UPWARD SOCIAL MOBILITY THROUGH EDUCATION IN GERMAN-IRANIAN BIOGRAPHIES: A PSYCHOSO-CIAL PERSPECTIVE ON INTERGENERATIONAL DY-NAMICS DURING ADOLESCENCE

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In many migrant families, educational achievements play a central role and can lead to intergenerational tensions, in particular when the parents endured a loss of social status. Therefore, many parents arriving in Western societies attribute a high value to educational attainments for their children who are often confronted with institutional discrimination in schools. On this basis, the significance of education in migrant families and the psychosocial effects of intergenerational dynamics on individuals and their biographies, especially during adolescence, will be discussed in this paper. Two different patterns can be worked out through contrasting two biographical narratives. In both cases, education becomes a pressing identity issue and course-setting in adolescence: Although in the first case this leads to a reformulated orientation toward the upward mobility expectations of the parents; in the second case, educational advancement offers a way out of difficult social and economic circumstances and provides psychological stability.

Keywords: Migration, discrimination, education, families, adolescence, social mobility, intergenerational dynamics

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite multiple criticisms of a "myth of meritocracy," hopes for social advancement through education are widespread – especially among migrant families (Bloodworth 2017; Bourdieu 2018). Particularly in the context of a migration that has been accompanied by a loss of social status, great importance is often attached to the educational attainments of children attending school in the country of arrival. Various studies have thus shown that many migrant families arriving in Western countries attach great importance to the education of their children (cf. Salikutluk 2013; Hadjar/Scharf 2019), while they are often confronted with institutionalized discrimination in schools, meaning that the causes of deprivation are embedded in the normal operation of organizations and not necessarily only the result of individual hostility (cf. Carmichael/Hamilton 1967; Gillborn et al. 2013; Gomolla 2021). These forms of social discrimination, some of which are difficult to grasp or name,

then give rise to different ways of coping by individuals who are perceived as members of a migrant group (cf. King et al. 2013).

This paper argues from a psychosocial perspective and considers the subjects and their psyches in their social conditionality and framing (cf. Frost 2019). In this sense, individuals are "both the product of social forces and of their specific psychic worlds" (ibid., 115) which are mutually constitutive. In an illumination of different approaches of *psychosocial theories*, Frost determines the following features as central and unifying:

[T]he subject is understood as passionate, ambivalent and emotionally driven, existing outside (but defined within) the rational processes of language. Importantly, this is a social subject existing in a world of power relations and status hierarchies. Psychosocial theory is able to explicate the emotional experience which in relation to all encounters [...] defines the nature of the real and fantasised self and other in a co-constructed relationship. (2008, 4)

Psychosocial theory has famous roots in critical social theory – especially in the tradition of Fromm, Marcuse and Adorno – and, against this background, scrutinizes the relationship of political and social entanglements with internalized ideas and the subjects' imagination (King 2020). Various sociological questions about suffering within social realities (e.g., Wilkinson 2004; Ehrenberg 2016; King et al. 2019) are taken up in this context and questioned based on empirical observations of the mutual constitution between psyche and social structures. Based on this, emotions such as shame, fear, and anger can be considered in the interconnectedness of social and psychological dimensions (cf. Froggett 2002; Jimenez/Walkerdinge 2011). For the analysis of interviews, which will be the focus of this paper, the goal is to look at the self-presentation of the interviewees in their social situatedness.

Against this background, the significance of education in migrant families and, in this context, the psychosocial effects of intergenerational constellations (e.g., implicit obligations for social advancement) will be discussed in this paper. This analysis is based on two biographical interviews with German-Iranians who migrated to Germany during childhood with their families and are educational climbers in relation to their parents. We use this material to explore and follow the *research question* of how social advancement through education is experienced and processed in adolescence psychosocially – especially against the background of intergenerational dynamics.

2. THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND

The significance of family is a central and recurrent theme in migration research. This may refer, for instance, to family care relationships across borders, transnational family narratives, global kinship networks, and their associated financial remittances, as well as to desires to found a family through migration (cf. Montero-Sieburth et al. 2021). Many studies focus on questions of mutual expectations and attributions between generations (cf. Foner 2009; Foner/Dreby 2011) – especially expectations of the first generation of immigrants towards the second (Alba/Waters

2011). Because migration very frequently involves costs or sacrifices and poses a risk (in very different ways) to those involved; it is in many cases accompanied by great hopes of improving the situation for all concerned. This phenomenon has been termed "immigrant optimism" by Kao and Tienda (1995, 1998). In particular, parents who have migrated themselves tend to have high expectations for improvement in the economic situation of the family and high educational aspirations for their children. The desire to improve their living situation is thus transmitted to the next generation (ibid.; Dreby 2010; Hadjar/Scharf 2019). At the same time, it has to be emphasized at this point that the concrete educational aspirations always have to be explained within their respective contexts. While quantitative studies, on average, find higher educational aspirations in migrant families, their very heterogeneous contexts, such as migration background and individual history, are central aspects that need to be considered (cf. van de Werfhorst/Heath 2019).

While such hopes for improvement are often hard to realize in the short term, they can lead to high aspirations and efforts for upward social mobility in migrant families. This, in turn, is accompanied by numerous mutual expectations and dependencies between individual family members. On the one hand, this can be described as an implicit "gift contract" (Attias-Donfut/Cook 2017, 120) between generations, leading to obligations to succeed in the country of arrival. On the other hand, there are numerous renegotiations of familial order in the country of arrival (ibid.). In turn, education plays a key role in realizing social advancement. In this context, it is important to emphasize that these are reciprocal generational relationships, not only unidirectional transmissions. Just as children are influenced by their parents' expectations, parents can also be influenced by changes in their children's dispositions in the country of arrival.

The chance of upward social mobility through education has been the subject of controversial debates in sociological theory and research. Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) famously described the narrative of advancement through education as an illusion and as a myth that disguises social barriers and hierarchies (see also:

Bloodworth 2017; Bourdieu 2018) – a critique that has been empirically substantiated in the meantime. Reasons for the reproduction of inequalities in and through education can be located in a complex design of discourses, institutional structures and practices as well as social orders (cf. Akkan/Bugra 2021; Emmerich/Hormel 2021; Horvath/Leemann 2021). Compared with other paths to social advancement, however, educational attainment still remains the most realistic option and is therefore particularly targeted by many migrant families who have experienced a loss of social status. Studies have therefore not only highlighted the importance of social advancement in the context of migration (see above), but also above-average educational aspirations compared to families from the "majority society" in similar social classes (cf. Salikutluk 2013; Hadjar/Scharf 2019; Miyamoto et al. 2020; Dochow/Neumeyer 2021).

Overall, however, aspirations and realized successes of migrants do diverge and migrants from various countries experience discrimination and disadvantages in educational institutions (cf. Moldenhawer et al. 2009). In the case of Germany, for instance, the following factors can be identified. For refugees, especially, there is limited access to the education system and there are delays until a regular school can be attended (El-Mafaalani/Massumi 2019, 12–13). Furthermore, language barriers occur in connection with a still predominantly monolingual habitus in German schools (Gogolin 1994; Ellis et al. 2011; Fürstenau 2016). Moreover, differences and unequal opportunities are not sufficiently reduced in German schools; rather, differences are solidified and continuously reproduced or even produced through institutionalized practices (Fernandez-Kelly 2012; Emmerich/Hormel 2021; Gomolla 2021). Another factor can be seen in housing policies and segregation in many cities and municipalities, leading to exclusion by place of residence and less favorable conditions in the arriving neighborhood (e.g., in the schools that can be attended there) (cf. Glitz 2012).

