

# HOW CHILDREN WITH IMMIGRANT BACKGROUNDS INTEGRATE INTO A GERMAN PRIMARY SCHOOL.

*WIE KINDER MIT EINWANDERUNGSHINTERGRUND IN DIE DEUTSCHE GRUNDSCHULE*

*INTEGRIEREN 2023.*



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# 1) Introduction

Germany has become an immigrant country. The high amount of immigrant background families has spread over the whole of Germany after World War II. (Schneider, 2018). Germany turned into a destination and safe place for many war refugees who departed from former Eastern Germany.

Many 'guest workers' went to Germany from neighbouring countries and other continents in the 80s. For example, immigrants who wanted to escape for political reasons from Latin America; refugees and immigrants from wars in Afghanistan and former Yugoslavia; a great number of software engineers from India; many young people from sub-Saharan Africa; as well as many domestic workers from Ecuador and Colombia; and ongoing refugees from Syria and Afghanistan are the major migration movements giving millions of immigrants to Germany for the last 80 years (Oltmer, 2016 cited in Schneider J, 2018). A small city such as Offenbach with 61% of its 130,000 inhabitants are immigrant origin. Furthermore, most of the town had the higher shares in the younger populations such as 70% of youth are under 18 years old. (Schneider J, 2018).

As an immigrant myself, I understood the struggle of making social connections and gaining a sense of belonging in the community. In particular, my children had experienced challenging times during their primary school years. My research focused on exploring how children from immigrant families integrated into a German primary school.

I was interested in understanding how children with immigrant backgrounds fit into German primary schools and how they formed friendships and connections at school. This knowledge could help educators and immigrant families better support students and children in developing their social connections.

I was particularly interested in the participatory research method. Therefore, I asked two older children with immigrant backgrounds to interview six younger immigrant children.

## 2)Literature Review

How do children with immigrant backgrounds integrate into a primary school in Germany?

### 2,1 The definition of immigration

The definition of immigrant is the `physical transition of an individual or a group from one society to another. This transition usually involves abandoning one social setting and entering a different one. (Eisenstadt, 1955, p.1 cited in Loue,1998 ). According to Mangalam,1968 (cited in Loue,1998) It is a relative movement away of ... migrants, from one geographical location to another, preceded by decision-making on the part of the migrants based on a hierarchically ordered set of values or values ends and resulting in changes in the interactional set of migrants.` In the global context, a non-resident (both national or alien) arriving in a State with the intention to remain for a period exceeding a year.

In the EU context, a person who establishes their usual residence in the territory of an EU Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another EU Member State or a third country. (Migration and Home Affairs – European Commission, 2024).

The data from 2016 shows approximately 400,000 refugee children arrived in Germany around this period (Andersen et al 2021). The definition for a refugee is `any person who is outside of any country of such person's nationality who is unable or unwilling to return to [that country] because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion` (United Nations General Assembly, 1951).

Both groups of people are looking for jobs or an education and a better life. But `immigrants` are a group of people who are looking for a permanent place to settle in other countries- (International Rescue Committee, 2022). This research study focused on immigrant children's experience of integration into a German Primary school. Their experience would be similar to refugee children, in terms of the battle of learning a new language and trying to fit into their new school environment.

Social integration in German society is one of the vital issues for a huge number of newcomers into the country. The German government launched a 'Welcome Politics' (Willkommenspolitik) and an 'Integration Politics' to allocate resources and adequate administrative papers for refugees' families. Unfortunately, after the 2015 New Year's Eve incident in Cologne, where women were targeted and cornered, mainly by groups of refugees, there was resentment and hostile feelings towards refugees and immigrants in German society. There are increased worries and concerns about women's safety and freedom, after these sexual attacks. Therefore, the number of voters for the anti-immigrant Alternative for Deutschland (AfD) increased rapidly in this period (Funk 2016). In Germany, like in many European countries, a large groups in society have shown resentment towards immigrants as well as against 'multiculturalism'. Policymakers have recognised that this sentiment has impacted on 'integration,' 'social cohesion, and 'shared citizenship values' (Entzinger 2003 cited in Castles & Miller, 2019). This research aims to understand immigrant children's 'integration' in the context of a primary school in Germany

Integration has various meanings regarding the social and cultural connection between refugees and immigrant and their host country (Sauer and Kraus, 2021). The implication of integration largely comes down to language proficiency and employability. There are many research papers about social integration programs concerning the labour market (Hartwig et al., 2018 cited in Andresen, Neumann and Schneekloth 2021) but there is few research about how primary children with immigrant backgrounds integrate into German primary schools. The quantitative studies by Hannover (2020) and Bauer and Hannover (2020) used interviews and questionnaires to analyse how refugee children integrated into German secondary schools and how they make connections with native German children. Their findings explained that refugee children socialized more with their ethnic group.

There are many studies such as Schlechter et al (2021) on the mental health of children with immigrant backgrounds and the impact on their well-being. However, this is not an area that is covered in this study. The literature review has found that key issues and debates on children with immigrant backgrounds and integration programmes in primary schools are mainly based on theoretical and conceptual ideas. Empirical research on how these children integrate into their new primary school seems to be missing.

This literature review has identified 15 different studies about children with immigrant backgrounds in Germany, and Turkey (Demir & Ozgul, 2019). It covers the findings about the German state policies, practices and civil society efforts, the holistic view of the immigrant issue (Funk, 2016; Häberlen, 2016; Sauer and Kraus, 2021; Hannover, 2020; Bauer & Hannover, 2020; Jäger et al, 2021; Hellmann et al, 2019; Hinger and Schweitzer, 2020 and Barreto et al, 2022). The discrimination experienced by children with immigrant backgrounds hinders their attempt to contact local people despite the opportunities for contact and meetings with native people in Germany (Hesse et al, 2017; Andresen and Schneekloth, 2021; Schmader and Sedikides, 2018). Demir and Ozgul (2019) carried out a qualitative case study with children in Turkey. It showed discrimination and ostracism at Turkey schools.

This literature review has been organised under two themes that are relevant to the research study: 1) Immigrant children and social integration and 2) Social integration policies and practices

## 2.2 Immigrant children and social integration

There are few research studies about children with immigrant backgrounds' experience forming social connections and friendships with native children in primary school. The research paper by Demir and Ozgul (2019, p.2) claims that host countries overshadow minority groups by marking them and calling them names. Drawing on an example in Anderson's study (2001), they explain how disintegration is reflected in the everyday life of immigrant children. They cite the experience of an Afghan who was confronted by her peer in Germany: "You're a foreigner, you don't belong in Germany. Get out of here. You're not wanted".

