INTRODUCTION

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Children's own views about their own childhood have long been neglected in the social and cultural sciences and so have their views of their experience of migration. This is true even when children are the ones under study and despite the fact that children make up a large proportion of migrants all over the world. The reasons for such neglect of child migrants' views are largely the same as those for the neglect of children's views in general. We will examine some of the major reasons here, but to do so we must first look at the history of childhood research in general, at the overall neglect of children's views and voices, and at the neglect of children's experiences and roles as social agents in the world they live in.

Let us start by pointing out that children were not simply ignored as objects of social and cultural studies. The first anthropological attempts to call researchers' attention to the influence culture has on children growing up of were made in the late 1920s by Mead who pointed out that children create cultural identity in a socializing process which is immersed in culture and emerging from it at the same time.[1] Based on ethnographies of non-western societies, she questioned the biological explanations for human maturation and development as stated by psychology, according to which children were not to be considered complete social beings. The contestation between cultural and biological explanations of human behaviour in general was a crucial issue in most theory (de-)construction pursued in the late 1970s and 1980s.

A more pluralistic notion of childhood and a more diachronic perspective including the idea that childhood might not always have existed as it is understood today was introduced in the early 1960s.[2] Thereby, not only biological determinism was contested but also childhood henceforth not understood as one single phenomenon but rather as a variety of phenomena influenced by and interrelated with social and cultural conditions. It is therefore of crucial importance to take into consideration the different historical, social and cultural contexts within which childhood is situated. This is especially important when dealing with childhood in societies different from those from which our dominant knowledge concerning childhood has emerged, and when investigating childhood in a comparative perspective.

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1   Mead 1928, 1931.
2   Aries 1962.

Hardman (1973) tried to identify the obstacles that had prevented scientific progress in the anthropological contributions to childhood research, stating that none of the existing anthropological theories had revealed what this particular field of study could be. The social lives of children are a world which escapes adult understanding, she claims, this being the reason why until recently children were not considered complete social beings and not valued as phenomena worthy of the attention of social scientists. Hardman also pointed out the necessity to go beyond the common view that children are merely receivers or containers of what they are taught by adults and to view children as autonomous and creative beings producing social reality and culture. Only if we acknowledge such, she claims, can substantial knowledge about children's understanding of reality and the means by which they organize and transform it, be achieved.

Although isolated, the efforts made by Mead, Aries, and Hardman significantly contributed to a critical review of the dominant theoretical concepts about childhood at the time and thus prepared the ground for developing new and more adequate paradigms.

At the beginning of the 1980s, however, proposals emerging from Sociology, History, Anthropology, and Psychology were still diffuse and ambiguous – and far too unconnected to form the consensus needed to develop adequate theoretical approaches and methodological devices for the study of childhood.

According to Jenks (1982, 1996), the socialization models which have been in use since the 1920s have been exclusively focused on the adult social world, on the adults children were going to be. Devised without taking into consideration the social world of children, these models were not able to contribute to an understanding of childhood. Real change could only occur as a result of constituting childhood as an ontological category, which is valid in its own right rather than as a residual or transitory phase on the way to adulthood. The constant use of "growing up metaphors" through which adults, including the social scientists, tried to explain their relation with the "other" that constitutes the child must therefore be overcome. For Jenks, it is the relationship between adults and children that must change in order to achieve a true understanding of children and childhood. It must be emancipated from a view which puts adults at the centre of the social world while placing children at its margins which they gradually depart from for a more central position when passing into adulthood.