These and other factors leave many migrants frustrated and lead to different conflicts in migrant families. As King and colleagues have pointed out (cf. King 2018; King et al. 2013), the

phase of the descendants' adolescence is of particular importance in this context. In general, adolescence can be understood as a transition from childhood to adulthood which is accompanied by numerous demands and requirements, such as the psychosocial processing of bodily changes as well as the emotional processing of detachment in dealing with the specific new social demands of this life phase. Transition to adulthood varies significantly, depending on time and culture as well as on chances and possibilities in the respective society (cf. Schlegel/Barry 1991; Hewlett 2013; King et al. 2013). The developmental and transformational processes of adolescence do not simply occur individually, but are embedded in an intersubjective and intergenerational relationship. In this way, the (latent) psychic and social familial heritage is transmitted in the context of migration (King 2016). The parental transmission of unprocessed migration experiences manifests itself in the descendants' confrontation with typical adolescent identity questions: Where do I come from? Who am I? And where do I want to go? Such questions are not only related to the biographical past, present, and future, but are also linked inevitably to their ancestors' migration experiences and their transmissions. Adolescence also typically marks the beginning of a more intensive confrontation with issues of social inequality, hierarchies, and forms of discrimination (cf. Bourdieu 1993; Lareau/Cox 2011; King et al. 2013).

While adolescence is therefore often accompanied by the processing of crises, growing up in the context of migration can represent a particular intensification of this crisis, as the "developmental challenges of migration are interwoven with those of migration" (King 2018, 24). Based on their respective intergenerational entanglement, different mechanisms to cope with these challenges arise (King et al. 2013) – such as strong adaptation, helpless revenge, or creative transformation (King 2018). As has been highlighted (cf. Foner/Dreby 2011; King 2018), the psychosocial configurations and interconnections of upward social mobility in the context of migration and adolescence remain underexamined. While scholars often stress the importance of social advancement in the context of migration (cf. Feliciano 2006; Papademetriou et al. 2009; Attias-Donfut/Cook 2017), it is rarely

interpreted in the context of complex intergenerational mandates and their psychosocial processing on the part of individual subjects. This is where the present analysis comes in. Based on biographical interviews with "educationally successful" German-Iranians, different intergenerational dynamics are elaborated that refer to the processing of migration and migration-related discrimination, on the one hand, and adolescence, on the other.

3. SAMPLING AND CONTEXT

The interviews we refer to were conducted as part of a dissertation project on the topic of "optimization pressure in the context of migration" (cf. Uhlendorf 2018, 2020). The study reconstructed discourses about and biographical narratives of German-Iranians who are considered "educationally successful." Hence, the prerequisite for inclusion in the sample was that the interviewees had at least a university entrance qualification and, in many cases, were also following an academic career path. At the time of the interviews, they were between 25 and 40 years old.

From a statistical point of view, German-Iranians stand out due to the large number of advanced educational qualifications within this group and, against this background, they are often regarded as an example of a migrant group with a high level of educational success (cf. Woellert/Klingholz 2014; Destatis 2017). Although many adult migrants of that group have experienced a devaluation of their qualifications, a high percentage of their descendants have been able to advance through education in the German school system (Destatis 2017). On the other hand, however, German-Iranians are subject to negative, orientalizing devaluation and are presented in various public discourses as "folk devils" (Cohen 2002) in Germany.

In this respect, this paper deals with the psychosocial dynamics in the nexus of migration, social advancement through education, and adolescence. For this purpose, narrative, biographical interviews (cf. Schütze 2016) with "educationally successful" German-Iranians who migrated during childhood with their own families serve as data material. This raises the question of how individual experiences are represented in narratives and in what way social themes are constructed through this process (cf. Charmaz 2003). During the interview,[1] participants were asked to describe their lives as comprehensively as possible. Based on a pool of 11 interviews, two biographical narratives were selected that contrast strongly in terms of their configuration of education, migration, and adolescence.[2] Complementing the analysis in the aforementioned dissertation project, the interpretation in this article is conducted from a *psychosocial* perspective, taking the mutual constitution of psyche and society into account. In the tradition of *grounded theory methodology* (Glaser/Strauss 1967; Corbin/Strauss 2015), open coding took place first, which was then condensed into overarching categories. These in turn served to contrast the two cases presented and to analyze their intergenerational dynamics.

