Limitations of research on the role of space, including but not limited to, in transitions can be seen in the dependency of access (impossible or intentionally denied)

to certain spaces for researchers. The research topic (e.g., becoming president, nun, Mafioso) as well as the relevant spaces (e.g., the Oval Office, seminary, back rooms) limit the possibility of being researched by spatial features or regulations. Apart from regulatory constraints, capturing person-environment relationships is especially challenging, as space is neither a container nor laboratory that can be controlled or held constant in real life, but encompasses countless bits and pieces to assess and analyze. Also, we would like to underpin that space is an important element that enriches research, but should not be traded for sensitivity for social, structural and psychological processes in transitions – at least in psychology and the social sciences.

Future – preferably interdisciplinary – research should aim to integrate spatial aspects into transition research consistently and to inform discourse on topics such as inclusion or aging: How do certain groups of people (or stereotypical ideas of them) occupy spaces? How do transitions take shape in place? How do spatial preferences emerge, strengthen or change across the life course and how do these preferences and experiences in and with space influence transitions (e.g., moving, shifts in mobility, career choice)? How does space actively shape transitions by hindering or prompting them? And how can we use, create and adjust space to facilitate and support people in transitions across the life course? For example, although not explicitly considered in this chapter, space can also facilitate intergenerational interaction, underlining its power worth considering. Yet again, the mere presence of people from different generations in the same space does not automatically imply interaction (e.g., Noon & Ayalon, 2018). Further research may address intergenerational patterns of space use and their role in transitions more closely. We advocate a methodological shift: That researchers no longer look for transitions in spaces explicitly dedicated to them, but instead follow people through spaces as they make transitions (e.g., using multi-sited ethnography, interviews in different locations or walks).

We set out to find the role of space in transition research and found that considering space can enrich transition research as it actively contributes to the onset, trajectory and end of transitions, as it is strongly intertwined with social life and helps to differentiate perceptions of transitions. Acknowledging space in transition research offers new and deeper insights into not only explicitly space-related, less institutionalized transitions like the ones presented here, but into the physical embeddedness of human life.

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Part V
Outlook

Chapter 15
The Significance of Relationality in "Doing Transitions"

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Transitions during and between different phases of the life course have long captured the attention of researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. They are central to understanding the organization and experience of life in every society. In premodern societies, this was particularly visible as life trajectories were structured by a few highly ritualized transitions such as birth, initiation, marriage, and death. In late modern societies, in contrast, differentiation and flexibility have led to more, and more diverse, life course transitions. Transitions are not simply "given" but instead emerge from how lives are organized differently across and within societies. In the opening chapter, we introduced Doing Transitions as a new framework for understanding life transitions (see Walther, Stauber, & Settersten, Chap. 1, this volume). This framework, inspired by a praxeological perspective, questions, reconsiders, and recasts some traditional ways of viewing transitions in the life course. We hope to offer a more comprehensive approach to understanding life course transitions, crossing the boundaries of age groups, life domains, and disciplines that so often segregate inquiry.

It is common to interpret transitions as individual experiences that are largely the result of personal choices and individual behaviors, even if they are framed and stimulated by institutions and structured by differential access to socioeconomic

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resources. A foundational tenet of the Doing Transitions framework is to question the separation between the constitution of transitions and individual processes of coping with and progressing through transitions. In fact, "doing transitions" means that transitions are shaped and produced through social practices. As transitions emerge, they are constantly reproduced and transformed through the interrelation of different modes of constitution and associated practices – or, more accurately, "bundles" of practices (see Schatzki, Chap. 2, this volume). The prior chapters, which have dealt with very heterogeneous fields, have explored how various transitions are being done and are nurturing a shift in theorizing transitions: instead of viewing transitions as fixed entities, they are handled as processual, dynamic, situated, and interwoven.

In the Doing Transitions program, from which most of the empirical contributions in this volume are derived, we have for heuristic reasons distinguished three different modes of constitution and associated practices: First, a *discursive mode*, with practices related to "articulation," "attribution," and "responsibility." Discourses establish situational definitions, provide interpretive frameworks, and represent symbolic orders that contribute to the constitution of transitions. They articulate the conditions under which experiences are referred to as "transitions," make attributions about their causes and consequences (especially "successful" or "failed" transitions), and assign responsibility to people for transition outcomes (see Boll, Chap. 11, this volume; Krumbügel, Chap. 13, this volume).

Second, an *institutional mode*, with practices related to "marking," "processing," and "gatekeeping." Institutions can be viewed as expressions of social discourses, playing roles in regulating and processing transitions – setting expectations, routines, requirements, and procedures. Institutions mark the conditions, times, and duration of transitions; process individuals by preparing them for and assessing them as they make transitions; and assign gatekeepers who are responsible for guiding people in transition (see especially Walther, Chap. 3, this volume).

