

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

WIE KINDER MIT EINWANDERUNGSHINTERGRUND IN DIE DEUTSCHE GRUNDSCHULE INTEGRIEREN 2023.



# What is the Research Purpose?

2

- **To understand how immigrant children integrate into a German Primary School**
- **To explore how immigrant children make friends at school.**



# Statistics on Immigrant Children in Germany

3

- The major migration movements have given millions of immigrants to Germany for the last 80 years (Oltmer, 2016 cited in Schneider, 2018).
- According to Federal Statistical Office (Destatis) 2024, the updated statistics of the foreign population from 2016 to 2023 is 13 895 865 (Foreign population by selected nationalities - Federal Statistical Office (destatis.de))
- The highest number of immigrant cities such as Offenbach with 61% of its 130,000 inhabitants are of immigrant origin.
- Most of the German cities had the higher shares in the younger immigrant populations such as 70% of young people are under 18 years old (Schneider, 2018).



# The definition of immigrant



- The United Nations defines international immigrants as individuals who move away from their original residence. This definition encompasses all migrants, irrespective of their legal status, the nature of their migration, or the reasons behind their movement (United Nations – Issue of International Migration, 2024). This is the definition used in my research.
- In the global context, a non-resident (both national and alien) arriving in a State intending 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).



# Literature Review Findings



- Immigrant children in Germany are facing discrimination and language barriers. Hamm et al. (2005) stated that immigrant children often face discrimination due to their “accented speech”.
- Even though there are many kinds of integration and support policies in Germany in terms of providing daily accommodation and daily basic needs (Funk, 2016), 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).



# Policy and Research Gaps

A graphic element on the right side of the slide, featuring a stylized German flag with horizontal stripes of black, red, and gold. The number '6' is prominently displayed in the center of the gold stripe.

- **Policy Gaps:** One year Welcome Classes (extra language program for new comers) are part of the Integration Policies. There is no social support for immigrant children after these Welcome-classes (Wentzel, Russell, & Baker, 2016; Zander, Kreutzmann, & Hannover, 2017 cited in Hannover et al 2020).
- **Research Gaps:** There is limited empirical research on immigrant children's integration in German primary schools, with most studies being theoretical. The genuine voice of immigrant children is not included in research studies (Andresen and Schneekloth 2021). 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).

# Research methods



- This research took place in a private primary school in the Western part of Germany (NRW).
- This research study used qualitative research methods.
- Interviews and drawings were used as part of the participatory research method.
- 8 children with immigrant backgrounds aged between 6 and 10 years old were the participants in the study.
- 2 older immigrant children (ages 9-10) interviewed younger participants in three different classes (class 1 to 3). They also interviewed their classmates (class 4).



# Children's friendship and play: Positive feelings



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

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

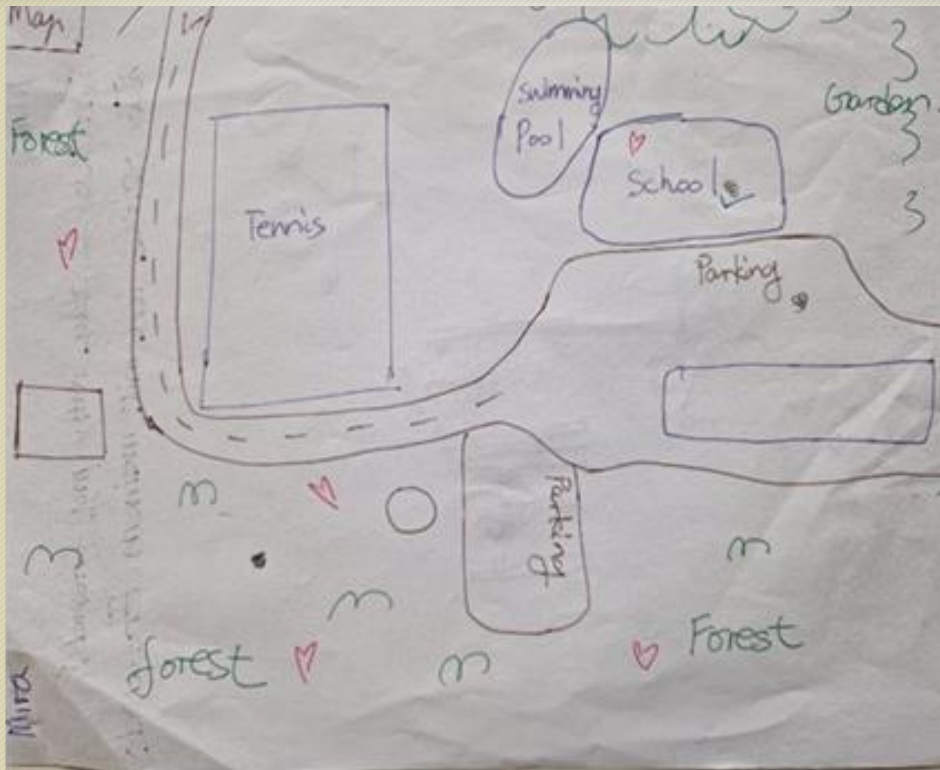
Um Eindauen, Tennisplatz.  
Ich habe ein paar beste  
Freunde. Ich bin glücklich.

