

THE NARRATIVES OF LOCAL CHILDREN AND NEWLY ARRIVING FORCED MIGRANT CHILDREN ABOUT THEIR MUTUAL CONTACTS AND FRIENDSHIPS IN GERMAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Even though almost half of the forced migrant population that entered Germany during the last several years are minors, research about the perspective of children on forced migration is very scarce. Drawing on childhood studies, which regard children as being capable of social thinking and acting, and generational theories, which scrutinize how childhood constitutes a common “social space,” this article aims to analyze narratives of local and forced migrant primary school children on flight and integration. Current regulations of the German educational system insert forced migrant children into the regular school system. Within the restrictive framework of schools, which disadvantage newly arriving migrant children by focusing on their German language skills as the primary marker of their educational potential and success, friendship making is the sphere where children can have agency. Children construct the school as their common generational space and discuss flight as the experience of “being new in school.” This allows children to acknowledge their different biographical backgrounds but empathize with each other and identify as generational members through their subjection to the educational system. Local and forced migrant children bridge language differences by performing their friendships through language-learning rituals. Hence, the public primary school system sets preconditions for the structural integration of local and migrant children, but the most important actors who “do integration” as a social process are children themselves.

Keywords: Childhood; Forced Migration; Social Integration; Friendship Making; Children’s Agency

Although the number of forced migrant children¹ and juveniles under 15 years of age is increasing and this group constitutes almost half of the overall forced migrant population in Germany, children are seldom regarded in the political and public discourse. Among the local population, children are the first group to get into close contact with newly arriving young migrants, who are often quickly inserted into public education. The representative “World Vision Children Study 2018” shows that the majority of local children have met forced migrants in their school (63 percent) or class (41 percent). Hence, local and newly arriving migrant children are pioneers of societal integration, because in school they experience a number and intensity of contacts with each other that is not shared by any other population group. This article aims to deploy the perspectives of local children² and forced migrant children on forced migration and integration into the German society. Focusing on the school context, I will analyze the processes of social integration between local and newly arriving primary school children.

For investigating the perspectives of local and forced migrant children, this study draws on primary data of two different studies conducted by the NGO World Vision Germany:³ the “Children Study 2018,” which included qualitative interviews with local children on forced migration, and the 2016 study “Arrived in Germany” about children who experienced forced migration themselves.

The theoretical design of the article combines childhood theories, which investigate children’s social thinking and acting, with a generational approach. The core idea of the generational approach is that generation, rather than cohort, sets individuals into a specific shared sociohistorical space, which shapes their socialization (Rohde 2011). Assumptions that children are social actors must not lead to the “romanticizing” perception of competent children acting on their free will (Abebe 2019). In contrast, it is important to investigate social structures that channel children’s scope of agency and their agentic practices. That is especially relevant for phenomena of rapid social change (Abebe 2019), like massive immigration, for which older generations have not established collective agencies yet.

¹ In the political and public discourse the dominant term used to discuss forced migration is that of “refugees.” In this article the term “refugee(s)” is only used when it refers to this discourse. I do so to indicate that the term “refugee” (especially in German language) is stigmatizing, evokes a highly negative discourse, and negates the individual biographies, competencies, and objectives of forced migrants (cf. also World Vision Deutschland 2016:13). Moreover, many children who were interviewed for this project do not hold an official “refugee status,” for example children from Kosovo. However, they argue that they were forced to leave their country, most often because of poverty. Therefore, the term “forced migrants” is suitable for all of the interviewees.

² The term “local children” refers to children who were either born in Germany or have been raised in Germany for a significant part of their life. The important difference between local and newly arriving migrant children is the time of residence in Germany, because statistically about one third of local children also have a migration background (Destatis 2018).

³ World Vision Germany is a Christian NGO focused on children’s rights and child well-being. World Vision provides emergency relief, education, health care, economic development, the raising of public and political awareness, and research on child well-being. World Vision works internationally and includes in its projects children of all genders, religions, cultures, ethnicities, and so on.