Hamm et al. (2005) stated that immigrant children often face discrimination due to their "accented speech". Discrimination constitutes a form of social rejection that is based on individuals' social identities (Tajfel & Turner, 1979 cited in Bauer and Hannover 2020, p.1). The study from Bauer & Hannover (2020) claimed that the continuous social discrimination in schools created some form of behavioural tendency not to befriend natives due to the surging discrimination, children with immigrant backgrounds felt less comfortable showing their authentic selves around natives (Bauer & Hannover, 2020)



Castles and Miller (2019) explained that many children with immigrant backgrounds and families relocate to different urban areas are hanging on within their ethnic community, instead of mixing and establishing social connections with the local population. Young children with immigrant backgrounds find comfort and a sense of belonging in their ethnic group of Immigrant families and communities (Bauer and Hannover, 2020). According to the State Authenticity as fit to Environment (SAFE) model (Schmader and Sedikides, 2018) stated that the authenticity of each person forms their “self-segregationally tendencies and patterns”. children with immigrant backgrounds have a social identity and authenticity that could also create self-segregation from the native German people (Schmader and Sedikides 2018). Therefore, the tendency to look for friendship and connection depends on whether they can show their true self-image and identity. Paradoxically, Bauer and Hannover (2020, p.2.) said that “authenticity is a potential mediator between perceived discrimination and individuals’ tendencies to avoid friendships with natives”. Some children with immigrant backgrounds are reluctant to show their genuine selves to others after experiencing discrimination (Bauer & Hannover 2020, p.1). As a result, children with immigrant backgrounds are trapped in their ethnic group both in school and after school. It is a contradictory phenomenon that disturbs the aim of social integration programmes, as well as the aim of building an inclusive society (Demir and Ozgul, 2019). Consequently, the integration and social connection program should be implemented as early as possible in primary school. Young immigrant children would be better to cope with life challenges and difficulties in school with peer support (Hannover et al, 2020).

### 2.3 Social integration policies and practices

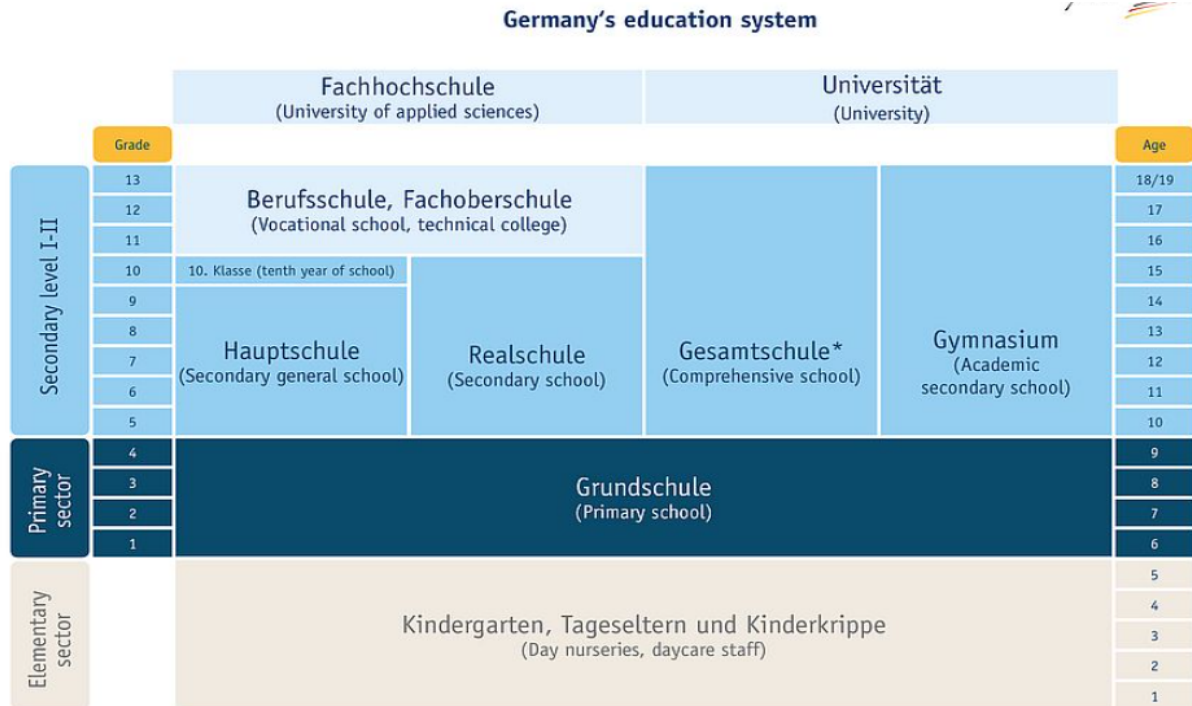
Funk (2016) argued that even though there are many kinds of integration and support policies in Germany in terms of providing daily accommodation and daily basic needs, there is no evidence of which policy works best for social integration in an educational setting. It is still a constant struggle for German society to accept and embrace this group of 'foreigners' (Andersen et al 2021). In Germany, around 43.9% of the 2018 asylum applications were from immigrants under 16 years old (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2018, cited in Hannover et al. 2020, p.7). The newly arrived immigrant children are placed into Welcome Classes or additional language classes.

These Welcome-classes and additional language classes facilitated their language training to let them fit into the mainstream German school system. The duration of these training classes is one year (Hannover et al. 2020). Afterwards, it is assumed that the immigrant children have enough German language proficiency to make friends and connections with their peers in school. However, these kinds of Welcome classes as a part of the integration programmes for immigrant children in Germany did not implement any assistance to support their social integration into regular classes in German schools. There is no social support after these Welcome-classes in their new school. (e.g. Wentzel, Russell, & Baker, 2016; Zander, Kreuzmann, & Hannover, 2017 cited in Hannover et al 2020). Therefore, school peer support programmes for these new arrival immigrant and immigrant children are needed to supply support for a longer period.

The tools of integration are highly influenced by language competence to communicate with others (Hinger and Schweitzer 2020). Many children with migrating backgrounds have various educational deficiencies besides the English language. It creates certain barriers for immigrant children to integrate into German primary schools. The German Language is the key to integrating into German society, both for children and their parents (Hesse et al 2017). According to Hinger and Schweitzer (2020), learning the German language is the main facilitator to the foundation of rights and becoming German citizens. Due to the language barrier, many immigrant families did not understand the German language and the written letters. Some of the refugees and immigrants in LaGeSo could not express themselves in English and they were heavily relying on volunteer interpreters for their official papers (Häberlen 2016). Therefore, they missed the opportunity to get in touch with the communal integration centres (Jäger et al, 2021). To improve this, the German government has imposed a compulsory integration language programme for immigrant families. Their language proficiency becomes an obligation to German citizens (Hinger and Schweitzer 2020).



## 2.4 The German school system



(information from: <https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/living-in-germany/family-life/school-system>)

The general education system in Germany starts from Primary school, from Klasse 1 to 4 and ages from 6 to 9 years old. (in German “Grundschule”). The elementary classes are not compulsory. Then the secondary level I and II are from Klasse 5 to 13 and ages from 10 to 16 years old. After that the student will take an important exam called Abitur, which determines whether they could get into university.

The Primary school hours are from 0830 to 1330. Some primary school runs after-school care from 1430 to 16:00.

Each federal state in Germany adopts a slightly different integration program in schools. Most of the children with refugee and immigrant backgrounds are placed in mainstream Primary schools (Jäger et al 2021). ‘Welcome-Classes’ policy was mainly designed for refugee children in public schools but private schools do not need to adhere to this policy.

This research took place in a private primary school in the North Rhine-Westphalia area in Germany. In this school, there is no intervention to support refugees or immigrant children.

In conclusion, Germany has received a huge number of immigrants since 2015 (Andersen et al 2021). The German immigrant policy in practice has highlighted the limitation of the `integration` programme in general (Funk 2016). This literature review has explored the limitations of how immigrant children integrate into German primary schools by looking at policies and practices of social integration (Hinger and Schweitzer 2020). Inevitably, many immigrant children have experienced some sort of discrimination and disintegration in school and in society (Hellmann et al, 2019). In particular, many immigrant children did not make connections with native German children and felt excluded from the majority (Häberlen 2016). Children have difficulties making friends mainly due to language barriers and their `accented speech`. This is why children opt to hang out with their ethnic communities.

