



Project “Integration of Children with Migration Background in Baden-Wuerttemberg and California”

Karin E. Sauer and Josef Held, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, Department of Educational Psychology

1 Content, relevance and methodical approach

The point of departure for the scientific study of the integration of children with migration backgrounds in the two areas chosen for comparison, Baden-Wuerttemberg and California, is the following problem: Children between nine and fourteen years of age, our project’s target group, are seldom considered in both integration research and integration practice. During this stage, children face important developmental and psychological tasks, which will determine their future orientation in various areas of life. In this specific period of development children go through important processes of integration – both those with and without migration backgrounds¹. For these reasons we argue that the study of children’s integration-experiences is of great scientific and societal relevance. Thus our research is based on a practical problem which at the same time marks a gap in current research literature. Practical problems are complex; in order to appropriately grasp and represent them, a variety of methods, both quantitative and qualitative, is needed.

Within the framework of the project we completed a complex research program in Tuebingen South and Stuttgart East and a field-study in California. We gained insights and experiences and collected data with various methods. In the meantime diverse forms of data, collected by way of questionnaires, sociograms, audio- and videotapes of interviews with teachers and focus-groups are available. Many discussions were held and many observations were documented.

A project that is consequently committed to the complexity of the research question can not be carried out using a single method. Each of the methods captures a different aspect, which together compose a whole. In this sense the different methods are neither meant to reciprocally validate each other as is the basic assumption in the triangulation of methods, nor do they represent a simple mix of methods (mixed-method approach), but rather a multi-method design. The research methods that we employed in our study were used independently of each other; the evaluation of the respective data gained with the different methods was also done separately in the first step.

2 Theoretical Background

Successful integration is not exclusively determined by the quality of integration measures, it depends rather upon a variety of societal, socio-ecological, socio-interactive and personal conditions. The following aspects shall especially be taken into consideration in the project:

¹ Children with migration backgrounds are those that have either directly lived migration, or indirectly, through the experience of one or more family members.”

- Neighborhood and its socio-ecological prerequisites; as well as the meaning of the immediate neighborhood for children.
- Family and its subjectively lived and experienced meaning for children, especially socio-structural disadvantages of families with migration-backgrounds.
- School and its programs and “good practices” to further integration; attitudes and expectations of teachers and parents; the relation between students and teachers regarding integration.
- Social relations and friendships between children taking into account the cultural background of their families and the children’s identity related to this background. Confrontation with prejudice in the everyday-life of children is also examined.
- Active participation of children in the areas of family, neighborhood, school and friendships/social relations.

The specific contextual conditions of integration are documented and verified by the investigation of different city districts. The selection of these districts is determined by their socio-ecological development and respective characteristics.

Tuebingen’s Suedstadt, which displays a model-project character in terms of integration, is compared with Stuttgart-East, a more disadvantaged district of the capital of the federal-state Baden-Wuerttemberg. Sonoma, a city in the rural area of North California, is set in relationship to Oakland, a more problematic area in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Due to accelerated international mobility, new cultural constellations are formed in the populations of urban spaces. These new constellations, groups or formations represent a serious challenge for city development, but, conversely, city development decisively influences all socio-cultural groups as well. This leads to the question, how children with backgrounds of migration in Baden-Wuerttemberg and California view themselves in this field, how they experience the conditions of integration and whether any identifiable differences may be attributed to cultural backgrounds.

3 Research Design

We developed a set of methods that was suitable for children between nine and fourteen years of age, dealing with the topics family, neighborhood, school, friendship and the possibilities of participation for children in each of these fields.

The research program contained a quantitative and a qualitative part. Both parts were carried out and evaluated by two independent project-seminars. The first method was a *quantitative questionnaire*.

The following methods were qualitative. *Focus-Group-Interviews* were done with six to nine children each in the participating classes, picking up on the dimensions of the questionnaire as a guideline. Audio- and video recording were used to document the discussions.

After that the children participated in creating *sociograms*². The first two questions were to be answered “secretly”, without knowledge of the other children. For the first question they were asked to write down the names of the children with whom they would like to spend their free time if school were to be cancelled for the afternoon. Secondly they were asked to write down the classmates with whom they actually spent their free time. This method enabled us to find out about the desired relationships and friendships (or “wish friendships” and “real friendships”) between children with and without migration-background.

For the *foto-sociograms*, which were carried out with selected children (Tuebingen and Stuttgart), we asked the children to pick their best friend of their class to be photographed with them. This gave us an impression of who the children committed themselves to in public. This was an important aspect adding to the findings of the secret poll of the “wish” and “real” friendships.