In the following section, the two biographical cases are first described separately (chapter 4) and then contrasted with regard to the entanglements of education, migration, and adolescence (chapter 5).

4. RESULTS

4.1 Biographical Analysis I: Sapideh – "Make something out of it, go further."

Sapideh was 32 years old at the time of the interview and grew up with her sister and brother in Iran. In the 1980s, when she was 5 years old, the family escaped to Germany due to a worsening threat situation: Bombings were getting closer, so close that her father was in danger in the immediate vicinity of his workplace. Moreover, there was another particular concern for their mother, decisive with regard to the restricted freedom rights for women which would probably also affect the future life of her daughters.

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[1] Each interview lasted one to three hours in a single sitting.
[2] We present case one in more detail, while we concentrate on additional aspects and results with case two.

The escape was the initiative of Sapideh's mother who is portrayed in the interview as powerful and assertive: "My mother has always been a kind of doer in our family." Her mother was able to continue her professional work through re-training in Germany, as there was a shortage of skilled workers in this field. Her father, however, lost his formal status as a civil servant and first took up a job as a kiosk salesman before he became a kiosk owner. With self-employment, more self-determination was possible and, in addition, he attempted to make himself less dependent on others. This, however, brought with it the potential danger of going bankrupt. On the one hand, the father is seen in Sapideh's narrative as mainly absent due to the high volume of work caused by his self-employment. In other passages of the interview, however, he is described as very present in taking care of the family. For example, he was most likely to do the cooking. In Germany, the mother began to suffer more and more from the hardships of migration, like struggling against discriminating attributions as well as from health issues. Finally, as a result of her exhaustion and physical complaints, she took early retirement.

Overall, the family had good socio-economic resources and a large family network in both countries, which was supportive before the flight and upon arrival in Germany. This is presented in the interview as being very helpful both for the flight as well as for the asylum process. However, in Sapideh's rendition of her parents' memories, the risks and dangers of escape also stand out, especially a short but far-reaching separation between the parents and their three children. Since then, separation and distance within the family seemed to be dangerous to the parents and were therefore avoided and it was attempted to prevent them in the country of arrival.

In view of the restrictive and partly (life-)threatening experiences in Iran and on the run as well as the parents' sacrifices and hardships in the country of arrival, parental expectations of freedom and security as well as for education and family closeness ("we stay together"), emerged in Sapideh's case.

With regard to her career, Sapideh fulfilled parental expectations par excellence, which is reflected in her educational advancement. After primary school, she went to a secondary school with an academic focus and then studied economics.[3] She embarked on an academic career, completed her doctorate with honors, and was employed as a postdoctoral research assistant at the time of the interview. According to her descriptions of parental expectations, there was no alternative to an education-oriented life course:

"Of course, education was always in the foreground, so it was also very much expected, learn, learn, learn, but also learn on your own, so I didn't have any support in everyday life like my parents helping me with my homework or things like that. Instead, the question was, do you still have homework to do? Mh, yes. In which subjects? This and that. And, well, then do it now."

On the one hand, the parents' heavy workload, language barriers, and, in particular, their lack of knowledge of the school system in Germany resulted in a lack of support for homework and school. On the other hand, however, Sapideh's mother is described as very "present" in her school life:

"My mother had no idea about the education system, how it works. But then she heard that there is a division into three school types and that the Gymnasium is the best school and that if you go to the Gymnasium and pass the A-levels, then you can go to university and for my parents it was very important that we children go to university and that we get an appropriate education. We had no idea how to do it, but it had to be that way,

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[3] After the common elementary school level, the German school system is divided into different secondary schools, which can be attended depending on the performance and preference of the parents. Sapideh attended a so-called "Gymnasium," which is characterized by an academic focus from the beginning. In contrast, a university entrance qualification is only one possible option or not an option at all in other school types. Since the career path of the interviewees is quite important in the context of the topic described here, we translate "Gymnasium" in this paper as secondary school with an academic focus.

they had huge educational ambitions [...] so actually we had no idea at all, we always stumbled along through the day, that's how I feel."