Childhood as a Social Phenomenon (CSAAP), a comparative research programme which was coordinated by the sociologist Jens Qvortrup and carried out in 19 (mostly European) countries from 1987 to 1992, marked a remarkable change in academic thought concerning the study of childhood. The project had, however, a difficult start: ideas were new, information was scant and disperse, no major precursors existed, and even among the researchers themselves it was still debated whether the academic notion of a "sociology of childhood" had a counterpart in social reality. However, the approach taken –

looking at childhood as a social phenomena in its own right – as well as the international format of the programme and its findings resulted in the recognition of the study of childhood as an acknowledged area of social and educational research.[3] Childhood was declared to be a specific form of the social structure of all (researched) societies and – in sociological terms – a permanent social category rather than a transient phase each individual has to pass through. It also became clear that children themselves have their share in the construction of childhood and society and that children are exposed to the same societal forces as adults, although in different ways – one of the major difference being their higher dependency on the conditions created – for both adults and children – by the adult world. Thus, according to the findings, children should also be regarded as a social minority suffering from marginalization and suppression.

James & Prout (1990) point out that children "must be seen as involved in the construction of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live. They can no longer be regarded simply as the passive subjects of structural determinations" (4). Meant as a reflexive tool rather than a set of fixed theoretical postulates they introduced a system of constituent elements for sociological and anthropological childhood research.[4] James, Jenks & Prout later specified four main approaches that meanwhile had become established in current childhood studies:[5]

- *Childhood as a social construction*: This approach discards concepts that until then had been considered self-evident, such as the concept of childhood as biologically determined. It inserts an epistemology of childhood in social studies. The idea of a universal childhood is substituted by the idea of a plurality of childhoods. In this understanding childhood also plays a political role in society.
- *Childhood as a world aside:* This approach emphasizes childhood as socially structured in a different way from adulthood. Therefore, it needs to be revealed, understood and analyzed by means of ethnographic research that involves children as subjects speaking for themselves.
- *Children as a minority group*: This approach has been developed in the context of an understanding of the world as unequal and discriminative, of adult power determining and deciding on childhood issues. It considers children as one of the categories of muted "others." It intends to give children a voice and aims at research which is in the interest of children rather than being just about them.

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3 Qvortrup et al. 1994.
4 James & Prout 1990: 8–9.
5 Cf. James; Jenks & Prout 1997: 198–205.

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- *Childhood as a component of (all) social structures*: This approach looks at childhood as a (universal) constituent of (all) social structures, which, nevertheless, takes different forms and meanings depending on the given society it is part of.

These four approaches also show how childhood studies can be linked to current discourses taking place in the sociological and anthropological construction of social theory, specifically by employing the notions of "agency versus structure," "identity versus difference," "continuity versus change" and "local versus global." Thus, theory developed in childhood studies has a lot to contribute to general debates in current social sciences.

The debate concerning the social and the biological impact on childhood is still continuing, however. According to Toren (1993), former concepts of child socialization should not be put aside or ignored but re-evaluated and adjusted to identify both their potentials and limitations. She argues that one of the major problems of such concepts lies in their a-historical character which ignores the fact that human cognition processes – including those of children – are in fact historical, related to the society they are part of and, thus, changing and transforming with time and with social and cultural context. Toren does not want to increase the number of ethnographies dealing with childhood as such, but stresses that children should be an integral part of studies dealing with any given society, claiming that anthropological studies which ignore children's knowledge about the society they live in are incomplete. She attributes the lack of interest in childhood to the fact that socialization is usually considered a predictable process through which children simply reproduce the adult's world.

Despite the shift towards the social world of children in more recent approaches, scientific knowledge about childhood still largely ignores what children themselves have to say about their lives and their own place in the social world. Children's explicit ways of criticizing the latter could be one of the reasons why adults are reluctant to consider their views, observations and assumptions relevant.[6]

The emergence of childhood as a social category of scientific interest and research has been compared with the emergence of women's studies as a field of research, which in the 1970s gave rise to a shift in paradigms in gender studies and theories.[7] However, the big difference is, that, unlike women, children cannot pursue ethnographic research on themselves. So it is up to adults to discover how children see the world, their social lives, their childhood. They can do so by letting children speak for themselves instead of clinging to the traditional belief in adult superiority implying that adults can think and speak for children better than they can for themselves. With regard to the practical application of such a shift in attitude adults could involve chil-