Those of the participating students who agreed to continue our study outside of school took us on a “*sightseeing tour*” through their city quarter with a group of their friends. This method of observation was documented by a filmteam. The children presented the ways in which they spent their free time, what they did together, and which problems there were. All this provided us with further insights into the children’s everyday lives.

Complementary *observation* of children in their neighborhoods and schools was carried out during the entire research process. In addition, teachers, inhabitants and social experts of the neighborhoods were interviewed. Guidelines for these interviews were the dimensions of the questionnaire, expanded to include any aspects of development over the last years regarding integration of migrant children.

This research design combined the mixed-method- and the multi-method-approach. The mixed-method approach (Morse 2003, p. 191 – 196), consisted of a quantitative part (questionnaire) which was supplemented and expanded by the qualitative part. The focus in this approach was the quantitative study and the verification of hypotheses, i.e. a deductive practice was dominant.

In addition we used the multi-method approach (Morse 2003, p. 196 – 205) in order to capture different facets of the research question. Here quantitative and qualitative data were regarded as equal. They were sampled and evaluated separately in a mainly inductive procedure.

By combining quantitative and qualitative data in a final step of evaluation we received an overview of characteristic features of the individual areas. This overview is, as previously stated, not to be seen in the sense of triangulation, as a process in which individual findings are pieced together with the goal of reciprocal verification. This is because the findings partly contradict each other. The seeming incompatibility of the results is related to the specific contextual settings of the research methods. Morse puts into question whether the possible contradiction of findings in multi-method designs signalizes an inadequacy of research methods for the research question (2003, p. 206). In our case the multi-method approach was chosen for this reason, as the subjective experience of children was studied, and it was to be captured in its various – even inconsistent – ways of expression.

² Sociograms are a traditional method in school research. The innovative use of sociograms in our survey is the focus on interethnic relationships.

4 Examples of evaluation

To illustrate the procedure of analysis we chose the importance of social relations for the children's integration as an example. Starting point is the general hypothesis, that nine- to 14-year-old children take cultural background into account for the selection of their friends. By the age of eight children are able to clearly differentiate ethnicities and perceive them as a stable, secure dimension. This has been known for a long time (Allport 1971, p. 303 – 314). In modern societies (like in CA and B-W) classifications of ethnicity are especially emphasized; they are perceived as a natural part of cultural background and largely taken for granted or not further questioned. This general hypothesis was confirmed by the trend of our results. 55% of the children stated that their best friend had the same cultural background and only 45% that their best friend had a different cultural background. As expected our findings were similar in California and Baden-Wuerttemberg. In both countries over 50% had a best friend of the same cultural background.

Furthermore, we supposed that children with migration backgrounds, who are a part of the subordinate group of society, would be more likely to have a best friend of the same cultural background than children without experience of migration. This assumption is based on the fact that children with migration backgrounds create a psychological "safe-space" among children with similar experiences which enables them to share experiences of discrimination that they have in common and to develop an individual – oppositional – identity (Tatum 1997, p. 59 f.).

This additional hypothesis was not verified. On the contrary – in the complete sample of all children (in CA and B-W) a great majority of those *not having* a background of migration stated to have a best friend of the same cultural background (71%); but less than half of the children *with* migration backgrounds claim to have a best friend of the same cultural background (48%).

This puzzling finding points at a significant difference between the children in Baden-Wuerttemberg and California. Only 53% of the Californian children *without* experiences of migration have a best friend of the same cultural background, whereas 63% of the children *with* migration backgrounds have a best friend of the same cultural background. Thus, only the Californian children verify our hypothesis.

Just the opposite was found to be the case for the children in Baden-Wuerttemberg: Children *without* migration backgrounds with a best friend of the same cultural background make up 67% in Stuttgart and 82% in Tuebingen. The percentage of children *with* migration backgrounds who have a best friend of the same cultural background is 41% in Stuttgart and 45% in Tuebingen. The differences between the children with and without migration backgrounds are statistically significant.

What may be the reasons for this difference between the children in California and Baden-Wuerttemberg? The children with migration backgrounds in Baden Wuerttemberg come from many culturally very diverse countries. Under these circumstances it is difficult to find a friend with the same cultural context or the same country of origin. In Germany the children tend to join either the group of "residents" or the group of "foreigners", i.e. that children with experiences with migration feel related to each other in general and do not select friendships or make alliances in terms of cultural backgrounds. They form relatively quickly an individual migrant-culture (cf. Held/Spona 1998).

In California however the sample contained larger groups of the same cultural background, which makes it easier for the children to establish friendships within their own cultural group, which is an effect of segregation.

