



**Female Migrants as Actors –
A Medical Anthropological Study on Pregnancy, Birth and Motherhood in Germany**

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Working in the field of transcultural trainings for German health professionals, we realized a lack of knowledge regarding socio-cultural conditions of migration. Especially within the reproductive health sector, professionals increasingly request information about the cultural backgrounds of female migrants, particularly regarding different cultural practices during pregnancy, birth and infant-care. Our study aims to fill this gap by looking at migrants' attitudes in Freiburg, a city located in the South of Germany, from a medical anthropological perspective. Former research done on these topics often relies on the premise of female migrants being passive and only able to respond to existing conditions. In opposition, we assume that women are active actors, who deliberately make their choices according to their needs. Hereby we aim (1) to learn what is special about 'becoming a mother' in a migrants context, (2) to discuss findings about the correlation between motherhood and health, (3) to gain knowledge about local birth systems in a global context and (4) to apply medical anthropological research approaches in the context of health systems.

The key questions of our study are the following:

How do pregnant migrants experience pregnancy in a foreign environment? What do they do to stay healthy? Why are some medical services accepted and others ignored?

Additionally, we are interested in learning more about their views on the importance of having children and being a mother in the context of integration. Hereby we consider their cultural background and transnational social networks and how they impact on constructions of pregnancy, birth and motherhood.

Moreover, the perspective of 'experts' from the health system and medical services for female migrants is taken into consideration. By including the attitudes and experiences of these professionals, we follow

a multilayered approach which enables us to examine, how the German medical system responds to the needs of pregnant migrants and whether these migrants influence and change the local health system. With our study, we contribute (1) to the current development of integrating intercultural factors in the health system and (2) to the theoretical discussion about concepts of 'culture', 'health and migration' and 'transnationalism' within medical anthropology.