Sapideh's parents' educational expectations, which seem to have had no alternative and were irrevocable, are contrasted with the children's lack of orientation and insecurity in the family, which, in addition to a lack of parental support, resulted in particular from experiences of exclusion at school. Here, the mother is also portrayed as very present, resistant, and assertive:

"She [the teacher] made a separation between foreign children and German children, and you could tell that because we weren't allowed to sit together. My mother again, as always, showed herself to be very engaged at school. She went there and demanded that I be allowed to sit next to Andrea and Lena, because they were my friends, and speaking first with the teacher and then directly to the principal and pushed it through."

Likewise, at the transition from primary to secondary school, which is, combined with a selection practice, significant in the German school system, the mother fought for the rights of her daughter. Sapideh did not receive a recommendation for a secondary school with an academic option, even though she had the required grades. Her primary school also withheld essential information from her parents concerning registering her at the targeted school. Again, her mother took the initiative with the principal to push through the possibility of her daughter attending a prestigious school.

With regard to the intergenerational dynamic, the increasing distance from the family due to a foreign education system and a change of milieu as a side effect of successful social advancement is attempted to be balanced out by the mother through a close relationship ("don't tell strangers, tell me"). Therefore, for example, the nearest local secondary school with an academic focus was chosen for Sapideh and she was not allowed to participate in a study abroad program.

But how does Sapideh process and cope with her parents' expectations which bring about contradictory consequences? In the interview, the

phase of adolescence appears to be significant for the struggle with parental hopes: Sapideh rebelled against her parents by refusing their expectation of upward mobility. At one point, she describes how she "just stopped" studying for her A levels and almost failed in her final exams. This temporary drop in performance can be understood as an adolescent attempt at separation through challenging her parents' ideas, which is also expressed in her choice of her first boyfriend – who, contrary to the parental principles of freedom for women, took a religiously conservative stance. In this way, the typical adolescent questioning of parental ideas escalates into a questioning of the parents' migration project and everything they have fought for. This questioning during adolescence, however, culminates relatively soon in the adoption of the family upward mobility project and a strong orientation toward achievement. In her narrative, the gradual achievement of academic goals up to the goal of a permanent position at a university is in the foreground. The theme of achievement is also emphasized as a common guiding principle in her current partnership. Her partner motivates and supports her, also with regard to her uncertainties. In this respect, the adolescent rebellion described in the narrative can be understood as a temporary revision of the upward mobility project, while she remains very much committed to it again after this phase.

4.2. Biographical Analysis II: Jasmin – "I've been dirt-poor long enough."

Jasmin was 30 years old at the time of the interview. Her family also fled Iran in the 1980s when she and her twin brother were about two years old. In this case, the initiative also came from the mother because of the limited rights for women. The key event for the escape was a conflict between her mother and a modesty guard. However, compared to the case of Sapideh, the family had hardly any socio-economic resources. As a result, their flight was more distressing, which is reflected in the father's physical collapse upon arrival. However, both parents were able to resume their professions in Germany, the father as a shoemaker and the mother as a laundry owner.

In Jasmin's case, there was no explicit expectation from her parents to advance socially through

educational attainment. Rather, the educational advancement took place out of an experience of existential hardship. Jasmin's childhood situation is characterized by instability in the form of experiences of separation, discrimination, and marginalization; Jasmin's family remained in different accommodations for refugees for several years. The cramped living conditions and witnessing conflicts in the accommodations are, however, contrasted with vivid descriptions of friendships and a junkyard that she experienced as an adventure playground.