Investigating the nexus between migration and generation is a well-established field in migration research but seldom regards intragenerational relations between local and migrant children. The majority of research points to differences in the migration experience of diverse generations of migrants (e.g., Levitt and Waters 2002; Portes and Rumbaut 2005; Scholl-Schneider and Kropp 2018; Zinn-Thomas 2018). Focusing on the experiences of young generations of migrants, research shows the specific vulnerability of migrant children who have to establish themselves in the new educational system of the receiving context. Risk factors for educational failure result not only from the transition into a new cultural system but also from psychological problems such as posttraumatic stress disorder (Beiser et al. 1995; Sack et al. 1986), which can especially be found in children from conflict areas. Moreover, rejection, isolation, and discrimination in the new school are risk factors for academic failure and dropping out (McBrien 2005; Pachter et al. 2010; Roxas 2008; Seaton et al. 2013; Stärck 2019). The UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report considers the German practice of including all children in the public school system a rather desirable form of integration in comparison with those of other nations (*Migration, Displacement and Education* 2019). However, comparative research on forced migrant children in different European educational systems hints at structural discrimination of these children in Germany due to the rather poor second-language training and an early placement into different educational tracks, which disadvantages migrant children in their access to gymnasiums, which can prepare them for academic education (Crul et al. 2017).⁴

Nevertheless, migrant children must not be perceived as passive victims of migration processes. Rare studies, which build on empirical material conducted with migrant children, show how they co-construct their childhoods within specific dynamics of agency and vulnerability resulting in the development and display of competencies, identities, and familial responsibilities (Assmuth et al. 2018; Coe et al. 2011; Laoire et al. 2011). Thus, even though newly arriving migrant children in Germany are officially integrated into the public school system, little is known about whether and how local and newly arriving children under given circumstances “do integration” by building social relations with each other. This article aims to contribute to the understanding of mutual processes of social integration among children. The first part of the article will focus on narratives of local children on forced migration and their encounters with forced migrant children, and the second part will present narratives of forced migrant children themselves.

FORCED MIGRANTS IN THE GERMAN IMMIGRATION REGIME

In 2015 the number of asylum applications in Germany rose by over 150 percent compared to the previous year (World Vision Deutschland 2016). The number of children was already significant in 2015 and has subsequently increased further, even though

⁴ Depending on the federal state of Germany, after fourth grade (at approximately ten years of age) or sixth grade (twelve years of age) children change into lower secondary school (*Hauptschule*), intermediate secondary school (*Realschule*), or grammar school (*Gymnasium*).

the overall number of asylum seekers in Germany has declined. In June 2018 the number of children and juveniles under 15 years of age has reached 42 percent of the overall forced migrant population in Germany (bpb n.d.).

Like adults, all children hold the human right to seek and enjoy asylum as declared by Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Due to Germany's federal system, the administration of immigration and residency is the responsibility of local councils under the guidance of state regulations, while asylum laws are decided at the federal level. By contrast, the federal states are responsible for school laws, whereby the educational integration may significantly vary in different cities and regions (Vogel and Stock 2017).

In Germany all children (including forced migrant children) hold the right to part-time early education and childcare starting at the age of one. For all children compulsory school education starts at the age of six and is carried out for twelve school years or longer. Depending on the federal state, primary school may take four to six years. Resulting from their educational performance in primary school, pupils then attend either lower secondary school (*Hauptschule*) or intermediate secondary school (*Realschule*) or gymnasium.

In most German federal states and regions integration into the educational system starts with preparatory German language classes for school-aged children.⁵ Curricula have a strong focus on German language instruction, while sometimes additional subject-oriented lessons are included. Dita Vogel and Elina Stock (2017:11) identify five models of educational integration following the preparatory classes: (1) immersion into regular classes without any specific extra support, (2) integration of regular classes and supplementary German language classes, (3) partial integration with a mix of German language classes and regular class attendance, (4) separate German language classes given temporarily for three months to two years until they are merged with regular classes, and (5) separate German language classes given permanently until leaving school. In Germany pupils who do not meet the educational expectations often have to repeat grades and consequently are older than their classmates.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CHILDREN AS SOCIAL ACTORS

The sociology of childhood is a rather new field, having emerged from the sociology of education and the sociology of family. While the research of the 1980s regarded children as passive consumers of adult culture, in the late 1990s studies have begun to investigate how children contribute to society as social actors.

Following Berry Mayall (2001), research on children requires seeing them as people, as agents intersecting with structures of their life context and understanding how they contribute to the reproduction and transformation of social structures. An important aspect of children's agency is not whether they (in their maturing pro-

⁵ Adults are offered different and separate language classes after their arrival in Germany.

cess) have already developed the competencies for acting, but rather whether their specific social subordination in society grants them the possibilities to act (Abebe 2019; Honig 2017).

The concept of generation is useful to understand how childhood is impacted by specific social conditions of the time. In the Mannheimian sense, generation has to be differentiated from cohort (Mannheim 1970), because generation sets the individual into a specific shared sociohistorical space, which shapes the socialization (Rohde 2011). This means that members of one generation experience historical events at the same time in their lives and may develop a “common social space of experience” (Soto 2010:75) based on this.

