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It takes a village to enable participation and integration

Examining the meaning of social relationships from different perspectives

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Introduction

What do migrant children (CMB) need in order to settle in well in a new school and a new country? What is needed to foster CMB's integration and their participation in learning and development? Often these questions are answered by either looking at children's individual abilities or by illuminating institutional, structural and societal conditions (Popyk, Pustułka, & Trąbka, 2019). For example, with regard to individual abilities, consideration is given to how well the child speaks or learns the language of the host country, how children cope with the stress of transition and show resiliency, or what social and cognitive skills, expectations or attitudes they bring with them (e.g., Esser, 2006; Shaheen & Miles, 2017). Similarly, studies examine how children develop their identity in face of the challenge of arriving in a new cultural context and how this affects their school adjustment and further development (e.g., Fröhlich, Martiny, & Deaux, 2020; Spiegler, Sonnenberg, Fassbender, Kohl, & Leyendecker, 2018). With regard to contextual influences, research has focused on the impact of aspects such as societal norms and attitudes, stereotypes and prejudice, existing policies and differing education systems, or institutional conditions such as school diversity (e.g., Crul, Lelie, Biner, et al., 2019; Dizon, Selak, Ramalho, & Peiris-John, 2021; Entorf & Lauk, 2008; van de Vijver, 2018). However, less attention is paid to the impact of social relationships with peers, teachers, and other professionals and how children (and professionals) actively shape these relationships, thus contribute themselves to their integration and participation (Dizon et al., 2021; Popyk et al., 2019). The present chapter exactly addresses the role of these co-constructive relationships inside and outside school on migrant children's participation and hybrid integration, their learning and identity development (see Chapter 2). To draw these relationships into focus, this chapter will review data from qualitative interviews with children and professionals working with them, which were conducted as part of the

CHILD-UP project. The chapter is structured as follows: In a first step, theoretical and empirical evidence on the central concepts will be presented. Subsequently, the association between social relations, integration and participation will be illuminated. For this, asymmetrical and symmetrical relationships are distinguished. Using language as an example, the next step is to elaborate the dynamic interaction between hybrid integration, agency and identity formation (see also Chapter 7). In the final step, implications and conclusions for practice are presented.

Conceptual framework

Integration, participation, and identity formation are multi-layered and sometimes quite controversial concepts; the lack of consensus is mirrored in the multitude of definitions, theoretical considerations and approaches (Fisher, Evans, Forbes, Gayton, & Liu, 2018). Underlying all of them is that they concern dynamic processes involving an interplay between individuals and their environments over time. Moreover, they are intertwined with each other: expressing oneself, one's needs and values, expectations and experiences through language and actions, within the context of social possibilities and constraints, impacts cohesion with others and reflects a balancing of identity aspects.

Capturing these interdependencies and interrelations, Esser (2001) distinguishes four types of social integration: (a) *Culturation* refers to the acquisition of knowledge and cultural competences, including language and linguistic skills; (b) *Placement*, which includes the assumption of positions and the conferring of rights, is made possible by culturation; (c) *Interaction*, made possible by culturation and placement, describes the establishment of social relationships and social interactions, for instance, with peers or between teachers and learners; and (d) *Identification*, also dependent on the previous dimensions, is the emotional engagement with the new social system. In order to identify with a new community, this identification must be valued positively and seen as beneficial. Thus, all four dimensions are needed to achieve integration. It is clear that integration requires knowledge and cultural skills, the assumption of positions and the granting of rights and opportunities that enable migrants to act with agency, participate in interaction and feel a sense of belonging to social groups and the social community. A process of identity development and identification can only take place if migrant children are culturally placed and interact, i.e. if they experience agency, participation and social belonging.

Of course, children do not belong to just one group, but are constantly in contact with many different social relationships. For example, migrant children interact with different family members and friends in their country of origin and in their host country. They often belong to several language groups, practice different rituals and customs from different religions, or have different social roles in different groups. Each group can contribute to the development of identity and self, they can complement each other or diverge. The self-concept of who one is can be shaped and changed throughout life and depends on various aspects, such as traditional cultural conditions, individual characteristics and self-perceptions, and

choices and interests (e.g., hobbies, friendship groups). This polygamous affiliation is represented through hybrid identity formation (Brooker & Woodhead, 2008).

Here, integration (in school) is defined as the active participation of children in negotiating their identity in the sense of combining the culture of their country of origin with the culture of the host society (Ślusarczyk, Slany, Struzik, & Warat, 2022). The focus is primarily on the empowerment of participation and agency of migrant children in social contexts and social interactions (Baraldi & Iervese, 2014). According to Baraldi (2022), agency is seen as a construction of unpredictability in communication systems in which children's decisions, actions and participation are dependent on social structures. Through integration processes, identity and self-perception can change.

In summary, this chapter considers integration to be established and shaped by multi-layered social processes, namely the ability and opportunity to interact and act (i.e., cultururation), through the placement and empowerment of agency and participation, and leading to a hybrid identity (see Chapter 2). These social processes are not experienced passively, but actively (co-)produced and shaped by individual actors such as migrant children and professionals working with them. In this chapter, we describe, based on quotes from CMB and from the perspective of professionals, how they experience integration at school and the influence of social relations on the integration process.

Epistemological status of the data

The chapter is based on the qualitative data from six countries (i.e., Finland, Germany, Italy, Poland, Sweden, Great Britain) that were collected over a one-year period between 2020 to 2021. It is important to note that each country surveyed in pre-defined regions, and that, therefore, no generalisation or country-specificity should be suggested. More concretely, the results presented are not intended to be a comparison of countries in terms of integration, but rather show, through a broad sample, the relevancy of social relationships and co-constructive processes for migrant children's integration, participation, and identity formation. However, a central commonality was the Corona pandemic and its impact on schools and the whole education system, although this again varied from country to country and from region to region. Due to existing access restrictions, interviews with children and professionals had to take place partly by telephone or online.