Third, an *individual mode*, with practices related to "positioning," "learning," and "decision-making." Transitions involve individual practices, even as they are actively negotiated with other actors. Individuals position themselves towards expectations which are addressed by others; the way they do so is not determined and could also vary from expected pathways. Individuals become subjects in a double sense: they are subjected under these expectations, but also turn into subjects, enfolding agency in new ways (Butler, 1997). They acquire skills and knowledge related to the new status and integrate the new status into their idea of the self. They make decisions that affect the likelihood and experience of the transition, and which correspond to the ethos in neoliberal societies that individuals determine their life outcomes (see especially Eberle, Lütgens, Pohling, Spies, & Bauer, Chap. 9, this volume; Hirschfeld & Lenz, Chap. 4, this volume; and Krüger, Chap. 5, this volume).

At the same time, research in the Doing Transitions program has revealed that processes that constitute transitions are even more complex than the interrelation between discursive, institutional, and individual practices; or better: social practice

is not only to be distinguished in terms of modes but also in terms of the dimensions of the social world. Some of these cross-cutting dimensions are reflected in the very structure of this volume.

First, the section on *institutions and organizations* reflects the finding that the regulation of transitions in many organizations in modern societies occurs through norms and expectations that are at once persistent across time and space and constantly being reinterpreted, translated, and negotiated (see Heinrich, Klevermann, & Schmidt-Hertha, Chap. 6, this volume; Riach, Chap. 7, this volume).

Second, *times and normativities* are inseparable because the time perspective inherent to a life course approach (e.g., sequences of transitions that permit distinctions of "before" and "after") fosters normative assumptions about the "right" timing or duration of transitions. A Doing Transitions perspective reveals that beneath the chrono-normative structure of the institutionalized life course several "layers" or "levels" of time are at work in constituting transitions, such as historical and biographical time (see especially Sánchez-Mira & Bernardi, Chap. 8, this volume; Wanka & Prescher, Chap. 10, this volume).

Third, a practice perspective opens the view to the roles of non-human actors – or better, the *materialities* – involved in constituting transitions, such as bodies, spaces, and artifacts. Transitions emerge from discursive marks of physical and psychic development and at the same time are embodied by human actors; discursive, institutional, and individual practices are situated and at the same time contributing to the structure of social space. Transitions not only represent practical bridges between discursive, institutional, and individual modes of practice, but doing itself influences how transitions evolve (see Nägler & Wanka, Chap. 12, this volume; Freutel-Funke & Müller, Chap. 14, this volume).

A Doing Transitions framework therefore underscores the notion that transitions are not individual as much they are *relational* – constantly co-produced or shared with, conditioned by, or otherwise involving multiple others who are constructing and enacting roles and relationships and interpreting behavior in a social world. As such, this framework may be interpreted in connection and consistent with a "relational turn" in the analysis of life course transitions (Dépelteau, 2018b). It makes visible how social interactions and processes reify or create individual and group differences ("doing difference"), including how transition processes and outcomes are entangled in dynamics of power and empowerment, inequalities, politics, and the welfare state.

In this chapter, we aim to make an innovative contribution to the field by systematizing this shift in observing and analyzing transitions *from a relational perspective*. We will first recall some core aspects of the theoretical turn in the social sciences offered by relational approaches. Against this backdrop, we suggest five different patterns of relationality and, drawing upon chapters of this book, show how the science and practice of transitions can be advanced by leveraging these patterns of relationality. Finally, we outline some important implications for future research on transitions that emerge from this perspective.

A Brief Recapitulation of Social Theories on Relationality

Relational approaches represent a heterogeneous field of thinking and research but are united in distancing themselves from approaches that tend to substantialize social reality by addressing social phenomena independently rather than as interwoven. They are driven by an interest in the dynamic and multi-factored constitution of "the social," accounting for the fact that "whatever happens comes from social relations between interactants. The world is relational and processual" (Dépelteau, 2018b, p. 4). In his "manifesto for a relational sociology," Emirbayer (1997, p. 281) states:

> Rational-actor and norm-based models, diverse holisms and structuralisms, and statistical "variable" analyses – all of them beholden to the idea that it is entities that come first and relations among them only subsequently – hold sway throughout much of the discipline. But increasingly, researchers are searching for viable analytic alternatives, approaches that reserve these basic assumptions, and depict social reality instead in dynamic, continuous, and processual terms.

Even if relational approaches are currently viewed as fashionable, they nonetheless look back on a long history of social theory that has not always explicitly referenced "relationality."

