

# Researching Children's Values in Primary Schools: Methodological Challenges of Conducting Surveys among Young Children

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# Outline

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# 1. Research Objectives and Sample

## Methodological challenges, lessons learned and solutions in conducting a survey among primary school children

Q1. What kinds of *adaptations* need to be applied to research instruments and instructions' procedures when preparing a survey in primary school classes?

Q2. Which *methodological challenges* can be anticipated when conducting an analogue or a digital survey with children at this young age? Which *solutions* can be suggested?

### Sample

$N = 1'138$  pupils (575 boys, 563 girls) between 5 and 9 years of age ( $M = 6.82$ ,  $SD = .50$ ;

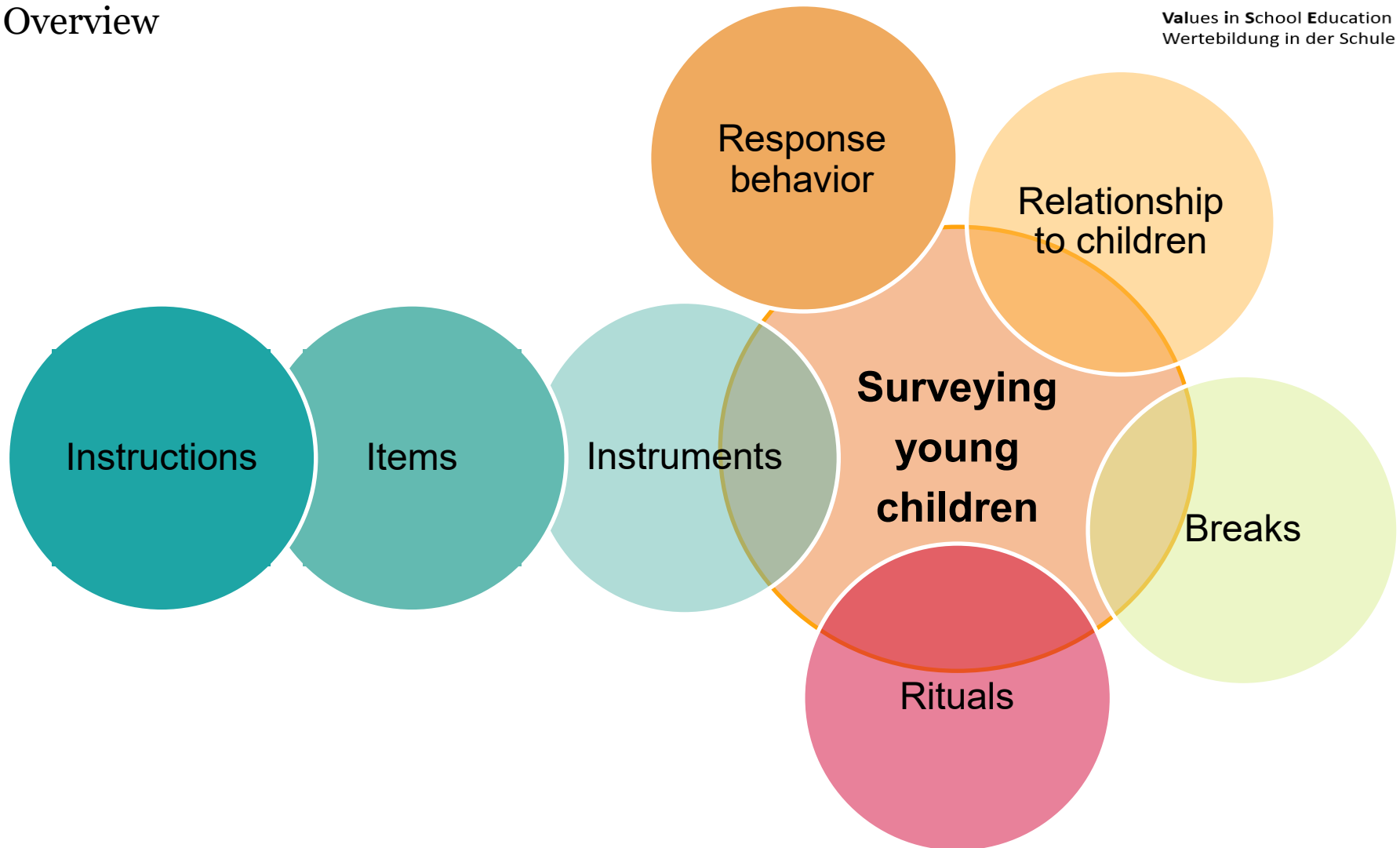
- Analogue:  $n = 834$  (422 boys, 412 girls)
- Digital:  $n = 304$  (153 boys, 151 girls)

## 2. Methodological Challenges and Solutions

### Overview

**VALISE**

Values in School Education  
Wertebildung in der Schule




## 2. Methodological Challenges and Solutions



### Instruments

- Importance of (pre-)piloting: testing of scales/items with individual children and then piloting with classes ( $n = 10$  classes)
- Little writing and use of simple language in questionnaire
- Use of pictorial items
- Answer options: smileys
- «No answer» - option

## 2. Methodological Challenges and Solutions



Instruments  
*digital*

- Switch off all obstacles that exist on tablets (automatic screen saver, pop-up messages, automatic translation help etc.) - very time consuming
- Confident and quick problem solving
- No reliance on infrastructure at schools (bring own pre-set tablets, internet hotspots)
- Class set of paper questionnaires as a back up
- Excitement to work with a tablet might have influenced the concentration/answers (different means than the analogue questionnaires)

# 2. Methodological Challenges and Solutions

## Instruments

Example of pictorial items, own adaptation of IOS Scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992)

Which picture shows best how close you are to your classmates?