In each of the countries, recruitment took place in regions with a high proportion of migrants, sometimes contrasted with regions that had a low proportion or differed in terms of existing infrastructure (Table 4.1). For example, in Germany, the interviews were conducted in the states of Hamburg (1.85 million residents) and Saxony (4.06 million residents). While all participants live in densely populated areas with good infrastructure, the proportion of migrants is higher in Hamburg (about 34.4%) than in Saxony (about 9.4%). Similarly, in Poland, the research was conducted in an urban area in the southern part of Poland (Kraków), which has been experiencing a steady, increasing influx of migrants and migrant

Table 4.1 Overview of recruitment regions in each country

| <i>Country</i> | <i>Regions</i> |
|----------------|--|
| Finland | South Ostrobothnia and Tampere region |
| Germany | Hamburg and Saxony |
| UK | London Borough of Barnet and the London Borough of Merton, Mitcham |
| Italy | Northern Italy |
| Poland | Lublin voivodship and Lesser Poland voivodship. |
| Sweden | Malmö City |

children in recent years. On the other hand, the surveys took place in small communities close to the eastern state border with the centre for foreigners located there.

In total, the chapter refers to 81 individual and focus group interviews with children and to 140 interviews with professionals (e.g., teachers, social workers; Table 4.2). Among the children are children who are immigrants themselves, children whose parents are immigrants, and non-migrant children.

Interviews were structured by guiding questions, which were agreed upon with the help of common grids by all participating countries. The interviews were recorded, anonymised and subsequently analysed in a structured, regimented procedure. In the text, the quotations are identified as shown in Chapter 1. In this chapter, relevant aspects of the topic of social relations from different perspectives and different contexts will be elaborated.

Social relationships and their meaning for integration and participation

It is undeniable that social relationships play a crucial role in developmental and educational settings, including but not limited to belonging, participation or mutual support (Arslan, Allen, & Tanhan, 2020; Brazelton & Greenspan, 2000; Hascher, 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2000), and that social relations reflect a core ingredient of children's emotions and well-being at school (Gläser-Zikuda & Fuß, 2004; Hagenauer & Hascher, 2018). This is also replicated in the views of the children interviewed within the CHILD-UP-project. All children, regardless of origin, describe the importance of social relationships for their well-being at school: "I genuinely like my school a lot and I got on very well with my classmates and teachers" (IT_F9_G); "Mainly comfortable with my friends, the most important things having friends so do not feel alone at school" (UK_F17_B); "I used to go to another school and I was feeling sick all the time ... because I hated the place. ... not many people were nice. ... [and] if you don't like [the] people, no place is OK" (UK_F25_G).

In line with Esser (2001), children also emphasise that their relations with peers and teachers are essential for learning and participation G: "Then you want

Table 4.2 Sample description, including professionals and children, in the six countries

| | <i>Finland</i> | <i>Germany</i> | <i>Italy</i> | <i>Poland</i> | <i>Sweden</i> | <i>Great Britain</i> |
|-------------------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---|
| Professionals (n_{total}) | 20 | 17 | 49 | 30 | 20 | 56 |
| Teacher | 13/0 | 6/1(2) | 43/0 | 17/1(5) | 12/0 | 42 |
| Social Workers | 7/0 | 9/0 | 6/0 | 8/0 | 8/0 | 14 |
| Children (n_{total}) | 17 | 29 | n.a. | 67 | 30 | 500 |
| Children | 0/7(17) | 25/2(4) | 0/33(n.a.) | 27/6(40) | 0/10(30) | 0/20(500) |
| Thereof migrant children | 17 | 26 | n.a. | 51 | n.a | 300 (estimated on the basis of data from the CHILD-UP questionnaires) |

Note. Number of Interviews/Focus Group Interviews (Participants).

everyone to be friends, and friends are important for learning” ... B: “For concentration, you do not have to think ‘Where would I be now on the break? Would people laugh at me?’” (SWE_F7_GB); “If we know each other, we know what others don’t like and what we don’t like ... If you get along with someone, it is much easier to tell him what you think” (IT_F9_B); “The boys more or less taught us [to play soccer]. ... And then we just learned it and kept on doing it. And then we got better and better at it. And I practiced a lot with my friends” (G_I33_G).

Focusing on integration, teachers stress the need of CMB to talk with other children about their culture, their needs and expectations, which might be different from those of children without migration experiences. In line with the notion of *culturation* (Esser, 2001), they perceive communication on this as an important foundation for integration:

They need to be heard and to be listened to, so they need someone to give them the floor. ... and to be welcomed not only by me, but also by their classmates ... But they lack this element, that is, being the bearer of a culture that the others don’t know and that can make the difference in terms of their growth and that of the others.

(IT_I35_T_F)

Thus, both children and teachers alike acknowledge the importance of social relations. However, the interviews also highlight that children’s well-being, social relationships in school and school belonging are not always and necessarily linked to the subject matter, to school performance and academic success. While teachers see children primarily in their role as students and stress the primacy of academic performance, children themselves place more emphasis on personal expression and social relationships. This leads to the discrepancy that children can have a positive experience of school, even if they have difficulties with learning. “Now I am going to be honest I am not doing that well, but yes, I do like school I would choose to come even if I could not come because I like my friends better than staying home” (UK_F25_B).