Social relations between children with and without migration backgrounds will influence how these groups will get along with each other in the future. The quantitative data holds only little evidence in terms of this issue. Social relations are very complex. We therefore used different methods to try to capture and correctly represent them.

In the *focus-group interviews* the children in both Baden-Wuerttemberg and California emphasized that they got along well with their schoolmates, regardless of their backgrounds. Rarely did the children make negative remarks about schoolmates of different backgrounds; yet, in individual cases children did report negative experiences with children of different backgrounds outside of school. However, the consciousness for ethnic differences seemed less developed in Baden-Wuerttemberg than in California. The children in California were familiar with the common categorizations (Mexican, Latino, Hispanic, Black ...) and they used them naturally. For the German children such categorizations were obviously rather unfamiliar. The following sequence of a focus-group interview in Stuttgart illustrates this tendency:

Karsten: I like it with the other children. They maybe come from different countries and maybe they are poor – maybe – but that’s why they are maybe nicer.

Question: From which countries?

Karsten: From Berlin or Africa or – no idea – England.

Mara: A couple are from Germany and a couple are from other countries: Albania, Croatia... I’m from Macedonia.

Question: Do you have friends from Macedonia?

Mara: Yes, only one.

Fabian: I’m from Stuttgart and I have many friends from different countries. Well, Nico is from Italy, Yogu is from Greece...

Especially in California the children were concerned with expressing themselves in a politically correct manner and not appearing to be racist. This attitude is characteristic of the developmental and psychological phase in which children consciously express themselves in socially appropriate ways, even if their behavior possibly does not correspond with their statements (cf. Allport 1971). This was only of limited validity for the focus-groups in Baden-Wuerttemberg. Conflicts between “foreigners” and “Germans” were verbalized to a certain extent, although they were not attributed to issues of ethnicity. Concrete negative experiences were given repeatedly as reasons for the non-acceptance of certain children.

Local German children did not deliberately choose their friends on the basis of their cultural background, but they preferred specific cultural backgrounds: Some were obviously interesting to them, others were not. This was strongly related to the countries of origin.

In the *sociograms* the children were asked to write down the names of the classmates they would like to spend their free time with if there were no school one afternoon. This fictitious question was an opportunity to gain access to information regarding the children's wishes and enables a comparison to the real conditions that were surveyed in the quantitative part of the study. The anonymous question provides supplementary information to the opinions and attitudes voiced in the focus-group interviews, as the children did not have to worry about political-correctness in the absence of public pressure.

As an example for California we chose a class in Sonoma that was attended by 17 children with and 17 without migration backgrounds. 59% of the children without migration backgrounds wanted to meet a child of the same cultural background. 53% of the children with migration background wanted to do something with a child without migration background. Here the majority of the children with migration backgrounds was oriented towards the dominant social group, which was not the case for the quantitative data.

In a class in Stuttgart with nine children without and twelve children with migration backgrounds, 78% of the children without migration background answered they would, if there was no school one day, spend their free time with a child without migration background. The children with migration background stated in 58% of the cases that they would rather do something with a child of the same or a different migration background.

It is now interesting to connect the results of the socio-grams (the secret polling) with the *photo-sociograms*. (Due to data protection rules in California this method could only be used in Baden-Wuerttemberg). In the described class in Stuttgart 67% of the children without migration backgrounds were photographed with a classmate without a migration background. 58% of the children with migration backgrounds chose a classmate that had a background of migration, no matter whether the classmate's background was the same or a different.

The findings of the sociograms in Stuttgart show in both the fictitious, anonymous setting and the real, public setting that the children without migration backgrounds preferred to be together with children with similar experiences, i.e. with the same or other backgrounds of migration. These findings were confirmed in the majority of the cases, paralleling the tendencies that were identified in the quantitative data. The qualitative data shows that children with migration backgrounds tend to orient themselves towards others who have a migration background as well, but not as often towards children without migration background. The great majority of children who have, direct or indirect, experiences with migration have also experienced discrimination (Tatum 1997, p. 59 f.) The experience of discrimination may be more readily and better processed in the company of children who have had similar experiences. The necessity for careful differentiation of children's behavior in their respective living situations, along with attributing any role played in behavior to their respective backgrounds, becomes clear in the "*sightseeing tours*" that were carried out in Tuebingen.

In each tour, a group of three children led a film team through their immediate school- and living environment. They showed and commented on places where they often spent time. While leading the tours, the children provided a miniature reflection of the situation of living together of the children with different cultural backgrounds in their area. One group talked positively about "foreigners" who were important for them e.g. because they bought candy in the "Albanian store", or because they saw a Spanish-speaking boy from Ecuador who lived in their neighborhood as an opportunity to "learn something new."