One of the social conditions that shape childhood in late modern societies is its institutionalization. The institutionalization of childhood firstly refers to specific organizations, like kindergartens and schools, which children of certain age groups are subjected to (Honig 2017). Following Michel Foucault (1987), schools are institutions of childhood that control and regulate children’s minds and bodies by disciplinary power. Therefore, “the spatial, political, and material factors” (Abebe 2019:2) that constitute childhoods and structure children’s agency have to be examined. According to Michael-Sebastian Honig (2017), it is “through the praxis of generational relations” that childhood as a social institution is reproduced by adults and children alike. Drawing on Judith Butler (1993), Dianne Dickenson (2010) argues that “child” is an identity that is performed through acts, gestures, and language. The “child” is a binary social category that cannot be understood without its opposite, the “adult,” so that childhood has to be investigated in its intergenerational relations (Honig 2017). Similarly, Tatek Abebe argues that “any practice of agency takes place within the context of intergenerational relationships and the social structures that produce these relationships” (2019:12). However, understanding childhood as a relational category between children and adults should not negate that generation also arises from children’s relations with each other. Intragenerational performances of childhood manifest in peer culture, which can be understood as a comparatively unique and separate child culture, making children’s shared values and common actions visible (Biddle 2017:15). Nevertheless, childhood is not a homogenous category but rather highly diverse, which results from the intersection with other categories such as gender, class, ethnicity, and so on, leading to different forms of societal subordination to other social groups (Biddle 2017). However, Sophia Biddle argues that the category of “child” in the perspective of children themselves dominates over “their race, gender, and class following behind as important but secondary, intersecting identities” (2017:31), because all children are subdued to the control of adults, which is mostly exercised through the institutionalization of childhood.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO THE SECONDARY ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

This article is based on a secondary analysis of the qualitative primary data extracted from two different studies by World Vision Germany. The term “secondary analy-

sis" refers to the use of existing empirical data to investigate a research question that differs from that of the original research. While this procedure is common for quantitative sociology, it is rather new but increasingly used in qualitative sociology (Long-Sutehall et al. 2010; Ruggiano and Perry 2019; Sherif 2018). It is often used to address a sensitive area of research or to access an "elusive" population that is difficult to find or to recruit (Long-Sutehall et al. 2010: 335). Children can be considered such an elusive target group, because it is difficult and costly to recruit interviewees and obtain consent of parents. Moreover, both data sets that were used for this article contained many narratives that had not been analyzed in the original research, so it seemed worth to increase the output of these two projects.

The "World Vision Children Study 2018" is a combined quantitative-qualitative study, which contains more than 2,500 representative standardized interviews with children from six to eleven years of age residing in Germany (World Vision Deutschland 2018). The analysis in this article is based on qualitative interviews with individual children; quantitative data are only used to contextualize the narratives of children. The qualitative sample comprised twelve children aged eight and nine years, eight of whom were girls.

Six of the interviewed children of the "Children Study 2018" have a migration background (at least one of their grandparents or parents was born abroad, for example in an African, Asian, south European, or east European country). This mirrors the proportion of pupils with a migration background in Germany: in 2018 about one third of them had a migration background (Destatis 2018). None of the twelve interviewed children of the World Vision "Children Study 2018" had a personal migration or flight experience. In this article these children are referred to as "local children," because they have been raised in Germany. All of their interviews were conducted in German and took between one and one-and-a-half hours. Children were selected based on the impression of interviewers that they would be able to concentrate for such period of time and would enjoy talking to a stranger about their life. Besides these individual characteristics, interviewers recruited children from different socio-economic backgrounds and family configurations, living in different regions all over Germany. Some of these children were found during the recruitment process for the quantitative interviews of the study, others were recruited through the educational or childcare system, and others through personal networks of interviewers. The interviews were done at the home of the child. Usually at least one parent was at home but did not attend the interview.

Following a qualitative approach, these interviews were not structured by closed questions; rather three different methods were used: Firstly, children were asked to tell how they had spent their day and which places they had visited (usually school, some leisure-time activities, home, etc.). Children were also offered small toys and items to visualize important places in their daily life. They were encouraged to tell what they like and do not like doing at these places and with whom they spend time there. Secondly, children were shown different images that visualize the topic of "flight." They were asked to explain their thoughts about these situations. Thirdly, children were told a fictitious story of a forced migrant boy who feels lonely at his

new school, and they were asked what they thought about this story. Usually children answered with a mixture of hypothetical assumptions and accounts of their personal experiences with forced migrant children in their school or class.