The different research currents and theories (see Emirbayer, 1997) associated with the "relational turn" can be distinguished as follows (see Dépelteau, 2018a, p. v): First, they include network research, which analyzes "multilayered, fluid relational structures" that "are based on attributions of meaning and generate meanings themselves" in which "identities emerge from efforts to maintain and position (control) fundamentally only in relations" (Fuhse & Mützel, 2010, p. 15; cf. White, 1992). Second, they involve interdependence-oriented approaches such as symbolic interactionism, pragmatism, and practice theories (Alkemeyer & Buschmann, 2016; Reckwitz, 2003), and Elias' sociology of figuration: "The question [...] of what actually binds people together in figurations [...] cannot be answered if one first considers all individual people alone" (Elias, 1970, p. 176). Third, a relational perspective draws on approaches based on power, inequality, and differentiation (Bourdieu, 1982; Butler, 1997, 2009; Foucault, 1972; Hirschauer, 2017). The type of transition research represented in the chapters of this book most often takes inspiration from the second and the third of these currents.

Relational social theory is a heterogeneous field, so it is perhaps no surprise that there are differences in the degree to which relations are understood as the unique or dominant mode of social realities. Dépelteau (2013) distinguishes three streams of relational thinking: (1) a "deterministic relational sociology," in which social structures shape individual action; (2) a "co-deterministic relational sociology," in which individuals have agency in existing relational structures; and (3) and a "deep relational ontology," which rethinks notions of interaction in the direction of transactions (Dewey & Bentley, 1949). A Doing Transitions framework, with its focus on power, inequalities, and differentiation, is located between the "co-deterministic" and "deep" relational perspectives and is critical of substantializing thought. At the

same time, some argue that a relational perspective is banal because analyzing social relations has obviously been central to its development from the very beginning (cf. Schatzki, 2019). Another concern is that relational approaches compromise the analytic rigor of the social sciences in trying to single out and understand specific identifiable elements of social relations.

Why Relationality Is Central to Understanding Transitions

Much transition research has analyzed the factors that influence transition "states" and their subsequent effects on life trajectories. This research has revealed the significance of dynamics related to how transitions reflect and contribute to the reproduction of social inequalities. But it has focused on one direction of the relationship: the *effects* of these factors on how transitions evolve. However, conceiving of transitions as social constructions or "doings" implies that transitions are not (just) entities that affect individual lives but are *practices* that are done while individuals pursue or are subject to transitions. In addition, a "doing" perspective involves reciprocal relationships: *all processes involved in constituting a transition and influencing an individual's experiences moving through it are at once affected by the emergence and the process of a transition.*

At the most basic level, understanding transitions calls for a relational perspective because transitions simultaneously separate and link distinct life phases and status positions. However, in contrast to the normativity underlying an "institutionalized" life course, transitions most often are not linear and unidimensional but are instead complex and involve interpersonal and nonlinear processes. Linear conceptualizations of educational, occupational, or other types of life trajectories too often attribute or reduce those trajectories to individual choices, obscuring the complexity of life course transitions (see Bernardi et al., 2019). In addition, particular transitions cannot be understood in isolation of other transitions – for example, transitions into and out of employment are connected to family transitions, such as marriage and family formation, and vice versa – and are therefore also intertwined with other people (e.g., the principle of linked lives; cf. Elder Jr., 1994; Settersten Jr, 2015).

This leads to the question of decision-making, which as noted above tends to be attributed to the individual undergoing the transition – for example, individuals making choices about whether to enter or leave education or to join or separate from a partner. Whether decision-making is being conceptualized as being done individually or jointly in negotiation with others in specific situations depends on how their "agency" is conceptualized. A relational perspective understands agency as inherent to social practices, as affected or even fostered by power and responsibility in situated phenomena, and as inseparable from discursive frames in which individuals are recognized and addressed as someone (and not someone else). Through these "addressings," individuals become subjects and, in the same moment, are subjected in being addressed in a specific way – for example, as mother, widow, pensioner, or person with special needs (see Walther, Stauber, & Settersten, Chap. 1, this

volume). In fact, if we interpret transitions as processes of becoming – which means they entail a dialectic of internal identification and external ascription – this implies that transitions must be analyzed as processes of subjectification and in ways that overcome the dualism of structure and agency. The above question of decision-making could be framed accordingly.

Also, social relations empower and enable individuals – and disempower and disable others (Burkitt, 2018; Butler, 1997; Ricken et al., 2019). Transitions involve powerful processes of subjectification: People are addressed differently, bringing differential access to subject positions and different configurations of agency based on their unequal statuses and resources. Relationality is therefore crucial for an intersectional research perspective on social inequalities: "doing difference" is to be regarded as a complex feature of interwoven social differences, partly reinforcing and partly modifying each other. The reproduction of inequalities can also be analyzed through the interplay of discursive, institutional, and individual modes of shaping transitions described earlier, and the material, temporal, and interpersonal relations that contribute to this reproduction.

Relatedly, transitions occur in larger socio-political contexts and are significant to the welfare of societies. This means becoming conscious of the social divisions through which modern societies are structured and how institutional regulation reinforces genderism, bodyism, racism, classism, and ageism. Thus, the ways in which transitions are regulated through policies of many kinds (e.g., social, educational, labor market) – even where they respond to precariousness, exclusion, discrimination, insecurity, and anxiety – necessarily reproduce the normativities and normalities of the life course and the transitions regimes in which they are embedded.