At the same time, she had already noticed segregation and poverty in her childhood. She had hardly any contact with children outside of the refugee accommodations; there was only one friend at school whose family did not mind her "being friends with children from the asylum seekers' accommodation." She became aware of starkly differing socio-economic conditions in her childhood, for instance at the birthday party of her only friend outside the accommodation. She recollects her memories in the following words: "She lives in a castle, she lives in a villa, it's huge, how big it is."

The situation within Jasmin's family also seems unstable in different respects. Her parents are described as absent because of their jobs and other duties. Jasmin and her brother were sent to a primary school far away in the morning and sometimes they did not arrive there, ending up in a forest or junkyard instead. Once, they were absent from school for a whole week. Against this background, she distinguishes her experiences from common educational ideals: "It was really chaotic [...]. It wasn't what you would call cared for and protected." The school is described as neither a supportive nor a compensatory environment. On the contrary, the different resources of the children become apparent and decisive for their educational path:

"You could already feel it in primary school. We were always short of everything, we were always short of pens and pencils, and we were always short of things where the person sitting next to us at the table was almost fully equipped with all the set squares, compasses, and so on, we were always short of something. You could feel that somehow, and until the seventh grade,

you can forget it, I didn't actively go to school, I was so passive, I kind of dragged myself there."

After primary school, Jasmin started to attend a secondary school without an academic focus, where she also experienced overt devaluation and downgrading from her teachers. For instance, she recalls one of her teachers' statements: "Well, if you don't like it here, why don't you go to Iran and weave carpets?" In contrast to Sapideh, however, she was left alone with her teacher and the situation and did not receive any help from her parents or others.

Jasmin's situation came to a head with her parents' separation when she and her twin brother were eleven years old. The children stayed with their father while the mother abandoned the family. Anger and despair are portrayed in the interview through the description of the consequences for her father: "For my father, I think, it was the worst time in his life. Abandoned by his wife with two angry children who somehow – who don't come home at night and smoke."

The situation within the family (absent mother and an overburdened father) on the one hand and the experience of marginalization due to societal segregation, poverty, and discrimination at school on the other hand led to a rather passive mode of participation during her education. A turning point, however, occurred during her adolescence.

First of all, her father met a new partner who is described as a second mother for the children. Jasmin describes her as caring and nurturing and illustrates the new existential security of basic needs with examples such as warm meals and packed lunches. The partner appeared present in the children's everyday life as an emotionally warm figure. Jasmin was able to accept this care at the same time as she points out in the interview: She stops smoking and starts doing sports and studying.

Moreover, the father's partner represented a different social status with more financial resources and is thus described as a gatekeeper to another world: "It was like a new life." Hence, there was a change of social milieu: The family moved from an outlying district to a rather privileged area of

the city. The father's partner provided a caring and supportive network that gave support and security, for example through a neighbor who offered Jasmin private tutoring.

Finally, the changed family situation and the supportive network also led to a turning point at school – "That was really such a turnaround" –, from passive school attendance combined with the experience of not being empowered to actively shaping her educational path. Jasmin received a recommendation to transfer to a secondary school with an academic focus and recounts that experiences of devaluation and downgrading due to her heritage did not take place at that school. Instead, she highlights the equal treatment of all students in her narrative: According to her perception, effort was most important, not the origin of the students, which she portrays as positive. However, during senior high school and in the A-levels, this equal treatment revealed her educational gaps due to her lack of resources. "Then you now notice that you have a different background and have deficits, a few gaps, while others from the Gymnasium somehow, from the seventh grade onwards, already had a higher level." She had to compete against other students and continuously demonstrate her abilities, while the unequal starting conditions were hardly ever considered and her effort was not necessarily acknowledged. Nevertheless, with some "cramming," she managed to graduate and completed an apprenticeship afterwards. Following a three-year professional activity, she began to study computer science with the aim of a Master's degree. At the beginning of her studies, she was afraid because of possible gaps in her education and lack of resources: "Well, I was really scared at the beginning and out of fear I studied so much that I somehow passed everything quite well." In the case of Jasmin, fear is dealt with by increasing performance. Overall, Jasmin presents herself as an achiever: "I have been dirt-poor long enough." Her twin brother, with whom she lived in a shared flat and who also studied at the same university, was an essential emotional and practical support. Through their close relationship, she was able to bridge the gap between herself and her family that arose due to her educational advancement.

