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Polish migrants in Germany: Challenges and inequalities in raising children in transnational social spaces

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Abstract

The transfer of cultural capital across borders is a common topic in transnational sociology. While the majority of studies investigates the opportunities and challenges of adult migrants and their social mobility in transnational social spaces, children in transnational social spaces are predominantly acknowledged either as indicators for their migrant population's mobility rates or as 'left-behinds'. While the first branch of literature investigates migrant population only in relation to the immigration country, the other does argue from a transnational perspective yet the ramifications and challenges of co-present parent-child relations in transnational social spaces are an understudied topic. This article aims to raise awareness that the ways migrants raise their children in transnational social spaces is a crucial site to study the broader topic of the modes of the (re-)production of transnational social spaces. This is so because the intergenerational transmission of cultural capital is the main mechanism operating in the reproduction of unequal social structures and therefore also of transnational social spaces. Based on twenty semi-structured interviews with migrants from Poland in Germany, this article sheds light on migrant parents' childrearing orientations in relation to language and education. The article reveals that despite fairly similar orientations, parents have, dependent on their cultural capital, very different opportunities to fulfill their parenting needs.

Keywords:

Polish migration to Germany, transnational social inequalities, parenting, cultural capital

Introduction

[The transnational turn in migration scholarship at the beginning of the 1990s placed the 'family' as a dominant research topic and thereby deconstructed the notion of migrants as single (and male) economically motivated agents. The role of children in migration processes has however remained a one-sided social scientific endeavor. Migration scholars either study migrant children as indicators for their migrant populations' mobility rates in relation to the immigration country, or from a transnational perspective (over-)emphasize the various facets of 'left-behind children' as those children whose mothers emigrated to earn income abroad (for an overview, see Carling et al. 2012). While migration scholars widely agree that the incorporation into transnational spaces is an indispensable dimension of migrants' lives, it is debatable thus to what extent children of migrants are and will be transnational actors and how their lives are affected by their transnational socialization. Most studies find that transnational ties diminish across generations (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, Morawska 2003, Kasinitz et al. 2008, Soehl and Waldinger 2012) and therefore arrive to the conclusion that assimilation is much more central to the second than to the first generation (Morawska 2003). Critical voices, however, emphasize the relevance of transnational incorporation for migrant offspring. Levitt (2009) argues that 'we should not dismiss outright the strong potential effect of being raised in a transnational social field' (p. 1226). Independently of the degree to which migrant children will be participating in transnational social spaces they are raised in spaces which are influenced by the cultural practices and norms of the emigration and immigration countries, i.e. the transnational social spaces arising from their connection. The main characteristic of transnational social spaces thus is the overlap of 'cultural orders' (Amelina 2010), so that 'actors or certain collectives are confronted with the simultaneous presence of different meaning patterns regarding the same "object" or "situation"' (p. 4). The participation in transnational spaces therefore is often associated with renegotiations of family, gender, ethnicity and class.

Parenting is intimately linked with the (re-)production of family, gender, ethnicity, and class. It also represents norms, ideologies, and expectations prevalent in social contexts which make parenting in transnational social spaces prone to specific challenges, such as navigating between expectations and norms of the emigration and the immigration country and is influenced by the positions of parents and families in transnational stratification systems. One of those expectations in transnational social spaces is related to the transmission of ethnicity. Spitzer et al. (2003) emphasize the central role of caregiving for the transmission of 'cultural values that serve to shore up the boundaries of their ethnic community' (p. 267). The intergenerational transmission of cultural capital is the major mechanism of the reproduction of

social structures and therefore also of social inequalities (Bourdieu 1986). How migrants raise their children thus provides an insight into the future participation and social positions of children in transnational social spaces. Parenting practices and the transfer of parents' cultural capital to their children is a crucial site for studying the (unequal) structure and modes of reproduction in transnational social spaces.