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6   Cf. Butler & Shaw 1996.
7   See Caputo 1995.

dren in developing childhood social action programmes since only then they could be developed in ways which suit children rather than merely the interests of children as perceived by adults.[8]

What is also still largely missing is a general agreement that studies of childhood help provide more complete knowledge of particular societies and social phenomena and thereby add new perspectives to the social and cultural sciences as a whole. Speaking about anthropology in particular, Hirschfeld states:

> It's worth repeating how curious is anthropology's aversion to children. […] children are theoretically crucial: anthropology is premised on a process that children do better than almost all others, namely, acquire cultural knowledge. Nonetheless, the call to bring an anthropology of children into the main stream has been repeatedly made […], still, a sustained, coherent, and – most critically – theoretically influential program of child-focused research has not emerged (Hirschfeld 2002: 624).

Hirschfeld points out that the actual problem is not the lack of research on childhood. What he finds surprising though is that the volume of research carried out during the last decade has not had much effect on general anthropological theory. In other words, anthropologists dealing with childhood might have done good work, but other anthropologists not interested in childhood have failed to consider the impact their findings might have on anthropological thought in general. The participation of children in social and cultural re-production, as well as the impact of children's culture on adults' culture is still very much underestimated. He also emphasizes that children do not just learn and reproduce culture but also create and produce it. In fact, he claims "anthropology is premised on a process that children do better than almost all others, namely, acquire cultural knowledge" (624). If such acknowledgement of children's cultural competences is difficult for adults in general, it is not surprising that this is the case for anthropologists as well. Hirschfeld suggests that one possible way to overcome this resistance is to consider that children constitute themselves as a semi-autonomous subculture like so many other subcultures that constitute social life, and therefore have equal importance and deserve equal attention from social scientists.

Pierre Erny (2003) also stresses the creativity of children in the process of social (re-)production, emphasizing that it is especially pronounced in societies undergoing rapid change, where children often turn out to be the ones educating their parents more than their parents are educating them. He claims that in some such cases it would actually be accurate to speak of "children cultures" and "children societies" (15). Thus, children must be seen as both ob-

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8   See Martins 1993; Rizinni 2002.

jects of cultural adaptation and as active subjects, who change the culture they were born into while adapting to it (at the same time).[9]

Recent research on childhood among Brazilian indigenous peoples takes the path suggested by Toren, Hirschfeld and other authors here mentioned, thus aiming at a notion of socialization which is part of an historical and dynamic process of culture.[10] Children are considered as complete beings, as social agents able to create a socio-cultural universe with its own particularities and as social agents able to critically reflect upon the adults' world.

That childhood is socially constructed is now generally accepted, but its variation in different cultural contexts still needs investigation which takes into consideration children's voices and children's actions. Studying age sets and classes socially well defined, as well as life cycles and social learning processes may very well be useful devices when trying to understand the category "child" and its social place and meaning in specific cultural contexts. However, one should keep in mind that children have something original to say and therefore their experiences, representations, feelings, and expressions should be considered a valid object of social research. According to James & James (2004) children's experiences of social life and their impact on their own childhood, future childhood generations and on adult's life is still rather unclear. In other words, childhood agency is not yet fully recognized. Children may have been discovered as actors playing roles which help them enter adulthood, but not as agents who shape those roles and imbue them with specific meanings. Children also create new roles for themselves, both as individuals and as members of wider social groups. They do so in ways which induces change in the social life of the group as a whole and in the successive generation of children (like their parents did before them). Recognizing children's agency means recognizing their experience as a potential for change. Children's agency makes a real difference for society at large.

Now what does all this imply for studying and understanding children's experiences and their agency with regard to processes of migration?