In 2016 World Vision Germany (in cooperation with the Hoffnungsträger Foundation) published the qualitative study "Arrived in Germany," which analyses narratives of ten children from diverse national origins who fled to Germany together with their families (World Vision Deutschland 2016). The interviewed children were recruited with support of the Hamburg-Eppendorf University Hospital and the Aktion Integration association, both of which support forced migrants. The sample includes children between the age of 10 and 13, who were selected to represent a variety of migration and integration factors such as contexts of origin, reasons for asylum, or current housing situation. These children come from Serbia, Kosovo, Syria, Iran, Afghanistan, and Eritrea. At the time of the interview, they had lived in Germany for at least one year. Three interviews were conducted in the native language of the children with the help of interpreters, while in the other cases the interviews were in German. Three of these ten children were girls.

The interviews took place at the home of the children or a room of the collaborating organizations. Parents had to consent to the interview and usually were at home during the interview but did not attend the interview. Similar to the interviews with local children, forced migrant children were first offered toys, figures, and symbols (cf. World Vision Deutschland 2016:20) to talk about important places and persons in their daily life. Following clinical-therapeutic methods, children were also offered a ribbon, small images, and smileys to create their life story. While doing that, they were encouraged to talk about important happy or sad events of their life. In the end of the interview children were offered cards from a memory game and asked to choose one or several cards that show how they imagine a good life in their future.

Altogether, five different interviewers assisted by two interpreters conducted the interviews for both studies. The interview methods, which were uniformly used in all interviews, allow interviewers to stimulate children's narrations without asking many questions. Given the studies' requirements of anonymity, the full transcripts cannot be published, but children's dialogues with interviewers are included in this article whenever they are important for the analysis.

The qualitative data was analyzed with a sequential hermeneutic method. Oriented on the approach of Ulrich Oevermann ([1973] 2001), this method aims to reconstruct meaning structures of the data by discussing the possible meaning that is conveyed in single sequences of a text or interview transcript and checking whether the identified meaning structures can be falsified or verified in the interpretation of following sequences.

The process of analyzing and interpreting the data revealed several limitations of doing a secondary analysis that have to be taken into account. Most importantly, this qualitative data has been collected from two studies that were explicitly aimed at reconstructing the perspective of children. Hence, very little information about the socioeconomic background and living environment was collected and no interviews with parents were conducted that could give insight into the intergeneration-

al transmission of attitudes and values within families. The impossibility to return to the participants to collect missing information or clarify contradictory statements is a major problem of secondary analysis (Ruggiano and Perry 2019:9).

In contrast to the qualitative cases, for the quantitative part of the “Children Study 2018” (World Vision Deutschland 2018:29–31) sufficient data on children’s living context and background was collected. This data shows a correlation between the contacts of local children to forced migrant children and their attitudes towards them. Results reveal that children in western Germany have more contact with forced migrants and more often report that forced migrants live in their neighborhoods than in eastern Germany (which matches the actual distribution of forced migrants in the country). Children in western Germany also report spending more time with forced migrant children and show more positive attitudes towards them.⁶ Quantitative data also show that children whose parents have a higher education level show more positive attitudes towards forced migrants. However, these correlations cannot be found in the same way in the qualitative data. For the qualitative cases information about the socioeconomic background of parents is partly missing, but the location of the family is known. Interestingly, interviewed children living in eastern parts of Germany and/or rural areas, which are assumed to have a smaller proportion of migrant population, talk positively about their contacts and friendships with forced migrants. This leads to the assumption that the individual perspectives of children are influenced by their actual lifeworld experiences within their specific neighborhoods and schools. Due to the governmental administration and distribution of newly arriving forced migrants, the proportion of forced migrant children in schools may vary significantly within the same city and even district.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF LOCAL CHILDREN ON FLIGHT AND INTEGRATION

This section analyses the narratives of local children concerning their stance on the phenomenon of forced migration. The qualitative data of the “World Vision Children Study 2018” show that local children construct flight as an existential necessity. Besides military conflicts, children also name causes like hunger and poverty. For instance, Marie⁷ expounds that people flee due to “problems with money,” which sometimes force “five people to sleep together on one mattress.” Leonie suggests that people flee “to find a job.” Hence, local children do not differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate reasons to flee, but rather they interpret that flight always arises out of a crisis situation. For them it is self-evident that people who face these hardships flee to countries that are safer or offer a higher standard of living. These examples also show that forced migration is perceived not as a negative phenomenon due to the potential consequences for the receiving society but rather as

⁶ Sixty-six percent of children in western Germany report that having met a forced migrant person was a (very) positive experience, while ten percent fewer say the same in eastern Germany.

