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While Europe has become a destination goal for millions of displaced persons, Germany is unique for the drastic growth of their accepted refugee and asylum seeker population over the past few years. The influx of asylum seekers and refugees has sparked public conversation about belonging and integration, and this research investigates to what extent discursive framings of citizenship, nationhood, Self, and Other impact the integration of contemporary asylum seekers and refugees in Germany. Based on fieldwork in Berlin during 2016, participant observation, 44 interviews with asylum seekers, refugees, and those who work closely with them, and discourse analysis, findings suggest that the challenges of integration are further complicated by assumptions about identity that are communicated through discursive framings of citizenship, nationhood, Self, and Other. Within this context, refugees are consistently patronized or criminalized to such an extent that they cannot become part of German society, despite constant pressure to integrate.

*Keywords: discourse, Germany, integration, refugees*
INTEGRATING THE OTHER: IMPLICATIONS OF DISCURSIVE FRAMINGS OF CITIZENSHIP, NATIONHOOD, SELF, AND OTHER FOR THE INTEGRATION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES IN GERMANY

By
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For all the beautiful people who shared your stories.
   This would not have been possible without you. I can never thank you enough, and I can never repay you for opening your hearts and sharing your lives.

And to the 65 million displaced people around the world.
   May you find peace. May the world find compassion. May we all find a solution.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................................................................ 1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ...................................................................................................................................................... iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS .......................................................................................................................................................... v
LIST OF FIGURES .................................................................................................................................................................. vii
INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................................................................. 1
CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW AND BACKGROUND ................................................................. 8
  Introduction ........................................................................................................................................................................ 8
  Literature Review .............................................................................................................................................................. 8
    Representations of Asylum Seekers, Refugees, and other Foreign Bodies ................................................................. 8
    Understanding “Germanness” through the German Experience with the Other ....................................................... 21
  Background: Germany’s Approach towards Asylum Seekers and Refugees ............................................................ 25
    Conclusion .................................................................................................................................................................... 32
CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH DESIGN .................................................................................................................... 34
  Introduction ........................................................................................................................................................................ 34
  Definitions ......................................................................................................................................................................... 35
  Research Question .......................................................................................................................................................... 38
  Theoretical Approach ....................................................................................................................................................... 39
    The Role of Discursive Theories .................................................................................................................................. 40
    The Role of Feminist Theories .................................................................................................................................... 42
    The Role of Integration Theories .................................................................................................................................. 46
  Methodology ...................................................................................................................................................................... 54
    Researcher Positionality .................................................................................................................................................. 55
    Interviewees ...................................................................................................................................................................... 57
    Research Instruments and Confidentiality .................................................................................................................. 58
  Data Analysis ..................................................................................................................................................................... 60
  Significance ........................................................................................................................................................................ 61
  Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................................................... 64
CHAPTER THREE: TOP-DOWN INTEGRATION: GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES .................................................. 66
  Introduction ........................................................................................................................................................................ 66
  The Discursive Construction of Citizenship and Nationhood ....................................................................................... 67
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 – Asylum Applications in Europe 2015-2016, Pew Research Center

Figure 1.2 – Asylum Seeker Origins and Destinations 2015-2016, Pew Research Center

Figure 2.1 – Ager and Strang’s Conceptual Framework Defining Core Domains of Integration

Figure 5.1 – January 2016 Focus Magazine Cover
INTRODUCTION

While many have lost their lives due to the ongoing conflict in Syria, many more have fled, amounting to approximately 4.6 million refugees and 6.6 internally displaced persons by mid-2015, numbers that continue to grow.\(^1\) Syria’s neighboring countries have borne the largest part of this displacement burden, hosting millions of displaced persons from the region. However, more than one million asylum seekers have also reached Europe, raising both sympathies and suspicions among European states. Due to the large influx of asylum seekers into European countries, the so-called “refugee crisis” is not only taking place in countries immediately surrounding Syria; this crisis has a second front in Europe, a destination goal for so many asylum seekers and refugees that European states are facing a migrant influx unparalleled in many ways.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the refugee agency of the United Nations, reports, “The number of asylum applications received in 2014 in European Union (EU) Member States has risen by 25 per cent compared to the same period in 2013,” and as much as a quarter of those were Afghans, Eritreans, and Syrians.\(^2\) Further, according to Eurostat, the number of first-time asylum applicants in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) “increased from 173 thousand in 2014 to 442 thousand in 2015.”\(^3\) Still, while 2015 marked the peak of the current influx of asylum seekers, the numbers of asylum seekers entering Europe in 2016 held steady. According to Phillip Connor at the Pew Research Center, 1.3 million people

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applied for asylum in Europe in 2015 and 1.2 million in 2016 (see Figure 1.1). Nevertheless, the peak of the influx of asylum seekers from the late summer to fall of 2015 is evident.4

![Europe’s monthly number of asylum applications returns to pre-surge levels](image)

**Figure 1.1 – Asylum Applications in Europe 2015-2016, Pew Research Center.**

Germany’s situation in this European “refugee crisis” is unique as they have received almost half of the asylum applications from 2015 and 2016.5 According to Eurostat, Germany received more than one third of all of the EU’s asylum applicants in 2015, and “The number of first time asylum applicants in Germany increased from 442 thousand in 2015 to 722 thousand in 2016.”6 Significantly, while the Pew Research Center finds that Germany was the destination country for 45 percent of all of Europe’s asylum seekers in 2015 and 2016, other countries individually accounted for no more than eight percent (see Figure 1.2).7

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Further, what sets the FRG apart in the context of the current influx of asylum seekers in Europe is their willingness to accommodate this demand by continuing to increase the number of spots for asylum seekers. Germany’s accepted refugee and asylum seeker population has grown tremendously over the past few years. The FRG had committed to offer 10,000 places for Syrian refugees in 2013 and 2014, and at the 2014 German Interior Ministers' Conference, Germany made the decision to further “extend their humanitarian admission programme for Syrian refugees by an additional 10,000 places.”

Notably, in September 2015, German Chancellor Angela Merkel made the decision to “suspend European asylum rules” in favor of allowing even

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more refugees and asylum seekers into Germany. In effect, Chancellor Merkel partially and temporarily suspended the EU’s Dublin Regulations, based on the sovereignty clause which allows individual EU member states to do so. The Dublin II Regulation stipulates that “only one Member State is responsible for examining an asylum application” and specifies that the responsible member state should be the first that an asylum seeker enters. The suspension of the Dublin Regulations with respect to Syrian asylum seekers was issued on August 21, 2015 and aimed to alleviate some of the burden on the common entry countries of Italy and Greece, making Germany the responsible EU member state for processing Syrian asylum claims that showed up in Germany. Under the Dublin Regulations, Germany could elect to deport these asylum seekers back to the EU member state they first arrived in, but in effect, the partial suspension of the Regulations meant that Germany would no longer deport Syrian asylum seekers back to their entry countries (usually Italy or Greece). The partial suspension of the Dublin Regulations seems to have created the perception of an open and welcoming Germany not only for Syrian asylum seekers, but also for asylum seekers from other origins. Indeed, in 2015 and 2016, the FRG also received a substantial number of asylum applications from Afghans, Iraqis, Iranians, Eritreans, and others. Due to the influx of asylum seekers, as of June 2015, the total population of concern in Germany was 573,828, and by the end of 2015,

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Germany had received approximately one million refugees and asylum seekers in one year alone.\textsuperscript{14}

Nonetheless, while Germany has been lauded for its sizable humanitarian admissions of asylum seekers, it has also been criticized for lack of planning. Of the approximately one million asylum seekers that Germany welcomed in 2015, only 442 thousand first-time asylum applications were completed, partially due to the backlog of the asylum system.\textsuperscript{15} While Germany received over a million asylum seekers, these numbers have apparently overwhelmed and nearly halted their asylum system. Further, bureaucratic delays force asylum seekers to wait in Lagers, or refugee camps, temporary housing provided by the government, causing confusion and frustration for incoming migrants and German nationals alike. While asylum seekers wait for their cases to get through the system, the German government pays for food and temporary shelter in crowded, often unsanitary conditions. Although these circumstances are better than having no place to stay, asylum seekers often wait for several months and even over a year before they are called for an interview that will determine whether they receive official refugee status and are allowed to stay in Germany or whether they will be deported. During this waiting period, asylum seekers are not allowed to enroll in school, look for jobs, or find alternative housing, thus hindering their potential for beginning the process of adjusting to their new society.

This situation has sparked public conversation on the process of integration, which arguably naturally follows admittance. Many debate what integration means, who is responsible for it, and how it can best be accomplished. In its simplest sense, integration refers to “the


making up… of a whole by adding together or combining the separate parts.”\(^\text{16}\) In this context, asylum seekers and refugees and German nationals are the separate parts, and through integration, they can be made into a more cohesive society rather than distinct separates. Further definitions and models of integration will be considered in chapter two. Nonetheless, integration even in this most basic sense indicates that public discourse regarding integration will necessarily involve assumptions about identity.

Discursive framings of citizenship, nationhood, Self, and Other carry and communicate these assumptions about identity, which are inherent in discourses on integration. This research therefore explores those discursive framings and investigates to what extent they impact the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Germany. Through a study of existing literature, discourse analysis, and fieldwork involving interviews and participant observation, this research investigates and discusses the integration of asylum seekers and refugees in the FRG.

This thesis offers a multifaceted consideration of the process of integration through a discussion of relevant literature, an explication of the discursive framings of citizenship, nationhood, Self, and Other, and an exploration of both “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches to integration. Chapter one reviews the relevant literature on the representation of and Germany’s experience with asylum seekers, refugees, and other foreigners. Further, the first chapter offers the reader the context of the study. Chapter two further details the research design by clarifying terminology, explaining the theoretical underpinnings and methodological approaches of the research, and discussing the significance. Chapters three and four discuss the findings of the research. Chapter three considers the discursive framings of citizenship and nationhood and addresses what I refer to as “top-down integration.” Top-down integration is concerned with the

government’s approach to integration and therefore considers the policies and practices of the German government to promote or facilitate the integrative process. While exploring the government’s approach to integration provides some information about the integrative process, exploring the day-to-day social lives and interactions of asylum seekers and refugees offers further insight. Chapter four includes a discussion on the discursive framings of Self and Other and this day-to-day level of exploration, which I refer to as “bottom-up integration.” Taken together, chapters three and four offer a thorough consideration and discussion of the integrative process of asylum seekers and refugees in Germany.

This research demonstrates that the discursive framings of citizenship, nationhood, Self, and Other play a substantial role in the process of integration. Through this research, I argue that the dominant meanings constructed within these concepts significantly impact the integrative processes and experiences of asylum seekers and refugees in Germany. This thesis will examine that process.
CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW AND BACKGROUND

Introduction

This chapter considers and discusses the relevant bodies of literature and the background context of the research to offer the reader a substantial foundation of information with which to approach the research. The main bodies of literature that impact this research are on representation, specifically on the representation of refugees, and on Germany’s experiences with refugees and other migrants. Further, the background information will discuss Germany’s current approach to citizenship, other forms of membership, and asylum seekers. A review of this literature and background should provide a base of information as well as identify how the current research is contextually situated and how it contributes to these veins of literature.

Literature Review

Representations of Asylum Seekers, Refugees, and other Foreign Bodies

This thesis research examines representation of citizenship, nationhood, Self, and Other in the linguistic sense of the word. Linguistic representation refers to the “the production of meaning through language.” From the constructionist perspective, meaning is built through language rather than existing inherently. As meaning is constructed through language, linguistic representations impact the way in which interlocutors make meaning of the world. Thus, the meanings that “citizenship,” “nationhood,” “Self,” and “Other” carry with them impact the ways in which these concepts and beings are perceived and even the experiences they have.

Ferdinand de Saussure’s and Roland Barthes’s semiotic approaches and Michel Foucault’s discursive approach can better explain how meaning is created and communicated.

through linguistic representations. Known as the “father of modern linguistics,”\textsuperscript{18} Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure analyzed the sign, which cultural theorist and sociologist Stuart Hall defines as, “The general term we use for words, sounds or images which carry meaning,”\textsuperscript{19} into the two elements of the signifier and the signified. According to Saussure, the signifier is the actual form; this could be a spoken or written word or an image. The signified is the idea or concept that the signifier represents.\textsuperscript{20} While Saussure’s semiotic work is indeed noteworthy, French critic Roland Barthes furthered the semiotic analyses to a consideration of different levels of meaning. Emphasizing the cultural stasis of meaning, Barthes divided the sign into two levels of meaning: descriptive, or denotative; and a deeper level, connotative. While denotations are often basic definitions which are more widely agreed upon, connotations are more implicit and suggest “wider realms of social ideology – the general beliefs, conceptual frameworks and value systems of society.”\textsuperscript{21} Barthes called this “second level of signification” in which some message about the whole sign is communicated the level of “myth.”\textsuperscript{22} When we analyze the myth, we first look at the signifiers of the words themselves and the illustrated image. Secondly, we analyze their signified. Thirdly, at the level of myth, we explore the message of the sign.

Still, Michel Foucault, with his discursive approach diverges from Saussure’s and Barthes’s more scientific semiotic approaches and proposes that language, culture, and meaning are too complex to be adequately addressed by positivist approaches. As Hall explains, “Later developments have recognized the necessarily interpretive nature of culture and the fact that interpretations never produce a final moment of absolute truth.”\textsuperscript{23} Instead of thinking solely

\textsuperscript{18} Hall, \textit{Representation}, 16.
\textsuperscript{19} Hall, \textit{Representation}, 4.
\textsuperscript{20} Hall, \textit{Representation}, 16.
\textsuperscript{21} Hall, \textit{Representation}, 23-24.
\textsuperscript{22} Hall, \textit{Representation}, 24.
\textsuperscript{23} Hall, \textit{Representation}, 27.
about the systematic qualities of language and representation, Hall notes that Foucault shifts to an analysis of knowledge and power. Specifically, Foucault is interested in “representation as a source for the production of social knowledge.” According to Foucault, knowledge is produced through language, a process that he defines as discourse.\(^\text{24}\) This thesis explores this level of discursive representation of the concepts of citizenship, nationhood, Self, and Other.

The politics of discursive representation with regard to Western and non-Western bodies have been extensively studied. One of the most seminal texts on this matter is Edward Said’s *Orientalism.\(^\text{25}\)* Said traces the historical, cultural, and political views of the West about the East back to the colonial period, identifying where the ideology surrounding “the Orient” comes from. In the term “Orient” was lumped together the cultures and peoples of North Africa, the Middle East, and the Far East, essentializing these groups as non-Europeans. Said in his critique points out the errors of this way of studying and conceptualizing non-European cultures and societies.

Said critiques the relationship between the West and “the Orient,” noting the power dynamics within. He states, “The Orient is *watched*, reservoir of infinite peculiarity; the European… is a watcher, never involved, always detached.”\(^\text{26}\) Not only is the European the watcher, but also the producer of knowledge about the Orient. Said repeatedly brings up the themes of power and knowledge in his critique and notes,

> Knowledge…means surveying a civilization from its origins to its prime to its decline – and of course, it means being able to do that. Knowledge means rising above immediacy, beyond self, into the foreign and distant. The object of such knowledge is inherently vulnerable to scrutiny; this object is a “fact” which, if it develops, changes, or otherwise transforms itself in the way that civilizations frequently do, nevertheless is fundamentally, even ontologically stable. To have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it.\(^\text{27}\)

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\(^\text{24}\) Hall, *Representation*, 27.
\(^\text{26}\) Said, *Orientalism*, 103.
\(^\text{27}\) Said, *Orientalism*, 32.
This excerpt includes a central part of Said’s critique of Orientalist studies and ideology:

Orientalism allows the West to obtain and maintain power over the East because the Western subject defines the Oriental object. Because the West can produce knowledge about the East, the West therefore has the power to assign meaning to the East. Said explains, “a white middle-class Westerner believes it his human prerogative not only to manage the nonwhite world but also to own it, just because by definition “it” is not quite as human as “we” are.”

This defining, managing, and owning of the “nonwhite world” is what Anwar Abdel Malek calls “the hegemonism of possessing minorities,” and Said says, is the epitome of “dehumanized thought.”

Significantly, the objectification of the nonwhite world continues, and this is evident in European discourses on foreigners. Discourses on European nationals and non-European foreigners reflect Orientalist tendencies in that the European national is the subject with the power to produce knowledge about the non-European, foreign object. Nonetheless, in the context of asylum seekers and refugees, the image of the non-European is not usually the exact image of Said’s “camel-riding, terroristic, hook-nosed” Arab. Still, some of the characteristics of this typical, Oriental representation of an Arab man are applied to asylum seekers and refugees. Particularly male asylum seekers and refugees are represented as dangerous – and indeed, even terrorist – freeloaders. However, asylum seekers and refugees are also commonly represented as un-agentic and rather helpless victims. How can we make sense of this apparent contradiction between the dangerous, terrorist freeloader and the powerless, helpless victim?

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These two seemingly contradictory portrayals can be taken as two sides of the same coin, both somehow deficient, neither quite equal to the European subject. Portrayals of refugees and other displaced persons often emphasize their agency or victimhood. Furthermore, many studies explore how refugees and forced migrants are represented as either victims or agents, which become very polarized. However, the possibility of any overlap between refugees represented as victim and agent, which would humanize them, is rarely considered.

Fascinatingly, this victim-agent dichotomy of representations of refugees is often gendered; while female refugees are victimized and represented as powerless, male refugees are criminalized and represented as threats. Human security analyst and expert in international law and human rights, Dr. Charli Carpenter contends that gender ideas are “embedded” in our ideas of war and civilian protection, which has implications for our ideas of refugees. Carpenter argues that these gender ideologies “affect and are reproduced in the representations that transnational advocacy networks use to frame atrocity and draw attention to war affected civilians.” Further, he states, “this construction of innocence and vulnerability according to gender essentialisms has affected the actual ‘protection of civilians’ by humanitarian organizations.”

Thus, women and children are constructed as linguistically victimized and portrayed as being legitimately in need of humanitarian assistance.