*In the tennis court. I have a  
few best friends and I am  
happy.*

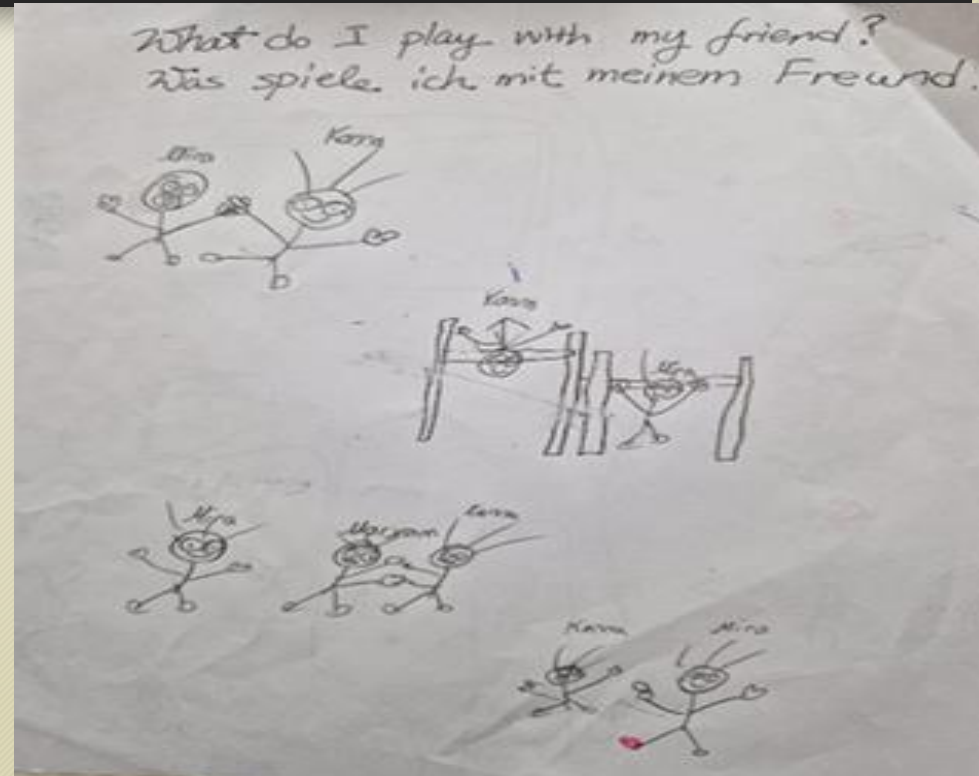




# Positive feelings



Picture 1 : Mary marked in heart shapes where she hung out with friends, for example, forest and school garden.



Picture 2: Mary draw how she played with her friends: chasing each other, playing at the school playground. She also mentioned the name of her friends.