⁷ All children’s names were anonymized by interviewers, who asked children how they wanted to be named.

the horrible experiences of migrants themselves. It is crucial that many children automatically express their feelings when they imagine the situation of forced migrants. For example, Hendrik states that he dislikes forced migration because "it means that many people had to leave their homes." Similarly, Markus states: "I find it terrible that they have to come here ... because the people there have war. I find that terrible that the people there have war." Marie suggests that staying in a "refugee camp" is "bad" for the people "because they only have a tent. And I also believe, they are also scared if there is a thunderstorm or something like that." Mia imagines "that they miss their home. Because there is war, they rather want to live in Germany ... but anyway they miss their home." These narratives show that children transmit their own experiences with being scared of something (like being in a tent during a thunderstorm) or missing family members to better understand the situation of forced migrants. Christoph Wulf (2008) argues that imagining and mimetizing situations, experiences, and actions of other people are an important element of intercultural learning during childhood. Hence, the emotional involvement of local children with the experiences of forced migrant children can be understood as a fundamental aspect of constructing social reality, because it enables local children to structure aspects of their lifeworlds in what is "close and distant, inside and outside, the other and the own" (Gerhards 1988:37). Children's narratives show that their effort to imagine the experiences of flight and consider how they would feel in this situation allows them to approximate themselves to forced migrant children. Despite their different biographical backgrounds, local children identify with forced migrant children because they assume that they share the same emotions. The emotional involvement of local children in the experiences of forced migrant children may support them in building relations with each other and forming a social group, as emotions, according to Jürgen Gerhards (1988), are an important element of communities.

What is crucial to children's discourse on forced migration is that in their narratives they often refer to forced migrants as children, not adults. This hints at the importance of analyzing intragenerational relations for understanding how children in their lifeworld perspective and agency relate to different societal phenomena by perceiving them through the "lens" of their lifeworld. They reduce the complex phenomenon of forced migration and integration to the experience of being "new in class" and making new friends. Hence, local children identify with forced migrant children as generational members who are subjected to the school system. Focusing on the social aspect of school allows them to empathize with the challenge of being new in class. For example, Lisa argues that forced migrants may be homesick and would want to return to their country "because if you are new in class, you first don't have any friends. And you have to be all by yourself." Referring to migration as the experience of leaving friends behind, Ronja suggests that migrants are sad because "they lose their friends," and Ina assumes that if migrants are new in class "they are very, very lonely," because they have "no one to play with." For children the school is an institution they are subjected to through compulsory school attendance. However, these quotes show that children refer to the social (not the educational) experience of school, which is strongly dependent on their agency and ability to make

friends. Mirroring Biddle's argument that children perceive other children primarily as generation members before recognizing their ethnicity, gender, religion, and other social characteristics, these narratives show that children's practices of social integration are based on their mutual identification with each other.

For local children language is the primary marker used to identify forced migrants, and it is also the only factor that impacts but does not impede interactions with them. For Leonie the category of being a "refugee" is a fluid social status that changes during the time of integration, as indicated by language proficiency. She says that some children in her environment are "not really a refugee any longer, because they already know German quite well."

In her interview Lena talks about a friendship with forced migrant girl and explains how they became friends. In describing her friendship she does not focus on the difference between them but rather on their similarities: "Well, she knew my name. And I just liked her. And, hmm, I don't really know.... At the end of the school day we always said 'good bye' and in school we always said 'hello.' And then we spend time together during the breaks." Lena does not portray this friendship as something special, but rather as a regular social relation that resulted from mutual sympathy and activities in school. Language learning was also an integral part of the friendship relation, and Lena claims that she taught the girl a little "to talk in German" and how to pronounce her name and the names of her friends correctly. This example hints at the importance of language-learning rituals and routines by which local and migrant children acknowledge their language differences but at the same time bridge and reduce them. Following Gerhards (1988), who argues that in modern societies rituals allow for the emotional bonding of individuals with each other, it has to be assumed that these language-learning routines allow children to express their sympathy with each other. What is important in Lena's narrative is that she does not emphasize how her friend is dependent on her help or friendship, but rather she portrays them both as active constructors of their friendship, who compensate initial language differences by displaying mutual interest in each other.

This also comes through in the narrative of Hendrik, who talks about a new boy in his class, who fled from Chechnya. He explains that "in the beginning he did not know us and I thought that he, that he is not so well but this is already half a year ago. And I just had the impression that in the beginning he was a bit sad because he did not know us." Here the major differentiation between the situation of the boy and Hendrik himself is being new in class. Hendrik shows his ability to empathize with the boy's situation, because he can imagine his loneliness. Furthermore, it is crucial that for Hendrik being new in class is a temporary status that has changed in a couple of months. Hendrik and his friends supported the boy in learning German: "So German has three different articles 'der, die, das.' This is difficult. Well, I don't find it that easy. That's why I just can see that he needs help with that."

