Families, Professionals, and Responsibility

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To focus on the question of responsibility in the context of family policies and youth welfare means to reflect on the political and programmatic framework and its implications for the welfare provision for families and children. Therefore, this chapter will describe central aspects of social, educational, and family policy in Germany. After discussing unequal opportunities for coping with the educational system, it will present an analytic model of familialization and defamilialization in welfare contexts related to families and discuss its dimensions of responsibilization of parents. Finally, it will reconstruct underlying normative ideas and their implications for professional practice under the conditions of (de-) familializing family policies.

Family Policy, Prevention, and Education

Looking at the framework of social, educational, and family policy in Germany, it makes sense to examine policies and discourses (Foucault 1991) and how they focus on family and parental responsibility. In recent years, the bête noire of demographic change and declining birth rates has become ubiquitous in public and political debates (BMFSFJ 2011) and constitutes a frightening scenario of an increasingly small population accompanied by economic slump and educational depletion. In this context, children are being discussed as a precious resource for the future survival and prosperity of society.

Since the 1990s, a preventive perspective has become established in child, youth, and family welfare. This began with the 8th Federal Child and Youth Report from

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1990 that described a preventive orientation as a basic approach for welfare provision. The authors claimed that a preventive approach would help reduce the probability of conflicts and risks (BMJFFG 1990, p. 85). In the last years, in response to public concern over tragic cases of child neglect and infanticide, a broad political and public initiative aiming at preventing further deaths and problematic circumstances while children are growing up has impacted on the field of social policy and welfare. In this context, early warning or early support systems[1] have been established (such as welcome visits to young parents after giving birth to their child, screenings in maternity clinics, etc.) in order to get in contact with parents and thereby control the circumstances under which children are being brought up. These initiatives on a federal[2] and communal level are mainly part of the child and youth welfare system, but also include pediatricians, nurses, preschool teachers, and midwives.

Since the publication of the results of the PISA study in the year 2000 along with Education at a Glance, IGLU, and so forth, a new debate on educational inequality and the "social inheritance" (Esping-Andersen 2007) has gained ground. Reproducing the basic arguments from the times of the "Sputnik shock," a threat to the global economic competitiveness of Germany was discussed and is still an issue. But beneath the reductionistically competence-oriented idea of education in the PISA study, empirical educational research has now delivered a range of studies that show in more detail the aspects of social stratification in the reproductive field of family life. This will be discussed later on in this article.

The developments described above (demographic change, preventionist shift, educational inequality) are confronted with a strong interest from an economic perspective aiming to create productive citizens who are prepared for global competition. In this context, economic organizations are pushing forward their ideas of citizen education in political lobbying; and, especially in the context of "lifelong learning," they are addressing the field of early childhood education in the sense of human capital production for a "knowledge society." In the end, citizens—from birth on—should be prepared for employability and productiveness in a labor market that has less need for emancipated, critical subjects with their own interests but requires productive and usable labor forces (Olk and Hübenthal 2011). This is framed by a shift in the welfare system from an accommodative welfare state to an activating, investment-oriented welfare state (Kessl and Otto 2009). The new welfare state expects its subjects to invest in their own progress, it provides welfare for those who are ready to contribute, and it can be characterized by the term

[1] The name "early warning systems" has been widely replaced by the expression "early support systems" because authorities wanted to reduce hostile reactions from parents visited in the context of "warning systems." They refused to be addressed as potentially dangerous persons (persons to be warned of), and the renaming tries to accommodate that. Nonetheless, it remains questionable whether a renaming can countervail the effects of such a discourse on families.

[2] Nationales Zentrum Frühe Hilfen [Federal Center for Early Support]

"from welfare to workfare" (Hyde 2000; Mittelstadt 2005; Opielka 2008). In this logic, nobody has the right to benefit without making an effort themselves. In German, the political slogan in this context is "*Fördern und Fordern*" [promoting and demanding]—in line with the third way of Tony Blair: "rights and responsibilities."

The Family as "Microfield of Power"

Nicholas Rose (1999, p. 18) speaks of so-called microfields of power to describe how the state is extending its scope of operation and the depth of penetration into citizen subjects' lives. This can be transferred to the field of family policy and family lives. Regarding families as a field in which central political interests are to be formed and safeguarded, this offers an analytical concept for what is happening in terms of controlling the conditions of raising children. The way in which control is being exerted in these microfields of power is not very stable and durable but tenuous, reversible, and heterogeneous. This can also be found in family and childcare policy.