Finally, analyzing transitions from a relational perspective requires the incorporation of history and discourse perspectives, which help illuminate how transitions are constituted in changing social contexts or, more precisely, how they are differently situated. What does it reveal about current societies if social processes increasingly refer to, shape, and are understood in terms of life course transitions? A relational perspective on transitions is therefore poised to account for and reveal the practical and institutional consequences of dominant discourses such as activation, lifelong learning, or optimization. However, the transformative character of transitions also applies to transitions themselves, as they are constantly reconsidered, reproduced, and modified, and constantly enacted and reenacted. The distinction between apparently "new" and "old" transitions, from which some transition research begins its inquiry, risks obscuring these ongoing processes.

Patterns of Relationality in Transitions

Relational thinking implies analyzing social phenomena – like transitions in the life course – by reconstructing their constitution through relationships and the social practices that reinforce them. When we say that relationships *constitute* transitions,

this implies that relationships are the cause or are one cause among others. Although a relational perspective requires that one cease or ease the tendency to think about causality in linear ways, it does not mean that causality does not exist or is unimportant. However, "constitution" is not the same as "causality," at least not in terms of linear causality. There are many different relationships that can be potentially attributed to the constitution of a transition; there is not one ingredient but a set of dynamics that help it emerge. In this section, we explore some of these patterns of relationships. Following Barad (2007, p. 176), there are forces (normally referred to as "causes") that leave marks on bodies (normally referred to as "effects"). Referring to such a relationship in terms of linear causal determination results from identifying and separating phenomena as clearly defined entities. Therefore, such "agential cuts" need to be included into the analysis. Causality needs to be understood in terms of agency dispersed across different actors, materialities, space and time.

One concept inherent to such an understanding of agency, and that describes the constitution of transitions through relationships, is *power*. Some relationships may be more central to a phenomenon than others, and relationships vary with respect to the power differentials that structure them. A relationship that is both central to the constitution of a social phenomenon (for example, the relationship between age groups) and characterized by unequal or differential power (such as that between adults and children) will have a discernible effect on transitions (in this case, within childhood or adolescence). Power works in different ways, such as through knowledge (e.g., how phenomena are articulated in discourse and interpreted by actors, which are also shaped by normative messages about "how things should be" or "how transitions should look"); resources (e.g., socioeconomic resources and "materialities," such as the qualities of bodies, spaces, or artifacts that permit or limit certain activities), and time (e.g., such as practices that are entrenched in institutions and hegemonial versus those that are found in single actors and specific situations).

Power constitutes relationships in different forms. We now turn to five patterns of relationality, which we approach theoretically as well as empirically through the chapters of this volume, and how they constitute transitions: (1) determination, (2) coincidence, (3) interactive spiral, (4) genealogy, and (5) demarcation. Before going deeper into these concepts, an important remark is in order: rather than representing distinct forms, these patterns might be imagined as a continuum marked by the extremes of determination and coincidence, with interactive spiral and genealogy in between while demarcation represents a cross-cutting aspect or function of such relationships. These relationships operate simultaneously and even interactively, but for reasons of clarity, we present them separately, offering what we hope will be compelling illustrations from the chapters and recognizing that it is sometimes difficult to isolate one category from the others. In examining relationships in this way, we do not mean to essentialize them.

Determination ("Because"; "Resulting from")

One type of relationality, which we call *determination*, is activity that directly affects changes in the world. This is reflected in language to explain the existence of phenomena in terms of "because" or "resulting from." Determination comes closest to the idea of linear causality. In practice, however, the complexity of social reality tends to be reduced by interpreting relationships in linear causal terms: B happened because of A. While the social sciences are accustomed to accepting social complexity, social practice itself is often structured and constituted by beliefs in and ascriptions of linear causality.

For example, according to the dominant construction of the life course, children are addressed as *school*-age students when they reach the expected age because their later roles in society as adults require specific skills and knowledge, and the taken-for-granted space for such learning is school. Based on assumptions about children's cognitive, psychological, and social "maturity" and "readiness" for school, age becomes a quasi-natural yet normative determinant of entering school.

However, it is not age per se that determines this transition but instead the law, which regulates this transition *through* age. Law empowers authorities to direct a transition by enforcing compliance and exerting sanctions. Even if there is a need to deconstruct why the law encodes a particular age through social processes (see below), deconstruction does not weaken the power of the law. In this way, welfare states make participation in certain institutions compulsory (e.g., school, work, retirement). This includes the transitions associated with them, to which individuals *must* position themselves.