This article focuses on parenting practices in transnational social spaces and is based on stories of people who migrated at diverse points in time from Poland to Germany. There are two characteristics known of Polish migrants in Germany: First, they are largely invisible (Schmidtke 2004) because of their 'silent' integration (Boldt 2011) and second, they do well in the education system (Segeritz et al. 2010). For some time, Polish migrants were marginally represented in the German public sphere. Very recently, however, the adult children of those who migrated during the 1970s and 1980s have raised their voice in German media and shared experiences about their parents' painstaking migration[1]. Before the post-socialist transformation, one of the few opportunities to leave Poland was based on ethnic German origin. Many found some German ancestor and could leave Poland and immigrate to Germany. Their settlement was often accompanied by the constant anxiety of prosecution. Others felt that they were ethnic German and that their migration was rather a return 'home' (Fassmann and Münz 1994). In both cases, yet for different reasons, they did not encourage their children to learn the Polish language or other cultural practices. There is however empirical indication that this is not true for all those who migrated during the 1970s and 1980s (e.g., Jańczak 2013). The empirical study presented here also reveals that for many migrants from Poland it was and to an increasing degree it is a wish to teach their children Polish and to maintain Polish identity.

Parenting in transnational social spaces though is not only orientated toward the emigration country. Another major orientation is the successful adaptation of children in the immigration country. Polish migrants are known for the high educational aspiration they have for their children (Lopez Rodriguez 2012). Parents thus need to navigate between their orientations toward the emigration and the immigration country. Which orientation is the dominating one depends on the phase in the migration process migrants find themselves in as well as children's life-stage.

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[1] Two exemplary articles on adult children of Polish migrants are: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (May 21,2015): The invisible neighbors: http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/polen-in-deutschland-die-unsichtbaren-nachbarn 13599176.html?printPagedArticle=true#pageIndex_2; or TAZ (June, 6, 2015) The invisible Poles: https://www.taz.de/Die-unsichtbaren-Polen/!5203994/

The article is structured as follows. In the next section some recent debates about childhood and raising children in transnational social spaces, as well as the role of children in migration processes are discussed. After that the empirical material and a short outline on the methods and the sample will be provided. The empirical results will be presented in two subsections, which correspond to two steps in the migration process. The first is the phase before migration and shortly after migration. In this phase, it is crucial to place children well in the education system. Therefore parents' experiences and reflections on the very important status of passage in the German education system, which is the transition from the primary to the secondary school, are at the core here. The most important pre-condition for children's success in the education system is their ability to speak German. How recent migrants intend to ensure that their children learn German is crucial in understanding the successful placement of children in the education system. For this, parents' cultural capital plays an important role, although social capital can set off for lacks in cultural capital. In the second phase, parents experience that they need to actively take care of their children having the ability to speak Polish and to have and maintain ties to relatives and friends in Poland. In this phase parents develop different strategies to maintain or establish their children's 'Polishness' in a German environment. Likewise to the adaptation into the education system, language plays a crucial role. Yet, the language in this case is assumed to be to a lesser extent automatically acquired and is to a large degree connected with creating 'familyhood across distance' (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002) and within the migrant household.

Transnational childhoods: The role of children and language in migration processes

After long years of investigating migrant offspring mainly in terms of incorporation into the immigration country, recently scholars began to turn attention to the dynamics and idiosyncrasies of being raised in a transnational social space (Orellana et al, 2001, Levitt, 2009). Orellana et al. (2001) critically comment that 'scholars who ignore children's presence and participation in processes of migration, framing them as baggage that weighs down adult migrants, neglect a central axis of family migration, and an important reason why families move across national borders and sustain transnational ties' (p. 588). The majority of studies conclude that over time, migrants and their offspring will lose their attachment to their home countries (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, Morawska 2003, Kasinitz et al. 2008, Soehl and Waldinger 2012). Yet, most studies also acknowledge that although the attachments to the emigration country for migrants' offspring will be different, for instance that they will be less

influenced by the norms of the emigration country (Kasinitz et al. 2008), they will still maintain some ties and symbolic attachments to the emigration country (Morawska 2003). Similarly, other studies argue for the central role of children in migration processes. For instance, fathers plan their circular migration according to children's life-stage (Kilkey et al. 2014) or that their future prospect is an important motivator for the initiation of 'migration projects' (Pribilsky 2014). As assimilation is supposed to be favoring education success (see for an overview, Kao and Tienda 1995), the decrease of transnational ties over time and generations has been interpreted as a sign for the upward social mobility of migrants' offspring.