The children developed a routine with the boy in which he asks them about different parts of speech. "He asks us for the different parts of speech, always three words. First nouns, then verbs, then adjectives." Hendrik's narrative is an excellent example of how the actual integration of a migrant boy into his new class is established as a mu-

tual learning process. At Hendrik's age (eight years old), local children learn to understand grammatical structures of the German language and train to differentiate between different parts of speech. Therefore, the language-learning process is a common experience for local and migrant children at that age. Same as Lena's, Hendrik's narrative suggests that children perform friendships—and through this achieve the social integration of newcomers—by their own routines and rituals that allow both groups of children to maintain a positive identity and display mutual sympathy.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF FORCED MIGRANT CHILDREN ON FLIGHT AND INTEGRATION

This section will present the narratives of children, who have experienced forced migration themselves. All of the children came to Germany with adult family members. In Germany they hold different legal status, ranging from temporary residency to recognized asylum entitlement. One of the children had already been deported at the time when the study was published in 2016.

The interviewed children fled their countries for different reasons, such as poverty, threats to their ethnic or religious minority group, or war. Herewith, their personal experiences accord with the ideas of local children about reasons to flee one's home country. More importantly, narratives of forced migrant children show that they frame flight similarly to local children, by constructing it as an existential necessity to survive.

Shirin, who is 11 years old, fled from Iran together with her mother three years before the interview, because the family belongs to the Christian minority.

Shirin: ... and I wanted to enter second grade [in school], then we fled here. Because we are Christians.... And this is not so easy in Iran, if you are a Christian. Death.... And in Iran you must not be a Christian. You must be a Muslim.

Interviewer: And do you know, who decided that you come to Germany?

Shirin: No. We fled. [*pause*] My mom did not tell me that, but I know that we fled.

The narrative of Shirin shows some key aspects of the flight narratives of interviewed children. They identify a clear reason for flight and are able to explain why they could no longer live in their home country. Furthermore, Shirin's narrative shows that she sets flight in the context of her school biography. This indicates that prior to flight her everyday life experience was dominated by going to school. In another part of her interview she is asked if school in Iran was any different than in Germany, and Shirin answers that she had to wear a headscarf there and was once sanctioned because it slipped and showed some of her hair.

Similar to narratives of local children, Shirin's narrative shows that going to school is the primary childhood experience and changing schools is an important experience resulting from flight. By pointing out that she wanted to enter second grade when the family fled, she can determine her age at flight but also her success in having accomplished first grade in her native context. This becomes relevant to her experiences in the German context, because she has to repeat two classes in primary school (see below).

Farid, an 11-year-old boy, fled with his parents and three siblings to Germany from Afghanistan two years before the interview. He also uses a school narrative to elaborate on the increasing threat in his home context and the flight to Germany. His narrative shows how the conflict led to the disruption of normality in his lifeworld, as he could no longer attend school.

Farid: And then we went to school. Then we didn't any longer. Because my father, my parents said, that it is too dangerous. I don't know why. Well, it was too dangerous.... My father sometimes had time and we studied, me and Samir, together with my father.

Interviewer: What did he teach you?

Farid: Well, to read Afghanian. Now I cannot do this anymore.

Interviewer: You can't? You unlearned it?

Farid: Hmm. Yes. When I was little, I could do it a bit. Now I can't so well.

Interviewer: Would you like to tell me what happened after that?

Farid: I don't know. I do not remember, well I don't know any more.

Interviewer: You don't know any more. Okay. And then you became older, don't you? And at some point you have not been in Afghanistan any longer.

Farid: No.

Interviewer: Hmm.

Farid: Because it was too dangerous there.

Interviewer: Yes. Do you remember how it felt when you came to Germany?

Farid: I was happy. Because Germany is not such a dangerous country.

Farid's narrative indicates that the native language seems to have lost meaning in the new life in Germany, as the father no longer teaches it to his children and Farid has already lost his reading skills. His case illustrates that entering the German educational system subjects migrant children to a specific knowledge system that often does not support the development of their native language or second language that were important in their context of origin.

The inclusion of the flight narrative into the school biography is also evident in the cases of children who fled for reasons of poverty. Marlon is an 11-year-old boy who fled from Kosovo together with his parents and two siblings. Marlon explains how the poverty of the family affected his school experience:

You know, in Kosovo, if you do not do the homework, in Kosovo, they beat you... Yes! And beat you and like this. In Kosovo my father did not have any money and I did not have, like, bought a notebook. And "Why did you not buy a notebook?" and beating. Yes. But Germany is nice. I have a notebook, I have everything with me. Yes. But in Germany, if you don't do homework, never beating.