Participation can promote both social and school-related development. For instance, it increases children’s sense of autonomy and expression of their personal preferences, needs, and skills. Allowing children to help decide which methods, learning pathways and learning content are used increases their motivation and can lead to better performance (e.g., Rohlf’s, 2011; Ryan & Deci, 2000). At the same time, active participation can also influence the atmosphere in a school and classroom, which is particularly crucial for children’s well-being (e.g., Hascher, 2004; Freiberg, 1999). A positive atmosphere seems to be characterised above all by interactions that show children they are valued (Schwab, Lindner, Helm, Hamel, & Markus, 2021). In the following quotes, children describe this positive atmosphere in their own words. They perceive agency when they are given the opportunity to ask questions, face a beneficial culture of error, are confronted with positive challenges, as well as experience appreciation and shared interests. “They

[teacher and children] always help me and ... we have group tables, where you can ask the group in case you don't know what to do" (G_F24_G); "So, I think it's good ... We have good teachers who stand up and help when you need help" (SWE_F3_G).

I: Challenging in a good way. What do you mean there? B: I mean, it is hard. But these difficulties will help us in the future. For example, if I get a difficult task, then I learn something new ... Or if I happen to do something wrong, I learn from that mistake, and in high school I will be able to do it better

(SWE_F10_B)

G: Like when ... I was chatting with my friend who is not here anymore she's in another school and Mr. S. said 'we are all interested' and I thought 'oh, we should stop' but she said 'we are interested can you speak for everyone?' and I was not sure but I started and she was like 'very interesting, do you have any question for F?' and I thought 'wow it feels good'. I: To share your story? G: It looked like it was important.

(UK_F15_G)

One thing that I would like to change in school is the ability of students to be free to disagree with teachers and that they are not afraid ... because I think students feel intimidated by that and that's not right ... [that] someone is avoiding saying what they think because they are afraid of being punished.

(IT_F11_G)

Some of the children describe a fear of making mistakes and being judged by their peers and teachers, which affects their participation and their self-perception. For instance, quantitative data from CHILD-UP (see Chapter 3) and previous studies (Ehm, Duzy, & Hasselhorn, 2011) have shown that CMB are more likely to be motivated in school than native-born children, but often have lower grades. As a valuable resource that should be more fully utilised, this motivation depends on a number of factors and can, of course, change over time. The factors described by the children are mainly characteristics that make them different from the group. Thus, rather than emphasising otherness, highlighting differences such as perceived language deficits in the host country, or dividing children into different groups, it is necessary to emphasise their commonalities and simultaneously acknowledge the individuality of each child (see also Chapter 8). School can serve as a safe place where children are taught that they are a resource for the community as they are. For example, Ohm (2021) shows that the perception of linguistic diversity in the classroom has an essential function for the emergence of shared experience as a basis for democratisation. Furthermore, he argues that

students' multilingual abilities must be seen as an essential aspect of their personal identity. The following narrative by a girl shows that many factors can play a role in this. First, there are language barriers, which influence the girl's self-efficacy and feelings of competence and control. Second, the child describes being afraid of becoming a target of social exclusion because of her skin colour. This has a negative impact on the child's self-image. "I would like to participate more, but I am afraid of making mistakes, and I'm also afraid (?) in front of other people, because I am another colour and so I am afraid that someone might start targeting me" (IT_F29_G).

This section shows that social interactions, well-being, integration as well as participation and agency at school are closely associated with each other. Social relationships can provide opportunities and constraints, can foster or hamper learning and development. For instance, if children feel excluded in the school environment because of perceived differences, their self-esteem might suffer. They might develop a self-image within the social structure that is characterised by negative ways of thinking. If such ways of thinking are reinforced through (non-)interaction with the environment, this can have an impact on personal identity. To understand the importance of social relationships for hybrid integration in school, it is necessary to take a closer look at what social relationships in school mean.

Types of social relations in school

The interviews distinguish between different types of relationships in children's everyday (school) life. It was Piaget (1932/1983), who first described two kinds of social relationships with different structures. On the one hand, he mentioned children's relationship to adults (e.g., parents, teachers), which is traditionally but not necessarily characterised by differences in knowledge and power; on the other hand, he highlighted the meaning of peer relationships. Youniss (1980) expanded on these types of relationships and referred to them as symmetrical and asymmetrical. Those relationships are not only structured differently, but may also have different effects and provide the child with distinct opportunities for learning and development (Oswald, 2009).

According to Youniss (1982), in traditional asymmetrical relationships, children are often required to adopt the opinion of adults via a power imbalance, whereas in peer relationships, there is a co-constructive process and thus a negotiation on equal footing. In this vein, the interviewed children describe frontal teaching in classrooms and methods that emphasise a power and knowledge imbalance between adults and children as 'boring' and 'unbearable':

My teacher in history ... talks the whole lesson long, does not write anything on the chalkboard I try to understand and takes notes [But] if she asks me and I cannot answer, it feels bad. ... I count the minutes, these 90 minutes [until the lesson is over].

(G_I44_G)

B1: Some teachers are tired and others more passionate. B2: It affects a lot. For those who are boring, you cannot even listen to them. You end up in your world of thought and then you miss what the teacher says, and this leads to a worse grade.

(SWE_F2_B)

Children are also very sensitive to demonstrations of power, such as yelling or scolding, or unfair treatment, which is perceived in a particularly negative way, and has a strong negative impact on children's motivation, agency, and well-being. "Well, fair teachers, that's the first thing [a school need]" (PL_I23_G).

... when I was in 5th grade, there was this bad lady ... I said that I forgot how to translate words, and she didn't speak, but shouted. ... then I said to her can you repeat the word, she shouted at me and said she had repeated it several times and there was really only one.