While it has been acknowledged to some extent that children's own concepts of their social world, and their thoughts and feelings should be considered when studying childhood in general and specific aspects of childhood in particular, this has had little effect on migration studies dealing with children. Little is known about children's particular understanding of (migrant) life, their concepts of their place of origin and their host society, their ways of building identity for themselves. This is true despite the fact that children

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9   See Egli (2003) who describes such a process with regard to hereditary rules in Eastern Nepal, which to a considerable extent predestine children's perspectives but which are also changed substantially by children in the process of adaptation and "enculturation."

10 See Lopes da Silva & Nunes 2002.

make up a large proportion of migrants and despite the fact that children take on important roles in mediating between their world of origin and the host society.

Children play this role for many reasons, one being that they acquire new cultural knowledge so "exceptionally well."[11] Children are also usually more involved in the social life of their host societies than their parents through school and other child-specific institutions and contact zones (playing grounds, football fields, kindergarten, backyards etc.). Children's ways of socializing with other children and with the world around is also less constrained by prejudice and bias than those of adults. Children want to be among other children; the "others'" cultural, social or political background is far less important to them than they often are for their – or the "others'" – parents.

We want to contribute to the understanding of how children themselves experience, view and manage migration and we want to show by means of which they construct an identity for themselves which takes into account their experiences from both their places of origin and their host societies.

The question that arises first when dealing with children constructing identity in the context of migration is whether they perceive and define cultural identity for themselves at all. In the context of sociological and anthropological research on migration and multiculturality concepts have been developed which try to terminologically classify and differentiate varieties of "mixed" culture and cultural identity (hybrid, creole, transnational, global, glocal etc.). Do such concepts also fit the reality of migrating children or is their perception of culture more dynamic and flexible than that of the researchers on the one hand and of the adults they usually research on the other?

One of the key issues raised in the context of identity as created by migrant children is the view children have of both their respective culture of origin and their host society. How children construct an identity for themselves, a sense of home and belonging and a sense of origin and descent which takes into account both contexts in which they find themselves is critically important. Another question is to what extent and by which means a relationship is maintained to the place of origin and whether and how it changes in the course of migration. How is this relationship represented in social interaction among children, between children and their parents, and between children and their social environment? It is important to get insight into children's observation concerning the social and cultural changes taking place that affect themselves and their families in the process of migration. What changes do they perceive, what do they think of those changes and how do they deal with them? What do they relate their observations to? Who do they perceive as initiating these changes and do they perceive themselves as agents of change within their families and their new social environment?

Another important issue is the process of social and cultural integration in society as a whole. How is it influenced by the dynamics of interaction of a

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11 Hirschfeld 2002: 615, 624.

particular cultural background of the society of origin on the one hand and the integration strategies and practices of a particular host society on the other?

The role of social milieus and peer groups is an important issue when dealing with children experiencing and managing migration. How do peer group environments, socialization at home and school interact or contradict each other? And how do children deal with these different social milieus and the demands they put on them?

One experience almost all migrants of all ages have is xenophobia. How do migrant children cope with a lack of acceptance, with hostility and exclusion? How do children make use of existing institutions to overcome frustrations resulting from such experiences and how do they create new social niches where they can feel at home? How do they express processes of cultural orientation, integration, disintegration via music, writing, media, and forms of creative discourse? Are there gender specific differences concerning the construction of identity in the course of migration? How do different motivations and reasons for migration influence the course that migration and integration take?

We cannot deal with all these issues with the same degree of thoroughness in this volume, nor can we answer all the questions raised here. What we can do, however, is shed light on some of the major issues related to children's experience of migration. There can be no doubt that cultural identity and social practices learned and generated in childhood have an important impact on the course of social and cultural integration in youth and adulthood. Therefore, the investigation of these processes is not only of scientific interest but can also give important impetus to the development of strategies and modes of integration that appeal to children and serve their needs.

The approach we take is both comparative and interdisciplinary, the contributors having different theoretical and methodological backgrounds, and dealing with different social and cultural settings with regard to both place of origin and host society.

