



Institut für Erziehungswissenschaft  
Abteilung Allgemeine  
Erziehungswissenschaft  
Date: 15.11.2019  
Alissa Maxman

# „Children of Babylon“.

Parenting in Russian-speaking Families in Berlin.  
Qualitative Study of Generation 1.5 Mothers.

## Content

Research Interest /Main Focus of the Study

Research Sample

→ Families from the former UdSSR in Germany, who are they?  
(Very) Short Introduction to the main migration waves in Germany

Data and Results of the Research

Discussion



"Familien mit Fluchthintergrund: Aktuelle Fakten zu Familienstruktur, Arbeitsmarktbeteiligung und Wohlbefinden", September 2019

<https://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/140756/d9b5173da1eca339f2507a4c60bcffdd/familien-mit-fluchthintergrund-aktuelle-fakten-data.pdf>

## Research interest / Focus of the Study

- „Migration is a family matter“ (Ruben Rumbaut)
- Generation 1,5 and it's specific: bridge-builder and cultural interpreter, helping parents and grandparents navigate their new home. Or they can feel like outcasts, neither here nor there (Does it have an impact on their parenting?)
- Two childhood: one of the mother and as a counterexample the one of own child who was born in Germany, and the ambitions of parental approach.
- How do parental attitudes and practices evolve from the first to the 1.5 generation of immigrants, reflecting ongoing acculturation and distancing from the heritage culture?
- whether and how the migration experiences of families affect the ideas and practices related to parental education in those families

## Research Sample:

- 12 semi-structured interviews with mothers
- Born in former UdSSR (Russia, Ukraine, Tadzhikistan, Kazachstan, Moldavien, Latvia) and immigrated to Germany at age from 5-12
- Age: 29-37
- Religion: jewish (6), russian-orthodox (5), muslim (1)
- 8 out of 12 with degree
- Own kids are between 4-9 years old
- 4 Topics: (own childhood memories/migration/birth of own child/parenting and expectations)

## → Brief Expose: Immigration waves from former UdSSR in the 1990s

- January 1991 new law appeared addressing „highly sensible topic and responsibility against the German history“ (Gerster/CDU) allowing jewish people in the former UdSSR to apply for so called „Kontingentflüchtlinge“ Status (from 1989 until 1995: there were around 54000 immigrants, 2015 – around 250.000 in Germany)
- ethnic German immigrants, victims of war (second half of 18th century), who were settled in different regions along Wolga river, around Black Sea, Central Asia) could return to their Motherland from 1993 (quick and legal immigration with receiving ID, German courses, financial support upon arrival)
- One of the biggest migration groups in Germany: between 1989-1995: around 2 mio. people arrived, 2018: 4.517.052 Mio ethnic Germans

## Results

As a result of migration and resettlement, the relations between parents and children undergo multiple transformations reflecting the new normative milieu and the demands of integration

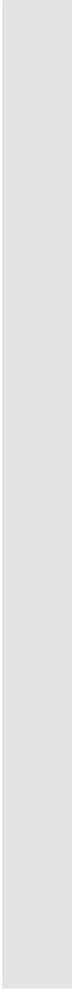
- the findings show that parental styles evolve towards host country standards already among the first generation, and this transition is enhanced among the 1.5ers.
- most strike a compromise between the old and new parental ethos, realizing that this is in their children's best interest to acculturate in order to succeed.
- They may selectively and instrumentally adapt to the receiving society's family and parenting norms (e.g., in relation to formal schooling or punishment) but stick to their core cultural values in all other aspects of parent–children relations.

- Especially the birth of own child marks the stage of so called *re-tradition*, were attachments to Russian culture, which were for many quite symbolic until that time, or some of the cultural principles under which these women had been raised become an important role in parenting (e.g., intense parental involvement in children's education, tendency to over-parenting)

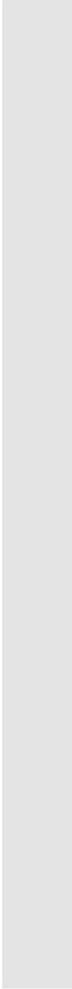
- Like their parents, the 1.5ers believed in education as the major venue for social mobility and success. The plurality of mothers invested thought and effort in the school placement of their children, starting from kindergarten age, kids are having tutors, hobbies, different activities, visiting Sunday's school, etc

“It’s great to let your kids study the arts, music, yoga... whatever their heart is drawn to—but for fun only. To make a living, one should choose a solid occupation like mine for example (physical therapist... It may be not as exciting, but it puts bread on your table and allows you to start a family.”

- The plurality of young parents (11 out of 12 mothers) wished that their children would keep elements of their Russian heritage, especially the language and familiarity with the everyday culture.

- 
- 
- In most homes, Russian was used either as the main language or on a par with German, and in 10 families, one or both parents persisted in speaking Russian to their German-born children. Eleven children attended “Russian” kindergartens or bilingual activity groups, and all of them were exposed to the “heritage language” via their grandparents who often served as child-minders.

- more ambivalent than bicultural
- constant flux, a complex interplay of cultural heritage and the social context and surroundings
- Perhaps the most tangible difference between parenting styles of the two generations was found in the realm of emotional support and verbalization. Contemporary western parenting relies on convincing and explaining rather than denying and banning and always tries to appeal to the positive side in the child, e.g., stressing what s/he can do rather than what s/he cannot.



Thank you for your attention!