Despite many integration policies in place, the genuine voice of immigrant children is not included in many research studies. Fraser et al (2014) argued that in much literature on research, children and young people were treated as `objects`. They also point out that the purpose of children's research is to provide a better understanding of their lives and this is what this research aims to achieve.

The literature review showed that there is a gap in research about children with immigrant backgrounds and their experience of integration in German primary schools. This research aims to address this gap by focusing on children's voices.

Main research question:

What do immigrant children experience in a German primary school?

Sub-research questions

- 1) How do immigrant children view their social connections in German primary schools?
- 2) How do immigrant children make friends in German primary schools?

### 3)Methodology

This research study used qualitative research methods to answer the following research question: “How immigrant children integrate into a German Primary school.”

This research employed a qualitative approach to understand participants’ feelings and experiences. Children explained how they felt in school and what friendship meant for them. The question explored the positive experiences and challenges when connecting with their classmates.

#### Sample and location

In this research study, purposive sampling (Gray, 2014) was employed. The selection of the school was based on my professional affiliation as a teacher at this institution. I selected a specific group of children who met the criteria of being immigrants. This small-scale research study was conducted over 12 months, beginning in September 2023, at a small private primary school in North Rhine-Westphalia, the southern part of Germany. All mainstream German schools started at the beginning of August.

Firstly, I obtained consent from the school headmistress. I approached the school principal with an introduction letter which explained the purpose of this research study. The school admits children marginalised by the region's standard schooling system. These children often do not fit into regular German primary schools due to various reasons, such as low or exceptionally high academic achievement or the need for additional support in social behaviour. The school also attracts many children with immigrant backgrounds who did not integrate well into the traditional German school system. The institution offered small learning groups, allowing children to learn at their own pace. The school has received various types of funding from the local government to support these initiatives. It is located in a residential area, surrounded by a small forest.

Secondly, eight children from Grades 1 to 4 were selected for the study. I approached 8 students and parents and gave leaflets with information about the research. These children were chosen because both of their parents or one of their parents is a foreigner to Germany, and they speak their mother tongue at home. I have been teaching across

grade 1-4 I have known these children for 4 years and have established good trust and rapport with them. Montgomery (2014) highlighted that having a good relationship with a research participant is essential to participant observation and interview. Enright's (2021) argued that it takes time to build up a respectful relationship with children and young people (Fitzgerald, Stride and Enright, 2021) and this is something that I have achieved over the last four years as their English Teacher.

it was my responsibility as a researcher to ensure that all participants fully understood the nature of this research study. In my research 'Informed and voluntary consent [was] central to research ethics' (Alderson, 2014 p. 94). I waited until our Christmas party concluded to follow up with these families and explain the research study in person again. One family lost the consent form, and another child's parent was travelling, making it difficult to obtain their signatures in January 2024. In the end, the frequently absent parents verbally agreed to the study and requested that I sign the consent forms on their behalf, as they were out of town and the grandmother was illiterate.

### 3.1 Qualitative Research Methods

Qualitative research methods have been widely used in research studies with immigrants in Germany (Funk, 2016; Häberlen, 2016; Sauer and Kraus, 2021; Jäger et al, 2021; Ahmad Al Ajlan, 2019; Schmader and Sedikides, 2018 and Hein et al, 2019). Jäger et al (2021) also used a qualitative research method to interview 8 relevant communal integration centre (CIC) staff who were working in the communal integration centre in North Rhine-di Westphalia (NRW) in Germany. The interviews were done from a problem-centred perspective, with 'grounded theory' and 'inductive-deductive' approaches. The original aim of this kind of interview was to focus on a specific topic from a subjective point of view (Jäger et al 2021).

Interviews and case studies were used in previous research on children with immigrant backgrounds. Häberlen (2016) and her colleagues interviewed a group of children and families with immigrant backgrounds about friendship. Demir & Ozgul (2019) also adopted qualitative interview research methods with case studies. Their study found evidence that Syrian children with immigrant backgrounds are ostracized by their classmates in school. Ahmad used qualitative interview research methods as well. This research study focused on how immigrant children view social connections in German

primary schools, their school experience and how they form friendships in German primary schools.

Flewitt (2017) argued that qualitative research methods are more flexible than quantitative ones, including observation and interviews. Besides, the interview method in qualitative research could explore immigrant children's experiences, perceptions, identities, and beliefs using a flexible approach to research design (Hammersley, 2014).

### 3.1.1 Qualitative interviews

I used the qualitative interview research method. As Flewitt (2014, p.138) explained, the qualitative interview research method could "generate insights into participant's lives which would otherwise remain hidden" Qualitative interviews and other data collection tools, such as drawings, could build a connection with the children with immigrant backgrounds. In particular, the qualitative interview could "generate complex insights into [their] perception of social phenomena" (Flewitt 2014, p.138).

After the Christmas and New Year's holidays in 2023, children returned to school in January. Therefore, collecting the data in February 2024 gave them a month of reunion with their peers and cemented their friendships and connections. The interview schedule was organized in consultation with schoolteachers and the participants. The interviews were audio-recorded because it was easier to transcribe in the writing stage. The interviews were used as part of the participatory research method

### 3.1.2 Participatory interview process

As explained above, after I gained access from my school, I identified 8 to 10 children with immigrant backgrounds aged between 6 and 11 years old (from Klasse 1 to 4) and sent them an informed consent leaflet in January in German and English. This consent leaflet provided details information about this research's aims and period. The older immigrant children were the co-researchers to interview the younger immigrant children. This older immigrant child received a second information sheet and consent form relating to his role in this research study. The advantage of this child-led research interview was that the older immigrant children understand the younger children's views and experiences better than an adult researcher. Additionally, they shared the same cultural and social background. The older immigrant children as co-researchers

could achieve a better understanding of their 'intentions and motives reflecting their own cultural and personal assumptions and practices' (Hammersley 2014 page 181).

The location for interviewing participants was vital for voice recording (Flewitt 2014). I used a portable sound recording device for voice recording, and it was mentioned in the consent form to parents. The location was one of the empty classrooms or in the garden depending on the weather. The time was after school around 16 o'clock.

### *Step 1*

I asked them to draw on a piece of white paper what they would like to do or play during their school hours in school in Picture 1. It was something about their break time with their friends. I prepared pencils for them.

### *Step 2)*

Then gave them a simple map of the school playground which I prepared beforehand and asked them to mark where they normally spend time together with their friends in Picture 2. Using the adapted Mosaic approach with the research questions, the participants needed to position themselves on the school's playground map and marked where they usually spend time together. It is a great visual method in research for verbal and non-verbal children. (Clark 2014).

### *Step 3*

After these two pictures, I asked them to explain their pictures explicitly. It was then fit into the two interview questions about their social experience in school and how they make friends in German primary school. In particular, Pictures 1 and 2 were important evidence to show their voiced. Especially, the immigrant children could explain their view of social connections in German primary schools and how were they social experiences and friendships.