But they also talked about negative experiences in their area, citing Achmed, a Turkish boy that once pushed another boy from a railing, so that he needed to go to the hospital with a broken leg. Following the discussion of these examples, the children then proceeded to attribute their experiences to cultural differences:

“There are foreigners – like Marc from Ecuador – who are cool. But then there other ones – like Achmed from Turkey – or from some other strange countries, where things don’t go so well, and that’s what I don’t really like.”

In relation to the observations in both countries the following characteristic situation of friendships between children in Baden-Wuerttemberg and California can be recorded:

Children in California generally made politically-correct statements about the cultural background of their friends and classmates and knew about the necessity of respect of the diverse ethnicities. They had internalized the almost omnipresent rules of living-together in a fair way and reproduced them. In the USA this can be related to the reinforcement of integration measures that have been carried out since the nineteen-sixties (on a federal level through “affirmative action” measures for the integration of people who are discriminated because of their cultural background; by civil rights movements e.g. the Black Panthers and other initiatives supporting the social status of discriminated demographic groups).

The *observation* of children on the schoolyard or at lunchtime showed, that there were indeed groupings of children by ethnicity, as described by Tatum in her book “Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?”: Black children remained together in groups; similar tendencies were observed among Hispanic children as well. Friendships between children of different ethnicities were exceptions. *Expert interviews* with principals of the Californian schools verified this tendency of the groupings of children with the same cultural background, although they could not explain the reason for this phenomenon.

Children in Baden-Wuerttemberg seemed to be less aware of the cultural background of their schoolmates and friends. The children in our sample found the character of their friends more important. When they were explicitly asked how they felt about children “who come from somewhere else”, they differentiated their relation by their experiences with children of the individual backgrounds. From these experiences they generalized characteristics which they then attributed to the cultural background. Children with migration backgrounds had more friendships with children of different migration backgrounds than in California, due to the greater choice of cultural backgrounds of children in Baden-Wuerttemberg. A principal in Tuebingen even assumed: “About 60% of the students have a migration background. The children are not aware of it, only if somebody has a darker skin color. On their own initiative the children tell little about it (their backgrounds), as they don’t want to attract attention. They only state their view when teachers may approach them on the subject in the context of specific topics”.

These typical situations in Baden-Wuerttemberg and California serve as an example for the independent evaluation of qualitative data. In relation to the findings of the quantitative methods and their completion and concretization by the qualitative methods (mixed-method approach) they add to a total (multi-method approach) that shows different aspects of the central research question of integration of children with and without migration backgrounds using the method of contrasting comparison. This approach allows the development of important perspectives for working with children in Germany and California.

References

Allport, G. W. 1971: Die Natur des Vorurteils. Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch.

Grossberg, L. 1999: Was sind Cultural Studies?, in: K. H. Hörning and R. Winter (eds.): Widerspenstige Kulturen. Cultural Studies als Herausforderung. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, pp.43-84.

Held, J. and Spona, A. 1999: Jugend zwischen Ausgrenzung und Integration. Ergebnisse eines internationalen Projekts. Bd. 2. Hamburg: Argument.

Morse, J. M. 2003: Principles of Mixed Methods and Multimethod Research Design., in: A. Tashakkori and C. Teddlie: Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage, pp.189-208.

Schütze, F.1994: Ethnographie und sozialwissenschaftliche Methoden der Feldforschung. Eine mögliche methodische Orientierung in der Ausbildung und Praxis der sozialen Arbeit?, in: N. Groddeck and M. Schumann (eds.): Modernisierung Sozialer Arbeit durch Methodenentwicklung und -reflexion. Freiburg i. Br.: Lambertus, pp.189-287.

Strauss, A. L. 1991: Grundlagen qualitativer Sozialforschung. Datenanalyse und Theoriebildung in der empirischen soziologischen Forschung. München: Fink.

Strübing, J. 2004: Grounded Theory. Zur soziotheoretischen und epistemologischen Fundierung des Verfahrens der empirisch begründeten Theoriebildung. Wiesbaden:VS-Verlag.

Tatum, B. D. 1997: Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? New York: Basic Books.

Author's Address:

Prof Dr Josef Held
Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen
Department of Educational Psychology
Münzgasse 22-30
D-72070 Tübingen
Germany
Tel: ++49 (0)7071 2976893
Fax: ++49 (0)7071-294
Email: josef.held@uni-tuebingen.de

**Social Work
& Society**