Marlon recounts how he was discriminated in school in Kosovo and contrasts this experience with his new life in Germany, where he is able to participate in education in the same way as the other children. In his narrative the school experience in Kosovo is used as an indicator of bad life conditions there. He, like other children, uses the school biography to indicate life conditions before and after flight.

The different narratives show children's perspective on their subjection to the disciplining power of educational systems, such as being sanctioned for not following the dress code. What is specific to the societal integration of the interviewed children is that before and after flight they have always been subjected to the educational system as a central element of their lifeworld. This allows children to make contact with locals quicker and easier. Many of the interviewed children recount how quickly they have found friends in school, some of whom they also meet in their spare time. For example, Marlon enjoys playing basketball at school and says, "you know, when finished with school, we play somewhere else." His younger brother Jakob explains: "Because I cannot know German. And hmmm my friends learn me [regional expression for "teach me"] how is German. Because I say 'This is a tlee.' And he says, 'Not tlee but tree.' He says it right."

Hence, these cases show that not only local children report about friendships with forced migrant children but also vice versa. Both name language learning and leisure-time activities as the basis of their friendships. If we compare the narratives of Jakob and Hendrik in the previous section, we can see that language learning allows both groups of children to build a positive identity, because locals are able to demonstrate their language and teaching skills and newcomers are able to show their ability to learn the language quickly.

Nevertheless, the narratives also show that the subjection to the German regular school system with insufficient support to their needs burdens forced migrant children with responsibility for their language-learning process and social integration in their class.

Kabira, who is 10 years old, fled from Syria together with her parents and three siblings. The narrative below shows that in her case flight is also constructed as a biographical event that is inevitable and disrupts the educational biography.

Interviewer: Well, tell me, did you go to school in Syria?

Kabira: Yes, until the third grade. I was eight years old then.

Interviewer: Until the third grade. Hmm. Okay.

Kabira: And then we had to come here. And because of that I have repeated the second [grade]. And then I had to go back again [to repeat the second grade again], because I still couldn't speak any German.

Kabira is aware of the interrelation between age and grade. Her narrative indicates that in her home context she was two years younger when she started the third grade than in Germany. Accordingly, she positions herself as responsible for learning German quickly to continue in the German school system. Besides highlighting falling behind their age groups and having to repeat grades in Germany—that have al-

ready been accomplished in the country of origin—this narrative also shows that for newly arrived migrants school merits are solely reduced to learning German. Therefore, it can be assumed that the transition from the educational system of the home context to the receiving context is dependent on the individual language learning success, while other skills are not taken into consideration (cf. Lerner 2012). This bears the risk that the intellectual potential of these children is reduced to their language skills. Moreover, their integration is complicated by the age difference.

Kabira's case also shows that the practice of grade repetition sets newly arrived migrants in a specific context, which forces them to cope with changing classes several times and with being older than their classmates and thus creates additional challenges of integration.

Shirin's narrative reveals how newly arrived migrant children can cope with this age gap. She is talking about whom to invite to her birthday party.

Shirin: I attend primary school, but I should be in the sixth grade [secondary level], but I also have older friends, too. And if they come and they are free, then I will invite my bigger [older] friends, and if they are not free, then I will invite my small [younger] girlfriend [*laughing*].

Interviewer: Okay [*laughing*]. But at the moment you are in the fourth grade in the primary school? Okay and probably you would actually be in the sixth class, because you are already older than the others. But yet you have friends in primary school?

Shirin: Yes. And they are really nice, I think. Yes, sometimes I think they are silly, well that I have to go there. Hmm, sometimes I want to go to the bigger ones, but sometimes, I say, this is good too.

Shirin emphasizes that she has made friends in her current class and in her age group. Although she prefers friends in her age group, Shirin is pragmatic in making friends in her current class. She shows her resilient agency in dealing with the age difference by making friends in different age groups and actively prioritizing them depending on the event. Her narrative reveals that Shirin uses her agency of friendship making to cope with pressures of class repetition and the resulting age gap.

CONCLUSION

Even though children make up almost half of the forced migrant population that has entered Germany during the last several years, and local children are the most important population group that makes contact with these newcomers, the perspective of both groups of children has not yet been paid much attention in research and politics. Notwithstanding methodological limitations that do not give insight into the intergenerational influences on children's contacts and friendships, the World Vision data set of qualitative interviews with local and forced migrant children presents a valuable source, because it reveals the intragenerational dynamics of the social integration of children with each other.