Transnational social spaces have distinct properties that affect in a distinct way the lives of the people located within them, such as the overlaps in 'cultural orders' (Amelina 2010) which make it likely for people to encounter situations of competing expectations and norms. The most important cultural system is language (Brubaker 2013). Since it is crucial for social life and because it is a 'categorically differentiated cultural practice that simultaneously unite[s] and divide[s]' (p. 3), language is a crucial prerequisite for the participation in transnational social spaces. The definition of language put forward by Brubaker (2013) argues that language is a relevant cultural practice uniting people together, but also in marking differences between people. As the transnational literature states that attachments to place are predominantly attachments to the people who live in places (Fog Olwig 2007), the involvement of children in transnational social spaces largely depends on their abilities to communicate and interact.

Although language is crucial for social life, and therefore also (and maybe even stronger because of lack of physical co-presence in daily life) for social life across borders, transnational scholars have surprisingly not devoted much attention until now to the transmission of the emigration countries' language to the next generation. Contrarily, socio-linguistics has investigated bi-and multilingualism and its outcomes on the development of children for several decades (for an overview, see Jańczak 2013). Recently, they have also analyzed the role of bi-or multilingualism in transnational families (see, Fogle and King 2013). Fogle and King (2013) for instance emphasize the central role of language as an active dimension of parenting with the term 'family language policy', which refers to the decisions and practices within caretaker-child relations with regard to language. These might be active and overt, but also implicit, and are negotiated and modified over time (p. 2). These studies however do not shed light on the role of language for how transnational families 'hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely "familyhood", even across national borders' (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002: 3).

Contrarily to language, dealing with absence in transnational families is a common topic. Studies prove that physical separation does not impede, but modify intergenerational contracts (Krzyżowski and Mucha, 2013) and acknowledge the role of ICT for keeping together (e.g. Wilding 2006), which often do not compensate, but ease the longing for physical co-presence (McGhee et al. 2013). Nevertheless, ICT are common means for communicating with each other across borders and a medium through which children can participate in transnational family life (Baldassar and Merla 2013). Yet, in order to communicate through ICT, children need to have the competency to speak and understand the emigration countries' language, in cases where the immigration and the emigration country main language differs. The experiences and strategies in terms of language in childrearing practices are at the core of this paper. It is argued that they are an important dimension of childrearing in transnational social spaces and reveal the future reproduction of transnational social spaces and their unequal structures.

Methodology

This article draws on a research project conducted between 2012 and 2015 at Bielefeld University[2]. Within the project, 300 ego-centric network charts were collected and semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sub-sample of 60 respondents. 30 interviews[3] were conducted in the countries of emigration with significant others of respondents in Germany as well as with people without migration experiences (see, Barglowski et al. 2015b). This article draws solely from the subsample of Polish migrants in Germany (n=20) as well as the insights from the interviews with the significant others in Poland (n=10). Moreover, insights from the interviews are complemented by participant observations in respondents' households. The sample has an equal gender distribution with an age ranging from 22 to 78. Of these, eight had Polish citizenship, eight had German/Polish dual citizenship and four were naturalized German citizens; eleven were married, four were single, three were divorced and only two were in an on-going relationship. Ten had a university degree, seven had completed vocational training, two were students at the time of the interview and one had graduated from secondary school. Respondents with degrees had received them in both

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[2] https://sfb882.uni-bielefeld.de/en

[3] All the quotes in this article have been translated by me from Polish to English.

countries. Thirteen of the interviews were conducted in Polish and the other seven in German. Fourteen respondents had at least one child. All the interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed according to social-science hermeneutics with the aim to reconstruct the processes of meaning making (see Barglowski et al., 2015b). 4 recently migrated, 1 less than ten years ago, 3 migrated 10-15 years ago and 12 migrated more than 20 years ago. With this profile we would not expect very high transnational activities. And indeed those who are located in Germany longer have less transnational contacts. But, that does not mean that having contacts to Poland is not relevant at all. Although the ties to people do decrease with time, in line with most findings within transnational scholarship, some contacts abroad remain very important, among which are predominantly family contacts. In general, parents aim to have their children well adapted in the immigration and the emigration context, which they mainly try to achieve through language. Which orientation prevails depends on the position in the migration process and children's life-stage. Accordingly, the following empirical sections are structured according to two phases of the migration process: the first phase comprises the pre-migration phase and shortly after arrival. The second phase is the phase in which children are perceived as 'adapted' in the immigrant society. The length and stage of the two phases vary within the sample, but they represent two typical stages of experiences in migration processes.