Further, Lindsey Moore, researcher and lecturer in postcolonial literatures, women’s writing, and literary theory, discusses Arab Muslim women’s representations of themselves in light of the long history of their representations by others from a colonial point of view. Moore examines the colonial construction of the Arab woman as the subject upon whom European domination takes place and argues that this “confining framework [persists] in the aftermath of

Similarly, Melinda McPherson argues that the dominant post-colonial discourses of refugee women are as “subjects of charity and victims.”33 Fraught with implications of hierarchy and inequality, these post-colonial representations of women carry with them connotations of colonial history. Driven by “a social justice interest,”34 McPherson notes,

The problem of representation of refugee women extends beyond invisibility. Various researchers… have noted, ‘a propensity [in forced migration studies] to represent refugees in essentialist ways, the hegemony of trauma as the major articulation of refugee suffering being an example of such essentialist representation’ (Dona 2007, 221). From a gendered perspective, Indra (1999), Johnson (2006) and others draw attention to the West’s propensity for representing women in development and forced migration circumstances as un-agentic victims. Refugee women and girls have become the face of refugee victimhood.35

The author explores and challenges popular representations of refugee women, attempting to create “different paradigms for representation,” which will influence both public perception and policy by incorporating voices of refugee women themselves into their representations.36

While Moore and McPherson concern themselves with the residual colonialism apparent in the Western representations of Arab women and refugee women as “un-agentic victims,” social psychologists Virginia Esses, Stelian Medianu and Andrea Lawson problematize the representations of refugees as violent, threatening, and dangerous actors. Significantly, the authors recognize the portrayal of refugees as being influential on public discourse and public policy. Esses, Medianu, and Lawson discuss the “uncertainty and unease” that characterize the treatment and perceptions of many Western nations towards refugees and other immigrants. Because of this uncertainty, they note that,

34 McPherson, Refugee Women, 1.
35 McPherson, Refugee Women, 3-4.
Questions that arise include how many immigrants should be accepted each year, the extent to which immigrants and refugees present threats to members of host nations, whether refugee claimants are legitimately in need of asylum, and the types of assistance that should be provided to immigrants and refugees.37

Further, the authors argue that in representations of refugees and immigrants by the media, “uncertainty is often transformed into crisis and threat.”38 Notably, the discourses that support the notions that refugees are dangerous and threatening assume that refugees are actors with agency.

Nonetheless, while Moore and McPherson focus on representations of refugees as victims lacking agency and Esses, Medianu, and Lawson focus instead on the representations of refugees as threats, all of these authors note that these portrayals are marginalizing and, even more importantly, dehumanizing. Esses, Medianu, and Lawson state, “Dehumanization involves the denial of full humanness to others, and their exclusion from the human species… This is an extreme reaction to members of other groups, removing them from considerations that surround our treatment of other humans.”39 This separation of in-group humans from out-group sub-humans is reminiscent of Orientalism, Edward Said’s explanation for the cultural binary in which the West is constructed and perceived as inherently superior to the East.

Esses, Medianu, and Lawson mention that part of the reason for the representations of refugees as dangerous might be to differentiate nationals from foreigners. The authors explain, …these types of depictions, and the problematization of immigration by the media more generally, may be seen as responses to collective insecurity and uncertainties about citizenship and national identity ‘stemming from globalization and ideological realignments associated with the rise of neo liberalism.’ They propose that by

manufacturing a crisis around immigration and refugee policy, a problem is identified that can be decisively solved, reducing anxiety in the process.40

Due to the insecurity that comes with globalization and the greater and greater interconnectedness of cultures and peoples, depictions of immigrant groups as somehow irreconcilably foreign from the national identity of the receiving country may alleviate the insecurities of nationals and enable them to envision some sort of concrete division between the “self” and the “other”. Thus, dehumanization of immigrant and refugee populations is useful as it may increasingly allow them to be conceived as somehow “Other” or sub-human.

The “identity problems” involved in the discursive framing of nation and “Other” are managed and negotiated by the state, according to sociologist Riva Kastoryano.41 Kastoryano describes, analyzes, and compares the ways in which France and Germany, and to a lesser extent the United States, negotiate the identities of both the nation and the immigrant. The author notes that unlike the model of the United States, many European states like France and Germany do not view immigration as “contributing to shaping the nation.”42 Rather, France takes a “universalist” approach, attempting to assimilate immigrants to the national identity and emphasizing the concept of laïcité (secularism), while Germany is “segregationist,” setting apart the national identity from the immigrant, as the term implies, and emphasizing ethnicity.43 Political scientist Joyce Marie Mushaben further explores German ethnic identity and its implications for incorporation and integration of ethnic minorities. Mushaben argues that although Germany does not view itself as multicultural, “multicultural identities have taken root

42 Kastoryano, Negotiating Identities, 53.
43 Kastoryano, Negotiating Identities, 9.
in the Federal Republic.” The author criticizes the FRG’s segregationist approach, suggesting that it hinders integration through the disenfranchisement of ethnic minorities in Germany.

Thus, the German representation of immigrant identity as extremely distinct from the identity of the German nation, based on ethnic differences, is detrimental to the integration of immigrant groups.

This extreme differentiation between the identities of the German nation and of immigrants continues and is present in discourses on refugees as well. With the influx of refugees into Europe and the significant number that have migrated into Germany, various media outlets, political parties, and other groups have kept up with and continuously offered critiques of or support for Germany’s acceptance of refugees and asylum seekers. As with most migratory flows, “migration is a subject rarely absent from news headlines or political agendas.”

Journalists and scholars on media coverage of migrations, Kerry Moore, Bernhard Gross, and Terry Threadgold, argue that the news tends to favor stories that align with “national interests of states and the powers they are able to exercise in controlling undesirable immigration.” The authors go on to explain that after 9/11 and the “war on terror,” national security came to the forefront of nations’ attentions, and other cultures are able to be positioned as “threatening.”

Further, Esses, Medianu, and Lawson note that portrayals of refugees and immigrants in Western countries overall tend to be dehumanizing. Discussing some of the dehumanizing stereotypes that often come up in these portrayals, the authors state, “immigrants are sources and spreaders of infectious diseases, refugee claimants are bogus queue-jumpers who are trying to take

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advantage of lax refugee policies to gain entry to western nations, and terrorists are trying to gain entry to western nations as refugee claimants."  

The Orientalist framing of Muslim immigrant populations in particular is apparent in many European cases, three of which I will discuss briefly. First, pre-colonial historian and specialist in Islamic studies, Dr. Chouki El Hamel, discusses the “controversy” of the hijab in France to examine the relationship of religion, immigration, and citizenship of Muslims in France. The author focuses on media as a problematic factor in the relationship between French Muslim immigrants and the larger French society and argues that French media has represented Islam as monolithic and has “had negative effects on the perception of Muslims in France and elsewhere” by creating an “us versus them” mentality, “injecting fear” of “an Islamic threat to liberal values,” and portraying “religious inferiority and irrationality.” The role of the media is problematic to Muslim immigrant integration because it creates a dichotomy between a collective “secular Christian national identity” and a monolithic Islamic foreign identity, which are not seen as compatible. In his conclusion, the author brings his discussion back to the issue of the hijab and states that the media debate over the hijab is one instance that caused negative perceptions of Muslims as “other” and led to negative policies towards Muslims, which in turn further the separation of Muslims from the rest of society.

Second, Middle Eastern and Islamic studies specialist, Dr. Ali J. Hussain, analyzes the “clash of misconceptions” between Western society and the Muslim world using the case of the Danish cartoons of Muhammad in 2006 as another example. The author discusses the historical

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49 Chouki El Hamel, “Muslim Diaspora in Western Europe: The Islamic Headscarf (Hijab), the Media and Muslims' Integration in France,” Citizenship Studies 6, no.3 (2002): 293. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/136210202000011621.
50 El Hamel, “Muslim Diaspora in Western Europe,” 299.
51 El Hamel, “Muslim Diaspora in Western Europe,” 300.
factors that impact the misconceptions of the Western world by the Muslim world as well as of the Muslim world by the Western world and refers to both as being misinformed about the each other.\textsuperscript{53} Hussain explicates the problematic nature of the media surrounding the Danish cartoons of Muhammed and argues that both the cartoons and the subsequent media coverage of them served to further misconceptions between the West and the Muslim world,\textsuperscript{54} demonstrating media’s role in influencing public opinion and creating and propagating misconceptions.

Third, sociologist Anna Korteweg and diversity, migration, and gender specialist, Dr. Gökçe Yurdakul examine 68 German newspaper articles and 101 Dutch newspaper articles “that reflect the political spectrum”\textsuperscript{55} discussing honor killing from 2005 to investigate how media can construct “bright or blurred boundaries” between immigrant populations and the rest of society.\textsuperscript{56} The newspapers from the Netherlands included De Volkskrant, NRC, and Trouw, and those from Germany included die Tageszeitung (TAZ), the Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ), and the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ).\textsuperscript{57} Korteweg and Yurdakul find elements of “boundary blurring” and “drawing bright boundaries” in both the Netherlands and Germany, with the drawing of clear boundaries overwhelmingly dominant in both cases. The authors argue that the drawing of boundaries and maintenance of social distance between immigrants and the larger populations impacts immigrant integration and “processes of assimilation.”\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{54} Hussain, “The Media’s Role in a Clash of Misconceptions,” 125-127.
\textsuperscript{56} Korteweg and Yurdakul, “Islam, Gender, and Immigrant Integration,” 218-219.
\textsuperscript{57} Korteweg and Yurdakul, “Islam, Gender, and Immigrant Integration,” 223.
\textsuperscript{58} Korteweg and Yurdakul, “Islam, Gender, and Immigrant Integration,” 234.
Further examples of representations of refugees in Germany indicate that the political underpinnings of German portrayals of refugees and immigrants may hinder integration, as these media outlets tend to take political stances that sharply divide Germans from incoming migrants. Social scientist Dr. Joost Berkhout, political scientist Laura Sudulich, and political scientist Dr. Wouter van der Brug note that the “German media system… is more strongly affiliated with established party positions,” indicating that popular opinion has little room to be voiced by media, unlike the United Kingdom’s media system in which a “strong tabloid press” allows for popular opinion, be it anti- or pro-immigration. 59 Thus, the overwhelming amount of German media portrayals tend to align with political parties and thus may serve to create divisions between “us,” the German nationals, and “them,” the foreigners, regardless of the political tendency.

Geographer Harald Bauder, focusing on migration and integration in Germany, uses a discourse analysis to examine 609 articles published in five German newspapers (Bild Zetung, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Stuttgarter Zeitung, Süddeutshe Zeitung, and Die Tageszeitung) from 2001 to 200560 to investigate how German media represents “humanitarian immigrants,” which he defines as asylum seekers and refugees.61 Bauder seeks to investigate the representations of humanitarian immigrants and the impact of those representations on the construction of the “German national identity.”62 The authors finds that humanitarianism was discussed “as something in which the German state participates passively” as either a legal or moral obligation.63 Bauder argues that the discursive construction of humanitarian immigrants in

61 Bauder, “Humanitarian Immigration,” 263.
German media causes a separation between German nationals as “self” and humanitarian migrants as “Other,” again, indicative of orientalist trends in representations of refugees.

Additionally, social scientist, Dr. Hajo Boomgaarden, who focuses on media content analyses and researches media effects on political attitudes and behaviors, and sociologist Rens Vliegenthart argue that in addition to the factors of societal and economic conditions, news coverage is an influencing factor on anti-immigration attitudes. The authors argue that media affects ways of thinking and thus affects political attitudes of the general public. Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart examine the visibility of immigrants and the tone of the media coverage and find that the quantity of immigration coverage is “only marginally positively related” to anti-immigration attitudes; however, the evaluations of migrants by the news media significantly impact anti-immigration attitudes. Ultimately, the authors conclude that “news about immigrants matters for attitudes towards immigration and immigrants,” thus media impacts “social cohesion.” Therefore, Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart also argue that representations and discursive framings of immigrants can cause problematic public discourses which result in a social separation.

From colonial times to the present day, Europe’s discursive framings of foreigners has served to drastically differentiate the Western subject from the Eastern object. The Western subject has the power to produce knowledge about the foreigner and thereby define, objectify, and dehumanize the foreigner. This dehumanization is present in representations of refugees and other foreigners that victimize, or – as is more often the case – criminalize them. Consequently,

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64 Bauder, “Humanitarian Immigration,” 275.
these dichotomous victim-agent representations may have real-world effects significant for integration.

Understanding “Germanness” through the German Experience with the Other

Germany has historically separated and emphasized an in-group of ethnic German nationals and an out-group of non-German foreigners. In addition to separating in and out groups and differentiating them, out-groups of non-German foreigners have been represented as inferior and otherized. Beginning with Wilhelmine concepts and citizenship legislation and continuing into the present day, the FRG has distinguished Germans from others with an ethnic aspect of belonging.

The principle of *jus sanguinis*, or “right of blood,” originating in Wilhelmine times, has traditionally been applied to German citizenship beginning in 1913. *Jus sanguinis* citizenship emphasizes belonging and privilege based on blood or ancestry, thus promoting the inclusion of all members of an ethnic group of Germans and the exclusion of others.69 This system of citizenship creates a nation based on blood rather than on territory, defining the concept of nationhood in ethnocultural terms.70 Thus, *jus sanguinis* citizenship constructs a notion of citizenship, nationhood, and belonging that might promote the divisions between self and other and therefore impact the representations of refugees.

While this blood-based and ethnic construct of nation perhaps laid the groundwork for Nazi ideology, it did not necessarily cause it. Sociologist Rogers Brubaker is careful to point out that while the system of Wilhelmine *jus sanguinis* citizenship was ethnonational, ethnocultural, and exclusive towards non-Germans, Nazi ideology was extreme and ethnoracial.71 Still, the

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71 Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, 166.
defeat of the Third Reich did not do away with the exclusivist and segregationist approach of defining the German nation based on blood. Rather, as ethnic Germans were expelled from Eastern Europe and the German state collapsed, the blood-based framing of German nationhood and Deutschtum, or “Germanness” was reinforced, and nationhood based on ethnicity continued.\textsuperscript{72}

In terms of post-World War II migration, the otherizing of outside groups can perhaps most obviously be seen through the discourse surrounding guest workers, or \textit{Gastarbeiter}. To support the growing German economy, the German government’s Christian Democratic Party (CDU) made a series of labor agreements with other nations in the 1960s: Spain and Greece in March 1960, Turkey in October 1961, Portugal in March 1964, and Yugoslavia in October 1968.\textsuperscript{73} The labor agreements were made to ensure the availability of laborers for the German economy, which was getting back on its feet following a devastating war. Nonetheless, defining the individuals who came to Germany as “\textit{Gastarbeiter},” or guest workers, rather than as immigrants demonstrates the German understanding of the other. Moreover, due to the continuance of the traditional concept of Wilhelmine \textit{jus sanguinis} citizenship, guest workers had no possibility of obtaining German citizenship because they were not part of the ethnic community of descent. The otherizing rhetoric around guest workers indicated that these individuals were thought to impact only the labor market and industry and not German culture or society.\textsuperscript{74}

Turkish guest workers specifically made up a substantial percentage of the guest worker population and were considerably otherized. Semantic otherness was applied from the beginning

\textsuperscript{72} Brubaker, \textit{Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany}, 168-169.
\textsuperscript{73} Rita Chin, \textit{The Guest Worker Question in Postwar Germany} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 37.
\textsuperscript{74} Chin, \textit{The Guest Worker Question}, 47-48.
to Turkish guest workers, who the linguistic anthropologist Ruth Mandel claims “have internalized this negative symbolism of social inferiority.” Mandel problematizes the label “Gastarbeiter,” drawing attention to the German emphasis on “guests” as non-permanent residents and “workers” as equating individuals to their labor and thereby dehumanizing them.

The author is concerned with the language used to create, express, and perpetuate considerations of difference between Germans and Turks in the “chronotopicity” of Berlin. The discursive construction of binary oppositions is a significant consideration in linguistic studies, and Mandel applies this to the discursive othering of Turks in the discourse of German identity. Dealing with the complex notions of Germanness and Turkishness, Mandel examines the nuances of how these identities are linguistically constructed and how they influence each other, asserting that, “‘Turk’ is shown to have become a signifier of instability and anxiety, in national, subnational, and transnational narrations.” In contrast to the “unmarked ‘native’ citizenry,” Turkishness is constructed as the marked other. While “citizenship is inscribed on the German body politic,” foreignness is inscribed on the Turkish one. Turks are thus disenfranchised and seen as incapable of integrating.

The language of Gastarbeiter began to be replaced with Ausländer in the 1980s. Ausländer, meaningforeigner, directly opposes the word Inländer. These words literally define in and out groups through their use of In- and Aus- referring to certain types of people. Mandel suggests that, “…behind the seemingly innocent use of the idiom of Ausländer lies both a clear

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75 Ruth Mandel, Cosmopolitan Anxieties: Turkish Challenges to Citizenship and Belonging in Germany (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 51.
76 Mandel, Cosmopolitan Anxieties, 32.
77 Mandel, Cosmopolitan Anxieties, 3.
78 Mandel, Cosmopolitan Anxieties, 80.
79 Mandel, Cosmopolitan Anxieties, 206.
80 Mandel, Cosmopolitan Anxieties, 88.
81 Mandel, 55-56.
ideological agenda and an explicit expression of social discontent, where questions of belonging and exclusion, of diaspora and difference, come to the fore.” Thus, both the discourse around Gastarbeiter and the discourse around Inländer and Ausländer caused West Germany to continue to think of itself as a “nonmigration country”\(^{82}\) and emphasized the mantra “Wir sind kein einwanderungsland,” or “We are not an immigration country.”

Mandel brings up the role of Islam in this dynamic, explaining that part of the conception of Turks as inferior and incapable of integration comes from their identity as Muslims.\(^{83}\) The author also discusses the German-ascribed Muslim identity on Turks, who in Turkey were likely more secular.\(^{84}\) Regarding German discourse on Turks, Mandel states, “it is arguable that until they lose their prescribed foreignness, the cultural and political integration…cannot be achieved,”\(^ {85}\) thus explaining the real, lived consequences of discursive formations.

The attention to Islam as part of the Turkish identity raises the question of whether migrants of Islamic background more broadly face the same kind of discursive othering and practical marginalization in German society. For instance, many refugees who have recently entered Germany are Muslim, and their experiences may be similar to Turks in this regard. Significantly, while discussing the “War of Words” and the ways in which states use words as “strategic weapons”\(^ {86}\) to shape identities, Kastoryano notes, “The origin of the asylum seekers does not matter; they merge once again with the Gastarbeiter, for, together, they are seen as foreigners contributing to the Überfremdung (foreign overpopulation) of German society.”\(^ {87}\)

Thus, potentially because of their Muslim backgrounds, or simply because of their foreign status,
contemporary asylum seekers may be otherized in Germany in similar ways as Turkish 
Gastarbeiter have been for decades.

**Background: Germany’s Approach towards Asylum Seekers and Refugees**

Nonetheless, while asylum seekers may share much with Turkish immigrants in Germany, significant differences exist. The German asylum system has its origins in Article 16a of the Basic Law, the German constitution. The categorization of “refugee” was first conceived by the global community and defined in the 1951 Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees as,

Any person who owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

Therefore, refugees by definition are a distinctive category of migrants and are “an object of law and policy, because the admissions criteria of refugees are predicated on humanitarian (as opposed to economic or social and sentimental) grounds.” Apart from other kinds of migrants who may move and relocate for a number of reasons and who may have to meet certain criteria to relocate in certain states, refugees are to be admitted on a humanitarian basis.