Sabine Mannitz' contribution presents the results of ten months of ethnographic fieldwork and subsequent interviews over a period of four years with adolescents from immigrant families in former West-Berlin. She points out that migration research has often stressed the adverse circumstances of immigrants in Germany. The so-called second and third generations in particular are seen as having the problem of living betwixt and between two cultures. This perception situates immigrants and their children in a structural conflict and creates the impression that they must choose between two competing cultures. But contrary to this model, Mannitz finds that her informants in Berlin face no such gap. While conforming in many instances to the idea of bounded groups and their unequivocal social identities – the idea that foreigners differ from Germans in their culture – children generally manage to act in both of these settings, applying practices of mediation and eventually creating a new transnational space for the management of identifications. However, despite

their competency in double agency, they have to cope with the fact that neither their migrant parents nor the wider German society is willing to legitimize their melange of identifications as a viable strategy. This is significant beyond the individual level, since creating an intersecting space for imagining collectivity may be a first step towards developing new codes of coexistence for the society as a whole. According to Mannitz, with transnationalization challenging the nation-state's previous *raison d'être*, the ways in which migrants construct their multiple affiliations might thus become centrally instructive.

Jacqueline Knörr deals with a group of (re-)migrant children and youths hardly mentioned in migration studies, namely children of Western background brought up in a non-Western environment before "returning" to a "home," which in many cases has never been or is no longer home to them. She deals with German children coming to live in Germany after having spent most of their childhood in Sub-Saharan Africa. Many of these children spent most of their social lives in German and/or international expatriate environments. In the context of dealing with some of their typical features she critically examines the notion of "TCK" – "Third Culture Kid" – a notion which has been used for some time now to denote children brought up as (children of) expatriates. Knörr looks at what it means to be brought up as a white child in Africa and how this experience affects (re-)migration to Germany. Upon "return" these children often find themselves in a dilemma: they are expected to be the same – speaking the same language and looking the same as everyone else – while their experiences, views, and ways of life are usually quite different from those of children and youths who have spent all their lives "at home" in Germany. Their difference is often neither recognized nor appreciated by teachers, peers, or their own families. What makes it even harder for them to find some comfort in their situation is the fact that compared to other groups of "real" migrants, it is usually more difficult for them to find others around them who share their experiences and problems. Knörr looks at the views and attitudes these children and youths develop in the course of (re-)integration and at some of their ways "in to" and "out of" German society – which include social isolation, self-exotization, multiple identifications, and idealization of one's former "real" home back in Africa.

Jana Pohl analyses the image of the *shtetl* in American children's literature. The *shtetl* was a predominantly Jewish community which corresponded to the size of a village or small town. The *shtetl* image has a long and rich tradition in American children's literature. It accommodates the manifold recollections of Jewish-American writers, whose autobiographical experiences are often related to their subject. To many Eastern European Jews who left their home and migrated to North America around the turn of the last century, the *shtetl* stands for their culture, their place of origin. In contemporary children's literature the image of the *shtetl* is linked to migration, the two concepts both being central to the collective identity of American Jews of Eastern European descent. By connecting the – memorized – *shtetl* image with migration, those

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stories embrace memories of both childhood images of the country of origin and images of the target country.

Violeta Davoliute's analysis of the diaries and memoirs of young victims of the Soviet deportations of non-Russian minorities during WWII offers unique insights into the effects of migration in its extreme forms, both on individual and collective identity. As the initial solidarity of ethnically defined group victim status breaks down in the multinational *Gulag* environment, the child's sense of cultural and even personal identity is tested and transformed under extreme duress. Davoliute's article considers the experience of Dalia Grinkevičiūtė, deported from Lithuania to the Russian far north at the age of 14. Her "early" memoirs, written when she was 21, capture her immediate apprehension of the ethical and cultural dilemmas facing the deportees individually and as a group. Her youthful reflections on women's recourse to prostitution, religious and bourgeois morality, national identity under conditions of Russification and Sovietization, and questions of ethics and justice in captivity defy any simple categorization. Believing her memoirs to have been lost, Grinkevičiūtė wrote a second version as a mature adult. A comparison of the "early" and "mature" versions of her memoirs helps to identify the immediacy of the early work discovered only after Grinkevičiūtė's death in 1989.