Welfare regimes therefore become "transition regimes" (Walther, Chap. 3, this volume), attributing a certain causality to the constitution of transitions. Welfare state institutions are powerful distinctive frameworks not only in addressing individuals as having to make a transition but also as having to do so at a specific time and in a specific direction. For example, curricula and training seem determined by the (shifting) necessities of labor markets while educational tracking and performance in school are often seen as "determining" later educational or life course transitions. Even if the meritocratic logic of school systems or the labor market suggest that "getting the best qualification will bring the best job," it would be naïve and even ignorant to deny that some relations have a more powerful effect than others on how transitions are being done. For example, Hirschfeld and Lenz (Chap. 4, this volume) show that young people with low qualifications in their transitions from school to work cannot defy being addressed as disadvantaged – they must position themselves in this respect. Similarly, Krüger (Chap. 5, this volume) shows that young people on the upper end of the performance spectrum need to either take opportunities or legitimize not doing so. Although education and welfare are powerful in addressing individuals in terms of the expected timing and sequencing of life course statuses, individuals may make meaning of and position themselves in relation to those statuses in unique ways. Yet, the possibilities of positioning oneself differently are not determined but enabled or narrowed by the power resources individuals have at their disposal.

A rather obvious case of causal relationships as determinants of certain outcomes is the spatial situatedness of social practice. Even when one starts from a relational understanding of space (Löw, 2016), which both structures and is structured by social practices (see Schatzki, Chap. 2, this volume), the material qualities of space impose some activities and exclude others. This is nicely illustrated in the case of retirement (see Naegler & Wanka, Chap. 12, and Wanka & Prescher, Chap. 10, this volume), which is often linked to changes in space. One way of coping with the leaving (or being expelled) from the workplace upon retirement is to travel to avoid being home. These changes can also be related to the functionality of space, such as the specific material or emotional qualities of a house or flat (e.g., after the death of a beloved partner) that can force an older person to make the transition to other housing (Freutel-Funke & Müller, Chap. 14, this volume). Spaces can also have a facilitating function – for example common housing projects that offer alternative ways of sharing, caring, economizing effort, and working together. Space reveals itself as a complex net of interdependent relations of people and material features that play inhibiting or facilitating roles in transitions.

There is sufficient evidence from studies of social inequality that some relationships are more powerful than others, whereby their effect is primarily notable in one direction – for example, the power of an employer to hire or fire workers, the power of Western nations to open or close their doors to refugees from the East and South, the power represented by legal documents or specific diagnoses. These examples make it evident that what we may understand to be determining causalities are often complex and multidirectional rather than linear. However, the closer research is to the logic of its fields, the bigger the challenge of distinguishing "natural" or "factual" from social causality; the more research is distanced from the logics of its fields, the clearer these determinisms reveal themselves as powerful social constructs where other relations also matter. We will show that what often seems like linear, deterministic causality often implies a multiplicity of relations working together.

Coincidence ("While")

Coincidence, in contrast to determination, captures a more contingent set of dynamics that can in many cases nonetheless be understood as a softer and de-centered form of causality. This is reflected in language that relates phenomena in a temporal perspective without making clear assumptions of causality. In the social sciences, for example, the move away from deterministic language, which has been replaced by softer language such as "while," reflects the fact that positions of structural determination have been losing ground.

We envision a continuum of types of coincidence from what appears as pure (or accidental) coincidence to coincidence in which reciprocal effects lessen its accidental quality. A looser version of causality in constituting transitions are coincidences of different processes that occur at the same time, in the same place, and/or

involve the same actors without the possibility of foreseeing them (such as the relationship between the biographies of two people who meet once on a train and have conversation that affects how one or both sees the world or themselves thereafter). However, it is not always easy or possible to distinguish coincidences from structured interactions. These may emerge from coincidences as they prove viable and successful according to the norms and interests of the actors involved. In fact, there are no examples of purely accidental coincidence in the chapters in this volume, which may be the exception rather than the rule in constituting transitions. Instead, it may be fruitful to assume that constitutive effects of many relationships are difficult to foresee but – in their reconstruction – reveal themselves to be less accidental than previously understood.

Interactive Spiral ("Adding Up"; "in Exchange")

One of these intermediate patterns is what we call an *interactive spiral*, which probably occurs most often relative to more rigid conceptions of determination or pure forms of coincidence. However, here the challenge of complexity arises, which is why in everyday language less frequent expressions such as "adding up" or "in exchange" would be used to refer to the diversity of actors and processes involved and their effects over time, creating loose relationships or indirect chains of activities (see Schatzki, Chap. 2, this volume).

Heinrich and colleagues (Chap. 6, this volume) analyze reciprocal processes constituting transitions of two (or more) actors involved in a relationship of subjectivation. The transformation of organizations into gatekeepers in the life course, and the life course transitions of the individuals they process, follow different rationales and reflect different states of aggregation of social practice. Yet, they are not linked in an accidental way. For example, migrant organizations are addressed by state institutions as well as by migrants themselves as actors to facilitate their integration processes. At the same time, the subjectivation is structured by the organizations' objective of distinction and self-sustainment in an institutionalized, politicized, and competitive environment.

