

My abstract belongs to the topic of Emotions and Relations:

Emotional Occupation with body image in early childhood

Physical well-being and being naked - an ambivalent experience for children, parents and professionals

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In the presentation I will discuss the emotional topic of being naked in early childhood and the implications of sexual education in the family and in early childhood institutions. Especially in the first years, children discover their bodies in an uncommitted fashion. Attention to children's bodies, and how these function, are experienced and constructed by each child individually. This is an important presupposition in understanding children as social actors. We have to bear in mind that some effects are influenced by the relationships in which the children are involved. Infants and very young children are reliant on the habits of their parents, the behavior of their peers and the rules of professionals. My theoretical interest concerns the social practice and emotional circumstances under which children's physical personification arise. The body and childhood can be comprehended as complex entities in which a mixture of cultural and natural factors influences the possibilities.

A child's body is seen as one characterized by change and growth – a process of biological and emotional development dependent on the quality and behavior of closely related peers and adults. Children experience themselves simultaneously *in* and *as* their bodies. In the early part of an individual's life course, personal and social relations are very important in accepting the physical changes and in finding the appropriate balance of personal well-being and the acceptance of social norms.

This theory is based on childhood sociology and emotional sociology, keeping in mind that adjoining disciplines such as physiology and anthropology are incorporated. Children are limited by the conditions of their social lives, but also find ways of creatively managing, negotiating and extending their possibilities.

The paper will introduce the debate about the connection between potty training, the development of sexual identity, early health promotion in the family and early child education, whilst focusing on the ambivalent aspects these processes.