Please circle the picture below which best describes your relationship

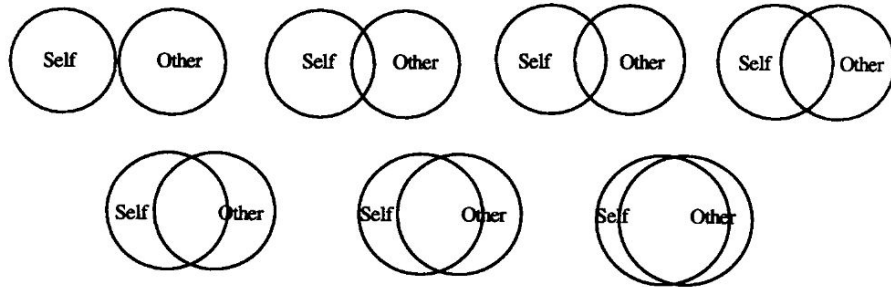


Fig. 2. The Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) Scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992)

Fig. 3. Adaption of the IOS Scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992)

## 2. Methodological Challenges and Solutions

### Instruments

Example of smiley answer scale, own adaptation of school climate (Berson & Oreg, 2016)

5. In my school I feel safe.



Fig. 4. Adaption of the school climate scale  
(Berson & Oreg, 2016)



## 2. Methodological Challenges and Solutions



- Minimization of number of items as much as possible (e.g., choice of items due to factor loadings)
- Use of simple language
- English-German translation: linguistic nuances partially decisive (e.g., to argue)
- If an item is not understood ask a child, who has understood the statement whether he/she would like to explain the sentence to his/her classmates

## 2. Methodological Challenges and Solutions



### Instructions

- Step by step instructions
- Standardization:
  - Word for word is read aloud
  - Use of same example for every item
  - Instruction team: lead & support
  - Only well-trained personnel to conduct the survey in the classes

## 2. Methodological Challenges and Solutions

### Rituals

- Ritual (e.g., instrument, noise) that the teacher and every child knows to calm the class

### Breaks

- Plan 1-2 breaks (movement breaks, play breaks, free play) to maintain concentration
- Clarify in advance with the teacher whether s/he also takes such small breaks → rituals

### Dealing/ relationship with children

- Very important!
- Introduction of every child (name, hobby)
- Anonymous survey

### Response behavior

- Children copying each other
- Social desirability
- Response tendencies

# 3. First Results

## Overview

### → Adaptation of scales successful

- **Children's value structure:**  
 Multidimensional scaling (MDS) confirms Schwartz's value structure
- **Value-related school climate** (School climate scale, Berson & Oreg, 2016): MDS confirms Schwartz's value structure
- **Children's value priorities:**
  - *Benevolence* the most important value (M= 3.53; SD=.68)
  - *Power* the least important value (M=2.35; SD=.92)
  - Gender differences
  - High in *security* values (M=3.33; SD=.74)

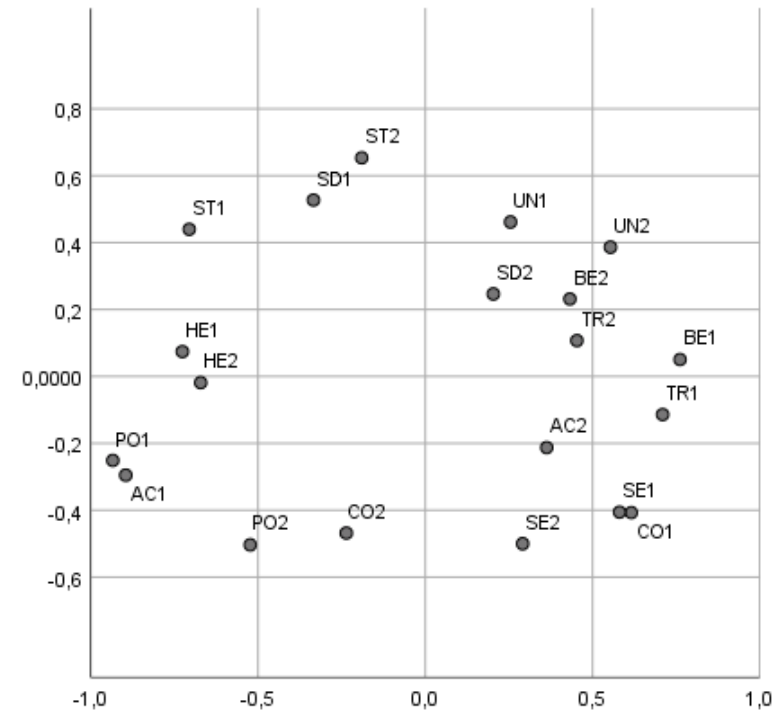


Fig. 5. MDS-matrix of childrens' value structure (Source: Own calculation T1)

# 4. Conclusion

- Heterogenous initial situation on class and individual level
- Importance of «whole package», not «only» the instrument/s (e.g., questionnaire)
- Importance to respond to digitalisation, also in surveying young children
  - Development of digital tools
  - More data is needed

## 5. References

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**Thank you**  
for your attention.