(PL_I11_B)

In summary, the presented interview quotes demonstrate that children are aware of asymmetrical relationships with their teachers. They want adults to actively shape these relationships and do not want them to abuse the imbalance in competence and power; instead, they want that their competences, interests, and concerns are also seen and respected.

With regard to peer relationships at school, Youniss (1982) emphasised that peers are all learners and must cope with the same developmental and normative tasks (e.g., transition to secondary school). Thus, peers usually have similar levels of cognitive and socio-emotional development, share similar experiences, and face comparable challenges. Studies on early childhood show that children are positively attuned to their peers. As early as seven to ten months of age, children exhibit fewer negative emotions and are more lively and explorative with other children than with adults. Specific forms of interaction develop early on, demonstrating children's efforts to create community and togetherness by establishing or emphasising commonalities (Schneider-Andrich, 2021). Eckerman, Whatley, and Kutz (1975) showed that, given a choice, children as young as two years of age prefer to interact with peers rather than adults. Friendships develop primarily when children and adolescents spend time together on a regular basis (Afshordi & Libermann, 2020). Accordingly, early and contemporary approaches, such as those by Youniss (1980) and Oswald (2009), emphasise the importance of symmetrical relationships for children's well-being, learning and development.

Nowadays, children are seen as capable social agents (see Chapter 2), who are able to independently shape their environment and are embedded in social domains in a participatory way. Based on this understanding of children as active (co-)producers of their development, symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships can be seen from different perspectives. The distinction between the two types of relationships has become more flexible and fluid, and both relationships are possible between children and adults. Asymmetrical relationships are not necessarily

limited to teacher–child interactions and symmetrical relationships are not exclusive to peers. Consequently, both types can be observed among children. In the children’s narratives, for example, a lack of equality among classmates is pointed out: “Someone may feel superior to someone else” (IT_F4_B). It appears that this sense of superiority can also be attributed to cultural differences: “with my classmates I had that problem a little bit ... Well, one boy ... a Polish boy ... said [that] Ukrainians are shit...” (PL_I17_B). But it is also connected to feelings of competence and to perceived eligibility to participate, as shown in the quote above introducing a girl who wants to participate, but does not feel capable of doing so and fears social exclusion because she has a different skin colour (IT_F29_G). In contrast, despite adults’ more powerful and ostensibly more knowledgeable starting position, there can also be symmetrical aspects between adults and children (Baumrind, 1991; Oswald, 2009) if the adults in the interaction take children seriously, show interest in their opinions and experiences, and view them as active and competent. Accordingly, some teachers try to connect with children by establishing a kind of symmetrical relationship with them:

I adopt a symmetrical approach from the beginning ... I do not put myself in the position of an adult because I am talking to a child, I try to have an equal relationship. This allows me to connect with the child.

(IT_F5_T_M)

B: We had so much fun when [our teacher] was telling stories of him going to school and that he did not like it I: How did it make you feel? B: Fun and it looked like me actually. G: That teachers are like us. I: So you will be like them when you get older? G: Maybe.

(UK_F16_GB)

This striving to establish more symmetrical relations is also desired by the children. They want to be recognised. Children particularly value teachers’ empathy and interest. When asked about the ‘coolest’ teacher, a girl answers: “... definitely the lady who teaches biology and chemistry, because I think she’s the best at talking to children and she’s just very understanding” (PL_I10_G). Another child describes a good teacher as one who is “able to explain well ... even if you do not understand, they should try to explain in different ways until we understand” (SWE_F8_G).

Nevertheless, the children also emphasise that the relationship between teachers and students must still be different from that between peers. They do not want to become friends with teachers, but rather still see the teacher as a person who challenges and empowers them. “our teacher, I think she’s cool, because she’s strict. ... Some don’t find that so nice, but others do, like me. Because it’s better when she’s strict, then you learn more” (G_I33_G); “Some of them teach creatively and they just are nice persons and to somewhat behave like students, not as friends ... when they have a reason to praise someone, they do this very well” (G_I36_G). Teachers should be persons you can rely on, not only, but particularly during an emergency, and turn to with confidence. If there are unsolvable conflicts between peers, adults

should be there to help and take a neutral view. Accordingly, one child states: “If it becomes too much of a problem, we can ask the teacher or our parents, otherwise we can do it ourselves” (IT_F31_B).

In summary, symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships are perceived and distinguished by both children and teachers. In terms of relationships between teachers and children, the interview extracts show that it is not so much a question of differences in knowledge and competence, but rather that attitudinal and power imbalances are seen as a more critical challenge that needs to be addressed. While children want to be taught and guided in terms of their achievement, they also want power imbalances to be reduced and to feel that their competences and needs are seen. Looking at peer relationships, the quotes illustrate that these relationships are not symmetrical per se, but are shaped and co-constructed by children’s subjective assessments along different dimensions.

Conflicts seem to occupy another unique position in the structure of the two types of relationships. When conflicts arise between peers, they can usually be resolved by the children themselves. If this is not the case, they can be helped to take a ‘top-down’ view of the conflict. The role of the adult is then to shape the environment so that the children have the opportunity and tools to resolve the conflict. However, if the conflict is between teachers and pupils, the effects can be more pronounced and long-lasting (e.g., UK_F10). This shows that teachers have an important influence on the atmosphere, social relations and fairness in the classroom. This allows teachers to emphasise social interaction, promote children’s well-being and emphasise participation and inclusion.

