

Abstract

This habilitation thesis focuses on grandchildhood. The research on grandchild-grandparent relationships has found a stable place within social science research. A plethora of articles have been written in the last couple of decades about grandparents and their grandchildren; however, most of them explore the perspective of grandparents. Drawing upon in-depth interviews with grandchildren in multigenerational living, this book aims to contribute to the understanding of grandchildhood and its meanings, practices, and relations. At the same time, the book presents a conceptual innovation and contribution. Following the existing literature on grandchildhood, grandparenthood, and grandchild-grandparent ties on the one hand and the practice approach in family studies on the other hand, the book formulates the notion of grandchild practices as active, regular, everyday, fluid, and relational doings. These doings are contextualized within the matrix of family relations and sociocultural normative expectations, the ideas and ideals about grandchildhood and grandparenthood. In the daily lives of grandchildren, the grandchild practices are shaped and shape the mutuality, reciprocity, and interdependence between grandchildren and grandparents, and between grandchildhood and grandparenthood. Five analytical chapters of the book investigate the context of grandchild practices and their four types – everyday grandchild practices, direct grandchild practices, learning and teaching grandchild practices, and cared and caring grandchild practices – to illuminate the activities and doings that grandchildren engage in as grandchildren and the meanings that they attribute to them. The book presents grandchildhood in its complexity and addresses its multiple dimensions by investigating the practices, meanings, and ideas and ideals of grandchildhood with an emphasis on past, present, and future grandchild practices and their negotiation in the macro context of normative expectations, the mezzo context of multigenerational living, and the micro context of the grandchildren's everyday lives.