5. COMPARISON AND DISCUSSION

In this paper, a psychosocial perspective was taken to understand subjects on their path of upward social mobility through education. In this sense, psychological needs and modes are regarded as related to social structures and hierarchies in order to understand the nexus of migration, intergenerational constellations in adolescence, and educational institutions. In this nexus, biographies were analyzed to focus on the relation between the psychological significance of upward mobility and the hardships in the context of discrimination in educational institutions. Hence, based on the biographical case analyses, (definite) factors for successful positioning in the educational system cannot and should not be derived, but different intergenerational dynamics in this nexus can be elaborated.

At first glance, the two biographical narratives share a number of similarities. For instance, both families fled Iran in the 1980s due to, among other reasons, the restriction of women's rights. In both cases, it is not only a matter of social advancement in the context of migration, but gender plays a central role in this respect. Important support for fair positioning in educational institutions comes from a female caregiver. Moreover, in both cases, migration is associated with liberation from constraints for women. In both cases, the German education system is described, on the one hand, as a space of opportunity for social advancement, but, on the other hand, as an arena of (visible) social degradation and (not necessarily visible) institutionalized discrimination (cf. Carmichael/Hamilton 1967; Gillborn et al. 2013; Gomolla 2021). The forms of discrimination that are visible in the interviews refer to the practices of recommendations for secondary schools, to degrading attributions on the part of teachers ("go to Iran and weave carpets") as well as to the lack of support structures and an accompanying deeply rooted belief within the schools in the aforementioned "myth of meritocracy" (Bloodworth 2017; Bourdieu 2018). Furthermore, the narratives are similar in that certain themes are very present, especially the importance of adolescence as well as the importance of formal education, even if these themes are accentuated very differently.

Equally, there are significant differences between the two narratives. *Sapideh* was confronted with strong and no-alternative educational ambitions on the part of her parents. The mandated expectations weighed heavily, as they were linked to, or motivated by, her parents' hardships and threatening experiences of flight and burdens in Germany. The mother, who was very active and involved in her daughter's school life, continued to fight for her daughter's rights in Germany. She attempted to fight against structures and practices of discrimination repeatedly throughout her daughter's school life, although she had little knowledge of the German school system and had to learn about it step by step. While Sapideh's mother put all her energy into her commitment to push the children forward, they, in turn, were faced with feelings of uncertainty about fulfilling this task without parental support in terms of schoolwork. In adolescence, these irrevocable expectations were shaken by a confrontation with questions of identity and self-positioning (cf. King 2012). To deal with these questions, in Sapideh's case, the counter-position to parental ideas was initially taken. Only in dealing with these essential questions was a transformation or an appropriation of the expectations possible without refusing them and thus rejecting the parental migration project and the costs associated with it. Her academic career can be interpreted as a compromise in the sense of a transformation of the mission according to her own passions. Against this background, Sapideh feels more empowered and continues the fight against discrimination.

In the case of *Jasmin*, there are no explicit parental educational expectations mentioned in the interview. Against a background of experiences of social marginalization as well as discrimination and with an outsider position in school on the one hand and poverty as well as family instability on the other hand in Jasmin's case, educational advancement and work mean existential security. For Jasmin, educational advancement stands for experiences of recognition, belonging, and participation – experiences that were made possible by the turning point during adolescence that led to stabilization within the family and a change of social milieu, combined with a support network and a different school. Despite her achievements, Jasmin remains driven by the experience of hardship and poverty on the one hand and the experience of deprivation in the family on the other. However, she received little support for her educational ambitions: At school, she mainly experienced her lack of economic resources in comparison to her classmates. Furthermore, the situations she reports with teachers also manifest a questioning of her existence in Germany, unless she is prepared to assimilate completely. At schools with an academic focus, she experienced less conscious devaluations, but due to the orientation towards a meritocratic logic, her lack of resources remained invisible – she had to compensate for them on her own.