The first phase of migration: Migrant parents' education orientation

The first phase of migration typically includes the time shortly before and after migration. In this phase, parents are mainly oriented toward their children's incorporation into the German education system. This involves learning the language as fast as possible and encouraging children to make German-speaking friends. This is not exclusive for the migrant population studied here, but can be assumed to be true for all migrant population around the world. Kao and Tienda (1995) for instance found that migrants in general have higher educational aspirations for their children than non-migrants. Yet, the means they have to successfully place their children in the education system are very different. In general studies prove that children of Polish migrants do comparatively well in the German education system. Segeritz et al. (2010) for instance found no differences in the education outcomes of Polish migrant children and non-migrant children. The success of Polish migrant children in the education system of the immigration country is often referred to the high education aspirations of Polish migrants (Lopez Rodriguez 2012). In her unique study on Polish mothers' educational aspirations and their interactions with the education system, Magdalena Lopez Rodriguez (2012) states that 'regardless of class, they have robust educational capital, represented in the form

of meeting the educational standards and expectations as set by the English mainstream educational institutions, which they deploy notwithstanding their ascribed class or educational levels' (p. 340). The empirical data gathered in my study also reveal that Polish migrants in general have high educational aspirations for their children. These are expressed in their wish to place their children in Gymnasium, which is the highest secondary schooling form in Germany. In line with the findings by Lopez Rodriguez, these aspirations were independent from class, but the means parents have to fulfill them are influenced by their capital disposition.

Bożena is one example of someone with high educational aspiration for her children, with herself being not very highly educated. She migrated in 2011 from Poland to Germany with her two sons who were 6 and 14 at the time. Her husband works as a construction worker and was commuting for several years between Poland and Germany, and later on also to the Netherlands and Belgium. As a common pattern of Poland's accession to the European Union, many who previously commuted decided to settle down in Germany. For Bożena, as also represented by many other families, her decision to settle abroad was not yielded by the wish to migrate but a wish to unite the nuclear family. She wanted to live together with her husband and children in one household, because this represents for her 'a normal' family life. The story of Bożena does only reveal that not all migration projects are started with a wish to migrate, but that migration means different losses for different types of people. For men, the pressure from the wives to stop commuting often comes with losses for their husbands when they after settling cannot offset their status loss in the immigration country by resources from the emigration country (Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2003). Women often report the loss of jobs and career prospects, family and friends and they also suffer when they cannot speak the language and do not feel as they could re-establish the same life abroad as they had before migration. The unification of the family and better-perceived future life-chances of children in Germany are then often used as rationalization strategies for these losses. But also not all children are perceived as having the same opportunities. Bożena when asked about what migration meant to her answered the following:

> What changed is that the children will maybe have a better education here, like chances for an easy life. Well, I don't know, I feel like that, but I am not sure. Many people tell me that. Hmm although maybe not the older one. He was 14 when we came and he directly got enrolled in Hauptschule. Then I think the older will have a worse chance, that's what they say. But the younger was in the first grade of primary school when we came. So he will maybe be attending Gymnasium. What I heard from other Poles is that the younger will have better opportunities in education and in the start of his life (Bozena, aged 40).

This quote, similarly like other respondents reveal that migration is patterned around a sensitivity of children's life-stages and their concomitant school careers (see also Ryan & Sales, 2011). The older the child is, the less its chances are to adapt neatly into the immigration

countries' education system. The older children are by time of migration, the more they run the risk of being stigmatized as a migrant and the lower the assumed chances are for them to overcome this with time. This indicates the inequalities within families in terms of the age of the siblings, who are supposed to have different chances of educational success. Migrant children are especially disadvantaged in school systems with an early selection from primary to secondary school, as the German system is a prime example of. In such systems, migrant children have less time to develop a habitus which is adequate for the immigration countries' education system. As Bourdieu & Passeron (1990 [1972]) indicated quite early, the education system allocates, channels, and classifies students based on their class-specific habitus. The performance of students cannot be separated from their habitus and is rather used to legitimize the class-related inequalities in education than it is an indicator for their different proficiency. In Bożena's case, her son has been directed to Hauptschule directly after migration, which is a common practice of the school council to channel migrant children independently of their skills and abilities into the lowest schooling segment. This is often not only providing worse educational opportunities but also means that they usually remain there with low chances for improvement. According to Becker and Lauterbach (2010), the secondary schooling system in Germany is characterized by a low degree of upward mobility between the highly segmented and homogeneous (in terms of parental background) school forms. Others can circumnavigate their children being channeled into lower segments of the German education system, such as Andżelika. After her husband, a computer scientist, found a job in Germany, she joined him with their three children shortly after in 2011. One of her sons was advised to pass an IQ test by the kindergarten teachers because they assumed him to have developmental deficiencies and thought about enrolling him into a school for children with special pedagogical needs. Andżelika opposed the thought of her son having developmental needs and rather referred to his performance as a 'stress reaction' brought about by migration. She was sure that he is a very talented and intelligent child:

> Well this kind of stress reaction is very common and I immediately wrote to them, you know in a German style, that if you conduct IQ tests, we have to control for the language dimension, and there are tests in the USA, which were invented to test ethnic minorities, and that they should test him with that, because I guarantee this kid's intelligence and development is good. And if the pedagogues are not capable of doing those tests, then they are not able of fulfilling their jobs and that I will not go in any way to a special school. And they did the test and it appeared that the kid is very talented. But as I say, I had to take care of it and I think not many people would be capable of resisting and surely many of their children end up somewhere there. I heard a lot such stories (Andżelika, aged 40).

Andżelika, with her professional knowledge and habitual self-esteem in judging her son's abilities, could circumvent him to being placed in a special school. For some children, that may have been a 'dead end' in their educational careers. Migrant children are predominantly affected in this regard (Diefenbach, 2008). The interesting aspect here is not only that An-

dzelika has the ability to professionally intervene into the situation, but that she also refers to her knowledge about German culture. She actively reflects that the communication in this respect needs to be written and bureaucratic, the 'German style'. The ability to understand the norms of the immigration country can be conceived of as a specific form of cultural capital, which Andżelika possesses. How migrants transport their cultural capital across borders is a topic of ongoing scientific interest (Nohl et al. 2014). This is because the valuation of skills, degrees, and orientations, usually understood as cultural capital, depends on social processes of recognition, which were historically staged within nation states. Therefore, many migrants cannot transport their cultural capital from one country to another, although there is rising indication that some migrant groups can, such as highly skilled migrants (Weiss, 2005).

Besides cultural capital, another important form of capital is social capital, which is usually defined as the access to social networks which can provide valuable resources. Emilia's story offers an empirical example of how social networks can make up for lacks in cultural capital. Her migration pattern is very similar to Bożena. She migrated after 2011 to settle with her husband who had been commuting. Right after coming to Germany, her 11-year old daughter was enrolled at Hauptschule by the school council. Since her daughter was a very good student in Poland and because Emilia heard rumors that Hauptschule provides very low chances for successful education, she contacted other Polish migrants through an online platform called '*My Polacy*' and got to know Marta, who is a teacher in Germany. Marta advised that she does not have to enroll her daughter at Hauptschule. They decided to enroll the daughter at the Gymnasium, where Marta works. In turn, since Emilia hasn't found a job yet, she helps Marta out with her children. Bourdieu's capital approach (1986) states, that the forms of capital can be transformed, in the sense that one form of capital can make up for lacks in another. Based on this, migration researchers frequently indicate the relevance of social capital in migration settings for the formation of ethnic communities as well as patterns of social mobility (Portes 1998). Alejandro Portes argues that social capital can account for downward social mobility through leveling processes and social control as well as resources provided in ethnic communities and the formation of economic ethnic niches. The example of Emilia indicates that this also applies to how parents with lower cultural capital can make up for their lacks in knowledge of the German education system. In that regard, her case adds to the recent literature on capital conversion in transnational social spaces (Plüss 2013, Nowicka 2013). The main means by which parents transmit language is the household and the 'family language policy' (Fogle and King 2013) that can be found within the household. Yet, in both phases of the migration process, where different languages are at the core of the language policy, parents face different challenges. In this phase, where learning German is

at the top of the agenda, they are largely worried with their own, non-native, German speaking ability. Therefore, they encourage children to consume German speaking media at home and to make German speaking friends. In the next phase of their migraiton, they are rather worried about their children losing touch to Poland.