During the last few years, family policy has tried to increase birth rates by different means—from providing parental pay to extending public childcare institutions. Underlying this, the political efforts to improve the rearing of children are equally broad and partly contradictory in focus. Looking at the initiatives and their underlying logic, a framework of strategies of familialization and defamilialization—enhancing a concept from Leitner et al. (2008)—can be reconstructed (see also Kutscher and Richter 2011). The following section tries to systematize these strategies.

Familialization

Familializing initiatives can be characterized by a shift of tasks and responsibilities into the (private) field of the family. Especially in the context of education, the discourse is shaped by a privatization of responsibility, which means that parents are expected to ensure adequate and effective educational settings and a successful educational biography of their children—basically disregarding the resource contexts and conditions of the respective families. What this means for different social groups will be shown later on.

Underlying the privatization of educational responsibilities, one can observe a privatization of care. This is the case in terms of home care with private forms of care being promoted because the state is no longer able to finance and provide adequate support for all those in need of care.[3] Other forms are models of support

[3] Similarly, the increase of food banks in Germany also represents a part of the privatization of care.

for school children or families (*Familienpatenschaften*, *Schulpaten*, etc.) by volunteers who are offering support in learning and afternoon care for children. In this context, a discourse on the positive effects of civil society and volunteer activities is strongly promoted by public institutions (Kessl 2006, pp. 77–78).

Another aspect frequently connected with the privatization of responsibilities can be characterized as the accentuation of appropriating technologies of the self as a solution model for social problems. In the field of the family, childcare, and education, the growing market of parental educational competence courses and of children's social competence courses indicates a basic shift toward responsibilizing parents and children by obliging them to acquire strategies of self-conduct. Many courses for parents offer to teach them appropriate attachment behavior or techniques for dealing with their children—both mostly focused on behavioral aspects and connected with causal models from biology or developmental psychology—that promise success by applying those techniques in educational settings. Education of children especially in school contexts but also in nonformal settings of child and youth welfare uses evidence-based methods such as programs aiming to strengthen socioemotional competencies and reduce behavioral problems for preschool children or programs for school children training self-conduct in solving tasks. These programs are basically behavior-oriented and developed in a psychological context, and they broadly aim to train children's behavior and adaptation in an efficiency-oriented way.

Defamilialization

Parallel to the familializing developments reported above, strategies of defamilialization can be observed in the field of families. This means a shift of responsibilities or tasks from the sphere of the private into the sphere of public education. This perspective calls upon the education of children in public institutions to ensure the best conditions possible for their educational biography and to lay the foundation for future careers. It is being attained by, for example, not only an increase of childcare provision in recent years aiming to offer places in public childcare for at least 35% of children (Deutscher Bundestag 2011, p. 6) but also by the introduction of all-day schools (StEG-Konsortium 2010).

Not surprisingly, economic organizations such as the *Vereinigung der Bayerischen Wirtschaft*, *McKinsey*, or *Bertelsmann* have got involved in the field of early childhood education, and are arguing in favor of public childcare institutions and high qualification standards for educators—basically with investment-oriented arguments.[4] Another aspect of the increase in the importance of public preschool

[4] The Cologne Institute for Economic Research (Institut der Deutschen Wirtschaft) has calculated a return on investment in the field of early childhood education and care for the national economy of 13% (Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln 2007, p. 63).

child education in an institutional context is the development and implementation of early childhood curricula in Germany. Every German state now has a curriculum,[5] the latest ones focusing on preschool and elementary school education together, aiming to create a consistent idea of education through the institutions—often showing a tendency toward school-oriented contents and structures.

Before discussing the diverging implications of familialization and defamilialization for different target groups, the situation of unequal family life and childhoods will be sketched.

Social Differences Among Families Facing the Educational System

When talking about families in a differentiated and inequality-reflecting way, there is no "family as such" but families in social contexts under certain living and resource conditions. As mentioned above, a broad range of activities in the field of family and child welfare are aiming toward successful educational participation, and these are increasingly using behavior-oriented approaches. This tendency toward individualizing educational responsibility poses questions insofar as the basic assumption—to solve the problem of social and educational disadvantages through an individualizing, behavior-oriented training of competencies—can be questioned when it is considered that opportunities and conditions for the realization of a successful educational career are, on the one hand, dependent not only on individual competencies but also on structures, and that, on the other hand, ideas of a "good life" could focus on something other than educational and labor-oriented success (Otto and Ziegler 2009).

Moreover, a lot of research has shown that the connectivity of experiences, practices, and capabilities acquired in familial life with the demands of the institutional education system depends on the child's and family's resources such as economic, social, and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1997). Research shows that there are extensive differences between social milieus as defined by Michael Vester (Vester et al. 2001),[6] especially when facing educational institutions. Rahel Jünger (2008) has shown that children and parents in families with restricted resources are very conscious of the existential importance of school for their future life. At the same time, however, they have limited knowledge about the educational system, the issues to be negotiated, or the informal codes of behavior. Based on their own educational biography, they lack access to school-oriented and school-usable knowledge. This leads to the experience that parents from these families are not sufficiently able to support their children in the context of educational institutions, and this also leads to a habitus of

[5] See for an overview: http://www.bildungsserver.de/zeigen.html?seite=2027.