# Positive feelings

10



**Picture 1: Amina marked many places where she hung out with her friends**



**Picture : Amina was playing hide and seek near school parking, she also indicated their name.**

# Some observations



- **Play facilitates friendship formation, and boosts social skills and academic performance.** When Mary first came to the school, she was very shy and looked very concerned. Once she has cemented her friendship, she got better academic results.
- **Language issues impact self-identity, but friendships improve social integration and academic results.** In Anna's case, once she could speak better German, she becomes more confident.
- **Sports are crucial for building friendships and alleviating study stress, as was observed with children participants**
- **The State Authenticity as Fit to Environment (SAFE) model (Schmader & Sedikides, 2018) indicates quicker connections among children with similar cultural backgrounds.**



# Findings: Negative feelings



1) Wo spielst du mit deinen Freunden? *Where do you play with your friends?*

1) ich habe keine besten Freunde.  
*I have no best friend.*

2) Okay, mit wem spielst du denn oft? *Okay, who do you often play with?*

2) Mit niemandem. Oft mit mir selbst.  
*With no one. I often by myself.*

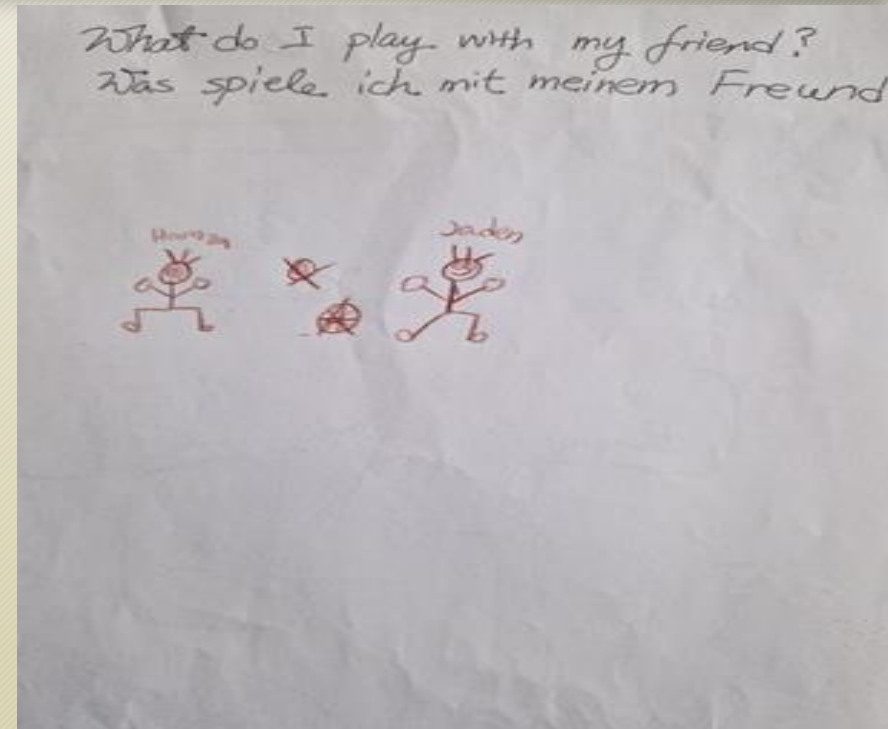


# Negative feelings

13



Picture 1: Ruben made a few pieces where he hung out alone, likes school forest and tennis court.



Picture 2: Ruben didn't know what to draw, so the older immigrant child helped him to finish his drawing. He mentioned one child he played with.