### *Working with older children who interviewed younger children*

I first explained the interview guidance and showed two older children how to interview the younger immigrant children by role-playing. After a few times practising how to ask the research questions, the older immigrant child started interviewing the younger immigrant children with their Picture A and B. After that, a semi-structured interview was held with the older immigrant children with me. In particular, it was vital to invite



children to be 'active co-researchers' and play a role in research studies (Fraser, Flewitt and Hammersley 2014). Due to the power dynamics among adult researchers that could influence children's answers to interview questions, it could be better to let older children interview the younger children (Roberts-Holmes 2011 page 154). At the same time. It was vital to listen to the voices of the children as they were the experts in their own lives. Children with immigrant backgrounds were aware of their situation and what happened in their home country as well as their reason to move from here. Donaldson's study (1978 cited in Fraser, Flewitt and Hammersley, 2014) stated that 'children's true competencies are revealed only in situations which make sense to them'. Furthermore, children of primary school age were knowledgeable about social and international matters. They were able and could find a solution for themselves (Taylor et al 2008 cited in Bucknall 2014).

### 3.4 Data analysis

Data from approximately eight individual interviews with immigrant children were audio-recorded, transcribed, and checked for accuracy before being thematically organized. Each interview was examined and analyzed within the context of the literature review and conceptual framework (Smith, 2014, p.195). I compared and analyzed the interview findings, linking them to related themes as identified in the literature (Smith, 2014).

Initially, I reviewed the transcripts, participants' drawings, and my observational records. Subsequently, I color-coded relevant words: words associated with positive feelings were marked in purple, while those related to negative feelings were marked in blue. Finally, these words were organized according to their respective colors (see Appendix 3).

### 3.5 Time frame

The timeline for the preparation, execution, and completion of this research project is as follows:

- **August 2023:** I obtained a German Police clearance valid for one year. I prepared and designed the research questions and information leaflets for the principal and eight immigrant children and their parents. These materials were written in both English and German.

- **September 2023:** I discussed the research study with my school principal. She reviewed the information leaflet and signed the consent form.
- **December 2023:** I approached the eight target families and children to explain the research study and its purpose, allowing them time to read and consider participating.
- **January 2024:** After the Christmas holiday, I sent out hard copies of the researcher's letter and leaflets to the eight targeted families. I again explained the purpose of the study to the parents and children individually.
- **February and March 2024:** I collected consent forms from the eight participants and began interviewing the older immigrant children. I asked them to draw pictures of what they played with their friends and mark the school map indicating where they usually hang out with friends. The interview process involved the older children interviewing the younger ones in the garden or an empty classroom after school, with the sessions being audio-recorded using a portable sound recording device.
- **April 2024:** I finalized the transcription of the eight interviews.
- **May 2024:** I focused on completing the data analysis.
- **June 2024:** I finished the draft research report.
- **August and September 2024:** Preparation of a PowerPoint presentation in both English and German. The findings will be disseminated in the school and published in an academic journal. The dissemination will target primary school teachers.

### 3.6 Ethics and limitation

This project adhered to the ethical guidelines set forth by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). Conducting research with children and young people presented complex and unpredictable ethical issues (Alderson, 2014). Alderson further argued that obtaining consent from parents of young children is both complicated and time-consuming, emphasizing the importance of ongoing consent. To ensure confidentiality, all data, including audiotapes, were securely stored in a locked facility (Alderson, 2014). Securing ongoing informed consent from the eight

participants was a significant challenge for this research study. Consequently, all the consent forms will be securely stored in my personal safe at home.

Obtaining ethical approval was an extensive process. I engaged with the targeted parents multiple times, reminding them to return the signed consent forms as soon as possible. Participants were reassured about the confidentiality of their information and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage if they felt uncomfortable. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, the real names of the research participants were not published.

Alderson (2014) highlighted the critical importance of conducting research with children in an ethical manner. I explicitly addressed the ethical issues related to consent, privacy, and confidentiality, as well as the purpose of the research study. Consequently, my research process used simple language, drawings, and pictures to ensure comprehension. However, cultural and social differences raised concerns that some parents might be reluctant to disclose sensitive issues publicly. As noted by Paudyal et al. (2021, p. 3), "Participant recruitment from this vulnerable group was anticipated to be challenging."

Truth-telling and parental influence posed another ethical dilemma in research with children and young people (Alderson, 2014). Conducting credible research became challenging when participants' answers could be influenced by their parents or peers. Some parents, fearing potential repercussions, might instruct their children to provide only positive responses. Consequently, immigrant children might not have dared to express their true opinions about their integration experiences at school. To address this limitation, I clearly explained to the participants that all responses were anonymized, even to their parents.

Smith (2014) proposed that children might not dare to give truthful answers in her study, referencing Bourdieu's concept of 'symbolic violence.' This implies that participants might not freely express their thoughts because their parents or peers may impact their responses (Smith, 2014). Additionally, the presence of the researcher and older immigrant children might create unintentional expectations that influence the interview outcomes (Smith, 2014), leading to uncertainties about the correct interpretation of the interviews (Flewitt, 2014). Flewitt argued that discrepancies might arise between what is said and its interpretation in English. She stated, "Researchers

must acknowledge that accounts gathered through interviews are co-constructions between interviewee and interviewer" (Flewitt, 2014). This poses another challenge in ensuring accurate translation or interpretation of the children's words (Smith, 2014).

### 3.7 Reflexivity and Subjectivity

Power relations influenced how children expressed their views during the data collection process. Due to my role as their English teacher, some students felt that the research activity that I designed was a school task that they had to complete. I listened to children's voices, but they didn't always feel that they could express their feelings without being judged. They thought they had to finish their work well and they always did to get a good grade.

Some children took the activity very seriously and took a long time to finish their drawings in class. As a result, many could not complete their drawings before the end of the lesson. Thus, I could not collect all the data in one session or as an end-of-lesson activity.

For example, on 25 January 2024, I asked Anna to draw a picture of what she normally does when playing with her friends and to place three stickers on a school playground map. It took her 30 minutes to complete this task, as she felt it was an assignment from the teacher. Following this experience, I gave more time to children to complete the task but this time I did not observe them. During Friendship month in February 2024, my four classes were asked to do the drawing. They also were asked to mark the school playground with a heart shape to show where they spend time together with their friends.

This allowed them to express their feelings about friendship through their drawings. This approach was intended to reduce power dynamics, making it a fun task for all the children, allowing them more time to complete it, unlike Anna, who felt pressured to perfect her drawing under observation.

## 4) Findings

### Participatory qualitative research method

Data collection began in January 2024. I employed the qualitative interview research method, which helped build a connection with children from immigrant backgrounds. By explaining their drawings, we could gain a better understanding of their thoughts on friendship and their feelings.

After practising how to ask the research questions, Anna and May, the older immigrant children, were ready to assist. I first interviewed Anna, demonstrating how to use their pictures to ask research questions. Anna then conducted a semi-structured interview with May. Subsequently, Anna and May interviewed the younger immigrant children using Picture A and Picture B.

It is crucial to invite children to be "active co-researchers" and play a significant role in research studies (Fraser, Flewitt, and Hammersley, 2014). Due to power dynamics among adult researchers that may influence children's responses, it is preferable to have older children interview the younger ones (Roberts-Holmes, 2011, p. 154)

### 4.1 Children's Friendship and Play: Positive Feelings

Some of the participants in the research had positive experiences making friends through play, which made them more social and open to others. At the same time, it positively impacted their academic results.

In my literature review, I mentioned that the State Authenticity, Language, and Culture to Environment (SAFE) model (Schmader & Sedikides, 2018, cited in Bauer & Hannover, 2020) explains that children with the same social and cultural background can connect more quickly than local children. For example, in Anna and Mary's story, both have immigrant backgrounds and face similar issues with language and culture. They are best friends at school. In particular, in Mira and Eva's cases, they both long to get a sense of belonging to have a connection to others. They come along well also among children with immigrant backgrounds as well. Therefore, many immigrant children often group as they share some common feelings and long for friendship.