The second phase of migration: actively taking care of children's 'Polishness'

In the second phase of migration, migrant parents experience that their children lose the ability and the inclination to communicate in Polish. How long after the immigration to Germany this occurs varies across the sample. Recently in the German media, the adult offspring of people who migrated during the 1970s and 80s expressed their experiences that their parents did not encourage them to speak Polish, or sometimes even suppressed their ability to do so. Respondents' stories in the study here reveal that the wish to teach their children Polish varies among those who migrated during the 1970s and 1980s. Some of them intended to rapidly incorporate into Germany, which meant that it was important to them to learn German very fast and communicate predominantly in German. Studies attribute this to the fact that Polish migrants often migrated as 'ethnic Germans'. This was one of the few opportunities to emigrate from Poland at those times and led many people to 'find some German ancestor'. Therefore many were anxious about being prosecuted for having immigrated under false premises and put a lot of emphasis on a rapid integration (Fassmann and Münz 1994). Moreover, for those migrants, the borders to Poland were more or less closed and even visiting Poland was a venturous enterprise. However, a closer look at those migrants who performed this kind of incorporation pattern (for instance by giving their children typically German names) often maintain ties to people in Poland. This is case of Danuta. She migrated in the 1980s as an ethnic German. She is the only person in my sample that did not encourage her children to learn and speak German and gave them typically German names. Although her children nowadays are not very attached to Poland, she herself is an active member of an association in the rural region where she migrated from.

Others, as in most cases in this sample, however, those who migrated as 'ethnic Germans' during the 1980s did care for their children's Polish speaking abilities. An illustrative example is Mateusz, who migrated in the beginning of the 1980s as a 2-year old child with his parents and 13 year old sister. After migration, both parents started working. Their child care strategy reveals sensitivity to their children's life-stage. While his sister was enrolled in a boarding school for a 'rapid integration', his grandmother came from Poland to take care of Mateusz.

This example illustrates that taking care of children's Polish speaking abilities, in addition to the phenomenon of commuting grandmothers, is by no means a product of the EU enlargement (for an overview, Kofman 2012, see also Barglowski et al. 2015a).

In the first phase of migration, parents are mostly orientated toward taking care of their children's German speaking abilities and success at school. Then, there comes a time in the life-course of their children when they discover that children do not automatically preserve the Polish language. Insights from socio-linguists, the interviews, and participant observation at home reveal diverse strategies for how parents aim to maintain their children's Polish language abilities. The main mode for establishing a Polish speaking environment at home is communication with relatives in Poland, mainly through Skype. In the first phase parents are usually focused on teaching their children Polish. After children are perceived to be adapted well in Germany, their 'Polishness' becomes the focus of attention. There are challenges insofar that they actively have to adopt language acquisition into their parenting strategies. A quote of Aneta illustrates this best. She migrated in the 1980s with her husband and today they have three children:

> Well if you decide that your child goes straight and only into the German language, then there is no problem. But that is at the expense of the Polish. If you want to maintain a balance, then some problems may occur. You then have to take care of it and support it. You would then have to look at it all the time and pay attention that there is a kind of level maintained. If you want to have your children attending the Gymnasium [highest secondary school in Germany; KB], then they need to have a certain degree of German, and at the same time, if you want to have them a proper Polish language like we want them to speak, write and read it, then you really need to take care of it (Aneta, aged 40).

Like in other respondent narratives, there are parenting challenges in different life-stages of children expressed here. The wish for the upward social mobility of their children, here signified by Gymnasium and the German language, may be at the expense of their Polish language skills. Having both is perceived as a challenge. During the time shortly after migration, or when migrant parents give birth to children and do not feel competent enough to teach their children German, they actively establish a German speaking surrounding. Yet with time, they experience that their children are far better in German and that they lose their Polish speaking abilities. This usually happens when children start to spend more time outside the household. The transition to primary school is often experienced as critical in terms of children changing their dominant language from Polish to German. The experiences of Adam and Zosia are typical. They have two children, both born in Germany:

> Adam: When our daughter was in kindergarten we were very proud about how well she speaks Polish.
> Zosia: And she also reads in Polish.
> Adam: Well yes, but you have to take care about that.

> Zosia: Yes, you have to take care. Now, when she is at the end of the first grade, I have the feeling that at the beginning she was even in both languages, but now it's easier for her in German (Both aged around 40).

