Materiality of care in children’s everyday life

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The work to be presented in this session is based on and primarily seeks to develop the theoretical framework of German-Danish Critical Psychology, which is a dialectical-materialist, culturally and historically grounded approach to human subjectivity as it emerges from within the daily activity of persons in social contexts.

The three papers are part of different research projects elaborating an approach to study children, childhood and materiality from within jointly lived everyday life. Here children are theorized and studied as situated participants to social practices: Children actively pursue social engagements, thereby coping with and changing the world at the same time through material production and reproduction. The symposium will discuss a fundamental ambiguity emanating from such an understanding of child-world relationship: Material objects and arrangements are simultaneously means for children to individually contribute to everyday life through their respective engagements, and meanwhile they also serve as instruments for adults to monitor and structure children’s everyday lives.

The symposium wishes to highlight how children themselves relate to objects and materiality, how these objects are ascribed meaning, serve as a continuously (re)arranged part of everyday life, and how different notions of care and caregiving become central part of these negotiations. Its aim is to propose and discuss conceptual developments that render it possible to let the children’s social-material contributions to caregiving practices surface in debates of how objects and arrangements should take their point of departure in the children’s diverse needs and engagements.

Niklas Chimirri starts the session with a presentation investigating negotiations and agreements on the directionality of mutual caregiving processes in the everyday life conducted across children and adults at a daycare. Second, Criststina Munck presents a study exploring how daycare professionals arrange care for the children by negotiating the children’s engagements by motivating the children to re-direct their attentions and engagements. Third, Anja Marschall extends this by exploring materiality and care in context of children’s post-divorce family life across two households.

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