The language issue affects self-identity, making it difficult for immigrant children to form connections with their peers. The study by Hannover et al. stated that most immigrant children speak their first language at home and rarely share their personal or life experiences with others. Hannover et al (2020) believe that striving for friendships will lead to being socially well-embedded within the classroom. Therefore, their academic result will get better too. At the same time when immigrant children face the daily challenge, they could turn to their friends and seek refuge in their friendships. In May's story, she was behind in her learning and struggling since Grade 1. Since her friendship become more settled, her academic result is also striving. Their stable friendship has also cemented their academic results.

***Anna: Wo spielst du mit deinem Freund? Wer ist deine beste Freundin?***

***(Where do you play with your friends? Who are your best friends?)***

***May: Um Eindauen, Tennisplatz. Ich habe ein paar beste Freunde. Ich bin glücklich. (In the Tennie court. I have a few best friends and I am happy.)***

Additionally, playing sports together can enhance friendships and help children get to know each other better. In Niels's story, he often mentions playing with his friends at the tennis court, football field, and school forest. He played sports such as tennis and football with his friends, which helped him build friendships and take a break from his studies. At the same time, personality also played an important role in social integration. Studies showed playing together could `contribute to the link between discrimination and interethnic friendships` (Bauer and Hannover,2020. p399).

In Ruben's interview, he also mentioned a few times about playing with friends on the tennis court and school's forest. Playing outdoors seems to play a vital role in integration in school. His drawing showed how he played football and tennis with his friends. And when he talked about it, he was smiling too.

## 4.2 Children's Friendship and Play: Negative Feelings

Children participating in the research experienced some negative feelings in their attempts to make friends. Some of these issues included language and cultural



barriers, being bullied, feeling alone, lacking a sense of belonging, receiving racist comments, and having limited social skills.

As mentioned in my previous literature review, social integration in German society is a significant issue for many newcomers to the country. The German government launched a 'Welcome Politics' (Willkommenspolitik) focusing on refugee children and an 'Integration Politics' to allocate resources and adequate administrative support for refugee families. However, these policies do not specifically address the inclusion of immigrant children in the German school system. Consequently, pre-migration investments in language learning are more likely to be made by other immigrants than refugees. Additionally, after migration, the two groups may encounter different learning opportunities, such as German language courses offered specifically to refugees (Brücker et al., 2019; Kosyakova and Brenzel, 2020, cited in Y. Kosyakova et al., 2022).

Anna, one of the immigrant children, struggled with the newly acquired German language at the age of five. She found it challenging to form friendships because of her initial lack of proficiency in German and the absence of additional language support at school. It was hard for her to express herself due to the language barrier, and she couldn't connect with her peers at that time. It took her around a year to overcome this language issue.

Research on migrant children's language use and cultural identity was found in migration scholarship (Little, 2020; Moskal & Sime, 2016, cited in Horgan et al., 2021) as well as in sociological-based research and literature (Peake-Hughes et al., 2021, p. 3, cited in Horgan et al., 2021). Valentine et al.'s (2008) work on Somali children living in the United Kingdom argues that increasing linguistic diversity challenges traditional assumptions about the relationships between linguistic uniformity, cultural homogeneity, and national identities, as well as impacting self-identities (Horgan et al., 2021). In Anna's story, she adopted the German language and formed a cemented friendship after 4 years. It showed in her drawing, that she is more confident in proclaiming who her friends are. She took her time to finish the drawing in great detail. She found that it is a task given by the teacher and she has to put more effort into it.

In particular in my previous literature review also mentioned from Hamm et al. (2005) stated that immigrant children often face discrimination due to their “accented speech”.

Discrimination constitutes a form of social rejection that is based on individuals’ social identities. (page 1, Tajfel & Turner, 1979 cited in Bauer and Hannover 2020) The study from Bauer & Hannover (2020) claimed that the continuous social discrimination issue in schools created some form of behavioural tendency not to befriend natives. Additionally, due to the surging discrimination, children with immigrant backgrounds felt less comfortable showing their authentic selves around natives (Bauer & Hannover 2020)

In my literature Review, I have also mentioned that based on the State Authenticity as Fit 2) Children’s friendship and play – Negative feelings Language and culture to Environment (SAFE) model (Schmader & Sedikides, 2018 cited in Bauer & Hannover, 2020) that many refugee and immigrant children tend to have a driving force in ‘self-segregational tendencies’, and Bauer and Hannover, 2020 also stated that self-autonomy acts as a ‘potential mediator between perceived discrimination and individuals’ tendencies to avoid friendships with local people. In this context, it reflected on the immigrant families and their children as well. The self-segregational tendencies could be one of the reasons that immigrant children are not mixing with their peers.

Anna's best friend, May, has experienced similar struggles with the German language. coming from a Russian-Kazakhstan family, she speaks Russian at home. In addition to her language battles, May faced family difficulties, as her parents were often away on business trips. This led to attachment and anxiety issues, especially during her parents' absences. She was often looked after by her ageing grandmother. It took May a few years to form a reliable friendship with Anna and other girls. She mainly plays with her close friends, as indicated in her drawing.

In Ruben’s story, he was bullied in his previous school and he did not get any support from his teacher. Social problems and bullying emerged neutrally together for most children. Being alone and feeling alien amid the crowd. In the end, if the school is not supporting their needs, they will have to change schools. The parents even mentioned

that those teachers showed no concern and empathy for his leaving for another school. During the interview, he was concerned whether he would say something wrong and lead to a negative impact on himself. He lacks self-confidence in an uncertain environment. Despite this, I have repeatedly said that it is anonymous and that no one about your interview or what you said. He was nervous and wanted to finish the interview as soon as possible.

The study from Chykina, 2023 stated that many immigrant parents have higher expectations than non-immigrant parents. Those immigrant parents tend to be more ambitious to their children's academic results and hope that they will be able to strive in the hosting country. Therefore, it fits into Ruben's story. Immigrant children are also very shy and afraid to disappoint their parents, so they try to behave well and not make trouble. They were afraid and hesitant to express their feeling directly. At the same time, they wish to fulfil their parent's expectations and not to disappoint their hard-working parents.

The specific learning needs of each child are very different. When children with immigrant backgrounds have special needs. The extra support should not be neglected. The matter gets worse when they get older. Jäger et al, 2021 mentioned that children with Migrant Background in various studies show that the factor of "migrant background" represents itself as a negative predictor for school success in the German education system,

With this background information, children with a migrant background are burdened by additional risks in school development or integration. Basis his study, the developmental limitations in school performance are caused by mental stress or the disabilities associated with the experiences of flight; and, second, because of the disadvantages in the education system that already exist independently of the specific migration experiences due to the migrant background and the existing acculturation requirements.

Michael is a 6-year-old boy in the first grade. He is having issues with other children. Due to his limited social skills, as he hasn't attended any kindergarten before. He claimed himself no friends at school. He couldn't express his feelings most of the time. Two months ago, we had a racist incident at school. Three white German kids refused to play with him because of his brown colour skin. It was a big issue when

those kids shouted out: we are not going to play with someone with brown colour skin. Michael was very upset and reported to the teachers immediately. The principal treated this `colour` issue seriously, so they all spent an hour in her office. Being bullied at school will lead to a mark in their childhood especially when he or she get excluded because of their skin colour.