In effect, signatory states to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol agree not to return refugees to a territory where they would be at risk. Further, signatory states are obliged to “facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of refugees” and to “make every effort to expedite naturalization proceedings.” Thus, in addition to the Convention and Protocol including provisions for the basic needs of employment, welfare, and education, it also can be understood

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to promote the civic inclusion of refugees through citizenship. Germany is a signatory to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol and went a step further by incorporating the legal right to asylum in their constitution,\(^91\) which states unequivocally, “Persons persecuted on political grounds shall have the right of asylum.”\(^92\) Uniquely, the concept of a right to asylum is constitutionalized in the Basic Law of the FRG rather than simply signed onto and/or ratified as in other states. The Federal Republic’s constitutional right to asylum is therefore considered “uniquely generous”\(^93\) and rather liberal.

In part due to the liberal asylum policy in the Federal Republic, this right to asylum was later qualified by the concepts of safe countries of origin and safe third countries. With influxes of refugees, “states shifted their policy focus from providing legal protection for refugees to finding ways to prevent them from coming into their territories in the first place.”\(^94\) Additionally, political scientist Joyce Mushaben notes that the FRG “not only saw a quantitative increase but also a qualitative shift” in their asylum applicants, “from Soviet-bloc dissidents to victims of armed conflict and economic deprivation in the Third World.” This shift in the qualitative nature of asylum applicants prompted a reflective shift in public discourse as “terms like pseudo-applicants, asylum parasites, economic refugees, and asylum cheaters” began entering the discussion and questioning the legitimacy of asylum claims.\(^95\) Further, historian and lawyer Douglas B. Klusmeyer and political scientist and co-founder of the Migration Policy Institute, Demetrios G. Papademetriou, suggest that, “the refugee challenge became increasingly conflated


with the problem of controlling illegal migration.” For instance, this conflation is exemplified by Germany’s actions towards Iraqi refugees. In a comparative report on refugee resettlement in the EU, attorneys and legal scholars Delphine Perrin and Frank McNamara note,

In 2008, Germany was considering helping Iraqi refugees suffering religious persecution and sought specific measures to help Christian Iraqis. Since the Christians were persecuted because of their religion, governments easily argue that the reason for their selection was their particular vulnerability. Yet, choosing Christians instead of Muslims may also be motivated by some EU Member States’ wish to limit the reception of a culture deemed to be a threat to the main culture of the country.

Rather than framing refugees as humanitarian admissions, in this case, refugees were framed as potential threats that countries needed to protect against. Further, Perrin and McNamara explain that the consideration of “integration potential” in the selection process of refugees has been “adopted by the Czech Republic, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, France, Germany, [and] Slovenia.” Denmark in particular has created legislation about this criteria which involves “language qualifications, education and work experience, social network, age, motivation,” and the Dutch Minister for Immigration and Asylum requested that the UNHCR “select higher profile refugees such as human rights activists and academics.” Thus the language of humanitarianism and “burden-sharing” has gradually been replaced by language connoting securitization against potential threats. While refugees are supposed to be admitted and granted protection on a humanitarian basis, these policies of criteria for acceptance based on integration potential effectively treat refugees fleeing persecution as if they were migrants who elected to relocate.

Still, the 1951 Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees differentiates refugees from other kinds of migrants and even goes so far as to compel states to “facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of refugees.”\textsuperscript{100} The remaining question, then, is to what extent the FRG actually does facilitate assimilation and naturalization. Citizenship law and integration policies therefore have significant implications not only for elective immigrants, but also for asylum seekers and refugees. Citizenship law is relevant for all kinds of migrants, whether they are elective or forced, as it has repercussions for integration.

Nonetheless, while citizenship is important, citizenship is only in the distant future for refugees, and many asylum seekers and refugees may not even have possibilities of citizenship in mind. Therefore, other forms of membership must also be considered as they significantly impact integrative processes and experiences. Klusmeyer and Papademetriou extend the notion of five different dimensions of membership, “an international dimension, a federalist dimension, a civic/political dimension, a social dimension, and an ethnonational dimension.”\textsuperscript{101} Laws reflecting each dimension are present in the FRG, indicative of the complexities of membership and norms of belonging.\textsuperscript{102} While the German Basic Law recognizes the principles of human rights and human dignity reflective of the international dimension,\textsuperscript{103} it also affirms “the qualities of collective identity that distinguish one people from another and are understood to be transmitted across generations.” Further, the authors argue that this ethnonational dimension of the Basic Law “has been used to justify highly illiberal naturalization policies and remains a barrier to fashioning a positive immigration policy.”\textsuperscript{104} While the FRG’s constitution includes

\textsuperscript{101} Klusmeyer and Papademetriou, Immigration Policy in the Federal Republic of Germany, xv.
\textsuperscript{102} Klusmeyer and Papademetriou, Immigration Policy in the Federal Republic of Germany, 1.
\textsuperscript{103} Klusmeyer and Papademetriou, Immigration Policy in the Federal Republic of Germany, 3.
\textsuperscript{104} Klusmeyer and Papademetriou, Immigration Policy in the Federal Republic of Germany, 22.
international human rights norms, it also embraces the understanding of membership an 
ethnocultural community, one that is therefore restrictive of the acceptance and integration of 
any immigrants.

While the international dimension and the ethnonational dimension may be viewed as 
opposites in many ways, Klusmeyer and Papademetriou also reference kinds of membership 
located between these two poles. The federalist dimension, for instance, takes a policy centered 
approach to immigration and integration, and the authors suggest, “To the extent that federalism 
is recognized as a means for accommodating diversity amidst unity, it implies a greater respect 
for difference among members than any abstract notion of collective democratic or shared 
ethnonational identity ever has.”105 Similarly in some ways, the civic/political dimension focuses 
on the shared rights and responsibilities of members of a state.106 While this kind of membership 
at one time was completely restricted to ethnocultural Germans, the 1999 citizenship law reform 
made the acquisition of citizenship for non-Germans possible for the first time.107 Finally, under 
the social dimension of membership, “the allocation of social rights depends much less on a 
distinction between citizen and alien than on residential status and economic contribution.”108 
Thus, under the social dimension, it is not actual naturalization that is important for membership, 
but rather societal residence and contribution.

Brubaker explores this kind of “membership without citizenship,” questioning, “What 
does the possession or lack of citizenship mean in terms of the social and economic opportunities 
of today’s migrants?”109 Exploring the cases of immigrants in Germany, Britain, France,

106 Klusmeyer and Papademetriou, Immigration Policy in the Federal Republic of Germany, 16. 
109 William Rogers Brubaker, Immigration and the Politics of Citizenship in Europe and North America (Lanham: 
University Press of America, 1989), 146.
Sweden, Canada, and the United States, Brubaker argues that “in the area of economic and social rights… citizenship matters relatively little, while status as a permanent resident or (in Europe) as a citizen of a common market state, matters a great deal.” Nonetheless, in terms of permanent residence status, Brubaker finds that Germany is the most restrictive of the six countries he addresses, with their official Aufenthaltsberechtigung (right of residence) tightly controlled through application and qualification procedures. While permanent residence can be significant for membership in terms of economic and social considerations, Brubaker does concede that, “noncitizens, whatever their degree of economic and social integration, have not joined the political community.” Bucerius too finds that, “formal citizenship is and remains important, even for immigrants on the margins, despite the fact that there are various other forms of citizenship that can be practiced.” Thus, while other forms of membership may be significant for inclusion, significant barriers to formal citizenship and naturalization – which seem to be the most important kind of membership – still exist for refugees and other immigrants.

For political sociologist Aleksandra Lewicki, citizenship and the discursive framing of citizenship are central to integration – even for those not seeking citizenship – because integration can be viewed as belonging and becoming equal. The author’s central argument is that “citizenship is shaped by competing discourses that facilitate or inhibit the articulation and translation of equality claims into collective institutions.” Thus, she outlines various discursive visions of citizenship in order to articulate how those discourses work – or hinder the work –

111 Brubaker, Immigration and the Politics of Citizenship in Europe and North America, 150.
112 Brubaker, Immigration and the Politics of Citizenship in Europe and North America, 152.
towards equality. Lewicki explores four distinct conceptualizations of citizenship, including civic republican citizenship, multicultural citizenship, liberal or civic universal citizenship, and denationalized citizenship.\(^{115}\) Referring to these four discursive conceptions of citizenship which she described, Lewicki reiterates that a “guiding concern” of her book is “that democratic citizenship is not constituted by a single ‘model’ of democracy… but by an ongoing negotiation of the interpretation of historical events, legal principles and institutional arrangements.”\(^{116}\) Thus, similar to her definition of integration, citizenship is viewed not as a fixed and definite condition, but as a negotiated and flexible concept discursively framed in varying manners.

In Lewicki’s analysis of the German Islam Conference, the majority discourses of civic universalism and civic republicanism came out in Germany with the respective arguments that “majority society is seen as having failed to disseminate and enforce the civic liberal rules of the democratic game, which include a non-violent and egalitarian code of conduct” and that social divisions were caused by socially deviant, violent Muslims who threatened social solidarity. The author moves on to discuss anti-discrimination measures in both Great Britain and Germany and argues that discussions around these in both countries were typically framed in terms of civic universal arguments, emphasizing supranational human rights’ concepts, diversity, and ideas of freedom from discrimination. In the case of Germany, civic republican arguments come forth in addition to civic universal ones in the discussions of anti-discrimination provisions. However, Lewicki explains that Muslims continued to be viewed as a threat to cultural and communal cohesion, and “discrimination was perceived as emanating from rather than being experienced by

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\(^{116}\) Lewicki, *Social Justice through Citizenship?*, 50.
Thus, the notion of a cultural community that other cultures may be a threat to remains intact in the German public discourse.

Citizenship and membership are significant factors that can impact the integrative experiences of asylum seekers and refugees. If we accept Lewicki’s central argument that the discursive framing of citizenship impacts integration policies, the integration of refugees is largely dependent on their access to citizenship. While German citizenship has historically been based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*, this system was reformed to include an aspect of *jus soli* citizenship in 2000. Nonetheless, this reform was not as much of a transformation as it was initially assumed to be, and citizenship remains only a distant possibility for incoming asylum seekers and refugees. Ultimately, as Klusmeyer and Papademetriou point out, the notion of membership in the FRG is complicated and multifaceted. Nevertheless, refugees and other immigrants in Germany remain without a clear and facilitated path towards integration and citizenship.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has introduced the research problem, reviewed relevant literature, and provided background on the German asylum system. The chapter began by introducing the issue central to this thesis and providing some context regarding the contemporary influx of asylum seekers and refugees into Europe and Germany’s reaction and role. I continued with a literature review, in which I discussed both literature on the representations of asylum seekers, refugees, and other foreigners by the West and Germany’s experience with foreigners. Finally, the chapter closed with background on the asylum system in Germany.

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While in the context of the current “refugee crisis” Germany has received the largest number of asylum seekers of any European country, these admissions are not sustainable and cannot be fully successful without effective integration measures and processes. Therefore, Germany must not only receive asylum seekers, but also ensure their integration. Integration is a complex concept that can be studied in many ways. The next chapter will further explain my approach to studying the integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Germany.
CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH DESIGN

Assimilation is that there is one German culture and if somebody else is coming from outside, the person has to assimilate and has to act in this way of the one identity, the one German identity. And in this way, Islam, for example is not a part of German identity, so people from other countries have to come and – I don’t know – have to get Christian, and that’s the best way of immigration.\textsuperscript{119}

I want to start off by saying integration is a really shitty term! Integration means, ‘You should be like us.’ Fuck integration and fuck assimilation! They’re the creation of colonial powers, a new colonialism. I grew up in Bavaria, but I am told I need to integrate because my skin isn’t white. Integration will always have this colonial side effect as long as it does not come to terms with its racism and colonial past.\textsuperscript{120}

Yes, we are from another country, from another world, from another tradition and so on. But in the same time we are not trying to change you, so don’t try to change us.\textsuperscript{121}

\textbf{Introduction}

The previous chapter introduced the topic of this research; provided a review of the relevant literature on portrayals of asylum seekers and refugees and German experience with asylum seekers, refugees, and other migrants; and offered a brief background on the legal process and implications for asylum seekers and refugees in Germany. This chapter will further explain the research design of this thesis. I begin by clarifying some definitions of terms that will be used repeatedly throughout the thesis. These definitions are followed by the central research question. Next, I explain the theoretical and methodological approaches that informed and facilitated this research. Finally, I close with a note on the significance of this study. Having already addressed the topic and background of the research, the purpose of this chapter is to better explain the design of the research.

\textsuperscript{119} Shea (German-Iranian social worker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
\textsuperscript{120} Poetry slam introduction in public talk, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 24 June 2016.
\textsuperscript{121} Hasan (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
Definitions

Before going into the research design, clarification of some terminology that will be used repeatedly throughout this thesis is necessary. I therefore begin by explicating the differences between the terms “asylum seeker,” “refugee,” and “migrant.” Although often conflated, the terms “asylum seeker,” “refugee,” and “migrant” each have distinct, though related, definitions. The problem with using these terms interchangeably is that they refer to different groups of people, each with different legal implications. Asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants all have national and international laws that apply to them and not to others.122

With the global mass movement of people, the debate between which words are used has recently drawn the attention of popular media.123 While many use “migrant” as a general, overarching term referring to anyone who moves, crossing borders, many of these authors also reinforce the legal divisions between refugees and other kind of migrants on the basis of refugees being entitled to legal protections that other migrants are not.

Legally, a definite division between these groups does exist. According to the 1951 Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, the document which first set the standard for who was defined as a refugee and therefore deserving of international protection, a refugee is someone who,

owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is out-side the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.124

According to this definition, refugees are *forced* to leave their countries due to persecution in some form (racial, religious, national, social, or political); therefore, in most cases, refugees cannot return to their home countries.\(^{125}\) Official refugee status is granted by individual states or by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and Refugee Status Determination (RSD) is the legal process for a person seeking international protection to gain refugee status.\(^{126}\)

While several popular news media outlets that engaged in this terminological debate have also pointed out the perceived neutrality of the word “migrant” in indicating people who move without indicating why they move or what the legal conditions of those moves are, the UNHCR recognizes the terms of “refugee” and “migrant” as distinct. This distinction has to do with the notion of choice. Media reports elaborate that along the journey, asylum seekers, refugees, and other kinds of migrants often take similar routes and face similar circumstances, thus making the distinction for reporters impossible and reinforcing the use of “migrant” as a neutral, blanket term.\(^{127}\) Further, some appeal to the Oxford English Dictionary’s definition of “migrant” as simply “a person who moves” or “a person on a journey,” without indicating any legal statuses or conditions of the move or journey.\(^{128}\) Nevertheless, according to the UNHCR, refugees are people who have not *chosen* to leave their countries, but who have been *forced* out due to circumstances beyond their control and for whom returning could be deadly. Migrants, however, are people who *choose* to move, typically with hopes of improving their lives through work opportunities, education, family reunion, or other reasons. Unlike refugees, migrants are able to

\(^{125}\) UNHCR, “What is a Refugee,” *UNHCR*, 2015.

\(^{127}\) See for example Elizabeth Jensen, “‘Refugee’ Or ‘Migrant’: How To Refer To Those Fleeing Home,” *NPR*, 21 Aug. 2015.; Ruz, “The Battle Over the Words Used to Describe Migrants.”

return to their home countries if they desire to do so, and if they do, they will still have the protection of their home country governments. Further, while countries deal with migrants with immigration laws and processes, refugees are dealt with through processes and protection defined in both national and international laws.\textsuperscript{129}

An asylum seeker is someone who claims to be a refugee, but whose claim has not yet been evaluated; an asylum seeker is someone who has not yet gone through RSD. National asylum systems evaluate the claims of asylum-seekers, who can be sent back to their home countries if they are judged not to meet the definition of “refugee” and therefore not to be in need of international protection. When large displacements occur, they often overwhelm the asylum system, as a process for individual asylum interviews when mass movements of people occur – usually resulting from general violence or conflict rather than targeted, individual persecution – does not exist. Nonetheless, a system like this is considered unnecessary because in these circumstances, the UNHCR often grants these large groups “prima facie” refugee status due to the reason for flight being apparent.\textsuperscript{130}

This research focuses on asylum seekers and refugees in Berlin, Germany, and I chose to use the UNHCR definitions of asylum seeker and refugee for the purposes of this thesis. That is to say, “refugees” in this research refers to those who have been granted legal refugee status due to the conditions stipulated in the Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, and “asylum seekers” are those who have applied for asylum but who have not yet been granted official refugee status. While other migrants may have similar experiences making their way to

\textsuperscript{129} Edwards, “UNHCR Viewpoint: ‘Refugee’ or ‘Migrant’ - Which is Right?.”
\textsuperscript{130} UNHCR, “Asylum-Seekers,” UNHCR, 2015.
Berlin, they are not considered here. Rather, the participants of this study are those who have
applied for asylum or who have already been granted refugee status.

**Research Question**

As the background and literature review demonstrate, citizenship and nationhood as well
as self and other are discursively crafted to carry with them certain meanings. While discourse
exists at an abstract level, discursive framings have real-world implications. For instance,
Lewicki explored four varying discursive framings of citizenship regimes in Germany and Great
Britain and explained how each of these affects the integration of Muslim populations. Lewicki
outlines various discursive visions of citizenship in order to articulate how those discourses work
– or hinder work – towards equality. Similarly, discursive framings of self and other can
significantly impact integrative processes. Asylum seekers and refugees are often portrayed in a
sort of dichotomy as either victims without agency or as free agents who can act of their own
accord and are likely to be a risk for or threat to the host society. Common images of asylum
seekers and refugees are either of helpless and hopeless victims, in need of a Western savior, or
potentially dangerous free agents. These portrayals may be constructed at many levels, by the
media, through government policy and discourse, by NGOs and citizens’ initiatives, and in
public discourse.

I argue that aside from pure theoretical implications, these discursive framings have
significant implications for integration. Both the discursive framing of citizenship and
nationhood and this discursive victim-agent dichotomy of asylum seeker and refugee portrayals
can have significant implications for integration, creating a separation of asylum seekers and
refugees from the dominant host society into which they enter. Therefore, this thesis investigates
to what extent discursive framings of nationhood, citizenship, self, and other impact the
integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Germany. In order to explore this central question, the following sub-questions must also be addressed: (1) What is Germany’s discursive framing of citizenship and nationhood? and (2) What are the discursive framings of self and other in Germany? These sub-questions address top-down and bottom-up perspectives of integration respectively: top-down examining government policies and practices, and bottom-up examining individuals and day-to-day experiences and interactions.

Theoretical Approach

To investigate the extent to which discursive framings impact the integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Germany, I combine a feminist theoretical approach with theories of integration. Additionally, at its foundation, this thesis is informed by discursive theories. Multiple theoretical stands inform this research due to the interdisciplinary nature of migration research. This interdisciplinarity in the field of migration studies is acknowledged and encouraged by many scholars. For instance, sociologist Gioconda Herrera speaks of the “cross-fertilization” in migration studies between different disciplines rather positively, and well-known scholars in gender and migration, sociologist Katharine Donato and historian Donna Gabaccia, with others, state that they “are pleased to discover an ongoing and widening interdisciplinary dialogue about gender that could, conceivably, contribute to new advances in both migration and gender theories.” The main strands of theoretical contributions that contribute to my approach in this interdisciplinary area are discursive theories, feminist theories, and integration theories. I will note the major contributions of each that inform in the perspective I take in this research.