In addition to the relationship between children and teachers, it is important to recognise that the child is not an island, but is embedded in a system consisting of different social relationships, such as peers inside and outside school, teachers and other professionals, and the family (e.g., Dizon et al., 2021; Popyk et al., 2019). Accordingly, it takes the whole village to shape hybrid integration, agency and identity formation. These social relationships are not independent of each other; rather, they interact, sometimes directly and observably, sometimes indirectly and more unconsciously. In the following interview extract, a teacher describes the meaning of parental work and collaboration with other professionals in order to work successfully:

My main tasks include ... contact with the student, contact with the parents, taking care of plans and cooperation with [other professional groups]. Then, I would also emphasise the meaning of social relations, the power of social relations, in order to support the students.

(SWE_I1_T_M)

Teachers and social workers stress the importance of working with parents. It is important to involve and communicate with parents, to value families and to consider the resources and challenges they bring to the table. A teacher utters: “I think it’s very important to know that the motivation comes from the child and that the parents also support that, so you have to be in constant contact” (G_I2_T_F).

For the development of CMB, in particular, it is important that their family and their culture of origin are seen and valued:

Integration is an activity whose aim is the mutual enrichment of two different nationalities ... the feeling that I give something of myself, that I share something, but I also experience such trust. My personality is enriched, my life becomes more colourful, my perspective on the world broadens. Integration is a win-win situation.

(PL_I1_T_F)

CMB are often seen in a process of negotiation between their culture of origin and the culture that surrounds them.

A teacher describes this balancing: [The children] ... end up a bit in the middle. From home, they have a culture where other things are important. Like getting married ... then they are in school, where they see that school is important. So, they end up in the middle there. It's a lot of work for them.

(SWE_I6_T_F)

This process can have a strong impact on the child's identity. On the one hand, there are children who strongly reject one or even both the culture of origin and the culture of the host country; on the other hand, there are children who show strong interest to unite both cultures in their identity or prefer each culture in different situations. For example, in experiencing different aspects of their identity, some children make a clear distinction between the school environment and the family environment (Ellis & Klusáková, 2007). The next section will elaborate on how social relationships relate to children's identity development.

Social relationship and their meaning for development of the self and identity

Self and identity are two closely related concepts (Baumeister, 2005) that refer to knowledge about oneself such as about one's abilities, appearance, preferences, or personality characteristics. Both concepts also encompass an understanding of important social relationships, perceived group memberships, ethnicity, and culture, but also the (consistent) classification of past and future in an individual's narration about himself or herself (Alsaker & Kroger, 2020). Ethnicity specifically may play an important role in identity formation. If children who identify themselves as members of an ethnic minority and share their attitudes, values and feelings, are excluded and/or rejected by the majority group and the mainstream social environment, the development of a positive sense of cultural belonging can be hampered (Romero & Roberts, 2003). The concept of hybrid identity shows how children can integrate different cultural aspects into their own identity through negotiation (Holliday, 2011). For instance, for CMB, it means integrating aspects

of the country of origin and the host country, but forming a hybrid identity can also apply to non-migrant children (Chapter 2).

The formation of self and identity is a lifelong, actively shaped and dynamic interactional process. The older children get the more complex their view of the self becomes. As children develop cognitively and socio-emotionally, the self becomes more independent of others' ascriptions, social comparison processes, and social feedback. Children rely more and more on their own observations and reflections, the self becomes more stable and independent of situational variation (Harter, 2012, 2015). Nevertheless, social relationships are an important reference point for the development of self, especially within transitions. Peers and teachers represent important sources of information for knowledge about oneself, one's skills and characteristics, and have a powerful influence on one's self-evaluation (Harter, 2015). More specifically, as illustrated by the following quotes on the meaning of mother tongue tuition, others directly and indirectly shape development of the self: "Mother tongue tuition is the king's path, I think, for integration. ... [It] is good particularly for those who want to develop both their Swedish and other cultural personality" (SWE_M2_M); "You could say that mother tongue teachers and study supervisors are the only persons ..., who can help students to integrate in a very good way or bad way" (SWE_M4_F);

Yes ... the main thing is language ..., but I am not fully comfortable with that because I wonder if we are the ones who are not ready, children never come without a language, they often have more than one, it is us, we are structured around one language only.

(UK_I23_T_M)

Here, the examples discuss how language fosters and hinders identity formation and hybrid integration. However, it is not language per se, but language as a socio-cultural tool and cultural grounding, the experiences and expectations that go along with language. Teachers' examples suggest that awareness and engagement with different cultural experiences can facilitate agency and integration, and strengthen the development and living out of hybrid identities.

An approach that complements the aforementioned developmental perspective and is fruitful when considering the development of hybrid identities is the Social Identity Theory by Tajfel and Turners (1979). According to this theory, identity can be viewed along a continuum between two poles: the personal and the social identity. Personal identity describes knowledge about oneself as a person, which is often acquired through comparison with others (Stets & Burke, 2000). It includes individual traits, characteristics, preferences, and abilities, such as whether one is extraverted, likes sports, or is talented in languages. Haslam (2004) describes that such comparison takes place on a so-called 'I'- and 'you'-level. It focuses on the individual and allows children to describe themselves in relation to and interact with each other. In contrast, social identity is not about the individual, but relates to the perception of being part of a group. Group members share characteristics and attributions; the entire group compares itself with other groups on a

‘we’-level. Accordingly, self-relevance and perceived similarity with other group members determines group membership (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019) and thus well-being at school:

I: And how is it between you students in L2? G: People, there are people like me. ... We feel connected, because we are all immigrants in Germany ... learning the same stuff and ... trying to learn the same language. Thus, we all understand each other. But in my normal classroom they all speak German and I am the immigrant one, so they don't understand how I feel among them.