The role of language in migration contexts is twofold. On the one hand it may be a marker of parenting success (see also Reynolds and Zontini 2014, but language is also a unifying medium: in that it creates boundaries between ethnicized groups, it also is a source of common experiences and identity within groups (Brubaker 2013). Therefore, many migrant parents fear to lose that common experience with their children. Even in cases where they do speak German very well and could be communicating with their children in German, they prefer to do so in Polish. A prime example for 'family language policy' is how families spend time together, commonly it is watching movies. While in the first phase of migration, those movie events are often done in German, later on parents prefer to watch them with their children in Polish. As Aneta and her husband Janek explain:

> Janek: We watch movies together, for example "Shrek" or "Puss in Boots". We watch them in Polish and the kids even wait for the Polish version, because they know…
>
> Aneta: ...that it will be funnier. For them it is easy to watch them in Polish, its actually the same for them whether they watch in German or in Polish. But we prefer to wait [Janek: for the Polish version] simply because it is more funny. Before, we watched movies in German. It was funny, but not the same. When we watch in Polish, it is much more funny. (Both aged around 40).

Because language is important in unifying and creating a sense of belonging in the migrant household, it also is a medium of creating and maintaining the transnational family. The role of children in keeping transnational families together has been emphasized earlier by Orellana et al (2001). A common experience is that over time, children switch their favorite language from Polish to German, which is often manifested in children speaking with their siblings in German. This is interpreted as a loss for their children and for relatives. Especially for relatives abroad, the fact that their grandchildren abroad will not be able to communicate with them is a constant topic of sorrow. For instance, as Andzelika reports, her mother is really '*suffering when she hears them talking with each other in German, it's even a kind of trauma for her'*. The fact that grandchildren speaking German is experienced as a sorrow for grandparents abroad is embedded in the German-Polish history. There were many incidents throughout history in which Germans intended to suppress the Polish language and habits and the interviews reveal that the fear of 'Germanization' is still vivid (Schmidtke 2004).

One way to avoid conflicts within transnational families is an extensive use of Skype. My participant observations, but also interviewees' reports, reveal that many migrants are in a very regular contact with their relatives, mainly parents and siblings abroad. Janek and Aneta for instance have Skype constantly on and share meals together with their families abroad. They also report, that even though their children often do not want to talk Polish, they hope that

simply by listening to their grandparents they will catch and maintain Polish language. As also McGhee et al (2013) reports, Skype is crucial for transnational family life as it eases the longing for physical co-presence.

Another common way of teaching children the Polish language in a German speaking environment is Polish schools. Such institutions are usually part of Polish churches and offer courses in Polish language, but also in Polish history and traditions. The great majority of respondents, albeit with a different regularity, make use of Polish schools. Instruction usually takes place on the weekends and many parents report conflicts with their children regarding the weekend schools. Children often do not want to go or feel tired. Therefore, as it requires effort to have their children speaking both languages, their bilingualism is a source of parents' pride and signifier of parenting success. Moreover, some parents also expect the bilingualism of their children to be an asset for them in a transnational social space, where processes of settlement are continuous and borders are fluid as probably never before (Amelina and Vasilache 2014).

Discussion

A main topic in transnational studies is the question of strategies and dynamics of social life across borders. It is being argued that transnational incorporation might be a new mode of incorporation which juxtaposes or even supersedes the incorporation into nation states. As migrants and their networks are involved in the production of transnational social spaces (Faist 2000), the ways they raise their children offers insight into the future development and reproduction of transnational social spaces. Based on interviews with Polish migrants in Germany and participant observations at their homes, this article showed how parents intend to ensure their children's incorporation in transnational social spaces. The major competency for transnational incorporation is their children's language abilities. Although the role of communication media for keeping transnational families together has been emphasized by many migration scholars (e.g. Wilding 2006), the ways migrants take care of their children's language skills is a marginal topic. This is surprising, as language is the precondition for successful integration into immigration countries and plays a crucial role for feelings of belonging and social life in general (Brubaker 2013). The study here showed that language plays a major role and migrant parents' parenting in that they establish contexts in which their children can acquire and maintain the respective language skills. Which language, the immigration or the emigration countries' one, is being pushed by parents is orientated toward children's stage in their life-course as well as in the migration process. While in the initial phase of their

migration process they are mainly involved in teaching their children the language of the im-migration country, all of them experience a point in time where their children begin to lose the attachment to the emigration country, signified by their hesitant usage of the Polish language.

As the major source of the transmission of cultural capital is the family, in both ideal-typical steps of the migration process, the household and its 'family language policy' (Fogle and King 2013) is a major source of how parents manage the language acquisition and mainte-nance of their children. Strategies, however, are always embedded in the availability of insti-tutional infras

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