The Role of Discursive Theories

As the central research question and sub-questions explore discursive framings, discursive theories lie at the foundation of this thesis. Political sociologist Aleksandra Lewicki in discussing integration emphasizes the importance of the discursive framing of citizenship, and she identifies four discursive models that can facilitate or inhibit the integrative process.\(^\text{133}\) In addition to exploring the discursive framing of citizenship and nationhood, a more top-down approach, I use discursive theories to investigate representations of asylum seekers and refugees from a bottom-up approach.

In terms of discursive theories, I apply a constructionist lens, which assumes that meaning is built through language and does not inherently exist.\(^\text{134}\) Further, I examine discourse through a Foucauldian lens. Rather than thinking solely about the systematic qualities of language and representation, cultural theorist and sociologist Stuart Hall notes that Foucault focuses on an analysis of knowledge and power. French philosopher Michel Foucault with his discursive approach diverges from de Saussure’s and Barthes’s more scientific, semiotic approaches to linguistics and proposes that language, culture, and meaning are too complex to be adequately addressed by positivist approaches. As Hall explains, “Later developments have recognized the necessarily interpretive nature of culture and the fact that interpretations never produce a final moment of absolute truth.”\(^\text{135}\) Instead of thinking solely about the systematic qualities of language and representation, Foucault shifts to an analysis of knowledge and power.

\(^\text{134}\) Hall, *Representation*, 16.
\(^\text{135}\) Hall, *Representation*, 27.
Specifically, Foucault is interested in “representation as a source for the production of social knowledge.” According to Foucault, knowledge is produced through language, a process that he defines as discourse. Foucault argues that,

In every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality.

As the production of discourse is controlled, discourse comes with power implications. Further, Foucault states, “the discipline is a principle of control over the production of discourse,” noting the disciplinary power over fields of discourse. For instance, Foucault differentiates between medical, political, and religious discourses. Nonetheless, each discursive field can constitute truth due to the power that is at play in the production of knowledge. Further, meanings produced by the similar narratives can work together to build discursive formations. Foucault discusses discursive formations, which occur when “discursive events” discuss the same subject in similar manners and “support a strategy… a common institutional, administrative or political drift and pattern.” Discursive formations support and sustain what Foucault refers to as regimes of truth. Through a Foucauldian lens, truth is not absolute, again emphasizing his divergence from positivist approaches. However, discursive formations carry with them power, and “Knowledge linked to power not only assumes the authority of ‘the truth’, but has the power to make itself true.” Thus, Foucauldian discourse theory explores the concepts of knowledge and truth while illuminating power implications therein.

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136 Hall, Representation, 27.
139 Hall, Representation, 29.
140 Hall, Representation, 34.
141 Hall, Representation, 33.
Foucauldian discourse theory is a vital theoretical approach that informs this research due to the focus of this thesis on discursive framings. In looking at discourse through a Foucauldian lens, I am interested in how discursive representations of citizenship, nationhood, the German Self, and the asylum seeker/refugee “Other” become a source of knowledge and power.

The Role of Feminist Theories

Building on the foundational discursive theory, this research is also informed by feminist theoretical approaches. Feminist theories have informed migration studies, drawing attention to the historical absence of gender in analyses of migration and proposing various ways gender in migration should be considered. Truly, throughout the history of migration studies, much research has been gender blind, neglecting to take into account the role of gender in migratory processes. Feminist theories have increasingly informed migration studies in deeper and more meaningful ways, as sociologist Helma Lutz discusses, identifying four stages of gendered approaches in migration studies. Lutz begins with a “compensatory approach” towards gender in migration, in which women are simply made visible. While this stage is significant in that it draws attention to women, a group historically neglected in migration studies, women-only studies can only provide so much insight. Lutz identifies the “contributory approach” as the second stage, which considers the influence of the role of women in the migration process with their specific migration experiences. As the stages progress, gender is given an increasingly more prominent role. The third stage Lutz identifies is a “differences” approach, which is influenced by second-wave feminism and draws attention to power differentials between women and intersectional identities. Finally, Lutz describes her fourth stage as “the paradigmatic change from a Women’s Studies to a Gender Studies perspective.” Moving beyond the consideration of
solely women, this fourth stage is characterized by a deeper consideration of migration as a gendered process, influenced by gender at all stages.\textsuperscript{142}

Similarly, law and sociology scholar Kitty Calavita also recounts stages to the consideration of gender in law and migration. The first stage Calavita discusses emphasizes the historical legal discrimination against women and thus is similar to Lutz’s compensatory approach with simply making women visible. The second stage Calavita identifies is characterized by the belief that “law in patriarchal societies is inherently patriarchal.” Calavita’s third stage explores intersectionality with critical race theory. Finally, the fourth stage is characterized by a postmodern approach, “deconstructing the male/female binary and critiquing the essentialism implicit in much of feminist theory.”\textsuperscript{143} While both Lutz and Calavita’s stages indicate significant developments in how feminist approaches have informed migration studies, this movement is not necessarily linear, and scholarship reflective of all stages continues to be produced.

The existence of the fourth stage regarding gender in a postmodern and poststructuralist manner does not preclude the value of third-stage approaches to gender and migration studies regarding intersectionality. Anthropologist Patricia Pessar highlights the invaluableness of intersectional approaches in particular due to the deeper understanding of multiple oppressions that they can provide.\textsuperscript{144} Further, intersectional analyses are concerned with power inequalities, representation, and de-marginalization. In this sense, this thesis is informed by intersectionality.

Further, gender and women’s studies scholars Anita Mannur and Jana Evans Braziel also value intersectional analyses and view feminist theory’s contribution to diaspora studies on asylum seekers and refugees as largely relating to race. Arguing that “Diasporas are always racialized,” Mannur and Braziel see feminist theories in diaspora studies as accounting for the role of race. The authors suggest that feminist theory highlights two thematic patterns of the racialization of diasporic groups: “(1) outsiders within – the postmigratory racialization of economic migrants and (2) barred entry – the racialization of refugees by intended countries of destination that bar entry to communities seeking political asylum.”¹⁴⁵ This research is specifically concerned with those “outsiders within,” as it involves the outsider status of asylum seekers and refugees within Germany as they begin the integrative process.

The focus of this thesis on in- and out-groups is thus most significantly informed by feminist theoretical approaches to “the Other.” Perhaps one of the quintessential works on the concept of “the Other” is Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, in which he describes the Orient as, “not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies… its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other.”¹⁴⁶ Said explains Orientalism as a discourse in which an Oriental “Other” is positioned in contrast with the European or Western “Self.” Orientalism is then the discourse and understanding of a cultural binary in which the West is constructed and perceived as inherently superior to the East.

Anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod points out that Orientalism was not intended to be a work of feminist scholarship; nonetheless, she notes various ways in which Edward Said’s *Orientalism* has informed feminist scholarship. Abu-Lughod states, “Orientalism was not just

about representations or stereotypes of the Orient but about how these were linked and integral to projects of domination that were ongoing,”147 and she suggests that Orientalism impacts theoretical understandings of identity, stereotypes, and discursive power. Thus, Orientalism is deeply connected to power inequalities between the Self and the Other and draws attention to the problematic nature of the Western subject’s power to produce knowledge about the Other. In emphasizing cultural difference, the Self-Other division thus establishes Western authority. Still, as Foucault expounds, the Other should not be taken as lacking agency. Rather, he states,

‘the other’ (the one over whom power is exercised) [should] be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, and results, and possible interventions may open up.148

Therefore, rather than taking the Other as fully subject to the power of the Western production of knowledge, Foucault acknowledges the agency of the Other even in a relationship of power where the Other is at the lower end.

Feminist theoretical perspectives have impacted the field of migration studies in myriad ways. The feminist theoretical approaches to Self and Other specifically inform this research due to the focus on the discursive constructions of the German Self and the Refugee Other. The racialization of refugees and immigrants produces an “outsider within” status in which the cultural differences between the Self and the Other are emphasized. While Orientalism did not originate as a feminist theory, it has informed feminist scholarship and understandings of identity, stereotypes, and discursive power. While the Other still possesses agency, a feminist

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theoretical approach to Orientalism informs this thesis’s perspective on the power dynamics involved in the discursive constructions of the German Self and the refugee Other.

The Role of Integration Theories

As this thesis considers the integration of refugees, exploring various theoretical frameworks involving integration as well as defining the term “integration” is necessary. To better operationalize the concept of integration, I first discuss a number of significant theoretical approaches to integration. Second, I explain why Ager and Strang’s framework is the superior approach for this research. Finally, I define integration as it is used in this thesis.

Scholars and practitioners alike recognize the concept of integration as complex. Nonetheless, as psychologists and experts in health and migration studies, Alison Strang and Alastair Ager so aptly state, “Despite – or perhaps because of – contention regarding the term, integration is a central concept in debates over the rights, settlement and adjustment of refugees.”149 While integration is a complex and contested concept indeed, the centrality of integrative processes to refugees makes understanding integration critical. Is integration adaption solely on the part of resettled refugees, or is it a process for all members of society to engage in? Does integration inevitably mean the rejection of previous cultural practices and identities, or can these be retained? Is economic participation indicative of integration, or must civic and political conditions be met as well? Numerous scholars have approached these and more integration-related questions, proffering a variety of models of integration.

Although integration is sometimes taken as synonymous with assimilation, assimilation is often seen as more extreme. For instance, Alessandro Silj, Founder and Director of European research organization Ethnobarometer, presents assimilation and integration on a kind of

spectrum, where assimilation is one extreme, multiculturalism is the other, and integration is somewhere in the middle. Classical assimilation theory views an immigrant or immigrant groups’ trajectory as a linear process of becoming more like the host society. Notably, in this model, the immigrant group is the only party adjusting and changing, while the host society remains constant. Further, the full burden of becoming like the host society to such an extent that they do not stand out as separate is on the immigrant group. Sociologists Susan K. Brown and Frank D. Bean explain, “This theory expects those immigrants residing the longest in the host society, as well as the members of later generations, to show greater similarities with the majority group than immigrants who have spent less time in the host society.” Brown and Bean use the example of early European migrants to the United States who were initially racialized but over generations assimilated and “came to be seen as white” Americans.

While the melting-pot style assimilation model has been the case for some, a linear model of assimilation cannot sufficiently represent many migrant cases. As previously noted, some scholars, including Silj, view integration as a medium between full assimilation and multiculturalism, which may not be cohesive. Notably, not everyone would agree on where integration falls between these two extremes. Silj seems to regard integration as being located in the middle, stating, “Integration… stands in between the other two and is common to both.” However, sociocultural scholar Rob Bijl and sociologic economist Arjen Verweij argue that the EU places integration as far closer to multiculturalism than assimilation. Bijl and Verweij ask, “Does it [integration] refer to assimilation, based around the requirement that migrants abandon their cultural identity and assume the identity of the host country in its place? Or

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does integration mean multiculturalism, in which both migrant and host society retain their own identities and only limited adaptation is required?\textsuperscript{153} The authors note that the EU defines integration as “close to this second approach: integration is a two-way process in which neither group need give up their cultural identity but in which both add a shared dimension to that identity.”\textsuperscript{154} Although the European Union does, according to Bijl and Verweij, view integration as between assimilation and multiculturalism, the authors suggest that the EU definition of integration aligns the concept more closely to multiculturalism due to the mutual adjustments and retaining of cultural identities on the part of both immigrant groups and the host society.

Nonetheless, integration is indeed a contested term, and many definitions for it exist, not all of them locating integration on the assimilation-multiculturalism spectrum. For instance, sociologists Richard Alba and Nancy Foner refer to integration as,

the processes that increase the opportunities of immigrants and their descendants to obtain the valued “stuff” of a society, as well as social acceptance, through participation in major institutions such as the educational and political system and the labor and housing markets.\textsuperscript{155} Rather than defining integration in relation to other concepts such as assimilation and multiculturalism, Alba and Foner craft an independent definition of integration involving increasing opportunities and participation of migrants in numerous venues within a society. Notably, this definition requires some action on the part of the host society in fostering “social acceptance” and on the part of the immigrant groups via various forms of participation.


\textsuperscript{154} Bijl and Verweij, \textit{Measuring and Monitoring Immigrant Integration}, 34.

In fact, one model of integration is the two-way model, which assumes this mutual activity is necessary for successful integration. Alba and Foner demonstrate their acceptance of a two-way model both by the actions inherent in their definition of integration and by their suggestion that “changes do not take place in only one direction.” Rather, the authors argue that as immigrant groups adapt to their new societies, those communities and the larger society are altered as well.\textsuperscript{156} This two-way theoretical approach to integration assumes that in processes of integration, not only are a number of responsibilities on the incoming immigrant groups, but also a number of responsibilities for the host society exist. Political scientist Zenia Hellgren explains this model at length, identifying both structural factors, such as unemployment and discrimination, and interethnic agreeability.\textsuperscript{157} Through both structural factors and interethnic agreeability, integration is an activity in which both the incoming migrants and the host society must engage.

Nonetheless, while Alba and Foner and Hellgren view integration as an activity undergone by both immigrant groups and the host society and which requires adaptation and change on the part of both parties, other scholars have drawn attention to the barriers that are present when the host society refuses to engage in integrative actions. Specifically, the racial-ethnic disadvantage model of integration suggests that integrative processes of immigrant groups are blocked by racial and ethnic factors such as discrimination and institutional barriers.\textsuperscript{158} Sociologists Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan published a seminal work using this theoretical framework to discuss the integration of migrants to the United States,\textsuperscript{159} nonetheless,

\textsuperscript{156} Alba and Foner, \textit{Strangers No More}, 6.
\textsuperscript{158} Brown and Bean, “Assimilation Models, Old and New.”
this model may be used in many contexts. According to Glazer and Moynihan, ethnicity can be viewed as both an asset and a burden in integration processes. The racial-ethnic disadvantage model of integration further argues that even when the migrant reaches language fluency and cultural familiarity, integration might still be impeded by racial and ethnic factors such as discrimination and structural inequalities. The Oxford English Dictionary reflects this concern for discrimination in the integration process, defining integration as “the bringing into equal membership of a common society those groups or persons previously discriminated against on racial or cultural grounds.”

Thus, racialization and discrimination can create significant barriers for immigrant groups in the process of integration.

While Ager and Strang acknowledge these barriers and include “facilitators” to address them, they also include several other “core domains of integration” to offer a complete picture of the integrative process. Using both documentary conceptual analysis and fieldwork-based research, Ager and Strang offer what they define as a “middle-range theory” in integration, which works at academic-theoretical levels while also being accessible to practitioners and policy makers.

Based on their research, Ager and Strang craft a multi-leveled, multi-dimensional framework indicating specific domains of integration including domains at the markers and means, social connection, facilitators, and foundation levels. This framework is depicted in Figure 2.1.

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Ager and Strang explain each core domain of integration, beginning with “markers and means.” Notably, the authors state that while the domains in this category, employment, housing, education, and health, are often taken for markers or indicators of integration, they also may serve as a means to integration, contributing to the process but not indicative of completion of the process.

The authors move from a discussion on the four markers and means domains into a discussion on the foundation of their integration framework, rights and citizenship. Ager and Strang argue that understandings of citizenship and nationhood have a direct impact on integrative processes, noting that “definitions of integration adopted by a nation inevitably depend on that nation’s sense of identity.”

Exploring much literature on the role of citizenship and nationhood in integration, the authors make the case that “in an ‘integrated’ community,
refugees should have the same rights as the people they are living amongst.”\textsuperscript{163} Significantly, this is not likely the case for refugees in Germany due to the “ethno-cultural political exclusion” model, which is associated with assimilationist models, as opposed to the “pluralist political inclusion” models of some other nations.\textsuperscript{164} These various national models and self-understandings, for Ager and Strang, form the foundation for understanding integration in different national contexts.

Between the markers and means domains and the foundational rights and citizenship domain, Ager and Strang identify a number of domains that work as the “connective tissue.”\textsuperscript{165} The authors first explain social connection and recognize distinctions between social bonds, social bridges, and social links.\textsuperscript{166} The social bonds domain includes the bonds with family members or ethnic or religious groups that can alleviate feelings of isolation and act as resources and support systems for refugees.\textsuperscript{167} Within the social bridges domain, Ager and Strang explore the relationships between resettled refugees and their host communities and particularly describe integration in terms of race relations,\textsuperscript{168} while in the social links domain, the authors note the importance of connecting refugees to relevant and necessary services.\textsuperscript{169} In this social connection level, Ager and Strang take into account the importance of a two-way model of integration, explaining that in social connection, integration can be seen as “a process of mutual accommodation.”\textsuperscript{170}

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\textsuperscript{163} Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 176.
\textsuperscript{164} Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 174-175.
\textsuperscript{165} Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 177.
\textsuperscript{166} Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 178.
\textsuperscript{167} Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 178-179.
\textsuperscript{168} Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 179.
\textsuperscript{169} Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 181.
\textsuperscript{170} Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 177.
\end{flushleft}
Finally, the authors include two domains on the level of facilitators, which “tend to be associated with policy measures that use the metaphor of ‘removing barriers’ to integration.” Here, the authors refer to the importance of enabling refugees’ access to language and cultural knowledge and safety and stability. Notably, Ager and Strang also incorporate a two-way model into this level, mentioning the role of the state and/or host society in removing potential barriers to integration for refugees.

Ager and Strang’s model of integration is superior for this research as it includes both two-way and racial/ethnic dimensions in the integrative process. Additionally, this model of integration allows one to explore domains like education and housing as both means and indicators of integration, a dual nature which other theories often neglect. Moreover, the authors’ model enables the consideration of the influence of citizenship and understandings of nationhood, which are crucial to the understanding of integration in the case of Germany.

Ager and Strang’s conceptual framework is complimented by political sociologist Aleksandra Lewicki’s proffered notion of integration as a process of becoming equal rather than a process of adaptation into social norms. Lewicki explains, “I thus reclaim and recoin the term integration, which is not understood as a process of inclusion into a pre-defined set of norms and institutions, but as a mechanism that gradually reduces institutionalized obstacles to individuals’ standing as equals.” Rather than defining integration more traditionally as a sort of adaptation into preexisting societal norms on the part of immigrant groups, Lewicki defines integration as a process of removing barriers to allow individuals to become equals. Focusing on varying conceptions of citizenship, Lewicki argues that the discursive framing of citizenship is central to

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171 Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 181.
172 Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 182.
defining integrative processes.\textsuperscript{174} Similarly, Ager and Strang acknowledge that varying understandings of citizenship and nationhood produce varying integrative models as citizenship and rights lie at the foundation of their model.

