

FEBRUARY 2024

CONFERENCE REPORT

International Conference

“Order(s) of Difference in Childhood and Education”

September 19-21, 2023

Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany

GOETHE
UNIVERSITÄT
FRANKFURT AM MAIN



FREUNDE
DER UNIVERSITÄT



Funded by

DFG

Deutsche
Forschungsgemeinschaft
German Research Foundation

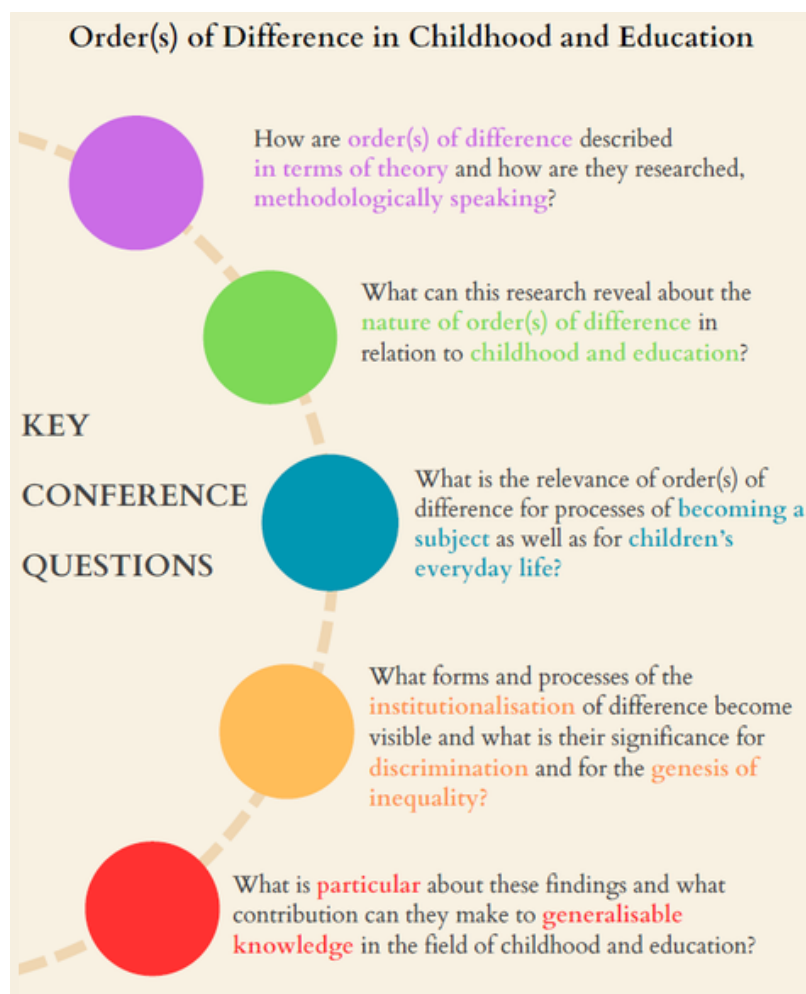
INTRODUCTION

The aims of the International Conference “Order(s) of Difference in Childhood and Education” were to explore the state of international research on the topic of order(s) of difference in childhood and education, to identify gaps in the research and new research questions, and to develop research opportunities in collaborations going forward. Twenty-six German and international researchers were invited as speakers, including 15 individuals from Australia, Canada, Chile, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Switzerland, Spain, the UK, and the USA. They met in keynote, panel and dialogue table formats to report on their research and engage in discussions. In total, ninety people participated in the event, which took place in the IG Farben Building at Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany.



AIMS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

After a welcome from Prof. Dr. Sabine Andresen, Dean of the Faculty of Education, the organizers opened the event, making reference to the history of the building and introducing the conference's subject and purpose. They presented five central questions intended to facilitate discussion about the shared subject matter: 1) How are order(s) of difference described in terms of theory and how are they researched, methodologically speaking? 2) What can this research reveal about the nature of order(s) of difference in relation to childhood and education? 3) What is the relevance of order(s) of difference for processes of becoming a subject as well as for children's everyday lives? 4) What forms and processes of the institutionalisation of difference become visible and what is their significance for discrimination and for the genesis of inequality? 5) What is particular about these findings and what contribution can they make to generalisable knowledge in the field of childhood and education? These questions had been provided to presenters in advance so that they might be accounted for in their contributions and addressed systematically and repeatedly during the discussions as well.