*May: Wo spielst du mit deinem Freund? Wer ist deine beste Freundin? (Where do you play with your friends? Who are your best friends?)*

*Michael: ich habe keine besten Freunde. (I have no best friend.) Mit niemandem. Oft mit mir selbst. (With no one. I am often by myself.)*

*Michael: Sie haben mir gesagt, dass sie wegen meiner braunen Haut nicht mit mir spielen wollen. (They told me they didn't want to play with me because of my brown skin.)*

Another issue occurred recently when one of the Third-grade kids needed to pick one of the First grade to read an English book, Michael didn't get picked and he was last in the group. His tears streamed down to his neck. Unfortunately, the sense of rejection and unacceptance became part of his school experience. He was alone and deserted in his drawing, so May supported her to finish his drawing when she got to interview Michael. He also recounted his bad experience in that he didn't get chosen as a reading partner and was left alone.

*Michael: Jeder wurde als Lesepartner ausgewählt, aber niemand hat mich ausgewählt. (Everyone was chosen as a reading partner, but no one chose me.)*

In conclusion, children with immigrant backgrounds have difficulties in forming friendships in general and it impacts their integration into the school. They need more time to make connections with friends and build up friendships. It is also co-related to their academic outcome. However, they all find connection and enjoyment through playing sports and games together.

## 5) Conclusion

My research question is: How do children with immigrant backgrounds integrate into a primary school in Germany? The data revealed that friendship is the primary concern for these children, and their integration process can be accelerated through play and spending time together. Additionally, teacher intervention can significantly influence their integration process.

The integration programme should be implemented as soon as possible in primary school. The integration programme is not just about learning the German language and placing them into `Welcome Classes` (Bauer & Hannover 2020). native German primary children should learn how to get along with newcomers. Children should take everyday opportunities for contact and meetings with people already living around them (Andresen and Schneekloth 2021). Therefore, the integration programme could naturally occur when the outsiders and the natives are trying to make a connection together (Barreto et al 2022).

The key themes from the data analysis include children's friendships and play, which evoke both positive and negative feelings. Positive feelings encompass inclusion and a sense of belonging, while negative feelings involve issues of bullying and feeling lost in the crowd. experience in friendship which shape and form their current friendship experience in school. Therefore, the concept of integration is crucial for schools and policymakers starting from primary school. In the future, sufficient research data will be important to come to a good integration policy that is embedded in the education system. This will improve the integration programme in the future and create a successful school environment for immigrant children in schools.

The key themes from the literature review indicate that many children with immigrant backgrounds face various challenges in German schools. There is a gap in the literature regarding the voices of immigrant children, which are often not included in many research studies. These children need to articulate what friendship means to them and the nature of their connections with peers. These are key themes that have also emerged from the literature review.

A participatory qualitative methodology was used, with data collection beginning in January 2024. Two older children with immigrant backgrounds interviewed six younger

children. The findings illustrate their experiences and thoughts on friendship and integration as immigrant children in a German primary school.

In the future, more research in this area will be vital for developing effective integration policies embedded within the education system. It is essential to implement integration programs in primary schools as soon as possible. These programs should go beyond teaching the German language but also support their social and emotional development. This will enhance integration programs and create a successful school environment for immigrant children

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## 7)Appendix

### 7.1 Ethics forms

#### Information sheet (for children)

# HOW CHILDREN WITH IMMIGRANT BACKGROUNDS INTEGRATE INTO GERMAN PRIMARY SCHOOL 2024.

*WIE KINDER MIT EINWANDERUNGSHINTERGRUND IN DIE DEUTSCHE GRUNDSCHULE  
INTEGRIEREN 2023.*



## The purpose of this research study:

I am researching the experience of children like you in their primary schools. I would like to know how you make friends or not, and why. In general, I would like to know how you feel at school.

#### **Der Zweck dieser Forschungsstudie:**

*Diese Forschungsstudie nutzt qualitative Forschungsmethoden, um das Integrationsprogramm an deutschen Grundschulen zu evaluieren und zu erforschen. Meine Forschungsfrage lautet: „Wie sich Flüchtlingskinder in deutsche Grundschulen integrieren.“*



## Do you want to join this research?

### Step 1)

We will ask you to draw what you like to do or play during your school hours at school on a piece of white paper in Picture 1. *Wir werden Sie bitten, auf ein weißes Blatt Papier zu zeichnen (siehe Bild 1), was Sie während Ihrer Schulzeit gerne tun oder spielen.*

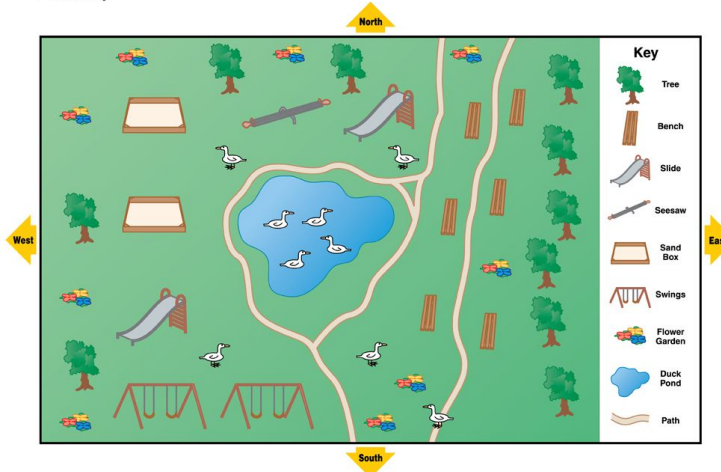


### Step 2)

Then I will show you our school playground map, then please put stickers where you normally spend time together with your friends in Picture 2. *Dann zeige ich Ihnen unseren Schulhofplan, dann kleben Sie bitte Aufkleber dort auf, wo Sie normalerweise Zeit mit Ihren Freunden verbringen (Bild 2).*

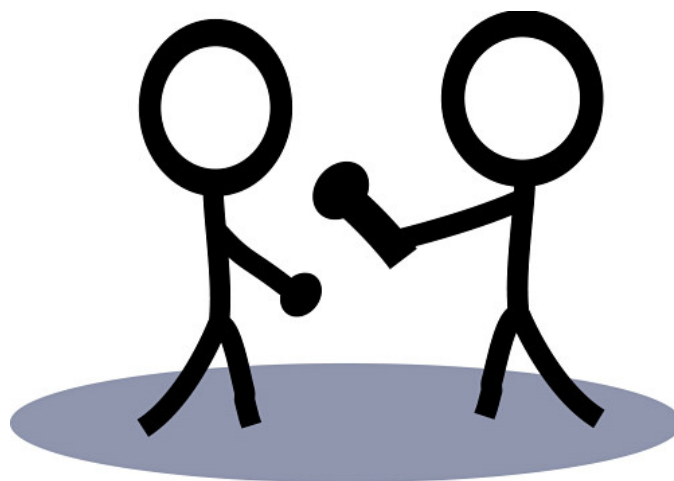


Park Map



### Step 3)

After these two pictures, I would ask you to explain your pictures explicitly. *Nach diesen beiden Bildern würde ich Sie bitten, Ihre Bilder explizit zu erklären*



## Confidentiality: *Vertraulichkeit:*

Your answers will be anonymized. That means no one will know your answers. *Ihre Antworten werden anonymisiert. Das bedeutet, dass niemand Ihre Antworten kennt.*



## INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR CHILDREN

### EINVERSTÄNDNISERKLÄRUNG FÜR KINDER

| Please tick the appropriate boxes <i>Bitte kreuzen Sie die entsprechenden Kästchen an</i>  | Yes                      | No                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Taking part in the study. 1. <i>Teilnahme an der Studie.</i>  |                          |                          |
| I have read and understood the study information dated [ / / ], or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered. <i>Ich habe die Studieninformation vom [ / / ]</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| Please tick the appropriate boxes <i>Bitte kreuzen Sie die entsprechenden Kästchen an</i>  | Yes                      | No                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>gelesen und verstanden bzw. sie wurde mir vorgelesen. Ich konnte Fragen zur Studie stellen und meine Fragen wurden beantwortet.</i>   |                          |                          |
| I consent to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason. <i>Ich bin damit einverstanden, an dieser Studie teilzunehmen und verstehe, dass ich die Beantwortung von Fragen verweigern und jederzeit ohne Angabe von Gründen von der Studie zurücktreten kann.</i>   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I understand that taking part in the study involves: <i>Mir ist bewusst, dass die Teilnahme an der Studie Folgendes beinhaltet:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making 2 drawings • <i>Anfertigen von 2 Zeichnungen</i></li> <li>• Interview by the older student in my school. • <i>Interview mit dem älteren Schüler meiner Schule.</i></li> <li>• During the interview, we will observe and record the information via audio-recorded: • <i>Während des Interviews werden wir die Informationen beobachten und per Tonband aufzeichnen</i></li> <li>• All audio recordings will be transcribed as text. • <i>Alle Audioaufnahmen werden als Text transkribiert.</i></li> </ul> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me, such as my name or where I live, will not be shared beyond the study team. <i>Ich verstehe, dass über mich gesammelte personenbezogene Daten, die mich identifizieren können, wie etwa mein Name oder mein Wohnort, nicht außerhalb des Studienteams weitergegeben werden.</i>   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. Signatures.

Name of the participant  
[in capitals]

X

Signature

[ / January/2024]

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, ensured that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting. *Ich habe dem potenziellen Teilnehmer das Informationsblatt sorgfältig vorgelesen und nach besten Kräften sichergestellt, dass der Teilnehmer versteht, womit er freiwillig einverstanden ist.*

CHAN HAU YIU, JOLIE

X

Signature

[ / January/2024]

Information sheet for parents

# How do children with immigrant backgrounds integrate into German Primary Schools?

A Qualitative Case Study

*Infoblatt zur Teilnahme an dieser Forschungsstudie und Befragung jüngerer Schüler meiner Schule.*

(Parents)

Dear parents,

I am a former Open University (UK) student. I finished a Bachelor of Primary Education Studies in 2022. I received a Children's Research Centre Practitioner Research award this year to conduct my own research study in Germany. As an immigrant myself, I understand the struggle of making social connections and gaining a sense of belonging in the community. In particular, my children had gone through some challenging times in their primary school years.

*Liebe Eltern,*

*Ich bin ein ehemaliger Student der Open University (UK). Ich schloss 2022 meinen Bachelor of Primary Education Studies im Jahr 2022 erfolgreich ab. In diesem Jahr habe ich einen Practitioner Research Award des Children's Research Centers erhalten, um eine eigene Forschungsstudie in Deutschland durchzuführen. Da ich selbst Immigrantin bin, verstehe ich die Schwierigkeiten, soziale Kontakte zu knüpfen sowie ein Zugehörigkeitsgefühl zur Gemeinschaft zu entwickeln. Insbesondere meine Kinder haben in ihrer Grundschulzeit herausfordernde Zeiten durchlebt.*



Therefore, we would like to invite your children to take part in my research project. This research study uses qualitative research methods to evaluate and explore the integration program in German Primary Schools. I would like to know how children with immigrant backgrounds integrate into German Primary Schools. I am planning to ask older children to interview younger children. The result of this research study will help us to understand better their social situation and cater for their needs in the future.

*Deshalb möchten wir Ihre Kinder herzlich einladen, an meinem Forschungsprojekt teilzunehmen. Diese Forschungsstudie nutzt qualitative Forschungsmethoden, um das Integrationsprogramm an deutschen Grundschulen zu evaluieren und zu erforschen. Ich würde gerne wissen, wie sich Kinder mit Migrationshintergrund in deutschen Grundschulen integrieren. Ich würde gerne ältere Kinder bitten, jüngere Kinder zu interviewen. Das Ergebnis dieser Forschungsstudie wird uns helfen, die soziale Situation zu verstehen und auf die Bedürfnisse der Zukunft besser einzugehen.*

**Interview location:** one of the empty classrooms or in the playground depending on the weather. *Ort des Interviews: Auf dem Spielplatz oder in einem leeren Klassenraum – je nach Wetterlage.*



**Time;** around 15:30 to 16:00 o'clock on a weekday in January or February *Zeit; etwa 15:30 bis 16:00 Uhr an einem Schultag im Januar oder Februar*

*What will my child ask to do if I agree to take part? Was wird mein Kind verlangen, wenn ich der Teilnahme zustimme?*



- The children will be asked to do some drawings about their school life.
- And then explain their drawings during an interview.
- *Die Kinder werden gebeten, einige Zeichnungen über ihr Schulleben anzufertigen.*
- *Während eines Gespräches werden die Kinder die Zeichnungen erläutern*



*What about the data and confidentiality:?* *Wie sieht es mit den*

*Daten und der Vertraulichkeit aus?*

The data and every individual interview with your child will be audio-recorded and transcribed-for data analysis. The data and information will be kept in a safe place. The names of the children will be anonymised. *Die Daten und jedes einzelne Interview mit Ihrem Kind werden zum Zwecke der Datenanalyse aufgezeichnet und transkribiert. Die Daten und Informationen werden sicher aufbewahrt. Die Namen der Kinder werden anonymisiert.*

*Your right to withdraw from the study. Ihr Recht, von der Studie zurückzutreten*

Your child can withdraw anytime during the research project if he or she no longer wants to participate.

Your child is free to choose whether to join our research study. *Ihr Kind kann sich während der Dauer des Forschungsprojekts jederzeit zurückziehen, wenn es nicht mehr teilnehmen möchte. Ihr Kind kann jederzeit frei entscheiden, ob es an unserer Forschungsstudie teilnehmen möchte.*

## *How can I agree to join this study?*

*Wie kann ich der Teilnahme an dieser Studie zustimmen?*

If you decide to give consent for your child to participate in the research after reading this information sheet, you will be asked to sign and return the consent form to me. *Wenn Sie sich nach Lektüre dieses Informationsblatts dafür entscheiden, Ihrem Kind die Teilnahme an der Forschung zu gestatten, werden Sie gebeten, die Einwilligungserklärung zu unterschreiben und an mich zurückzusenden.*

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

*Vielen Dank, dass Sie sich die Zeit genommen haben, dieses Informationsblatt zu lesen.*

Regards,

Jolie Chan

## **How do refugee children integrate into German Primary Schools?**

### **A Qualitative Case Study**

#### **Consent form**

*Wie integrieren sich Flüchtlingskinder in deutsche Grundschulen?*

*Eine qualitative Fallstudie*

*Einverständniserklärung*

(Parents)

Dear parents, thank you for discussing with your child whether or not they are willing to participate in the study.