Due to the complementary relationship of Ager and Strang’s conceptual framework and Lewicki’s definition of integration, this research is strongly influenced by the conjunction of these frameworks. While Ager and Strang’s conceptual framework of integration provides specific domains to explore, Lewicki’s definition provides an overarching description of what I take integration to mean. In other words, for the purposes of this thesis I view integration as the process of becoming more equal, and I explore Ager and Strang’s domains to investigate that process.

**Methodology**

To answer the central question regarding the extent to which discursive framings impact integration of asylum seekers and refugees, I use a mixed-methods approach. First, to explore what I call “top-down integration,” I have studied and analyzed government policies and practices on integration of refugees, using a discourse analysis to explore the framing of the concepts of citizenship and nationhood. Additionally, over the course of my fieldwork in Berlin in the summer of 2016, I asked interview participants about government approaches to integration and about their feelings towards the German government’s approach.

In order to explore what I refer to as “bottom-up integration,” I used interviews, participant observation, and discourse analysis. My interviews allowed me to explore what asylum seekers, refugees, and those who work closely with them think and feel about integration. Through participant observation, I was able to see how asylum seekers and refugees were treated

\textsuperscript{174} Lewicki, *Social Justice through Citizenship*?, 4.
or dealt with in different contexts, interactions which have implications for bottom-up integration. The examination of bottom-up integration also involved a discourse analysis on the representations of asylum seekers and refugees in daily conversation and in the rhetoric of organizations working with refugees. This discourse was explored by engaging in participant observation and conducting semi-structured interviews in Berlin, Germany. Discourse analyses are used in both the social sciences and literary studies and can be useful in that they allow the researcher to combine linguistic and social theories to produce a detailed examination of power and power imbalances in social and political processes. As discourse analysis is concerned with “relations of power and inequality in language,” this is the ideal means to carefully and systematically examine the underlying issues of social inequality and power dynamics.

Researcher Positionality

Qualitative researchers across many disciplines agree that as a researcher, assuming a completely objective stance is not possible. As educational studies scholar Brian Bourke explains, “Research represents a shared space, shaped by both researcher and participants… As such, the identities of both researcher and participants have the potential to impact the research process.” Nonetheless, this influence of the researcher and participants does not render research invalid. Rather, researchers must accept the impossibility of complete neutrality, reject the myth of the “neutral observer,” and acknowledge potential biases. One way for researchers to account for researcher bias is to reflect on their own positionality. Through a reflexive self-examination, the researcher can minimize his or her biases.

Having worked with resettled refugees for multiple years in Colorado and formed relationships with many individuals and families, this research is in a way very personal for me. Throughout my time working at the Global Refugee Center, I heard refugees’ stories and witnessed their resettlement struggles firsthand, and these experiences influence my views towards forced migrants. My previous encounters with refugees have made me sympathetic toward their experiences. Nevertheless, having observed the desire for self-sufficiency and independence of most refugees with whom I worked, I recognize that sympathy may look like pity in many cases. These previous experiences allowed me to be more conscious of how I expressed my sympathy and concern for the asylum seekers and refugees with whom I spoke in Berlin. Due to my previous experiences, I was able to take a balanced approach with my interview participants, expressing sympathy while avoiding being patronizing.

Further, I reflected on my motivations for researching this topic. Early on in my research, several organizations declined interviews, stating that they were getting too many requests from journalists and researchers, so they were not responding to any of them. One individual noted, “I’ll be honest with you. I receive nearly ten emails a day from researchers or journalists looking for interviews.” Further, when seeking an interview from a refugee self-organized group that publishes a newspaper called *Daily Resistance*, I came across this statement on their website: “If you want to interview refugee activists for a research project, please consider your position in relation to people categorized as refugees and being active politically, and how refugee protests and the activists themselves can benefit from your project.” These interactions caused me to more deeply reflect on my role as a researcher in this context. I found myself reflecting on my own privilege and power relative to that of my interview participants. While as an American

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citizen, I have the privilege of freedom of movement, my participants often had experienced extreme restrictions on their movement. Further, I was often treated as a guest and warmly welcomed in many public places, whereas in several situations I observed, asylum seekers and refugees were often treated as nuisances or with suspicion.

As the last thing I wanted to do was to be another insensitive, probing microphone in someone’s face, to treat them like an object to be studied rather than a human being with an individual story, I began making every effort to intentionally foster relationships with the people I interviewed rather than simply interviewing them and moving on. While this approach required spending more time with each individual and likely resulted in a fewer total number of interviews, it was beneficial in that I was able to get to know individuals on a deeper personal level. Additionally, since through my research I had come across a number of different organizations and programs, I began making recommendations and connecting my interviewees with resources that seemed useful for their specific needs. Ultimately, my goal in this thesis is to represent the stories of the asylum seekers and refugees with whom I spoke in the truest sense. Therefore, I use many direct quotations and share many stories in order to promote these individuals speaking for themselves.

Interviewees

Over the course of seven weeks in the summer of 2016, I was able to interview 44 individuals. My interview participants fall into three main categories: (1) asylum seekers, (2) refugees, and (3) individuals who volunteer or work with asylum seekers and refugees through citizens’ initiatives or NGOs.

Prior to arriving in Berlin, I had a few existing contacts. Specifically, I had communicated with two individuals who could serve as translators if needed. Additionally, I had
connected with the pastor of Life Center Berlin, a church of the same denomination I had been raised in. There were a few refugee families in the congregation at Life Center Berlin, and one man there offered to take me to the refugee camp where he had previously stayed. This was the first open door to interview asylum seekers. Later on in my research, one of my translators, an asylum seeker himself, offered the same. Thus, these contacts were able to facilitate initial connections with asylum seekers and refugees.

To connect with organizations that were working with asylum seekers and refugees, I began with Google and Facebook searches. Through Google, I found and emailed several organizations. Facebook enabled me to connect with two community groups, Berlin Refugee Help and HELPLINGE, where numerous organizations, projects, and asylum seekers and refugees posted information. Through these methods, I connected with several individuals working on different projects. Further, Google and Facebook searches allowed me to find relevant events going on in Berlin, such as organizations hosting informational meetings for volunteers, an academic conference on racism and discrimination, and a festival featuring several related organizations. Attending relevant events was helpful in that I was able to engage in further participant observation, witnessing public discourse on relevant issues, and I was able to connect with potential interview participants.

Research Instruments and Confidentiality

To understand asylum seekers’ and refugees’ experiences with arriving to and integrating in Berlin, my primary tool was semi-structured interviews. In accordance with the University of Wyoming’s research regulations, I completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Program on human subjects research, and this research was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). When I began an interview with any participant, I first gave
them a copy of a consent form and read it aloud to them, ensuring that they understood and asking if they had any questions. Four interviews with asylum seekers required Arabic translation, and in this case, a translator read the consent form to the interviewee. I had contacted Dr. Regula Forster, the chair of the Islamic Studies department at the Freie University of Berlin, before arriving in Berlin to explain my research and ask if she had any students with fluent Arabic abilities who might be interested in helping with translation. After she forwarded my request to a departmental listserv, several students contacted me. I exchanged several emails with students and spoke with two of them over Skype. This process was detailed in my IRB application, and the translator signed a confidentiality form as well.

Interview participants were asked to sign consent forms and indicate whether they were comfortable with being recorded or not via checking one of two boxes. 14 interviews were not recorded, in compliance with interview participants’ requests. When interviews were not recorded, I asked the participants if they would be comfortable with me taking notes throughout the interview. All of these 14 individuals agreed, and I took extensive notes during and after the interviews. Recorded interviews were later transcribed. Interviews ranged in duration from 25 minutes to an hour and a half. The majority of interviews lasting 45 minutes to one hour. Interviews took place at a variety of public places including coffee shops, parks, shopping centers, and businesses. Some interviews also took place in refugee shelters, camps, or homes.

Interviewees were told that I was a graduate student from the University of Wyoming in the United States, interested in learning about asylum seekers’ and refugees’ experiences and challenges in Germany. Participants were informed that I would eliminate identifying information about them and replace their names with pseudonyms. Due to the potentially sensitive nature of this topic, I also made clear that participants could skip questions or stop the
interview at any time. Additionally, due to the lack of private space in most cases, participants were told that if they were concerned about being overheard or became uncomfortable if someone came near us, they could stop talking.

During the interviews, I asked participants how they defined integration and what integration would mean to them. Further, I asked asylum seekers and refugees about their interactions with and impressions of NGO workers, refugee shelter and/or camp workers, and other Germans they had encountered. I also asked if there were any instances since they had arrived to Germany that they felt particularly welcomed or unwelcomed and included or excluded, and I asked them about their major challenges and concerns and what actions could alleviate these concerns. I asked those who worked with asylum seekers and refugees about their roles, their work, and their motivations for working with these groups. I then asked them about meaningful interactions with asylum seekers and refugees. Finally, I also asked these individuals about their impressions of asylum seekers’ and refugees’ primary challenges and about their impressions of the climate of Berlin towards asylum seekers and refugees. After each interview, I asked participants whether they wanted to further discuss anything we had brought up over the course of the interview and if they had any additional thoughts to share. I then asked participants if they knew of any other individuals who might be willing to talk to me, and this method of chain referral sampling yielded some additional interviews.

Data Analysis

Once the interviews were transcribed, I analyzed the transcriptions for salient themes. The notes from the interviews that were not recorded were also typed up in order to have all interview data in digital format. I identified several reoccurring themes through analysis, which I organized under the broader categories of “top-down” and “bottom-up” integration. While
themes did not always fall neatly into one of these two categories and were sometimes more complex. I used Ager and Strang’s conceptual framework to aid in the organizing process. Top-down themes include those related to government policies and practices, and include language and culture classes, camp conditions, waiting, isolation, racial hierarchy, and bureaucracy. Bottom-up themes are those related to day-to-day interactions, and include positive/inclusive interactions, negative/exclusive interactions, gender-related concerns, Islam, and labeling. These themes will be discussed at length in chapters three and four, respectively.

Further, in order to make sense of the large amount of data, I made use of NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software. NVivo allows for one project file to contain several imported text files and data analysis on those files. With NVivo, the researcher can explore frequently occurring words and phrases and their contexts to find connections in the data and gain new insights. Further, NVivo allows the comparison of files as well as data visualization in word clouds, word trees, and comparison diagrams. In NVivo, I was able to code my data, using the themes I had identified to create data nodes, which can be hierarchically structured. The nodes can then be textually or graphically viewed and further analyzed. This program proved advantageous for further analyzing the data and gaining insight into relationships between concepts and themes. After all of the interview data was coded and categorized into nodes, I went through each node to review all materials and ensure the accuracy of the thematic code. If any material did not seem to match the code, it was reorganized into a place it better fit.

Significance

In a report about the UNHCR, Paula Tasso states, “Refugees have wandered the earth as long as there have been wars, persecution, discrimination, intolerance, famine and flood.”

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While this statement is true, and both non-forced and forced migration have occurred throughout human history, Tasso notes, “the number of displaced people has grown exponentially during the last half of this [the twentieth] century.” Still, does discourse really matter? This thesis explores the impact of discursive framings of citizenship, nationhood, self, and other on integration, but what leads scholars to believe that discourse has any impact at all? Portrayals of asylum seeker and refugee populations tend to influence thought, actions, and behaviors; however, perhaps more significantly, in the context of global migration, these portrayals can also have profound impacts on public discourse and on policy making. Thus, for the situation of asylum seekers and refugees in Germany, discourse can affect a great deal.

Further, French philosopher and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu discusses the complex relationship between language, discourses, and power in his book, *Language and Symbolic Power*. Bourdieu sees language as not only a mode of communication, but also an expression of power. According to Bourdieu,

…a discourse can only exist, in the form which it exists, so long as it is not simply grammatically correct but also, and above all, socially acceptable, i.e. heard, believed, and therefore effective within a given state of relations of production and circulation.

Therefore, discourses exist on the grounds that they are somehow bought into at a social level. Bourdieu goes on to explain that discourses gain power based on the symbolic capital, or the sum of the economic, social, and cultural resources, of agents, or actors. He explains that the authority that causes a discourse to be effective comes from the discourse being perceived, or “a percipi,”

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184 Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 76.
which in turn “allows a *percipere,*” or perception or way of knowing, “to be imposed” and understood as the common meaning of the social world.\(^{185}\)

What Bourdieu has to say about discourses and the relationship between language and power aids understanding the significance of the discursive framings in this study. Because discourses contain such symbolic power as to create or define the commonly understood social reality, the discourses of citizenship, nationhood, self, and other have the power to create a socially accepted reality that impacts the integrative processes of asylum seekers and refugees.

Moreover, while theoretical debates on integrative measures and processes play a vital role in migration studies, these debates can also have policy implications. As Strang and Ager explain, “While critique and elaboration of the theorization of integration processes is a key goal of the field of refugee studies, so too are means of making the insights of theory accessible to local actors and policy makers.”\(^{186}\) Notably, a mid-level theory such as Ager and Strang’s operates at both levels: engaging in theoretical debate and making itself accessible to influence policy.\(^{187}\)

Finally, the contemporary asylum seeker and refugee situation in Europe is a timely issue in that the events that have caused displaced persons are current and ongoing. Because of this, the challenges that asylum seekers and refugees face are highly relevant in our current world. As policy makers, aid workers, and academics scramble to find solutions for the growing problems of displaced persons, this issue is of increasing importance. Understanding the challenges to integration in refugees’ new societies may give further insight into the kinds of services and resources that are most needed to foster equality and social cohesion. Additionally, allowing the

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\(^{185}\) Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 106.

\(^{186}\) Strang and Ager, “Refugee Integration,” 591.

\(^{187}\) Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 167.
voices of asylum seekers and refugees to be more accurately represented may lead to solutions of some of the problems they face.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to explain the research design, which can be seen as the mechanics of the thesis. In this chapter, I have defined important terms, differentiating “asylum seeker,” “refugee,” and “migrant,” and clarifying the definitions that I use. Additionally, I expressed my central research question regarding the extent to which discursive framings of citizenship, nationhood, self, and other impact top-down and bottom-up integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Germany.

A number of theoretical approaches inform the investigation of this core concern, including feminist theories of migration, theories of integration, and theories on discourse. Specifically, this research is informed by the deeper consideration of gender reached in the developments of gender and migration studies and intersectionality’s concern with inequality, representation, and de-marginalization. With regards to integration theories, this thesis is influenced by Ager and Strang’s conceptual framework defining core domains of integration and Lewicki’s definition of integration as the process of becoming more equal. The final theoretical strand informing this thesis is Foucauldian discourse theory, which focuses on discourses as the production of knowledge, having power implications.

In order to investigate the central research question, I used a mixed-methods approach using interviews, participant observation, and discourse analysis. With my statement of researcher positionality, I attempted to acknowledge potential biases and assumptions, thus minimizing their impact on the research. My 44 interview participants consisted of asylum seekers, refugees, and those who work closely with them in NGOs or citizens’ initiatives. I
explained the interview process and some frequently asked questions and provided a brief overview of the data analysis process, which involved the NVivo software.

Finally, I explained the significance and relevance of this research, noting that discourse has real-world implications for integrative processes despite its perceived abstract nature. With the research context and design thoroughly explained, I will present the data from my findings and my analysis in the next two chapters.
CHAPTER THREE

TOP-DOWN INTEGRATION: GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES

It’s a general issue we have with bureaucracy, especially in Germany. I think we’re the masters of that. You can start with as much motivation as you want to. You will feel defeated at the end. It’s very tiring, it’s very long, it’s very technical, doesn’t really make sense… so I’d say it’s pretty much impossible to come out of an asylum case and say, ‘Wow this was a nice experience, that was easy, it was helpful, it made sense what happened, everything I had to go through feels like actually it was aimed at a target to lead somewhere.’ It’s not like that. So of course you feel defeated… There is no victory to be found there, it just feels horrible.188

Introduction

One way to explore the integrative process of asylum seekers and refugees is to examine government measures regarding integration. Governments implement a variety of policies towards integration, and these are an obvious source of information about the integrative experiences of migrants. I therefore begin with an investigation into the German government’s policies and practices concerning the integration of asylum seekers and refugees. This “top-down” approach to integration is indicative of the integrative experiences of asylum seekers and refugees in relation to the German state.

In this top-down approach, I first explore notions of citizenship and nationhood in Germany. I use discourse analysis to explicate the discursive framings of citizenship and nationhood. I then discuss how these discursive framings play a role in top-down integration, as seen through Ager and Strang’s foundational and facilitator levels. The foundational level, referring to the citizenship and rights of refugees, is chiefly in the hands of the government. Moreover, Ager and Strang explain the “facilitators” level as “associated with policy measures that use the metaphor of ‘removing barriers’ to integration.” The authors further clarify that “The role of the state is then to remove these barriers and thus allow integration to take place.”189

188 Hans (German asylum lawyer) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
189 Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 181.
Therefore, at both the level of “foundation” and the level of “facilitators,” the state is the primary actor engaged in integrative provisions.

The Discursive Construction of Citizenship and Nationhood

This chapter investigates the extent to which discursive framings of citizenship and nationhood impact top-down integration at Ager and Strang’s foundation and facilitator levels; thus, I begin by discussing the discursive constructions of German citizenship and nationhood. The traditional German concept of nationhood is framed in a very ethno-cultural context, emphasizing the importance of German blood and the German Volk. This discursive framing of nationhood has directly impacted what it means to belong to the nation, and thereby what it means to be a citizen. In fact, until the German Citizenship Act, passed in 1999 and entering into effect in 2000, German citizenship was completely blood-based. These ethno-cultural and blood-based understandings of nationhood and citizenship create exclusive tendencies towards persons of non-German descent and thus can inhibit integration. Moreover, while the 2000 citizenship reform has liberalized citizenship to an extent, the alteration to citizenship law may not have had as significant of an effect as hoped. Legacies of ethno-cultural, blood-based framings of German citizenship and nationhood, exclusive to all others, linger and significantly impact contemporary refugees and asylum seekers.

The 1951 Convention and Protocol compels states to “facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of refugees,” and examining German citizenship and the discursive framing of citizenship and nationhood is necessary in order to evaluate to what extent Germany actually does facilitate assimilation and naturalization. In the context of Germany, the separation of in-group and out-group individuals and the otherization of those in the out-group are historical

trends. In fact, the Wilhelmine principle of *jus sanguinis* has traditionally defined German citizenship since 1913. That is to say that the basis of German citizenship and conceptualization of nationhood has conventionally been blood relations and ancestry. Through *jus sanguinis* citizenship, the modern state is not only a territorial entity; it also is comprised of a national grouping, and this idea of nation assumes some sense of belonging and some definition of belonging and not belonging, of inclusion and exclusion. Thus, “German citizenship law, although markedly expansive toward ethnocultural Germans, is markedly restrictive toward non-German immigrants.” While ethnic Germans from other national origins could acquire citizenship due to their German blood, immigrants and their descendants had no way to gain German citizenship under the *jus sanguinis* model of citizenship.