THE FIRST DAY OF THE CONFERENCE

The opening keynote was held by Prof. Dr. Claudia Matus (Chile) and accompanied by a commentary by Prof. Dr. Anja Tervooren (Germany). The two contributions highlighted the significance of normalization processes in the institutionalization of difference in childhood both historically and in the present day. They focused, for example, on questions of disability in early childhood, and succeeded in relating the very different developments in Chile and Germany to each other, as well as to the specialist educational debates surrounding them. The first two conference panels continued the opening focus on the question of the institutionalization of difference. In Panel A, Prof. Dr. Zsuzsanna Millei (Finland) presented the results of research in Sweden on the processing of the national via the norm of 'a notion to nature', which is also anchored in pedagogy in particular. Thereafter, Prof. Dr. Kenneth Horvarth (Switzerland) illustrated the perspective of neopragmatism in its significance for the analysis of orders of difference. Prof. Dr. Sabine Bollig (Germany) then related the two presentations to one another and linked them back to the discourse of German-language childhood research. In Panel B, Prof. Hannah Dyer (Canada) and Dr. Anike Krämer (Germany) introduced new perspectives on the relevance of queer theory for childhood research. They raised the possibility of questioning the standardization and normalization of childhood by looking at, among other things, the everyday experiences of parents of intersex children. Prof. Dr. Bettina Kleiner (Germany) provided the comment for Panel B. A review of the research -- especially of that in Germany -- showed that the epistemological positions of trans*, inter* and queer studies are largely lacking, and that childhood is predominantly imagined in a cisheteronormative way. At the end of the conference's first day, the discussion among the speakers was continued over dinner at a networking meeting.

THE SECOND DAY OF THE CONFERENCE

The second day began with a morning dialogue table. Prof. Dr. Claudia Diaz-Diaz (Canada), Prof. Dr. Spyros Spyrou (Greece) and Dr. Catherine Wilkinson (UK) began by presenting their respective epistemological positions in two rounds of questions. The subsequent opening of the podium to the plenary allowed for both questions about these positions and the introduction of others entirely.

In day two's Panels C and D, the focus of the investigation of order(s) of difference shifted to the level of subjectivity. In Panel C, Prof. Dr. Anja Sieber Egger (Switzerland) and Dr. Gisela Unterweger (Switzerland) presented the results of an ethnographic kindergarten study and traced children's involvement in it. Prof. Dr. DePalma Ungaro (Spain), for his part, elucidated gender-related distinctions in the media and shared the results of an intervention project. Rounding out Panel C, Prof. Dr. Nadine Rose (Germany) contextualized both presentations by means of a subjectivation theory perspective. In Panel D, Prof. Dr. Sarada Balagopalan (USA) and Prof. Dr. Rachel Rosen with S. Khan (UK) explained the significance of political regulation around 'race'/ethnicity and migration policy with regard to the position of the child. The commentator was ill, unfortunately, and so the discussion of the presentations in Panel D took place without additional input.

In the afternoon keynote, Prof. Dr. Machteld Venken (Luxembourg) accentuated the connectivity between historical and childhood theory perspectives. Using the example of her research on borderland children, she traced changes and their effects on childhood and education in various borderlands in which Germany has been involved. Afterward, commentator Dr. Jessica Switek (Germany) referenced current migration policy measures in the context of childhood and flight in relation to contemporary society and childhood theory perspectives. The afternoon of day two also included excursions to the following educational organizations: Bildungsstätte Anne Frank (Anne Frank Education Center); Mehrgenerationenhaus Kinder im Zentrum Gallus, e.V. (Multigeneration House Children at the Center – Gallus); Internationale KiTa Curumim der Brasilianischen Fraueninitiative Imbradiva, e.V. (International Child Care Center Curumim of the Brazilian Women Initiative Imbradiva e.V.); KUSS41 – Queeres Zentrum für junge Menschen (Queer Center for Young People), and Verband binationaler Familien und Partnerschaften iaf, e.V. (Association of Binational Families and Couples).

THE THRID DAY OF THE CONFERENCE

The conference's third day began with the closing lecture in which Prof. Dr. Kerry Robinson (Australia) introduced her perspective on difference theory and presented a range of findings from her many years of research in the context of early childhood. In particular, she focused on the question of how knowledge of difference is employed as a political and pedagogical tool for the regulation of knowledge about childhood and education. Prof. Dr. Melanie Kubandt (Germany) followed up with her similarly oriented research perspective, productively relating the two research contexts with one another. The conference ended with a mid-day dialogue table featuring Prof. Dr. Urszula Markowska-Manista (Poland), Prof. Dr. Galina Putjata (Germany) and Dr. Seyran Bostanci (Germany), which facilitated an exchange about the effects of past and current educational policy measures on language and migration. This included discussion of the necessities and contradictions of state anti-discrimination policy in Germany and non-inclusive education in Central and Eastern Europe, among other things.

The organizers closed the conference on day three by referring to the key questions, the fruits of the conference and the prospect of future collaborations. During the conference, catered breaks (sponsored by the Friends and Sponsors of Goethe University Frankfurt) served as enthusiastically embraced informal opportunities for conversation and exchange between participants and speakers outside of the conference sessions. Ultimately, the conference's theme proved valuable as a common subject, many connections were made, and collective interdisciplinary reflection was made possible. This reflection will be continued in the next step, in the form of a joint international publication.

CONFERENCE ORGANISERS

Raphael Bak, Prof. Dr. Claudia Machold and Dr. Carmen Yong-Ae Wienand
Unit Childhood Studies in Early Childhood and Primary Education Goethe University Frankfurt