Despite their different biographical backgrounds, the subjection to the educational system is one of the major aspects of the childhood experience of both groups of interviewed children. The intragenerational praxis of friendship making allows children to subvert societal categories like “refugee” which differentiate between various social groups. The narrative framing of “flight” as the experience of changing schools enables local and newly arriving children to identify and empathize with each other, because local children may also potentially experience and fear the status of “being new in class.” Hence, commonality and emotional involvement allow local and migrant children to perceive each other as equal while acknowledging different backgrounds. Thus, the findings of this article suggest the need for childhood studies to focus not only on the intergenerational but also on the intragenerational constitution of childhood. While research on intergenerational dynamics often tends to focus on the subordination of children through social structures of adults and their society, intragenerational research highlights how children within these structures act in relation to each other and transform their compulsory school attendance into the social experience of friendship making. These findings also point out the importance of complementing studies that focus on unique experiences and various disadvantages of migrant children with research examining mutual relations between migrant and local children. Pierre Bourdieu (1991) in his analysis of social groups argued that group boundaries could be overcome by identifying homologies between members of different groups. This is exactly what children do. Despite being sorted into different groups—locals and migrants—in the public, political, and academic discourses, they perceive themselves as peers sharing the same school experience. Migration for local and migrant children is a phenomenon that takes place within their common generational space of experience (Mannheim 1970), which may possibly foster generational change in overcoming group boundaries that are important for adults.

However, it cannot be denied that the subjection to the German educational system results in different educational chances and pressures for many children who do not speak German as their native language. Highlighting the importance of their own agency, interviewed children have coped with these disadvantages through friendship making, which on the basis of mutual identification and sympathy helps them to bridge age and language differences. The performance of friendships by language-learning rituals allows both groups of children to acknowledge their different biographical backgrounds while maintaining a positive identity as being competent German speakers and learners. With the consequent reduction of language difference in this process, the “refugee” status in children’s perspective loses its meaning and newcomers turn into classmates like any others. Based on these empirical results of this study, it seems beneficial to allow the immersion of forced migrant children into regular classes soon after their arrival (with additional support, for best results), because this enables local and newly arriving children to make contact with each other and to experience education and integration as common and mutual processes.

While the data used for this study did not contain any narratives that indicate experiences or practices of mobbing, racism, or ethnic boundary making, which probably results from the small sample size, other studies have already shown that these phenomena exist at all levels of education. Hence, further research should investigate children's actions and practices that lead to social exclusion in school classes and whether the mobilization of children's ability to empathize with each other could be a useful pedagogical strategy to overcome exclusion.

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НАРРАТИВЫ МЕСТНЫХ ДЕТЕЙ И НОВОПРИБЫВШИХ ДЕТЕЙ ВЫНУЖДЕННЫХ МИГРАНТОВ О ВЗАИМНЫХ КОНТАКТАХ И ДРУЖБЕ В НЕМЕЦКИХ НАЧАЛЬНЫХ ШКОЛАХ

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Исследование, лежащее в основе статьи, выполнено при поддержке фонда World Vision в Германии.

Половина вынужденных мигрантов, переселившихся в Германию за последние несколько лет, – несовершеннолетние. Тем не менее количество исследований, изучающих взгляд детей на вынужденную миграцию, крайне мало. Данная статья обращается к исследованиям детства, в рамках которых дети рассматриваются как личности, способные к социальному мышлению и действию, а также опирается на поколенческие теории, изучающие детство как общее социальное пространство. Автор анализирует нарративы о беженстве и интеграции, принадлежащие детям вынужденных мигрантов и местным детям младшего школьного возраста. Согласно нынешним требованиям немецкой образовательной системы, дети вынужденных мигрантов должны учиться в обычных школах. Ограничения школьной системы ставят новоприбывших детей мигрантов в невыгодное положение, поскольку образовательный потенциал и успеваемость в школе оцениваются по знанию немецкого языка. В этом контексте дружеские связи становятся областью, где дети приобретают агентность. В нарративах детей школа конструируется как общее поколенческое пространство, а вынужденная миграция обсуждается как опыт «новичка в школе». Это позволяет детям признавать различные биографические бэкграунды, проявляя при этом эмпатию друг к другу, а также самоидентифицироваться как представители одного поколения, встроенные в одну образовательную систему. Местные дети и дети вынужденных мигрантов преодолевают языковые барьеры посредством практик дружбы и ритуалов изучения языка. Таким образом, система общественных начальных школ создает условия для структурной интеграции как местных детей, так и детей мигрантов, однако наиболее значимыми акторами, совершающими интеграцию как социальный процесс, оказываются сами дети.

Ключевые слова: детство; вынужденная миграция; социальная интеграция; дружба; детская агентность