[6] Milieu as dependent on social, cultural, and economic capital resources (Bourdieu) that influence the formation of a milieu-related habitus.

subordination and anxiety about criticizing teachers by both parents and children (Jünger 2008). Annette Lareau (2003) has also shown the different fit between capabilities acquired in the familial context and competence- as well as habitus-related expectations in the institutional system. She uses the basic logic of childrearing in the respective milieus to explain the different attitudes toward the school institution. In this context, she notices how working class and poor families have a feeling of dependency on institutions, of helplessness and frustration, and a perception of conflict between educational practices at home and those in educational institutions (Lareau 2003, p. 31).

Rahel Jünger (2008) has found that in contrast middle-class families possess a relaxed attitude toward school as well as broad knowledge about the educational system and its habitual codes. Both children and parents display logic of investment in school and deal confidently with norms and teachers. Based on the parents' own institutionally and habitual compatible educational biographies, the children experience support from their parents when facing tasks or problems in the school context and feel free to criticize teachers and norms. This correlates with Lareau's (2003, p. 31) observations that parents in middle-class families criticize and intervene in the school to promote their (children's) interests, and that their children are encouraged and trained to criticize themselves.

Another study by Amy Paugh (2002) on the language socialization of children shows that not only underlying communicative competencies are imparted in daily family life but also family- and work-related ideas and values such as relations of superordination and subordination, ways of participation, and so forth. Hence, one could say that habitus formation takes place "at the dinner table."

Like Annette Lareau, Tanja Betz (2008) also reports that children from disadvantaged families acquire competencies that are not usable in school contexts, although achievements in school have a much higher relevance for their parents than they do for parents from privileged milieus. At the same time, because these parents are much less able to support their children in school assignments, their children experience school as a place characterized by anxiety, failure, and disdain. Children from milieus with higher capital resources participate far more often in extracurricular educational activities, and their leisure time is far more structured and planned by adults. This leads them to acquire experiences with heteronomous success and structured time that are relevant for their future qualification. The resources in these families are less restricted and thus they feel more unburdened. Children experience school as a more pleasant place because they experience the competencies acquired in their familial life as linkable to school requirements and their parents have a more easy-going attitude toward school achievements (Betz 2008, pp. 293–295).

Against this background, it becomes clear that the question of parental responsibility needs to be reflected in the context of the availability of economic, social, and cultural capital resources within families and their relation to realization chances in terms of successful social and educational participation. In the following, the interdependence between families' resources and (de-)familialization strategies in the welfare state will be discussed to show the disparities in this context.

Familialization, Defamilialization, and Diverging Focuses on Different Milieus

The shift of responsibility for the children's future chances to the familial resource context is often linked with a moralizing discourse on parental responsibility that classifies the inability of disadvantaged parents to sufficiently support their children as individual failure. This moralizing discourse characterizes disadvantaged parents as nonmotivated, oriented toward their subjective well-being, neglectful of their children's needs, and so forth; and it disregards resource problems (Chassé 2008; Klein 2009, p. 25; Klein et al. 2005). Blending out resource inequalities on the basis of an individualizing understanding of parenthood leads to a consolidation of inequalities. Moreover, this decontextualized focus on responsibility poses pressure on families that is easier for families with higher capital to answer than it is for disadvantaged families.

The accompanying increase in the institutionalization of childrearing is also characterized by a double-layered meaning: It becomes a private growing up under public control. The measures implemented in the context of child protection and educational advancement lead to a stronger regulation of private matters of familial education (Oelkers and Richter 2010). A central aim of institutionalizing childhood focusing on disadvantaged families is to increase the mothers' labor force participation to make families independent of welfare benefits and also increase tax revenues (Kutscher and Richter 2011). However, in addition, the public debate since reports such as PISA and others is arguing that an institutionalization of children's education raises the possibility of compensating inequalities due to social background.

Reflecting on the general logic of applying (de-)familializing strategies to socially disadvantaged families, it can be stated that the underlying idea concentrates on basic needs and necessities, dealing with elementary issues of providing a living and enabling a basic educational participation.

Regarding middle-class milieus, parents also experience a relocation of responsibility and a moralizing debate on parenthood. But whereas they have resource opportunities available that allow them to cope with the demands on the basis of social networks, knowledge, and a resource-rich habitus, the issues discussed in terms of familialization that are focusing on them are defined by the question of choice, for example, whether to stay at home and care for the children. This is linked to a positive connotation of private care, often based on arguments from attachment theory—that is not present in a comparable way when discussing disadvantaged families.

