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# **Interviews, portraits and montages of everyday family life**

A triangulative approach to the inner space of the family

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## Interviews, portraits and montages of everyday family life

A triangulative approach to the inner space of the family

When I tell my children about this they will say "Oh, you played".

Sure. @.@ The adults may play too, one in a while. If the children aren't there we are allowed to play too.



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## **Background: Research project on "Learning and educational processes concerning family concepts" (DFG)**

- ✦ study the development and modification of concepts parents have of their everyday family life.
- ✦ qualitative longitudinal study with parents from 56 families
- ✦ method: qualitative guideline interviews combined with montages of toy figures and objects, family portraits
  
- ✦ chronology of the survey
  1. family portrait (opener of the interview)
  2. montage: present family life
  3. montage: family of origin (past)
  4. montage: (ideal) future of the own family

## Two-fold understanding of the term 'image'

1. (extended) understanding of images  
„inner“ or „mental“ images: experiences are sedimented as images  
they are inscribed in bodies;  
body: functions as a storage or archive of images
2. More specific understanding of images:  
visualized and materialized representations of family
  - ✦ familial portraits
  - ✦ montages of three-dimensional play figures and objects

### Aims of the study

- triangulation to understand better relationship between past experiences in, actual perception of and idealized future concepts of family
- „doing family“ will be made understandable

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## Benefits of the triangulation of image and text

- ✦ undisputed immediacy of the visual (images)
- ✦ to produce a text, experiences has always to be transformed in a sequentially ordered narration
- ✦ emotional highly charged research topics are difficult to verbalize
- ✦ independent narration is oftentimes simply not possible
  
- ✦ empirical fundamental reasons:
  1. difficult for actors to talk about experiences in family affaires
  2. particularly shown by interview partners who have generally less experiences in verbalizing
  3. pictures are used as a material impulse to talk about family
  4. Images underly less rational controll of the intervees

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## Excursion: game (theoretic) approach

- ✦ closely connected with images of the desired and or existing family
- ✦ the (haptic) handling with the plastic figures doesn't only aim at the materialization of an inner family image
- ✦ but also leads to playful practices, opens up new possibilities
  - ✦ borders on a simulation game
  - ✦ a desired possibility of what could be or could take place

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## Analysis of the material

- ✦ start with the images and refer them respectively to interview extracts
- ✦ interpretations are based on the documentary method
- ✦ expand Bohnsack's approach: picture does not only stand for itself but needs to be contextualized (cultural embedding)
- ✦ „tracing of a first impression“ is prefixed to the documentary interpretation process
  - ✦ **what** is in the picture ?
  - ✦ **how** is it received spontaneously?
  - ✦ **why** is this the case?
- ✦ determined description along formal aspects of the pictures
  - ✦ planimetrics and the scenic-choreography

## The family portrait

"I try to pull Robert into doing something with the Kids, when coming home from work. If he says "oh, no!" I reply "there is no no!"

"They don't say stepbrother or half-brother, they say brother. And Domian does sometimes [say] Papa to Robert too, that's a bit tricky @.@"





## Montage I: Present family life

"I only work twice a week, from 9-12. I thought about working more, but I want to be present for the Kids."

"I try to tear Domian off from me, I try to make him more independent."



## Montage II: The family of origin

"We never had time together. My parents were working, or they were tired. I had to fend for myself. When I came home from school I heated up food, made my homework and played outside afterwards. Also my brother was seldom present."

"I am alone with the boys, so to speak. Some people say 'I cannot sleep without my husband' but I am used to it."



## 2. Interviews, portraits and montages – performances of everyday life

### Montage III: Future family life

"Roman once said 'if only we would have some friends', but shall I go outside and find some? Where shall I find them? And would I find people that match with both of us?"

"I don't like much to call people from my family. I am always afraid to disturb them. And if I would start calling I would have to call too many of them.... I am simply not used to that."





## Internal comparison / contrastation

care vs. missing care  
care vs. independence  
solitude vs. togetherness



Inner fraction and  
tensions of the family &  
the work it needs to  
keep it together

Isolated nuclear family  
vs. more open social life  
(in which the family  
vanishes?)



solitude vs. togetherness



## Conclusions

- ✦ Multiple relationalities between pictures and text e.g.
  - ✦ *accordances* of text and image
  - ✦ *discrepancies* between text and image
  - ✦ the *interplay* of text and image can lead to new hypotheses on the case
- ✦ Images can perform ambivalences by showing inconsistencies simultaneously, because they condense time (Imdahl) (> while inconsistencies in Texts more often appear as contradictions because they are presented at different points of the text)
- ✦ The image creates more nearness between the researchers and the research subjects - because of its *visual persuasiveness* (Burri 2008) image is an in-between „doings“ of producer and recipients
- ✦ Entering the case analyses via images allows to reconstruct a more complex understanding of the case, than starting with the text or working only with texts, because you can immediately see tensions and ambivalences of the case