Freutel and Müller (Chap. 14, this volume) show that transitions are situated but at the same time can link different places, pointing to the fact that transitions of one generation can induce transitions of another. This is reflected in the example of common housing projects, where housing is linked to transition-related experiences or prospects: the death of a partner, the fear or experience of one's own vulnerabilities, the need for belonging. Artifacts are similarly relevant in that things create, furnish, or establish social situations for doing transitions (Nägler & Wanka, Chap. 12, this volume).

Sànchez-Mira and Bernardi (Chap. 8, this volume) depict biographic time as highly relative time. Especially while experiencing and undergoing transitions, time becomes multidirectional, elastic (the same number of weeks could be experienced as rush hour or as endless waiting period), and telescopic (which refers to

biographical horizons/prospects and is viewed as highly relevant for the activation of agency, see Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). At the same time, life course transitions (and above all the so-called normative and highly institutionalized transitions) have linearity and strict time frames. Frictions, stress, and failure could result from the simultaneity of different temporal orders.

Interactive spirals have long been a focal point of transitions from school to work. We have discussed the power expressed by educational institutions in determining opportunities and outcomes in later stages of educational and life trajectories. However, this spiral evolves in different ways. One aspect is how young people position themselves in being addressed as disadvantaged or are expected to use exclusive career opportunities. Hirschfeld and Lenz (Chap. 4, this volume) have analyzed how disadvantaged young people use support and counseling in transitioning to vocational training, which reflects prior experiences of support and needs to be compatible with family and peer relationships. For example, the poor health of family members or the end of friendships may affect how young people interpret and make use of support and/or engage in supportive relationships with professional staff. On the other end of the spectrum of inequality, Krüger's (Chap. 5, this volume) analysis of young people in elite schools shows that making transitions into prestigious positions requires translating family capital and institutional selection into subjectively relevant life perspectives to mobilize available resources.

Genealogy ("Building on"; "Following from")

In the interactive spiral, causalities are dispersed over a diversity of relationships, even if in retrospect a narrative is imposed to make them appear less accidental. What we refer to as *genealogy* is even more complex because it brings a longer time frame into view and involves more institutionalized rules, leaving power even more dispersed across a greater variety of actors, dimensions, and times. This is reflected in language referring to sequences of events and relationships as "building on" or "following from." Like the interactive spiral, genealogy does not single out specific aspects as causes of transitions but instead reflects a more macro-historical perspective where larger processes of social structuration build on each other and create sets of conditions that favor certain consequences or reduce or exclude the possibility of others. The key feature of genealogy is that it requires attention to both historicity and institutionalization.

This perspective is especially influenced by discourse theory, according to which representations do not determine certain consequences but create conditions for what can (or cannot) be said and thought (Foucault, 1972). Discourses are inherent in all practices and processes involved in constituting social phenomena, especially through language, and are thus powerful in contributing to the emergence of the social as seemingly self-evident. Thus, the idea of "building on" or "following from" strongly reflects an understanding of transitions as bundles of practices that are the consequence of chains of previous practices (see Schatzki, Chap. 2, this volume).

Boll (Chap. 11, this volume) analyzes the historical evolution of normality as a mechanism of coordinating and controlling human action through the merging of normativity, typifying knowledge through statistical averages of how most others live, and ongoing social practice. The "normal" life course emerges as the sequence of doing and undoing membership in age-based categories and the doing and undoing of other types of difference. Thus, transitions are the expression of distinction and typification according to time and membership in different social groups and categories. Normality is not the cause but a necessary condition of their constitution.

In an institutional perspective, genealogy is expressed through the concept of path dependency (North, 1990), referring to the narrow scope for organizational change resulting from the accumulation and interdependence of practices of institutionalization across historical time. The welfare state plays a role in producing transitions, and the concept of "transition regimes" (see Walther, Chap. 3, this volume; cf. Walther, 2017) allows an analysis of pathways of societal development in which different actors have interactively contributed to the emergence of a particular normality of transitioning. Transition regimes can be seen as constellations of doing transitions – as discourses prepare who is addressed (and how and when in the life course), as institutional forms of regulation bring these discourses to life, and as individuals then position themselves and make biographical meaning from them.

Riach's (Chap. 7, this volume) analysis of "older workerhood" shows how different genealogies intersect. First, there is the grown generational order and life course regime according to which adulthood is construed as the productive life phase and old age marks pension eligibility. Second, there is the flexible and dynamic development of post-Fordist labor markets with specific orders of performance for each occupational sector. And third, there is the body memory of techniques needed to perform certain practices. Together, these create discrepancies of bodies being out of time and space, discrepancies which both mark and induce transitions.