Although this blood-based in-group and out-group definition may invite speculation about origins of German Nazi ideology, sociologist Rogers Brubaker points out that drawing such a direct linkage between the *jus sanguinis* system and the radically racialized citizenship of Nazi Germany would be anachronistic. Still, although the racist Nazi ideology and policy in Germany was distinctively extreme, its antecedent was this kind of exclusive conception of belonging, and Brubaker notes,

> The notions on which it was based – the nation as organic *Volksgemeinschaft*, the importance of common descent, the exclusion of Jews and other “fremdvölkisch” – had deep roots in German history, and had already left their mark on the citizenship legislation and naturalization practice of Imperial Germany.

The *jus sanguinis* principle indeed creates a barrier to the naturalization of non-Germans with belonging and membership framed by the concepts of an ethnic nation and an “organic

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193 Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, 165-166.
194 Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, 165-166.
Volksgemeinschaft,” or “people’s community” of common blood and heritage.\textsuperscript{195} While the Wilhelmine \textit{jus sanguinis} framing of citizenship provides context for Nazi ideology, Brubaker describes the \textit{jus sanguinis} policy as “ethnonational” and “ethnocultural,” while he describes the Nazi policy as “ethnoracial.”\textsuperscript{196} The 1935 Nazi \textit{Reichsbürgergesetz}, translated as the law of civil liberties or the Reich Citizenship Law and also known as the Nuremberg Laws, distinguished full citizenship (\textit{Reichsbürgerschaft}) from state membership (\textit{Staatangehörigkeit}) and defined only full citizens as those with political rights. Full citizens had to be “of German or related blood,”\textsuperscript{197} and the Nuremberg Laws also defined in detail who was to be considered a “Jew.”\textsuperscript{198} While Jews remained state members, just not full citizens, the Third Reich eventually stripped this status from them. As \textit{Staatangehörigkeit} were still members of the state and therefore entitled to protection of the state, the Interior Ministry proposed to exclude Jews from this status in 1938.\textsuperscript{199} By 1940, the status of \textit{Staatangehörigkeit} could be lost by “taking up residence abroad,”\textsuperscript{200} which also included being forced to become a resident of most of the concentration camps. Therefore, by deporting German Jews to the camps, the Nazis were thus able to transform Jewish \textit{Staatangehörige} into Jewish stateless persons and strip them of their state protection.\textsuperscript{201} While this understanding of the German nation as blood-based seems to harken back to Wilhelmine \textit{jus sanguinis} citizenship, the important distinction is that while Wilhelmine \textit{jus

\textsuperscript{195} Brubaker, \textit{Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany}, 165-166.
\textsuperscript{196} Brubaker, \textit{Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany}, 166.
\textsuperscript{197} Bernhard Lösener and Friedrich Knost, eds. \textit{Die Nürnberger Gesetz mit den Durchführungverordnungen und den sonstigen Vorschriften}, 4\textsuperscript{th} ed. (Berlin: Franz Vahlen, 1941), 28.
\textsuperscript{199} Brubaker, \textit{Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany}, 167.
\textsuperscript{200} Diemut Majer, “Fremdvölkische” im Dritten Reich, (Boppard: Harald Boldt, 1981), 213.
\textsuperscript{201} Brubaker, \textit{Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany}, 167-168.
sanguinis citizenship sought to prevent non-ethnic Germans from becoming citizenship, citizenship in Third Reich, Nazi ideology sought to strip citizens of their rights.  

Nevertheless, the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II did not destroy blood-based German citizenship. Instead, with the collapse of the German state in 1945, “Germany became again what it had been before unification: a nation without a state.” The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) was then established on a foundation of ethnocultural and “historical-territorial” nation. This “ethnocultural moment in national self-understanding” was then “nourished” by the “expulsions of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.” Some 12 to 14 million stateless ethnic Germans fled into the new framing of German nation. Therefore, post-World War II conception of German nation became again based on an ethnocultural understanding. Further, with the division of East and West Germany, the FRG never recognized a separate East German citizenship but insisted on a single, unitary German citizenship. Brubaker argues that in effect, “the Wilhelmine citizenship law of 1913, with its system of pure jus sanguinis, remained in force and became the law of the Federal Republic.” Thus, through birthright, ancestral, or jus sanguinis citizenship, the notion of an ethnocultural nation and sense of belonging is promoted in the post-WWII reconstruction of German citizenship. This notion of belonging might promote the divisions between the German nation and other nations, and therefore likely has some impact on the acceptance and integration of asylum seekers and refugees.

The exclusive jus sanguinis approach to German citizenship was not reformed until 1999. Parliament adopted a new law for naturalization based on territory in 1999, and it was enacted on

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202 Brubaker, Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany, 166.
203 Brubaker, Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany, 168.
204 Brubaker, Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany, 168-169.
January 1, 2000. Political scientist Joyce Mushaben suggests that, “the new statute provides an important launching point for assessing Germany’s relation to a complex array of foreigners in the new millennium.” Under this law, children of foreign-born parents who have been “lawful and habitual residents” in Germany for at least eight years can acquire German citizenship. Nonetheless, to discourage dual-nationals and potential divided loyalties, the law stipulates that children must choose to acquire German nationality or their parents’ nationality by their eighteenth birthday. While the new German Citizenship Act introduced a component of jus soli, or territorial understanding of membership, political scientist Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos questions to what extent the change actually represented a paradigm shift in regards to the conceptions of membership. As criminologist and ethnographer Sandra Bucerius explains, “Many believed that the reform had the potential to finally put an end to the anachronistic, ethnocultural understanding of German nationhood that had long shaped the Federal Republic’s citizenship policies, while also enhancing immigrants’ prospects.” However, Bucerius argues that for second-generation immigrants, and particularly for young men, “the citizenship reform was a major disappointment” that served to alienate them and reinforce their inequality. Therefore, the reformed German Citizenship Act may not have been as significant of a paradigm shift as initially imagined, and notions of jus sanguinis membership still linger.

Although the new German Citizenship Act of 1999/2000 introduced a jus soli, or territorial understanding of membership, this extension of citizenship may not have been as much of a paradigmatic shift in German understanding of membership as was initially supposed.

208 Bucerius, “‘What do You Expect?’” 71.
209 Bucerius, “‘What do You Expect?’” 81-82.
Rather, the notion of the FRG as an ethnocultural nation and citizenship as membership in that nation linger. Much of the literature on the integration of refugees and other migrants relies on the concept of citizenship, even if these refugees are not initially seeking citizenship. Ager and Strang draw attention to the varying interpretations of citizenship. Thus, they argue that in order to “develop an effective policy on integration, governments need to clearly articulate policy on nationhood and citizenship, and thus the rights accorded to refugees.” Germany has historically articulated their stance on nationhood and citizenship as an essentialist, ethnocultural one, inclusive towards ethnic Germans and exclusive to all others. While citizenship policy has liberalized to an extent, the remnants of a history of ethnocentrism still have significant implications. According to Ager and Strang, the articulation of nationhood and citizenship will directly affect integration in that they “underpin important assumptions about integration.”

Ultimately, the notion of membership in the FRG is complicated and multifaceted. Nevertheless, refugees and other immigrants in Germany remain without a clear and facilitated path towards citizenship and with a deficit in the rights that are available to them.

**Foundation: Integration through Citizenship and Rights**

At the foundation of Ager and Strang’s conceptual framework defining the core domains of integration is the domain of citizenship and rights. These authors admit that “there is probably no theme that creates more confusion and disagreement regarding understandings of integration than that of citizenship, and the rights and responsibilities associated with it.” My fieldwork demonstrates that the assumptions inherent in the traditional ethnocultural model of German

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210 Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 175.
211 Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 175.
212 Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 173.
nationhood and citizenship do indeed carry over to affect the very foundations of refugee integration in the domain of citizenship and rights.

Most of the data from my fieldwork is about asylum seekers’ and refugees’ rights rather than citizenship, likely due to the perceived unlikeliness or even impossibility of citizenship for refugees. For refugees who have come to Germany in the recent influx of asylum seekers during 2015, the possibility of gaining citizenship in Germany is a long way off. In order to apply for German citizenship by naturalization, typically one has to have lived in Germany for at least eight years and meet a number of other requirements as well. If a resident of foreign origin has successfully completed an integration course, they may be eligible for naturalization after seven years. In order to become a German citizen through naturalization, one must demonstrate oral and written proficiency in the German language and political and cultural knowledge. The German Federal Ministry of the Interior notes that “special rules apply to persons with special status (displaced foreigners and stateless persons), making it easier for them to become naturalized citizens.” Nonetheless, for many of my interviewees, citizenship likely seemed a long way off, if even a possibility at all. Moreover, since many interview participants were asylum seekers, gaining official refugee status was the immediate objective in the forefront of their minds rather than the remote long-term future possibility of citizenship. Therefore, much more of my data addresses Ager and Strang’s foundational domain of citizenship and rights with regards to rights rather than citizenship.

The most basic right asylum seekers in Germany are granted is the right to asylum. The German asylum system has its origins in Article 16a of the Basic Law, which is the German

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constitution. The categorization of “refugee” was first conceived by the global community under the direction of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and defined in the 1951 Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees as,

Any person who owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.²¹⁴

Among other states, the Federal Republic of Germany was present at the 1951 Conference and agreed to this definition.²¹⁵ Still, the FRG went a step further by incorporating the legal right to asylum in their constitution,²¹⁶ which states unequivocally, “Persons persecuted on political grounds shall have the right of asylum.”²¹⁷

Still, this right to asylum was later qualified by the concepts of safe countries of origin and safe third countries. Legally, safe countries of origin refers to countries in which citizens and residents there do not have a reasonable fear of persecution, often due to their democratic status and political and legal conditions.²¹⁸ The German government and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees argue that the safe countries of origin concept allows them to process asylum applications more quickly. Additionally, safe third countries are those in which the 1951 Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights have been “ensured.”²¹⁹ In effect, these safe country concepts play out in a discriminatory way. Rather than any individual

being given an equal ground on which to claim asylum, the safe country concepts cause
individuals of certain nationalities to have a greater burden of proof in their asylum cases. One
interview participant, a German asylum lawyer, mentioned that the safe country concepts favor
certain asylum seekers over others, stating,

> You can claim protection unless you come from a safe country of origin… What it practically says is that the – that your case is considered as invalid. So kind of your burden of proof just gets higher, because it’s considered safe there. You’re not persecuted… When you come from other countries, it’s more open. Maybe that’s the best way to think about it. If you come from any other country it’s considered like 50/50 argue your case, but if you come from a safe country of origin, it’s more like 90/10 against you from the beginning.\(^{220}\)

This asylum lawyer went on to discuss safe third countries, explaining,

> Safe third countries are countries where you’re supposed to file asylum before coming to Germany. So if you come from one of those countries, you’re supposed to stay there. There’s no reason to flee those counties… because it’s safe enough. There’s no reason to go further.\(^{221}\)

With the safe third countries concept, the idea is that a true asylum seeker is interested only in safety and should therefore stop moving when he is out of the conflict. If he continues to try to migrate into a country with a better economy, his interests are seen as economic in nature and not purely based on safety, and his claim is delegitimized in this way. Klusmeyer and Papademetriou raise the concern that, “the incorporation of the safe third country and safe country of origin concepts encourages would-be refugees to lie about their travel routes, or their country of origin, or lead them to “lose” their passports, thus preventing deportation.”\(^{222}\) Thus, the safe country concepts both work to give preference to certain nationalities or ethnicities and work to criminalize asylum seekers by questioning the legitimacy of their claims.

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\(^{220}\) Hans (German asylum lawyer) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
\(^{221}\) Hans (German asylum lawyer) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
Klusmeyer and Papademetriou argue that Germany’s safe country concepts, introduced in the 1990s, exemplify the trend of conflating refugees, who ought to be addressed in a humanitarian context, with other kinds of migrants who opt to relocate for a number of reasons.\textsuperscript{223} Legally, safe countries of origin refers to countries that due to their democratic status and political and legal conditions, citizens and residents there do not have a reasonable fear of persecution.\textsuperscript{224} The German government and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees argue that the safe countries of origin concept allows them to process asylum applications more quickly. Additionally, safe third countries are those in which the 1951 Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights have been “ensured.”\textsuperscript{225}

Thus, while individuals have the right to seek asylum under the German Basic Law, they are not guaranteed that this process will be easy. In fact, German bureaucracy makes the asylum-seeking process extraordinarily complex. Of all that asylum seekers have to go through, they overwhelmingly described their encounters with the \textit{Landesamt für Gesundheit und Soziales} (LaGeSo), or State Office for Health and Social Affairs, as singularly trying. Ameera, a Syrian asylum seeker who had travelled and been in the camps alone, described LaGeSo as “the worst experience” and even went so far as to say, “LaGeSo is the worst thing that happened in Berlin so far in history I think.”\textsuperscript{226} She went on to explain,

There they give you a card with a number so you have to wait for this number to go and finish your papers. And you have to stay from the hour they open until they close. And if you go miss – like they shout numbers, and if you miss it for like five minutes and your number is – like they say your number and you’re not there, it’s gone. So I used to go there every day for four days, from 5:00 am until 8:30 pm. Yeah, and I still have marks on my feet because of this… It’s terrible. It’s, people sleep on the grass because they

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{223} Klusmeyer and Papademetriou, \textit{Immigration Policy in the Federal Republic of Germany}, 133.
\item \textsuperscript{224} “Safe countries of origin,” Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, \textit{Federal Office for Migration and Refugees}.
\item \textsuperscript{225} Informationsverbund Asyl und Migration, “The Safe Country Concepts: Germany,” \textit{Asylum Information Database}, 2013.
\item \textsuperscript{226} Ameera (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
\end{itemize}
don’t want to miss their numbers. See? It’s terrible really. And people who work there
when you get in, when your turn comes, they are very stressed out because all these
people outside are their lives depending on them, and if it takes long they swear on them
and they curse and get angry… So the whole atmosphere is negative.227

Ameera noted that the impatience of asylum seekers contributes to the negative atmosphere as
everyone involved is stressed and upset. However, others, like Hasan, saw the LaGeSo
employees as the main issue. Hasan explained,

I had really bad experiences at LaGeSo. Uh, from I think October, November, December,
those months, the LaGeSo situation was so bad. Uh, lot of people were there, the
employees were not working at all, and the security were managing to take bribes even to
get people inside house… But the LaGeSo situation is just really bad, and even they are
dealing with us as exactly as refugees. They are making the people feel this. And I hate
the word “refugees”… but they are really making the people feel so bad about this.
Sometimes they are shouting in their face, sometimes they are just pushing them away,
they don’t want to work, it’s depend on their mood… and the security men is a problem.
Always, they are choosing the worst people to put them in this position. They don’t have
respect for anyone, and they don’t at all, I can’t describe them with words, because we
aren’t human to them. Dealing with us, okay, pushing us… and I had a bad situation in
LaGeSo with the security one day and even they reached the level to beat some people, to
use violence with us.228

In the context of the recent influx of asylum seekers to Germany, LaGeSo has become somewhat
infamous as many media sources reported about the backlog and inefficiency of the office.

Headlines such as “Berlin’s refugee services are becoming a bureaucratic nightmare,”229
“Berlin’s Appalling Conditions at Refugee Registration Center LaGeSo,”230 and “Fail in the
Refugee Crisis: Berlin’s Government is resisting Criticism of LaGeSo”231 all spoke of the
government office’s reputation.

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227 Ameera (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
228 Hasan (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
229 Kavitha Surana and Thalia Beaty, “Berlin’s refugee services are becoming a bureaucratic nightmare,” Quartz, 21
231 “Versagen in der Flüchtlingskrise: Berlins Regierungschef wehrt sich gegen Kritik an Lageso,” Spiegel Online, 8
Moreover, not only asylum seekers like Ameera and Hasan, but also Berliners who worked closely with them spoke ill of LaGeSo. Even these Berliners seemed to have a sense of how much of a nightmare LaGeSo was for asylum seekers. For instance, Sanna, who worked with an organization called SINGA Deutschland, commented on hardships for asylum seekers, stating,

Like waiting to get your status, waiting to get your next appointment, waiting to get an appointment to get an appointment, um, in Berlin it’s like hell with LaGeSo, which is like the institution you know where asylum seekers have to go to get anything done, any of their bureaucratic stuff done or you know, papers they need to like go to the doctor or to pay for the hostel that they’re staying in or whatever, and to get money for language classes, to get money, pocket money to get food, whatever. And this LaGeSo is so overrun, which you know it well, that yeah people often have to go like twelve hours in advance and like wait overnight for a meeting that they have in the morning... because the line is just so long. It’s just crazy.\(^\text{232}\)

The media, asylum seekers, and volunteers alike recognize the issue with LaGeSo’s inefficiency and lack of capacity. Perhaps due to the hitch in the German bureaucratic machine that is LaGeSo, Chancellor Angela Merkel has been criticized for opening Germany’s doors for asylum seekers without having a solid plan to process them all.

While in Berlin, I was able to visit LaGeSo myself. I had the good fortune of meeting Sami, a Syrian man who worked for an organization that worked in affiliation with LaGeSo. Sami had not come to Berlin as an asylum seeker; rather, he had lived there for several years when war happened to break out in his home country, Syria. Sami has been working with refugees in various capacities and with various well-known organizations since 2006. As his organization was assisting LaGeSo, taking on cases with special circumstances, he was able to give me a quick tour of the LaGeSo facilities and walk me through what asylum seekers go through there. Upon arriving, I was struck by the long line of people outside the door. I arrived

\(^{232}\) Sanna (one of the founders of SINGA Deutschland) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
around eleven o’clock, and there were approximately thirty to forty people in line, both women and men, some with small children. It was a particularly warm day, and many were fanning themselves and their children. I recognized my privilege as Sami greeted me at one of the doors and took me inside immediately. He noted that he had a break enough to show me around since the line was not so long anymore; it had been significantly longer when they first opened in the morning. Sami explained that asylum seekers wait for hours to talk to someone at LaGeSo, and from there, they usually have to make an appointment to take care of whatever matter they are inquiring about. Asylum seekers are forced to go through this process for many needs including to register their case, to get assigned to housing, to ask to be transferred to other housing, to get permission to see a doctor, to acquire and renew health insurance, and more. Unfortunately, the office seemed to be completely overwhelmed, even in June 2016 from the influx of asylum seekers in the late summer of 2015.

Due to the backlog of paperwork in the bureaucratic German asylum system, many asylum seekers and refugees also noted similar issues with other government offices such as Ausländerbehörde (the Foreigner’s Authority), and the BAMF (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, or Federal Office for Migration and Refugees). However, the complaints about the sluggishness of and the treatment at LaGeSo far outweighed the others. Still, one prominent issue with Ausländerbehörde that asylum seekers, refugees, and organizations frequently mentioned was the residenzpflicht, or residence requirement.