Nadina Christopoulou and **Sonja de Leeuw** discuss the findings of a European research project on "Children in Communication about Migration" (*Chicam*) and compare them with existing theories on culture and identity. The research was carried out in six European countries and focused on the social and cultural worlds of refugee and migrant children. It explored the potential uses of media and communication technologies as means of empowering migrant children and enabling them to realize their potential. Christopoulou and De Leeuw focus on "family relations" to investigate the relationship between media, migration and childhood. They analyze how children see themselves positioned within these relationships, and explore how their perceptions are articulated in the process of making media productions. Using examples from the media work done by the children they analyze the children's conceptions of "home" and cultural identity in the context of family relations as they are being re-established in the new country.

Jan C. Oberg's contribution deals with more than 200 essays on local history and the tradition of migration written by children themselves. The children under study describe their life-worlds located between Tramonti – a small mountain community near the Amalfitan Coast (Southern Italy) – and "the North." They tell of past times rich in tradition when "innumerable cows stood in the cowshed," of "times long gone [when] one could meet people here with pure hearts free of the manifold problems that plague humanity today." They tell of migration as the fiend raging in Tramonti, destroying the ideal life of the past. But they also tell of fast cars and pizzerias, of the wealth of the North, and of the freedom which their migrant relatives bring with them to Tramonti on their summer vacations. The children's narratives fluctuate between idealization of migration and disapproval of it. However, more than re-

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flecting inner conflict their stories reveal how creatively children manage to deal with heterogeneous environments and how actively they take part in the production of culture.

Heike Drotbohm aims at exploring how children of the second generation of Haitian immigrants in Montreal, Canada, perceive and define their position between Haiti, as their parents' reference culture, and Canada, as their host society. Through the analysis of the songs of one particular local Haitian rap group "family conflicts" and "black power" are identified as core issues with regard to the construction of personal and ethnic identity. Drotbohm finds the lyrics reflect the social realities of Haitian children in Montreal from different points of view and pinpoint the transnational dimension of Haitian ethnicity in Montreal. From the children's perspective, Haiti serves either as a negative stereotype, referring to their parents' difficulties in coping with everyday-life in Canada or as an imaginary homeland, which helps to develop ethnic consciousness and pride in Haitian community life in Montreal.

H. Julia Eksner and **Marjorie Faulstich Orellana** address the conjunction of "liminal" and contradictory aspects in the lives of immigrant children and youths. In analyzing how children's experiences of immigration in Germany and the United States are translated into linguistic practices, they present a critical appraisal of liminality, a concept describing individuals' subjective experiences of in-betweenness. Liminality has been used in a variety of ways in anthropological, sociological and sociolinguistic theory. The authors examine several uses of the concept, including both its original application and the various ways it has been expanded and adapted, highlighting its efficacy in some contexts and pointing to its limitations in others.

Angela Nunes' ethnographic research does not deal with children living through a migration process but with children who belong to the Xavante, an indigenous group of people in Brazil who were prevented from maintaining their semi-nomadic way of life which had determined their existence for centuries. They now settle permanently, suffering the consequences of the sudden and violent change they endured in all aspects of their social life. With a great deal of effort, however, the Xavante are reacting, though, and finding innovative ways to mend what was almost destroyed. Their hopes lie in their children. They say children can better bridge the past with the future and that children have a wisdom adults have lost. Nunes' article reveals how children actively and creatively participate in the process of reconstructing the social life of a migrant people who have been forced to settle down.

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