However, genealogy also involves processes that occur at the micro level, such as in biographies – which evolve from a foundation of earlier experiences and identity-building but at the same time limit the scope of individual agency in given situations. Eberle and colleagues (Chap. 9, this volume) reconstruct how processes of individual positioning in different transitions – becoming politically active, making up missed school qualifications, or speaking about experiences of sexual abuse – become turning points in a life trajectory while also reflecting the accumulation of experience that makes them possible. Historical and biographical time also intersect: the specific conditions of individual lives are coupled with discursive practices that allow for such turning points – in the case of one of the studies addressed in the chapter by Eberle and colleagues, where increased public attention to sexual violence increased the probability that people who suffered sexual violence would raise their voice (and participate in the study). Similar dynamics emerged in the #MeToo movement. This is a good example of genealogy as it occurs across multiple interrelated layers of biographies, social life, and history. It is composed of coincidences that are regularly institutionalized into notions of how the world is and then revised in an interactive spiral of ontogenetic and phylogenetic development.

Coming back to young people's transitions through education and into work, genealogy helps us see that forces that are apparently determining the constitution of transitions, like legal ages, are the result of ongoing struggle, debate, and negotiation, which at a certain point are institutionalized in a law and implemented by bureaucratic rules. This gives way to new debates which may lead to changing the law later. At the same time, law maintains the power to sanction. Hirschfeld and Lenz (Chap. 4, this volume) show how young people are not simply subject to institutionalized rules but try to negotiate the application of those rules. How they do this reveals a genealogical pathway of mobilizing support in their life history and family history. Thus, genealogies are not necessarily working together in a direct, progressive way but could also imply cycles of de-institutionalization and re-institutionalization.

Demarcation ("Before/After"; "Not Yet/Already/No More"; "Into/Out of"; "From/To"; "Other Than/Different from")

Finally, *demarcation* cuts across the prior patterns and has a distinct quality. It reflects the fact that transitions are expressions of marking individual and group differences. Such marking of boundaries and transitions is reflected in the fundamental representation of transitions as movements from state A to state B, thus reproducing the difference between A and B. This means that doing transitions coincides with both doing and *undoing* membership in groups, institutions, and/or social categories based on specific status, including age, gender, educational credentials, employment positions, and the like. It also implies that the structural differentiation is reflected in life trajectories in linguistic figures such as "before/after," "not yet/already/no more," "into/out of," "from/to," or "other than/different from." Once a transition occurs, the life of the individual is qualitatively different than it was before, whether in its objective conditions or in how they see themselves or how others see them.

In all these processes, the difference between A and B is not only reproduced but also creates dynamics of inclusion and exclusion that must be navigated and negotiated. The person becomes something new and often leaves behind what they once were. Membership occurs *under specific conditions*, and these processes of doing difference are both momentous and fraught with consequences. Deviations from the "normal expectable life," to use Neugarten's (1969) phrase, are marked as "otherness" while pathways that do not deviate reveal the "remarkable power of the unmarked" – for example, the male position, the north-European or "Western" position, or the heterosexual position (Zerubavel, 2018).

Boll's (Chap. 11, this volume) analysis of the relationships between normativity and normality refers to such differentiation as it signals the boundaries that individuals need to pass to live their lives and participate in society according to the existing order. Normalcy (and deviance) are categories that function as (changing)

framings and doings of transitions as (not) "normal" are attributed to the individuals concerned. Power becomes visible and highly productive in processes of human categorization: we are constantly *becoming* through our ongoing changing categorical affiliations (i.e., through dynamic processes of subjectivation). Some of these categories, even age or sexual orientation, are inherently dynamic and transitory. Boll argues that "we move differently through different kinds of categories. Some are sticky and have rigid boundaries, some have revolving doors and slippery floors" (p. 171).

Changing membership and categorization are intertwined, for example, through the gatekeeping of organizations, which reproduces pre-existing differentiation of employees/non-employees, employees with/without children, migrants/non-migrants, integrated/not yet integrated migrants, and the like. This is especially visible regarding transitions in education, work, or welfare, where status passages include becoming (or ceasing to be) a member of a particular organization (see chapters in this volume by Nägler & Wanka, Chap. 12; Hirschfeld & Lenz, Chap. 4; Riach, Chap. 7; Heinrich et al., Chap. 6; Walther, Chap. 3). In most cases, the differences between members/non-members includes further differentiation in judgments about the capabilities or achievements of these groups.

Transitions can also entail performances of these categories, such as how "growing up" or being "retired" are explored or expressed through bodies, spaces, and material things or ritualized in ways that announce them as transitions. Wanka and Prescher (Chap. 10, this volume) illustrate how both "youth" and "old age" are revealed through rituals that transform everyday life as individuals enter a new life phase and exit the prior one. Ritual or institutional staging ensure that both individuals and others involved as witnesses understand and confirm the transformation. Especially when they are highly institutionalized, rituals also become important mechanisms to help individuals or groups cope with the change and uncertainty associated with transitions.