The residenzpflicht is a residential obligation that requires asylum seekers and other migrants to stay in a certain lander (state), county, or even town where they originally registered. According to the group International Women Space, “if they want to leave this area… they must apply for a written permit. Violations of the residential obligation are fined; repeated breaches
result in a criminal procedure." The German federal government claims that the *residenzpflicht* is in place to ensure that asylum seekers are able to receive benefits and to assure that the “social burden” of asylum seekers is equally distributed throughout the German *lander*. Prior to the fall of 2014, the *residenzpflicht* was strictly enforced, and the German government mandated that asylum seekers and what the government refers to as *Geduldeten Ausländer*, or “tolerated foreign citizens” stay within a certain parameters. During the fall of 2014, the *residenzpflicht* underwent some alterations, and as of January 2015, the *residenzpflicht* was reformed, but not abolished altogether. The German government now only enforces these mobility restrictions for the first three months. Kelly Miller, writer for *The Migrationist* notes that, “reforms to this policy… are significant for the signal they send to other EU countries: demonstrating a humanitarian shift away from what is, in principle, restrictive migration and asylum policy.”

Groups like International Women Space, Corasol, and The Refugee Movement see the reformation of the *residenzpflicht* as a result of their efforts, and these refugee self-organized groups continue to strive for the complete abolition of the *residenzpflicht*. One particularly significant part of the efforts to end the *residenzpflicht* was the occupation of Oranienplatz. From 2012 to 2014, asylum seekers and refugees occupied Oranienplatz in Kreuzberg, Berlin. The

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Refugee Movement, an integral part of this self-organized protest, has its origins in the Oranienplatz occupation. The Refugee Movement reports that after the suicide of an Iranian refugee in the camp in Würzburg, refugees from various camps organized a protest march to Berlin.\textsuperscript{238} Bahemuka, a Ugandan refugee with whom I spoke, was involved in this movement and began marching from his camp in Bavaria. He explained that although he had been a human rights activist in Uganda, it was not until a professor and students from The University of Passau came to his camp and informed asylum seekers of their rights that he began activism in Germany. Bahemuka noted, “They visited us and they tried to encourage us to stand up and say no to the situation, if really we want to have a better situation.” He described the goals of the subsequent refugee movement like this:

So our aim was a demand for a change, to change the refugee situation, refugee asylum policies, keeping isolating refugees. So our message were really clear, and so in that very struggle, that’s how we came out with the idea to organize a protest march from south of Germany to come to Berlin and demand for freedom of movement, just to make the public aware. Already they know, but you know? We wanted to let them know that we know that freedom of movement is our right too, you know. That’s why we wanted to demonstrate it, you know. So that was a very good step, and that’s how we came to Berlin and occupied Oranienplatz here.\textsuperscript{239}

The occupation at Oranienplatz continued for 550 days and involved displaced persons from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Uganda, and other nations.\textsuperscript{240} The Refugee Movement notes that the protest camp at Oranienplatz was a significant “symbol to show the society what the problems are, that we reject the isolation and discriminative laws the German state is trying to impose on us, that we raise our voice and are resisting.”\textsuperscript{241} The protest, colloquially referred to as Oplatz, continues to be a central symbol for the struggle for refugees’

\textsuperscript{238} The Refugee Movement, “History,” http://oplatz.net/about/.
\textsuperscript{239} Bahemuka (Ugandan refugee) in discussion with the author, July 2016.
\textsuperscript{241} The Refugee Movement, “History,” http://oplatz.net/about/.
rights in Germany. Oplatz seems to have given refugees the opportunity to have a voice in the political discussion on many issues including the *residenzpflicht*, conditions in refugee camps or *Lagers*, deportations, the food voucher system, and the right of asylum seekers to work and study.

Furthermore, perhaps one of the most significant aspects of Oplatz and the subsequent refugee self-organized movements is that they framed refugee rights as human rights. In the context of rights, asylum seekers and refugees reported that they often felt as if they were seen and dealt with as inferior. For instance, one asylum seeker, Teresa, noted that the laws towards asylum seekers are discriminatory and inhumane, stating,

I am not happy because of this discrimination. For us, they have put very tough laws. If things could be equal for all persons, I would be the happiest person. If we could come here and they don’t see us as ‘refugee’ or ‘foreigner’ but just as human beings, things would be better. I pray for equality no matter who you are.242

Teresa’s sentiment was echoed again and again. Hasan noted that specifically employees at government offices “are dealing with us not like human.”243 Further, Bahemuka discussed his arrival in Germany, noting that he was treated as inferior and with suspicion from the very start. He said that he continues to refer to his arrival as full of “German surprises” and explained,

I didn’t expect that in such so-called great nation, Germany is so-called democratic nation as I hear, you know? So I thought everything okay here. They respect other humans, they’ll say, ‘Hello,’ yeah, ‘You are welcome’… But that was not the case. ‘Why are you here? Which way? Where have you passed to enter here?’ You know? Not even in a human way, but you know, a forceful manner... So that was a strange welcome experience I got, and but also it was a quite interesting on the political side to have, to realize how politically Europeans present themselves, you know, in terms of democracy.244

Corasol, an organization of asylum seekers and refugees, echoed Bahemuka’s sentiment about the expectation of human rights. Corasol describes themselves as “people with and without a

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242 Teresa (East African asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, May 2016.
243 Hasan (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
244 Bahemuka (Ugandan refugee) in discussion with the author, July 2016.
right to stay, with and without the experience of flight or migration, who try to fight against racism and white dominace [sic] within the society by structural political work and mutual support.”245 They charged, “In Europe, you talk about human rights, but if you see the situation [for asylum seekers], there are none.”246 Many of the asylum seekers and refugees I interviewed echoed a perplexity about their expectations for human rights in Europe and the reality they were met with.

Moreover, it seems that many others were also aware that their lack of rights in some ways denied them an equal level of humanity. Those who worked closely with asylum seekers and refugees referred to the inequalities they faced when it came to their rights. For example, Sanna took issue with the German government’s approach towards asylum seekers and refugees, and in her work with SINGA Deutschland she was passionate about ensuring that an awareness for humanity was a foundation. She explained, “We’re dealing with humans, we’re dealing with sensitive beings, you know, we’re not dealing with robots… So this is why it’s very important to deal with the people on a comprehensive – like on a whole level.”247 Further, professor of culture and political science at the Freie University of Berlin, Dr. Kien Nghi Ha commented on the inequalities of German integration policies for asylum seekers as well. He noted that the result of the German bureaucratic system towards migrants is to produce a global hierarchy that “asks, ‘Are you part of the West or not?’ and based on that, this determines your rights.” Dr. Ha went on to explain that Germany’s integration policies ask, “Do you have the right to exist here, and

246 Corasol (refugee self-organized group) in public talk, Festival Contre Le Racisme, Freie University of Berlin, 7 June 2016.
247 Sanna (one of the founders of SINGA Deutschland) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
are you integration viable?” Based on these questions, Dr. Ha argues that the German bureaucracy specifically separates out non-Western migrants as subhuman.248

The lack of rights that the bureaucratic German asylum system affords asylum seekers and refugees dehumanizes them. As non-citizen others, asylum seekers and refugees are constantly reminded of their lesser status in Germany. The lingering framings of traditional blood-based citizenship and ethnocultural nation seem to underlie many of the assumptions about who is deserving of what rights. Consequently, the discursive framings of citizenship and nationhood as exclusive towards non-Germans translate into implications of inferiority for asylum seekers and refugees as they attempt to integrate using the German legal system that was set out by governments for refugees.

**Facilitators: Removing the Barriers**

Other domains of integration that framings of citizenship and nationhood may impact which warrant consideration are what Ager and Strang refer to as “facilitators.” These facilitators “tend to be associated with policy measures that use the metaphor of ‘removing barriers’ to integration.”249 Notably, the “facilitators” level assumes that integration – the process of becoming more equal – is in fact inhibited by some kind of barriers to begin with. Ager and Strang point to the state as the actor with the primary responsibility to remove these barriers. Thus, the state remains the primary actor at the “facilitators” level, creating policy measures and practices to *facilitate* integrative processes for asylum seekers and refugees.

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248 Kien Nghi Ha (professor of culture and political science) in public talk, Festival Contre Le Racisme, Freie University of Berlin, 7 June 2016.
249 Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 181.
Language and Cultural Knowledge

Ager and Strang identify “being able to speak the main language of the host community” as “central to the integration process” for refugees. Without the ability to communicate, other domains of integration, such as social bridges between refugees and members of the host community, and markers of integration such as access to healthcare and education, are difficult or even impossible to achieve. Ager and Strang remark that with a ‘two-way’ understanding of integration, receiving communities are expected to accommodate refugees’ language difficulties by providing translated material. Thus, the authors state, “translation and interpreting supports are crucial in the early stages of settlement, and – given the length of time required to develop proficiency – are likely to be of ongoing significance.” Thus, both services such as translation and interpretation and language courses are important to facilitate refugee integration. Further, while language can facilitate the integrative process greatly, Ager and Strang also draw attention to “the value of a broader cultural knowledge in enabling integration processes and outcomes.”

In order to facilitate refugees’ integrative process, refugees need to know both practical information about their new societies and cultural expectations. Significantly, my fieldwork yielded similar results, pointing to the significance of both language and cultural knowledge as facilitators of the integrative process.

Many asylum seekers and refugees actually cited language as their primary concern and as one of the most basic factors that could enable successful integration, and volunteers who worked closely with asylum seekers and refugees also referred to language. For instance, when I

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250 Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 182.
251 Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 182.
252 Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 182.
asked Allie, an American who was living in Berlin and volunteering in various capacities, what kind of challenges she saw asylum seekers as having, she replied,

    I think one of the hardest, well and the most direct one is language, ‘cause they can’t do anything before they learn the language. So I think the – it seems to me that the first thing newcomers do is try to go to a language class, improve their German as much as possible so they can like go to school or get a job.253

Allie continued to emphasize that all of the newcomers she had met were very willing and even enthusiastic about learning German. This claim proved to be true from my research. Whether asylum seekers had been in a refugee camp for a year or whether they had just recently arrived, many of them seemed proud to tell me about what efforts they had made to learn German. Ranim, a Syrian young woman, stated, “I think the language is a very important way for us to make a good life together with these people,”254 explaining that she saw the lack of language and communication as the main barrier for integration.

    It seems that asylum seekers begin feeling the pressure to learn the German language from the moment they arrive. They begin receiving forms and information in German, and whether it is a list of foods to select from in a Lager or a letter about when their interview with the government will take place, asylum seekers have no way to make sense of it without knowing the language, having a dictionary, or finding a willing interpreter. In addition to the pressure to learn German due to the German forms and information they receive, asylum seekers are also pressured by society. For instance, a Syrian asylum seeker, Tarek, discussed the pressure he felt from Germans in Hamburg, where he was first assigned, explaining,

    In Hamburg I didn’t feel comfortable to engage with people. Because at that time I didn’t use my English that well, so I understand a lot but I couldn’t say a lot. So when you are not comfortable from the beginning to say something and you wanna say it in a different language with somebody, he will be like, ‘Huh? What? Huh, huh?’ Maybe you didn’t pronounce it correctly or he didn’t really understand English that well, and you’re not

253 Allie (American volunteer) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
254 Ranim (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
comfortable talking, so, ‘Okay, forget it, I’m out.’ And this was the whole seven month for me that I tried a couple of times but because of, it was uncomfortable… And I was just observing how should or shouldn’t, you can say, engage with the whole society.255

In addition to needing the German language to actually engage with German society, Shakir mentioned that language is a necessity to find work. He explained, “All the companies here are asking for German language at the very beginning” and noted that learning the language is difficult and could take a year to three years to become proficient.256

Despite the German government providing language and cultural orientation classes for refugees, one can only enroll in these courses when he or she has been granted official refugee status. The government provides no way for asylum seekers to begin learning German.257 Thus, asylum seekers have little they are able to do aside from waiting. Yet, they are pressured to use their own limited resources to begin to learn the language. Eyob, an Eritrean young man who had been in the refugee camp at Bestensee for over a year, confidently showed me a German language book he had been able to save up for and buy. Bahemuka stated, “I bought my dictionary in three month here because I was very anxious to learn the German language. So but if you go in the refugee camps, you will find refugees with dictionaries,”258 recalling his first German dictionary fondly and noting the commonality of asylum seekers doing what they can to begin learning the language. Without the ability to speak German, asylum seekers face difficulties that range from not knowing what labels on food say to not being able to find needed services. Allie recounted one such difficulty, stating,

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255 Tarek (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
256 Shakir (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
258 Bahemuka (Ugandan refugee) in discussion with the author, July 2016.
I met a doctor from Afghanistan, he was very nice to talk to. It sounded like he’d gone through a lot though ‘cause he had a wife and three kids... He’s been here for like two years I think, hadn’t been able to work, but he said his kids were first depressed when they came here… But his wife was still suffering from depression and he was like unable to find people who spoke Farsi to like provide psychological services, and he’d been sort of trying to help her himself… He was working on his German but it wasn’t that great yet because he was like occupied with taking care of his family.259

Allie said that although the Afghan man was aware of some services in German and English, his inability to communicate in German and limited ability in English – as well as his wife’s inability to communicate in either German or English – prevented them from seeking out those resources. Due to the lack of services in their native language, his wife had been suffering for years.

Asylum seekers commonly struggle to find resources and information, and if they are unable to rely on themselves and their own development of their language skills, they often try to find someone else who will help. While offices like LaGeSo provide translators somewhat regularly, asylum seekers often require translations even outside of these offices. When possible, they tend to rely on each other. Many of the younger asylum seekers who were able to speak English recounted often being asked by others to help translate things. One asylum seeker who often helped others with translation was Zahar. Zahar had worked as a translator with the United States’ military in Afghanistan and had been forced to flee after the unit he was working with departed. When I spent a couple days with Zahar, several asylum seekers in his building and neighborhood approached him with papers, asking questions. He even went with an asylum seeker to a meeting to help translate.

259 Allie (American volunteer) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
In addition to needing translation services, yet mentioned with less frequency and urgency, was the need for cultural knowledge. Nonetheless, some asylum seekers and refugees were also aware of their lack of cultural literacy. For instance, Hasan explained,

Most of the people [asylum seekers] don’t know about the traditions here, most of the people don’t know about how the people act. Even the first time I came here, I didn’t know that Sunday, all the markets will be closed. I didn’t know this till I went out and okay, all the markets closed, and that’s weird for me… Another thing, I was asking all the time about the taxis, and I don’t know about the taxis and how the system works… I don’t know about, for example, how to rent a flat, and nobody’s telling us a lot of things that must be learned… Those simple things for living the life is really essential. In Syria, I didn’t face, for example, when I’m going in the market I have to pay for the bags. It’s weird here. Okay I took it and I have him say, ‘Give me the bag?’ ‘What?!’ ‘Give me the bag.’ And okay that’s weird. So I didn’t know.\(^{260}\)

The volunteers and employees who worked closely with asylum seekers and refugees mentioned the need for cultural knowledge more often than asylum seekers and refugees did themselves, and they mentioned things like gender equality, recycling, and waiting for people to exit the U Bahn\(^{261}\) before entering as important cultural knowledge that impacts daily life.

The heavy emphasis on both language and cultural knowledge as a facilitator of integration of asylum seekers and refugees draws attention to the non-membership of these groups. Because German citizenship and nationhood are framed in ethnocultural means, the cultural aspects of Germany become an important domain where nationals are separated from non-nationals. Although the German government “removes the barriers” to integration in this domain in the sense that it provides refugees with language and cultural orientation courses, these measures are lacking for the majority of refugees upon arrival and do not exist at all for asylum seekers. Refugees can benefit from government provided courses; however, newcomers begin to face pressures related to language and culture from the moment of arrival, and in that

\(^{260}\) Hasan (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.

\(^{261}\) The U Bahn is a part of the German public transportation system, much like a subway.
moment the government does nothing to facilitate integration in the domain of language and cultural knowledge.

Safety and Stability

In addition to language and cultural knowledge as a domain in which the state is responsible to remove barriers, Ager and Strang also remark on the state’s role in providing safety and stability. They found that “a sense of personal safety,” involving a peaceful atmosphere free from unrest was vital for integration of refugees. The authors note that “if they did not feel physically safe in an area they could not feel integrated.”\(^{262}\) Nonetheless, Ager and Strang point out that safety and stability are not only about physical conditions. Rather, to optimize the conditions for integration, physical safety as well as the absence of verbal abuse or threats are important. Further stability can be viewed as consistency, and Ager and Strang note the problematic nature of continually relocating refugees and disrupting their surroundings.\(^{263}\)

As the state is largely in control of the conditions in which refugees are resettled, the domain of safety and stability can be considered as part of the “top-down integration” process.

Once an asylum seeker makes it to Germany, the German government is obliged to provide food and shelter to the individual while his or her asylum application is processed. During this process, asylum seekers are sent to housing facilities, also known as refugee camps or *Lagers*. Hans, an asylum lawyer working at the Refugee Law Clinic with Berlin’s Humboldt University, explained this process:

> You first register, and after registering you are referred to a housing facility, which is supposed to be a facility of first-housing, as we call them, but as these do not have sufficient capacities, you very often get sent to emergency housing, which is high school gyms, abandoned schools, basically anything, tents sometimes, the old airport here in Berlin has been transformed into emergency housing. And from there, you’re supposed to

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\(^{262}\) Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 183-184.

\(^{263}\) Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 184.
wait until there’s room for you in a regular housing, practically that doesn’t really happen.264

Hans refers to the emergency housing facilities that have opened throughout Berlin in this statement. Several of the asylum seekers and refugees with whom I spoke also brought up the housing facilities, which were one thing that did not meet their expectations. While they had been under the impression that they would be able to secure an apartment for themselves fairly quickly, this was not the case. Thus, asylum seekers were often left waiting in temporary housing facilities such as cots or bunks in community centers and athletic centers, huge tents, or even the abandoned Tempelhof Airport for several months. Shakir, a Syrian refugee man described his experience like this:

I arrived in March 2015 and I waited for three or four months just to become a recognized refugee, uh, for sure I slept in camps, and it was really… I didn’t like it because I slept in like basketball court and football court. Yeah, I spent maybe three or four months in these places so it was horrible for me… We were 250 people, and 250 we all use one bathroom, 250 people you can imagine that, and all that’s like so near to each other. So I didn’t imagine that I would find like this but what Germany gave me.265

Often, as this man described, asylum seekers would be crammed into these housing facilities, and they would all have to use one bathroom. This quickly created very poor and unsanitary living conditions, which a few organizations that I encountered in Berlin, and Corasol specifically, were trying to raise awareness about and fight against.