In both cases, therefore, dealing with structural barriers and social degradation played a central role as well as resistance to their positioning within social hierarchies. In the case of Sapideh, however, this is rooted more strongly in an intergenerational family project and is thus incorporated by the narrator into her habitus; in the case of Jasmin, it follows an existential pressure that the interviewee experiences and through which she tries to give herself support and structure. Questions about formal education become a pressing identity issue, especially during adolescence – whether as a starting point with the possibility for transformation against all odds (like experiences of discrimination or an educational gap due to a lack of resources) or as a reformulated strong orientation toward the upward mobility expectations of parents.

In both cases, furthermore, these social structures are relevant in psychological terms based on the different emotions that are described in the narratives. In Jasmin's case, for example, episodes of fear in the face of precarious experiences prevail throughout her narrative. This fear is caused by the far-reaching experiences of deprivation in the family up until the phase of adolescence and, in addition, by social experiences of exclusion and devaluation. This fear with which she is apparently left alone at many points is described as the motor for her ambitions, for her fight for advancement. In other words, in her case, educational advancement not only offers a way out of difficult social and economic circumstances, but also provides some psychological stability. In the case of Sapideh, it is also about

the emotional processing of uncertainty in many instances. In contrast to Jasmin, however, her strong alignment with her parents can compensate for this uncertainty and provide more orientation.

The juxtaposition of the two cases thus reveals the complex intergenerational dynamics of social advancement in the context of formal education. The focus on formal education takes place on the one hand in the mode of family obligation (cf. Feliciano 2006; Papademetriou et al. 2009; Attias-Donfut/Cook 2017; King 2018) and "immigrant optimism" (Kao/Tienda 1995, 1998), but on the other hand also in the mode of coping with precariousness and poverty. This second mode in particular requires a psychosocial support structure, which has still been little investigated in existing studies. The example of immigration from Iran seems particularly relevant in this context, as it focuses not only on the desire for advancement, but also on the necessary and sometimes exhausting debunking of attributions as "folk devils" (Cohen 2002) or other negative stereotypes (cf. Said 1997; Maghbouleh 2017; Uhlendorf 2018, 2020).

While questions of self-positioning and of being positioned are a central aspect in migration studies, interconnections between socio-structural dimensions and psychological processes of identification and internalization have received little attention so far. This approach focuses on the vulnerabilities of individuals without understanding them as a purely private problem, but rather as a consequence of social distributions of power (Frost 2008, 2019). In this sense, there are numerous lines of connection between this approach and psychosocially informed subjectivation research (cf. Butler 1997). With the help of the analysis presented here, not only can the interconnections and dynamics be elaborated, but also their transformations across different life stages can be studied. In this context, adolescence is of particular importance, as it is associated in many ways with a renegotiation of social ascriptions as well as of intergenerational structures (cf. King 2012; Benzel/King 2020). Questions about mutual influences within generations continue to receive little attention, even though intergenerational socialization is a central aspect of psychosocial migration research. A stronger consideration of the perspectives of the older generation is therefore an important task for future studies and could only be considered in this article from the perspective of the interviewees. Questions about sibling relationships and different educational paths among siblings could not be explored in depth in this paper either, but they also represent an important research gap. Based on the case analyses presented here, and especially in the context of migration from Iran, a more detailed analysis of the gender perspective is recommended. In addition to these aforementioned limitations of the study, it must be added at this point that although a detailed analysis of cases has the advantage that intergenerational patterns can be presented in great detail and in their entanglements, it does not allow for a comprehensive presentation of all possible patterns in such brevity.

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