(G_I47_G)

Finding common ground is not just about speaking the same language: “G: We mix, but for the most part, we spend our time in those groups where we feel most comfortable simply. I: And what else do you have in common. G: Interests” (PL_F5_CH). Perceived similarity in terms of (language) competencies and migration experience, but also with regard to needs, values, and interests, is extremely important for a sense of (group) belonging. As a result, the groups appear homogeneous to a certain extent and the individual group members become somewhat interchangeable (Fischer, Jander, & Krueger, 2018). Individuals tend to belong to multiple social groups, which manifests in different social identities elicited, for instance, by the different contexts in which one moves, and group membership is accompanied by various emotions (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019). Accordingly, a girl in the following quote describes that she perceives her class as a community, but also identifies sub-groups, which are characterised by different interests:

We have many common points and many different ones. For example, one common point is that we all like to talk in class ... and quite a lot ... play instruments. And then it's also quite different For example, we have small groups. One group is always so smartly dressed, so modern and always so loud ... another group, they ... don't care what the others think of them ...the groups always keep to themselves a bit. But you can always see which group you belong to, because one of them does it this way and that way.

(G_I36_G)

The following example illustrates the negotiation of personal and social identity and points to the necessity of shared interests and values in order to ‘find common ground’:

B: In class, we do have a close relationship with each other ... [with] Finnish people, we can connect if they come to us and we can talk to each other. I: Does it mean that it is sometimes difficult to make friends with Finnish pupils? ... B: Yes, it is indeed difficult to make friends with them. ... It doesn't mean

that they don't like us, no. We just don't have common things to talk about.
... we don't have anything to talk about.

(FI_F1_B)

The quote illustrates that finding common ground is difficult and entails ambivalences and uncertainties. On the one hand, it concerns the question of who actively makes an effort and how (i.e., "we can connect if they come to us"); on the other hand, the perception of common ground is not fixed. In the example, aspects such as social well-being, the ability to make small talk (surface-level common ground) and the need to have more general topics to talk about (deeper common ground) are touched upon. The child describes that commonalities are important for making connections with each other and building deeper friendships. Thus, intercultural competence presupposes not only a common language, but also a certain degree of shared standards of perception and communication, shared knowledge, issues and values, as captured, for example, by Esser's (2001) notion of *culturation*.

Furthermore, it is possible to have personal relationships with individual members of either one's own group (ingroup) or other groups (outgroup). The social valorisation of a group can enhance the self-image of the ingroup and the self-esteem of its members, while at the same time possibly devaluing the outgroup (see, for example, quotation PL_I17_B). In the school context, devaluation might manifest in bullying, exclusion of students, and even racism toward minority groups (Rastas, 2005). The following conversation between two children exemplifies such group-processes with regard to gender:

G: If ... he quarrels with me, he has a whole group of boys and I have a whole group of girls behind me, and then it becomes a group. ... I think it gets worse and worse because it gets bigger. B: Yes. ..., it can lead to a big, I would say war between girls and boys, that can destroy our whole sense of community.

(SWE_F6_GB)

Here, the girls and boys are seen not as individuals, but as group members, allowing an intergroup conflict to arise. In line with Social Identity Theory, the interviews emphasise that differentiation between groups and (self-)categorisation as well as demarcation and not belonging are part of natural group processes, which are context-dependent, but carry a risk of conflict, exclusion and discrimination. "I: Have you had situations where you or someone else was treated worse? G: I don't know if I was, because almost nobody liked me because I'm from another country" (PL_I9_G).

Summing up, Social Identity Theory points to the balancing of personal and social identity aspects. Several implications for practitioners can be derived. The challenge and the opportunity for teachers and other professionals is to create a group that encompasses all children, yet, at the same time, acknowledges their individual differences. Two girls summarise this issue as follows: "G1: ... this

school is very good because there are no groupings, like everyone is friend with everyone. G2: Everyone is different. G1: ... Everyone is with everyone. So this school ... is good for everyone actually” (SWE_F9_G).

From the children’s perspective, social skills and the structural opportunity to get to know each other are particularly important for creating a group that encompasses everyone. Children refer to possibilities related to seating arrangements (see also Laursen & Faur, 2022), group work, joint activities such as sports, or personal exchange in the form of informal talks: “Well, a girl sat down with me ... and [still] sits with me and she’s a very nice girl, because she sat with me from the first day” (PL_I14_G); “My favourite activities involved group work because it helps you approaching your classmates, to make friends ... the teachers would then try and put us with this classmate to strengthen the relationship” (IT_F21_B); “I didn’t know many words ... that are not used in school. On ... a class trip, I talked to a friend and she taught me words ... of a girl’s everyday life, for example, pimples, pores or something” (G_I43_G); “For me the best thing ... is break time, when I ... didn’t know anyone yet, it was talking with the others to get to know each other better” (IT_F31_G). While children often consider time at school to be most important, social workers and teachers also emphasise the significance of providing opportunities for children and their families to connect, support, and spend time in social relationships, such as peer relations, outside of school. “There is this place where they have a football field, [and] ... do an after-school program, it is very inclusive and so Italian and foreign kids become friends, then there is the town square where they mee.” (IT_I30_T_F); “To be able to do many activities, for example, they would like school time to be longer, they would like to play sports with others, they would like to spend more time with their classmates outside of school” (IT_I21_T_F). However, it should be noted that there is considerable inter-individual variation among the children in the connectedness of the relationships within and outside of school. Not a few report that they only have contact with their classmates at school. Moreover, the interviewed professionals note that identity issues remain even years after arrival in the host country.