In terms of defamilializing strategies, the arguments addressing middle-class families are to create incentives for mothers to increase their contribution to raising the birthrate and thus to offer them the opportunity to have children and continue working. Here, the reconciliation of work and family life is the central aim (Böllert 2010). In general, middle-class families are addressed by defamilializing strategies in a sense of enabling choice and of supporting parental self-fulfillment. Comparing both target groups under a discourse perspective, it can be stated that familialization seems to be regarded as more acceptable for middle-class families, whereas defamilialization seems to be the preferred strategy for disadvantaged families.

Responsibilization and Normalization: The Hidden Agenda

These underlying different logics of addressing families are completed by two dispositifs in a Foucauldian sense: the idea of responsibilization and forms of normalization.

Responsibilizing parents (see, also, Oelkers 2011; Oelkers and Richter 2010) is intertwined with the idea of activation, which means to ascribe responsibility under conditions that make it hard to comply with. This means that parents are held responsible for their children's successful growing up while completely disregarding resource contexts. On the other hand, parents are having to face being responsible under circumstances that generally make it difficult to shoulder this responsibility (Kocyba 2004, pp. 20–21): "One can prepare for the case of endangerments, but for the one who does this, they change into risks as soon as one connects the event risk/probability of occurrence or the extent of future damage with one's own acting or forbearance" (Bröckling 2004, p. 213, translated). Thus, the risk debates in the context of childhood lead to a responsibilizing discourse that puts pressure on all parents—but under different resource conditions (Henry-Huthmacher and Borchard 2008).

Parents are also confronted with subliminal measures of "normal" or "appropriate" childrearing. Every discourse on parents' responsibility focuses explicitly or implicitly on ideas of a "normal" or "right" way to educate children. This idea of normality is characterized by the constitution of the "social" or the "normal" by means of measurement/quantification and standardization and norms in the field of social realities. It thus leads to a differentiation between norm and deviance that seems "natural," but, at the same time, has a moralizing dimension (Bublitz 2003, pp. 151–162; Seelmeyer and Kutscher 2011). Moreover, defining educational issues in early childhood curricula anchors an idea of normalization (as the appropriate issues and fields of knowledge to be expected from early childhood education). In his governmentality studies, Michel Foucault (2006, pp. 58–60) discusses normalization as a power dispositif connected with economic regulation aiming to increase productivity. Reflecting on the developments mentioned above, the establishment of normalization strategies has a broad impact on shaping children's lives and presents a broad field for future research.

Implications for Professional Practice in the Context of Familialization and Defamilialization

The pivotal question then becomes what does it mean to work as a professional under the circumstances of (de-)familializing strategies? If activation and responsibilization are established as dispositifs in the context of education, professional practice relies on installing and teaching technologies of the self as an approach to dealing with the responsibility problem in the eligible behavioral dimension.

This would imply training parental conduct, attachment behavior, and concepts based on behavioral theory promising to give certitude in the uncertain situations that essentially characterize educational settings. Another approach would be to use behavior-oriented methods of learning and disciplining to educate children—which would also be a way of normalizing. Connected with this, against the background of responsibilization, professional social and pedagogical work would focus on activating responsibility (Oelkers 2009; Oelkers et al. 2010), decontextualizing resource inequalities, and individualizing risk and performing behavior-focused prevention.

These activating concepts of social work and pedagogy fit into the subject-oriented tradition of these professions, perverting their idea into subjectivation for productivity. Whereas the political acceptance of such social-pedagogic concepts and strategies is actually nowadays widespread, this focus on behavioral aspects implies a neglect of sociostructural circumstances such as class, gender, race, age, and handicap (Kessl et al. 2007, p. 12). It thus becomes evident that the analysis of and reflection on programs in which social work is involved as well as the analysis of and reflection over implicit and explicit normativity in professional practice are crucial—also in relation to institutional and political interests (Kessl and Bock 2011).

All-day schools represent a microfield of power as well, and here the role of social work, pedagogy, and parents can be reflected in a similar way. In this context, familial resources and interests will also be negotiated and will influence service provision. Here, sensitivity for inequalities and the challenge of unequal support will be part of the "game of powers."

For future research, it is essential to analyze substructures of power, habitus differences, and their consequences for developing services in all-day schools that focus on both children and families. Moreover, techniques and methods of teaching self-conduct need to be analyzed and reflected as mechanisms of power. In the broader framework, there will be a strong need to analyze tendencies toward (de-) familialization and their consequences for educational participation.

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