*Liebe Eltern, vielen Dank, dass Sie mit Ihrem Kind besprochen haben, ob es bereit ist, an der Studie teilzunehmen.*

Please tick the appropriate boxes *Bitte kreuzen Sie die entsprechenden Kästchen an*

Yes      No

1. Taking part in the study *Teilnahme an der Studie*

I have read and understood the study information dated 1 January 2024 or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. *Ich habe die Studieninformation vom 1. Januar 2024 gelesen und verstanden bzw. sie wurde mir vorgelesen. Ich konnte Fragen zur Studie stellen und meine Fragen wurden zu meiner Zufriedenheit beantwortet.*

I consent voluntarily that my child is allowed to be a participant in this study and I understand that my child can refuse to answer questions and my child can withdraw from the study at any time up until the results start getting analysed (expected 1 January 2024) *Ich bin freiwillig damit einverstanden, dass mein Kind an dieser Studie teilnehmen darf, und ich verstehe, dass mein Kind die Beantwortung von Fragen verweigern und mein Kind jederzeit bis zum Beginn der Analyse der Ergebnisse (voraussichtlich am 1. Januar 2024) von der Studie zurücktreten kann.*

I consent to the processing of the submitted information and data for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations) *Ich stimme der Verarbeitung der übermittelten Informationen und Daten für die Zwecke dieser Forschungsstudie zu. Mir ist bewusst, dass diese Informationen streng vertraulich behandelt werden (vorbehaltlich gesetzlicher Beschränkungen).*

I understand that taking part in the study involves my child's participation in a focus group. *Mir ist bewusst, dass die Teilnahme an der Studie die Teilnahme meines Kindes an einer Fokusgruppe beinhaltet.*

I understand that my child's participation in the study has neither positive nor negative consequences. *Mir ist bewusst, dass die Teilnahme meines Kindes an der Studie weder positive noch negative Folgen hat.*

I agree to the focus group being audio and/or (if necessary) video recorded. *Ich bin damit einverstanden, dass die Fokusgruppe auf Ton und/oder (falls erforderlich) auf Video aufgezeichnet wird.*

## 2. Use of the information in the study Verwendung der Informationen in der Studie

- I understand that my data will be stored on the researcher's personal Laptop and on an external disk in an anonymised form. *Ich bin damit einverstanden, dass meine Daten auf dem persönlichen Laptop des Forschers und auf einer externen Festplatte in anonymisierter Form gespeichert werden.*
- I understand that data will be destroyed one year after the study is completed (August 2025). *Ich verstehe, dass die Daten ein Jahr nach Abschluss der Studie (August 2025) vernichtet werden.*

I understand that by selecting the corresponding option below, I agree to take part in research conducted by Children Research Centre from Open University UK. *Ich verstehe, dass ich durch die Auswahl der entsprechenden Option unten der Teilnahme an der vom Children Research Centre der Open University UK durchgeführten Forschung zustimme.*

## 3. Signatures

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Name of the participant [IN CAPITALS]

Signature

Date

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, ensured that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting. *Ich habe dem potenziellen Teilnehmer das Informationsblatt sorgfältig vorgelesen und nach besten Kräften sichergestellt, dass der Teilnehmer versteht, womit er freiwillig einverstanden ist.*

JOLIE CHAN HAU YIU

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Name of the researcher [IN CAPITALS]

Signature of participant

Date

## **How do children from immigrant families integrate into German Primary Schools?**

### **A Qualitative Case Study**

#### **Consent form**

(Headteacher)

Dear Schwutke, thank you for being willing to participate in the study.

Please tick the appropriate boxes

Yes

No

### 1. Taking part in the study

I have read and understood the study information dated 1 January 2024. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent voluntarily that the students are allowed to be a participant in this study and I understand that the students can refuse to answer questions and the students can withdraw from the study at any time up until the results start getting analysed (expected 1 January 2024)

I consent to the processing of the submitted information and data for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations)

I understand that taking part in the study involves the student's participation in a focus group.

I understand that the student's participation in the study has neither positive nor negative consequences.

I agree to the focus group being audio and/or (if necessary) video recorded.

### 2. Use of the information in the study

- I understand that data will be stored on the researcher's personal Laptop and on an external disk in an anonymised form.
- I understand that data will be destroyed one year after the study is completed (August 2025).

I understand that by selecting the corresponding option below, I agree to take part in research conducted by Jolie Chan, a graduate Open University (OU) student sponsored by the Children's Research Centre OU, UK.

### 3. Signatures



\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of the headteacher [IN CAPITALS]

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, ensured that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting.

JOLIE CHAN HAU YIU

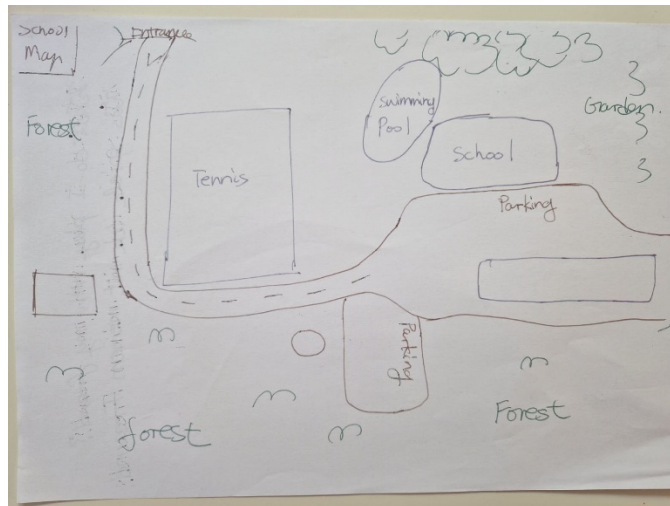
\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of the researcher [IN CAPITALS]

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant

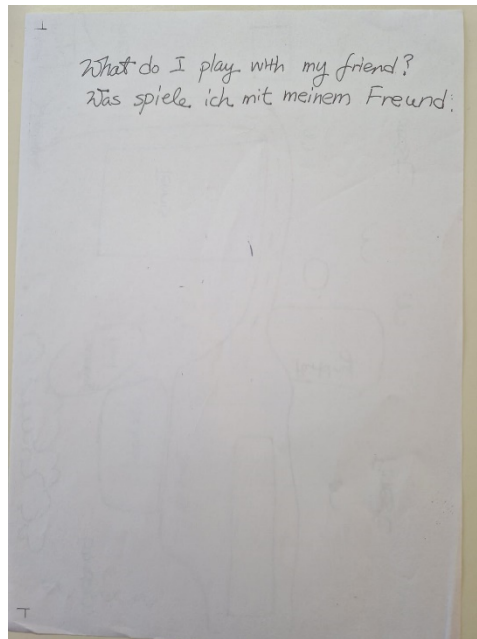
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## 7.2 Interview tool - examples of data

1) Where do you normally hang out with your friends?



## 2) What do you play with your friends? What do you do in your break time?



### 7.3 Coding -example

- Interview coding

#### Coding

I developed 2 main themes from my research data:

- 1) Friendship and feeling 24
- 2) Problem with friendship 23

#### Other themes

Play (in different contexts playground, forest, tennis court, etc)

Language and culture

Relations with teachers and Principal

Academic results

Being alone

#### Data analysis

1) Children's friendship and play – Positive feelings  
Included, a sense of belonging. What happened in your data? You can compare with findings from the literature review. These findings are similar to Johnson's research in Australia. Johnson found ..... Academic results

2) Children's friendship and play – Negative feelings  
Language and culture bullied Being alone sense of belonging limited social skills brown color

### 7.4

### Example of Drawings