In contrast to the construction of a transition as a single demarcated experience, Krumbügel's (Chap. 13, this volume) analysis of the transition to parenthood instead illustrates a series of demarcated experiences. "The" transition cannot be reduced to the culminating event of the birth of a child but must be conceptualized further back in time, beginning in puberty when young people (and young women more explicitly than young men) are confronted with the possibility of pregnancy and becoming a "parent." However, discursive practice ensures that the focus throughout the pregnancy is on the growth of the fetus and on the mother's behavior through distinctions of "risky" and "healthy" pregnancy, "normal" and "abnormal" development, "responsible" and "irresponsible" motherhood. The knowledge transported via parenting advice literature reflects an assemblage of discursive practices involving "experts," the publishing industry, and a whole market of birth preparation courses, nutritional supplements, and other products that direct and mark the pregnant woman and her body. These discursive practices subject women becoming mothers to a certain knowledge order of natural causality and "healthy behavior" constituted by the relationship between expert and body knowledge.

Having recalled the theoretical turn in the social sciences offered by relational approaches, we developed five distinct patterns of relationality – theoretically, as well as empirically through the chapters of this book. We have shown different ways that relationships have an impact on the constitution of transitions. But even where causal relationships at first sight seem to be deterministic, they prove to be multifaceted and dynamic. Genealogy, especially, explains how coincidental relationships become institutionalized over time.

Conclusion

Relationality matters for research and practice on transitions in at least four major ways. First, relationality forces reflexivity. Adopting a relational perspective entails critical self-questioning of how transition research is involved in the very constitution of its "object." Once we acknowledge transitions as being constituted by social processes and practices, we must come to terms with the fact that researchers are part of and contribute to the social world and play roles in shaping the very subject matter they seek to understand. This means that researchers must reflect on their disciplinary, political, biographical, even corporal situatedness. These things affect what we understand as a problem and why we are drawn to it, the questions we ask, the types of data we gather, the methods we use for gathering and analyzing those data, and how we interpret what we find. This matters because we may in the process inadvertently perpetuate knowledge orders, reify normativities, contribute to social inequalities, and more.

Second, relationality makes clear that transitions cannot be understood as the individual-level phenomena they are so often construed to be. The Doing Transitions framework underscores the reality that transitions are never purely "individual" but are instead constantly co-produced or shared with, conditioned by, or otherwise involving multiple others who are constructing and enacting roles and relationships and interpreting behavior in a social world. This puts a premium on social relations, forces, and experiences, which must be present, if not occupy a central position, in transition research. Reflexivity demands that the wide range of disciplines involved in transition research critically reflect on their assumptions and myopia – and that they work in greater partnership on interdisciplinary inquiry to transcend the limits of their epistemologies and methods. This will foster the ability of researchers to treat transitions as processual, dynamic, situated, and interwoven, and to reveal the "bundles" of practices associated with them (see Walther, Stauber, & Settersten, Chap. 1, this volume; Schatzki, Chap. 2, this volume). A relational perspective should be built into empirical designs for analyzing transitions. Even where destinations and effects of transitions are the main concern, these need to be related to the emergence of transitions as much as the research questions and indicators. Here, the challenge is keeping accounts and reduction of complexity in a feasible balance.

Third, relationality demands that we develop a systematic perspective on transitions and not essentialize them. One risk of a relational perspective is that everything seems as if it must be in view, and everything seems potentially interrelated. Relations are manifold, but they are of different quality and strength. Our attempt to begin generating patterns of relationality in the context of transitions – from determination, to coincidence, interactive spirals, and genealogy, all of which can include processes related to demarcation – is just a first step. We are not suggesting that these different patterns automatically imply greater or lesser rigor in prescribing transitions, or that they automatically diminish or enlarge scopes for personal agency. But it seems helpful to recognize that on the one hand some relations have a more direct effect on the constitution of transitions than others, while on the other hand apparently singular aspects can emerge and be constantly reproduced through multiple relationships across time and space. Here, especially , we note the danger of essentialism and reductionism in research on transitions.

Finally, relationality makes more visible the socio-political relevance of transitions and, in understanding how transitions are shaped, practiced, and performed, brings the opportunity to improve transitions for the wellbeing of individuals, groups, and societies. The social pressure to regulate and treat the precarity of transitions has increased enormously, whether in early childhood, in the education system, into and out of work, in the context of migration, or in advanced age. These insecurities – and their regulations – bring complex questions of belonging and integration, which in both government and public discourses are too often individualized and translated into questions of individual competencies and responsibility, the need for and the access to help, and judgements about success and failure. In this way, migration policies, labor market policies, educational policies, social policies (down to regulations and practices of social work) very often reinforce exclusive forms of doing difference in transitions even as they try to address exclusion. Relationality counteracts these trends by revealing how transition processes and outcomes are entangled in dynamics of power and empowerment, inequalities, politics, and the welfare state. Reflexivity at the institutional level can help to formulate integrated policies related to the regulation and pedagogical configuration of transitions – which also brings the possibility of better managing social conflict and advancing social justice and democracy in an ever-changing world.

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