# Negative feelings



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.*

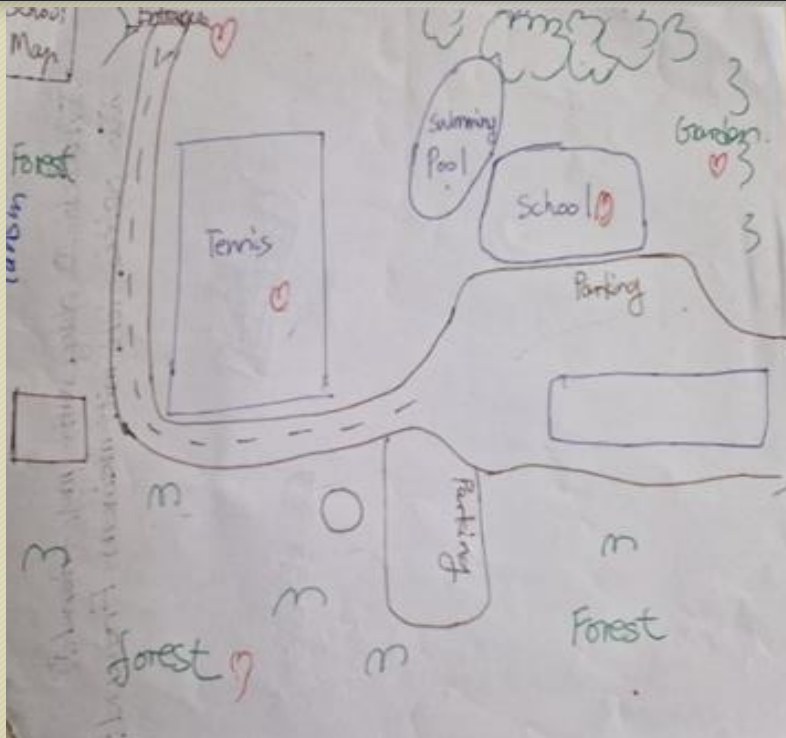
Jeder wurde als Lesepartner ausgewählt, aber niemand hat mich ausgewählt.

*Everyone was chosen as a reading partner, but no one chose me.*

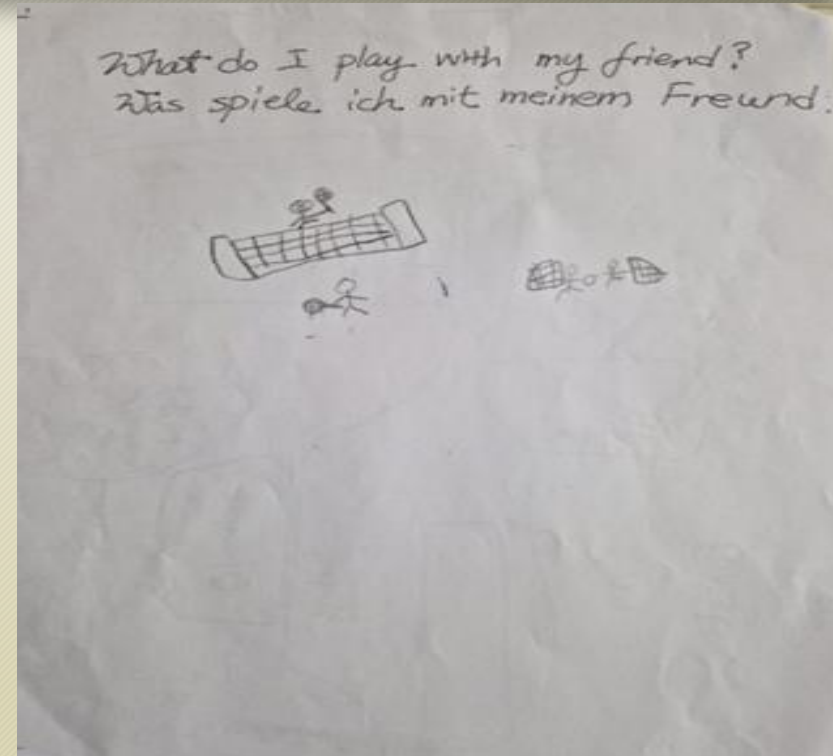


# Negative feelings

15



Picture 1: Terry made only a few pieces where he hung out, like school forest and tennis court.



Picture 2: Terry draws the tennis court with one friend.

# Some observations

- Challenges include language barriers, bullying, loneliness, and discrimination.
- Language barriers and discrimination led to self-segregation and limited local friendships, as in Ruben's case.
- 'Welcome Politics' and 'Integration Politics' lack specific support for immigrant children.
- Immigrant children faced higher academic expectations, adding to their stress.





# Conclusion and Recommendations



- The findings underscore the central role of friendship in the integration process.
- Social interactions, particularly through play, can significantly facilitate their integration.
- Teachers' involvement also emerged as a crucial factor in supporting children's integration.



# References

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