Language as an example of the dynamic interdependencies between integration, agency and hybrid identity

Language and its importance illustrate well how the concepts of integration, agency, and hybrid identity are intertwined and can be promoted or inhibited by social relationships (Esser, 2006). A widely held belief is that CMB must first learn the language of the host country before they can be integrated (see Chapter 8): “Strengthening their language is an absolute need, language as a vehicle of coexistence ... as a means of establishing social relations” (IT_I7_T_F). At the same time, social relationships also enable – or impede – learning, whereby learning should not be defined narrowly (as is sometimes done in the school system), but should also be understood in terms of integration and identity formation (Kinossalo, Jousmäki, & Intke-Hernandez, 2022). Thus, relationship building starts before

students speak the same language. Accordingly, an Italian teacher stresses that CMB “aspire to be accepted by others, they invest a lot, especially at the beginning, in learning from their peers rather than from us” (IT_I11_T_F). The meaning of establishing peer relations at the beginning is also exemplified by the quote from a migrant girl, whose teachers supported her in learning, but also in getting to know her classmates by allowing the students to use internet translators. The girl could rely on these relationships, thus creating a good base for learning. The quote also exemplifies the interplay of language and social interaction as a gradual process that takes time.

G: At the beginning, I was using flashcards so everybody could understand English ... and also help me translate for the students. And some of them tried to communicate with me in English. So it was good. I: Did you make any friends at school? G: Yeah. I made many friends. ... recently I was spending time with [my friend] after school. Like, for example, go to the park, we sit under the swing. We talk to each other and then go home. I: And ... did your classmates help you with learning? G: Yes. ... She helped me.

(PL_I22_G)

Similarly, the following extract illustrates that to children, personality is more important than language, thus problematising the view of language as the first necessary prerequisite for integration.

B: It is not about where a person is from if the person is good and honest, yes, we can be friends. G1: When I came for the first time, it was a bit late and I did not know anyone and I could not speak so well ... but I made friends before learning to speak well because I think my friends trust me and I was kind. G2: Yes, she was. I: It's the individual person that matters to you. G2: Yes.

(UK_F9_GB)

Schools are steady contexts to build relationships and offer great opportunities to form friendships because children see each other on a daily basis, have the same rhythm and routine of the school week, and face similar types of tasks and requirements. Accordingly, the children emphasise that what is important is not language, but rather personality, shared interests and values. This is especially true for younger children. However, as children grow older, the importance of language for belonging, participation, and identity increases, as the following quotes illustrate:

B: We have many friends in the school. ... He is also my friend. Because the four of us speak the same language. I: Are you friends with those who speak the same language or are you friends with others? B: No, there are also those who ... know me. ... But not a real friend. Like a real friend in the homeland.

(SWE_F4_B)

B1: Because first thing, you want to make a friend, you need to communicate. You need a language. ... when [name of friend] came, it was like we got out to shop, we chatted all the time. Like, we had it fine. I: What role does language have when it comes to being friends? B2: It has a lot.

(SWE_F5_BB)

Thus, language becomes more important for peer relations and friendships in order to express oneself and communicate with others. At the same time, language – and the way its meaning is conceptualised in school contexts – affects what opportunities for participation children perceive and the extent to which they experience themselves as having agency: for example, whether they believe they have something to contribute. Problems are often attributed to one's personal failings and affect children's self-concept and self-esteem (Crone, 2016). This is especially true for older children, who ascribe more importance to language for creating cohesion and participation and use language to tell others who they are and what makes them tick.

I have this boy who is from Hungary. And I am best friends with him. We also speak German, but with other Germans, I am not so close with them. ... I don't talk so much in class. ... But with my friend, we talk together ..., because he doesn't know German either. ... That's why I can talk to him.

(G_I42_B)

How I feel in [school] is not ... so good. At the beginning, it was even worse for me. So I felt somehow that everyone was looking at me. ... I don't feel like I belong there. ... So really the classmates were so fast and I always felt like I couldn't contribute anything good. So then group work and I always felt like such a zero-person.

(G_I44_G)

In my opinion, let's say foreign people, participate (less) or someone who has greater difficulties in a subject avoids asking questions. ... I've noticed that some foreigners, especially when they first arrive, greet the teacher and then don't say anything during the lesson ... they are either ashamed or afraid of making mistakes.

(IT_F21_T_F)

With regard to identity, a shared language may also represent shared backgrounds and therefore lead to a shared social identity and social belonging, as the following interviews with three children demonstrate:

B: Because ... you connect to the person directly that we come from the same country, we have the same background. So you get a connection with

that person. G: You have something in common. I: Do you have it automatically then? G: No, it depends. I don't talk to every single Arab I see here [in Sweden].

(SWE_F2_GB)

Using language as a mediating process, it becomes clear that social relations influence hybrid integration, agency and identity formation. Contrary to what is often assumed, it is not always language that comes first, but a dynamic interplay that is influenced by aspects such as age, previous experience, perceived similarity and cultural values.

Implications for practice

This chapter focuses on the significance of social relationships for hybrid integration, participation and identity formation. In doing so, children are understood as active co-constructors of these processes by shaping social relations and social contexts. Social relationships, whether symmetrical or asymmetrical, form the foundation for children's well-being, enable or hinder agency and hybrid integration. This co-constructivist perspective not only concerns the school and educational context, but all interrelated contexts in which children move (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

Our results show that professionals need to be aware of social relationships' potential, with regard to not only well-being and learning, but also concerning children's motivation and academic achievement. For example, CMB are particularly motivated to perform well at school – and it is precisely this school performance that teachers focus on. However, this motivation is also particularly susceptible to social influences as shown by our examples on participation and communication, a fact that is usually not sufficiently taken into account. Accordingly, in their work, teachers must find answers to a series of questions such as: How does interaction in the classroom strengthen or hinder each child's agency and participation? How can the teacher succeed in building a relationship with each individual student, but also with the group, in order to support children in expressing their desires and needs, discussing topics with each other, exchanging views and experiences, and questioning attitudes and content? How does the composition of the peer group and cohesion affect the development of a hybrid identity? In this vein, teachers and other professionals must more thoroughly exploit the potential of social relations for learning and participation (Esser, 2001), for instance, by creating a good atmosphere in class, making themselves available as moderators and confidants, and objectively resolving conflicts among peers as needed. Accordingly, the interviews emphasise that teachers should give peers time to get to know each other on a personal level, carry out joint activities, specifically strengthen cohesion, and find common ground, for example, through group work and field trips. Peer-mentoring programs, learning tandems, or peer learning constellations are good ways to harness the potential of symmetrical relationships. Joint excursions, sports and space to get to know each other's interests

are just as important as group work in the classroom. It is important, however, not to encourage groups to separate themselves from others, but to ensure that participants flow fluidly into and out of different groups and that no boundaries are erected that could cause discrimination, exclusion or racism. This can be ensured, for example, by frequently randomly assigning groups to group work. Methodically, this can be introduced by establishing similarities, shared interests and values. Thus, professionals need to create opportunities for children to get to know each other on an individual level, for instance, by stimulating personal exchange about each other's experiences and desires and establishing joint activities that allow for seeing new facets. This is a foundation to be laid in the classroom for activities outside the classroom and school. One concrete idea would be for children, together with their teachers, to create a portfolio for each individual child in which special highlights, developmental steps and educational stages are recorded. These folders are oriented towards the resources and strengths of the individual child and record their biography in a temporal and subjective dimension. These portfolios belong to the child and can, on the one hand, record and make transparent the child's social networks and interests and, on the other hand, encourage the child to exchange with peers, professionals and parents about the portfolio's contents.

Furthermore, our interviews also make it clear that in the work with CMB, asymmetrical and symmetrical aspects of relationships should be taken into account and consciously shaped. The interviews also demonstrate that both relationship types are not mutually exclusive but interwoven, they go beyond asymmetrical relationships between professionals and children to shed light on the importance of symmetrical interactions as well. Adults have to find the right balance between guidance and instruction on the one hand, recognition of children's competence and relinquishment of control and power on the other. These ambiguities are not easy to negotiate. Children want guidance, supervision, and to be taught content and competencies, but, they also want to be seen in their abilities and encouraged to try out and develop them together with and alongside others. This is emphasised by teachers and social workers as well as by the children themselves, for example, when it comes to solving problems and conflicts. One example for a practical implementation is the creation of 'neutral' spaces in the form of a room or a table where problems and conflicts can be solved constructively. Ideally, the children must have the possibility to find and use this place independently. This requires a jointly established structure and rules for problem-solving skills. Furthermore, there must be the possibility of low-threshold supervision by teachers or social workers and it must be ensured that someone has the needs, rights and safety of the children in mind and enforces them. It should also be ensured that children with language deficits have the opportunity to express themselves and that they are listened to.

It is also important to keep group processes in mind with respect to identity formation. Here, it is important to break down group categorisations such as those based on ethnic characteristics, and create a group that sticks together based on similar interests, positive common activities, and social cohesion. Even the children's seating arrangement does not have to be fixed, but can be rotated to allow

everyone to get to know each other better or that children can learn from each other and exchange ideas. Students can also take on the role of the teacher and vice versa. This allows for a change of perspective, promotes empathy and can strengthen the children in their respective expertise. It also shows teachers what school and the social fabric can be like from a child's perspective. Extracurricular and school activities in which all children are involved and can contribute their skills also help them to get to know each other better and limit boundary formation.

At the same time, professionals have to apply their knowledge in interactions and take children seriously, show interest in their opinions and experiences, and see them as active and competent. It is important to recognise children's experiences, appreciate their culture and actively support the development of their individual identity. In this way, children learn about recognition and appreciation, can accept these positive factors and develop their identity, while also learning to appreciate other people, no matter where they come from. CMB may face extra challenges in identity formation, especially if there are differences between their culture of origin/family culture and the dominant culture of the surrounding environment. Here, social contexts and feelings of (not) belonging play a major role for navigating individual challenges such as learning and using a new language, the fear of making mistakes or of talking in front of others, dealing with novelty, and managing one's own and others' expectations. This is also the case when considering group-level challenges such as dealing with commonalities and differences, establishing similarity and common ground, and shaping group membership and breaking down group boundaries.

The CHILD-UP interviews make clear that both, children with and without a migration background, as well as professionals would like to see more space and time for exchange, for getting to know each other and each other's cultures, needs and expectations. All this is necessary to find common ground from which social relationships can arise and grow, friendships can be formed and strengthened. Here, it is particularly important for the development of CMB that their family and culture of origin are seen and valued. Thus, teachers should support the migrant child's hybrid identity by encouraging participation not only by the child, but their entire family.

Hybrid integration, agency and identity development are multi-layered, and subject to a dynamic process at the intersection of the individual and social environment. Paying more attention to agency and individual developmental challenges can strengthen the hybrid integration and well-being of the whole group. Ultimately, developing a hybrid identity by exploring and adopting values from both the family culture and the dominant culture can bring additional benefits (e.g. Marcia, 1980).

Finally, the area of language is a good illustration of how hybrid integration, agency, and identity formation are interconnected. Thus, exchange and communication are considered essential by both the children interviewed and the participating teachers and social workers. This is not only about language in the narrower sense, but also about the expression of aspects relevant to identity: How can a common language be found in a class? What is necessary for a child to be able to

talk about interests, beliefs, and experiences? This also suggests that teaching is more than just the imparting of learning content, but also the promotion of cohesion, children's personality development, and support for identity formation.

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