The poor and cramped living conditions in the camps also created conflicts. Katja, a manager at a camp in a former gymnasium in Berlin that I visited, commented on the connection between cramped quarters, conflict, and communication:

We have the language that’s spoken here: Arabic, Farsi so Persian, it’s the same, and um Tigrinya which is from Eritrea, and um Russian… The people have troubles. The two big groups of Persian speaking and Arabic speaking people are almost of the same size, and we have only one or two people who speak both languages, and so communication between these two groups can be complicated and can easily get into conflict. And even

264 Hans (German asylum lawyer) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
265 Shakir (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
the living conditions here are – let’s say um, what would you call that without being too bold? – um, yeah, it’s cramped actually, people are cramped together. And um, you can then go in and have a look at these boxes. We have up to six people in one of these boxes, they go by two by three meters or um three by three. And it’s illegal to keep six cows like that. So um we have animal protection laws that would not allow a hundred and thirty cows in that. It’s only refugees, you know.266

Katja also noted the trouble the cramped living space and lack of privacy caused for families as intimacy was often especially private in the asylum seekers’ cultures. Margriet, a social worker who worked with asylum seekers who were living in the abandoned Tempelhof airport, also remarked on the lack of intimacy and privacy. Further, she discussed the restlessness and frustration that increasingly built up over time. She stated,

The frustration speaks out of them of course, like things that wouldn’t have upset them five months ago really upset them now, and of course you are the only ones that they can speak to, so sometimes you are also the only ones that they can just let everything out on.267

Margriet commented that it seemed like the longer people were waiting with no developments, the more restless and frustrated they became and the more likely conflict was to occur.

While waiting to be granted refugee status (or alternatively to be deported), asylum seekers cannot rent an apartment, work, or take classes; they have nothing to do but wait in the housing facilities. Several NGOs and citizens’ initiatives provide free German classes or language cafes, and asylum seekers may even begin learning about the language and culture on their own. However, many asylum seekers were still left feeling that they were in a stage of seemingly endless waiting. Waiting was one of the more problematic themes regarding integration that came out of the interviews. For instance, Hasan described the process and the condition of waiting saying,

I have to get my residence to take an integration course, after that I can manage to get a flat by job center or by my friends. But here, I still belong to LaGeSo, and taking a flat by

266 Katja (German refugee camp manager) in discussion with the author, July 2016.
267 Margriet (German social worker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
LaGeSo is next to impossible because it needs a lot procedures, so people are waiting and they are really getting nervous about it. And at the beginning we could manage to hear some people, okay they got their residence, okay now they are moving, but now nothing is changing at all. I know lot of people from nine months, eleven, one year, and they still waiting for their residence. And they are still in the camps.²⁶⁸

Hasan’s sentiments were echoed in many interviews. Asylum seekers often discussed waiting for several months and not hearing anything from the German government. They were perplexed by the seeming standstill of the German asylum system, and they were frustrated with their realities, which did not align with their expectations for Germany.

Another rather salient theme from the interviews relating to safety and stability was isolation. The camps I visited were mostly on the outskirts of the city rather than in the center, and many asylum seekers and refugees as well as volunteers and employees at various organizations confirmed that this was usually the case. Hasan told me about the distance of his camp from Alexanderplatz, the central U Bahn and S Bahn station where we met, saying,

I always made a joke about my camp. I told them whenever you are seeing the sign, you have to know that you are out of Berlin, and it’s really out. From there to here, I need one hour fifteen minutes, and it’s like for us as Syrian if I want to travel from one city to another city it will take one hour fifteen minutes. So to think about it, it’s really far.²⁶⁹

This was not uncommon for the camps. The locations that the German government had provided and approved for camps and for temporary emergency shelters were mostly located a good distance from the buzzing city center. This caused issues for integration as refugees were not easily able to access the city center, but it also may cause issues for refugees’ perceived criminality. For instance, one woman I heard speak at a public talk referred to the statistics that AfD (Alternative for Germany), a rising right-wing party, used to “prove” that refugees had higher rates of criminality. She said that these statistics tended to include things like being outside their assigned district and not having a public transportation ticket that covered the zones

²⁶⁸ Hasan (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
²⁶⁹ Hasan (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
they were in, both of which may be caused by the sheer distance of the housing facilities from Berlin’s city center. Moreover, the camps were often seen as areas of inconvenience and/or areas of crime. Katja noted that the rent prices of housing around refugee camps had decreased and that no one really wanted to live there because they were afraid the value of housing would continue to go down. Further, Peter, a Kenyan refugee, mentioned that before the refugee camp in Bestensee was established, there had been a large protest because the surrounding community did not want abandoned boarding school buildings to be used to house refugees.

The view of asylum seekers as either an inconvenience or a danger to the German host society has the potential to cause unsafe and unstable environments for them as their surrounding community may foster feelings of contempt and hostility towards them. Additionally, this notion of asylum seekers further reflects the influence of the enthnocultural framing of nationhood on integrative processes. Non-national and non-member asylum seekers are framed as a foreign and inferior body that may present a problem for the ethnocultural German nation. Thus, the framing of German citizenship and nationhood are also present and problematic for the safety and stability of asylum seekers, inhibiting the integrative process.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has explored how the discursive framings of citizenship and nationhood may be present in and impact “top-down integration,” from both the legal perspective and in terms of the availability of integrative supports like access to housing and language learning. Ager and Strang’s core domains of integration at the “foundation” and “facilitators” levels constitute areas in which top-down integration may be considered. The traditional, blood-based system of German citizenship, which was not reformed until 2000, establish an exclusivist understanding

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270 Katja (German refugee camp manager) in discussion with the author, July 2016.
271 Peter (Kenyan refugee) in discussion with the author, July 2016.
of membership in Germany. While the Wilhemine *jus sanguinis* system was radicalized by Nazi ideology, the defeat of the Third Reich served to reinforce an ethnocultural understanding of the German nation that lingers even today. The traditional *jus sanguinis* citizenship was reformed in 2000 but did not represent a major paradigm shift. Thus, the traditional, ethnocultural framings of citizenship and nationhood still prevail and impact the legal and practical options open to new arrivals seeking integration.

The discursive framing of citizenship and nationhood in an ethnocultural sense impact both the “foundation” level in the domain of citizenship and rights and the “facilitators” level in the domains of language and culture and safety and stability. This research demonstrates the importance of Ager and Strang’s domains, therefore upholding these portions of their conceptual framework. However, the research also shows the significance of the discursive understandings of citizenship and nationhood. The traditional, blood-based citizenship that bases membership off of common descent creates and sustains an ethnocultural conception of nationhood. These frameworks then influence the rights of those who are not members of the community of common descent. The rights asylum seekers and refugees are minimalized, and these individuals are treated as inferior to ethnocultural German members of the community. Further, the non-membership of asylum seekers and refugees is emphasized with the weight on language and cultural understanding as a key part of integration. Finally, asylum seekers and refugees are conceptually framed as at best a disadvantage and at worst a threat to the concept of the German nation. This conception of asylum seekers and refugees causes an unsafe and insecure environment for them, furthering the tensions between newcomers and the host society.

Exploring top-down integration through the consideration of government policies and practices towards the integration of asylum seekers and refugees reveals much about the
dynamics of the integrative process in Germany. Nonetheless, an inquiry into governmental approaches only indicates so much about integration. The scope is limited with the sole consideration of top-down integration measures. The next chapter will offer deeper insight into the integrative process of asylum seekers and refugees through exploring a “bottom-up” approach to integration which considers day-to-day interactions and Self-Other dynamics as a way to study integrative experiences.
CHAPTER FOUR

BOTTOM-UP INTEGRATION: INTERACTIONS AND CONVERSATION

We will find similarities, we are all human, we will find some similarities, we both have eyes, we both have a mouth, we both have hair, so we will find something. And I think we always think these people need help. These people walked from Afghanistan, they don’t need help. This is, this is – these people are no victims, these people are survivors. And they do not need help in a way we understand it – they do not need our pity, we do not need to pamper them, and they do not actually ask for donations or stuff. They ask for a chance. And it’s ours to provide the chance, and it’s theirs to take it. And I think that’s the level we must reach. We must see humans as equal… and no society in the world ever managed to do that, to see everybody as equal, yeah it’s a high goal.  

Introduction

In addition to top-down integration, this research explores bottom-up integration. Chapter three explained how government policies and practices determine integrative processes at the “foundation” level through discourses on rights and citizenship and at the “facilitators” level by removing barriers through specific measures and policies that facilitate integration. In this chapter, I discuss Ager and Strang’s remaining seven core domains, which constitute what I refer to as “bottom-up integration.” These seven domains are in the upper two levels of the model, “social connection” and “markers and means.”

While exploring and analyzing government policies and practices provides a certain amount of information about integrative measures, looking into the day-to-day realities that asylum seekers and refugees experience can provide further insight regarding integrative experiences. German integration policies are indicative of integration processes asylum seekers and refugees experience to an extent, but considering asylum seekers’ and refugees’ daily lives offer a deeper understanding of integration and how discursive representations impact it. In

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272 Katja (German refugee camp manager) in discussion with the author, July 2016.
273 Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration.”
conjunction with understanding integration from a top-down approach of government policies and practices, examining day-to-day interactions between asylum seekers or refugees and the German public can illuminate our understanding of integrative processes and experiences.

**The Discursive Construction of “Self” and “Other”**

In order to address this study’s central question regarding the extent to which discursive constructions impact integration, I first discuss discursive framings of the German “Self” and the refugee “Other.” Recall in the previous chapter, the discursive framings of citizenship and nationhood were addressed. The ethno-cultural understanding of *Deutschtum*, or “Germanness” directly connects to a similar understanding of the German Self. If German nationhood is understood in terms of an ethnocultural grouping, German nationals are united by their ethnocultural identities. Sociologist Riva Kastoryano describes German borders as “the territorial boundary of identity,” an image which constructs the incoming immigrant or refugee as an identity threat. Additionally, as opposed to the political identity providing the foundation for the cultural identity, as in the case of France, in Germany’s case, “a cultural identity constitutes the basis of a political identity.” This is to say that it is not German citizenship that supports the nation’s cultural identity, but rather, German political citizenship is supported by that cultural identity. Kastoryano argues that social cohesion rests on the agreeability of this collective identity. Thus, the collective German self-identity, which is deeply rooted in ethno-cultural understandings, binds the nation together.

Further, as with many power relations, the Self and the Other are mutually constitutive; in other words, they give definition to each other. The Other is as much defined by what constitutes

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275 Kastoryano, *Negotiating Identities*, 43.
it as by what does not constitute it. Thus, the refugee Other is not only defined by what he is, but also by what he is not (i.e. the German Self). Regarding the idea of defining the Self in relation to the Other, French philosopher and feminist Simone de Beauvoir discusses the notion of the subjugation of women through their role as the “second sex,” arguing that women are defined only in relation to men and that women are denied subjectivity and therefore become objects. De Beauvoir states, “…humanity is male and defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being… He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other.”277 Similarly, “Germanness” is taken as a default, and foreignness as the Other. The kind of “othering” that women are subjected to as the “second sex” is similar to the kind of “othering” asylum seekers and refugees are subjected to as the non-national and can be seen as a kind of Orientalizing discourse. Thus, while the German Self can be seen as the unmarked subject, the refugee Other is constructed as the marked object.

Significantly, tension exists around the cultural difference of the Other due to the perceived challenge to the Self. Kastoryano further explains this dynamic, stating,

…the Other is perceived as unassimilable. In France, the Other is Muslim, in Germany the foreigner. In France he or she is described as not following the rules of laïcité; and in Germany, the foreigner is not part of the German “we.” In both countries, Muslim and foreigner are synonymous.278

Worth noting is that Kastoryano recognizes the perception of the Muslim as a particular kind of foreigner, one that is unassimilable, and therefore one that represents a cultural threat. The recognition of the Muslim Other is important for this research as many of the refugees entering Europe come from Muslim countries, and Islam is brought into much of the discourse surrounding the so-called “refugee crisis.” This construction of the Other as an unassimilable

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278 Kastoryano, Negotiating Identities, 65.
cultural threat leads to a great deal of tension and a lack of societal cohesion as the Self and the Other remain distinctly separate.

Nonetheless, the power implications do not lie in the labeling of the Muslim, foreign body as an unassimilable Other, but rather in the ability of the German subject to produce an image of the refugee Other in the first place. Sociologist Meyda Yeğenoğlu explains,

The power of Orientalism does not stem from the “distortion” of the “reality” of the Orient, nor from the dissemination of “prejudiced” or “negative” images about Other cultures and peoples, but from its power to construct the very object it speaks about and from its power to produce a regime of truth about the Other and thereby establish the identity and the power of the Subject that speaks about it…

The German subject has the power to create a regime of truth around the refugee object, thus defining the Other. As the production of knowledge is a privilege of the subject, the German Self can produce so-called knowledge about the refugee Other, and therein lies the power.

While the German Self is discursively constructed in terms of ethno-cultural Germanness, the refugee Other is constructed as a foreign, unassimilable, and potentially threatening body. Nonetheless, the refugee Other is not only threatening; the refugee is also constructed as victimized. These discourses are not contradicting, but rather mutually reinforcing. The refugee Other can be constructed as a dangerous threat or a helpless victim, but he cannot be a human being on equal terms with the German Self.

Patronization and Criminalization in the Word “Refugee”

The discursive construction of the word “refugee” was one of the most significant themes that came up during my fieldwork, and many interview participants recognized the connotations and stigmas associated with the word. From my observations, most of the German public tends not to make the legal differentiation between asylum seekers and refugees. Instead, both groups

are referred to as Flüchtling, the German word for refugee, or “one who flees.” Several volunteers with whom I spoke mentioned that the -ling ending of this word is a diminutive and therefore minimizes or trivializes refugees. Further, many interview participants expressed concern about or dissatisfaction with the term refugee. For instance, Allie, an American woman who was living in Berlin and involved in volunteering with various projects told me that she did not like the word “refugees” because it “seems like it gives them less agency.” She further explained,

Especially in the media, they’re like, “refugees,” “this refugee situation,” and I feel like it gets this connotation where they’re people who need help, and the state needs to provide aid for them and like they can’t do anything for themselves, which is not true at all. They’re individuals… we should recognize them as individuals and recognize the skills they bring – the knowledge and their background in their field or their areas of education or their profession or whatever it is – and not just think of them as refugees as these people who are in need of aid and can’t really do anything for themselves. Allie noted patronizing connotations that the word “refugee” carries. She suggested that it would be better not to label people at all, but if we had to come up with a name for them, we should refer to them as “newcomers.” For her, this word simply indicated that an individual was new in a community without indicating their legal status or motivations for moving.

Nonetheless, it was not only volunteers who recognized the tension within the connotations of the term “refugee.” While asylum seekers may not have been familiar with the linguistic implications of the diminutive ending of the German word Flüchtling, they did express awareness about negative connotations of the word “refugee.” Tarek, a male asylum seeker from Syria said,

The thing that I really hate, that the word refugee is a bad word now…you have the stereotype and it’s not always a positive way. People if they wants to react in a positive way, they will pity you that, “Ah, okay that poor man or poor family!” or something, and on the negative way, “Okay this extremists or this people that just want to ruin our way of life or our way of living!” So it’s always in the both sides it’s not a good word… Even

Allie (American volunteer) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
when I get more engaged in society, even if I had my residence, I’m gonna stay in your eyes a refugee. And this is, you can say, block me from society that I’m gonna stay out, I’m not gonna come in, you’re not gonna see me as equal.\textsuperscript{281}

In this statement, Tarek explains that he sees people using and responding to the word refugee in either patronizing or criminalizing manners. He notes that when people want to react positively, they react with pity, which he regards as a negative thing. Notably, he expresses that the reactions of people based on the word “refugee” separate or “block” him from society and cause him to limit his interactions.

This sentiment was also expressed by a young, female asylum seeker from Syria. This young woman, Ranim, had originally come to Berlin from Syria for a theater-related internship and applied for asylum after her visa expired. When we met, she was staying with friends and managing a volunteer project that involved theater and art-based therapy for women and children in the refugee camps. She stated,

\begin{quote}
Some people have big problem with this word ‘refugees.’ “Okay, we not refugees. What is refugees? We just people go out from my country because we have war.” Some people have this problem because it’s like, “You are just refugees.” And you say, “Okay, I have really a problem with this war, okay, then I’m refugee. But what means this refugees?” Some children [ask], “What refugees? What means refugees? I’m not good? I’m so bad? What I do?” When I am sometimes with women and children, they say, “Okay, I’m refugee, then I’m not good? I’m so bad? What I did? Okay, I will stay in my home, in room. I cannot talk with people. I’m so bad.”\textsuperscript{282}
\end{quote}

With Ranim’s statement, the confusion around the term refugee is evident. Further, she refers to the implications of criminality around the word, noting that women and children ask her what they’ve done wrong to earn such a title. Finally, this quotation again refers to the point that the word refugee itself can cause a separation from society.

\textsuperscript{281} Tarek (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
\textsuperscript{282} Ranim (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
Female Victims and Male Agents

The connotations of patronization and criminalization that are implied with the word “refugee” also have some gendered significance; women are more often pitied and discursively constructed as helpless victims, while men are more often criminalized and discursively constructed as threatening agents.

Many interview participants described female asylum seekers and refugees as being portrayed as somehow victimized or oppressed by Islam or by men from their families. For example, Allie, the American volunteer, discussed her limited interactions with refugee women and speculated about if they were not showing up to more events because their husbands would not allow them to.283 Additionally, another volunteer commented that women are more worth helping and that, “somehow with women everybody’s more sensitive, especially when they know that they are refugees.”284 While some of the volunteers expressed this mindset, that women were victimized or were more legitimately in need of help, asylum seekers and refugees too noticed these trends. Teresa, an asylum seeker from East Africa, noted, “I see a lot of this judging that they [Germans] think that some men are dangerous. Maybe the women and the children they deserve more help, but not the men.”285 Further, Tarek commented that,

They [Germans] will see the [Syrian] woman as, especially if she is wearing a hijab or something, they will see her like she is a – she doesn’t have words, she can’t speak out, she doesn’t have a personality or something, she’s torn from her freedom or something.286

Teresa and Tarek both regarded their cultures’ gender norms to be different from those of Germany, but neither of them regarded women to be oppressed or victimized.

283 Allie (American volunteer) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
284 Sophia (volunteer) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
285 Teresa (East African asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, May 2016.
286 Tarek (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
Interestingly though, while female refugees were often regarded as oppressed, male refugees were often regarded as the oppressors. Allie’s wondering whether women’s husbands were preventing them from participating in organizational events is one such illustration of this line of thinking. Another example came from Shea, a German-Iranian social worker from Cologne who noted that, “German stereotypes for Muslim men is like super aggressive, sexist, in a way dominant and also violent against women, un-emancipated.”287 Further, a few of the asylum seeker and refugee men with whom I spoke reported that they were cautious about approaching white, German women because they were fearful that the women would think they were trying to hurt or harass them. One Eritrean man even described getting lost and not knowing which train to take, but not asking for help because the people immediately around him were women who were by themselves. Recounting the experience, he wondered aloud how he could make them understand he was not dangerous.288

Regarding these gendered conceptions of victimhood and agency, many interview participants cited the attacks in Cologne on New Year’s Eve, in which a number of women reported sexual assaults and muggings by groups of Arab or North African men, as inciting even deeper stereotypes. While doing social work and volunteering with asylum seekers in Cologne, Shea had actually done extensive research herself on the media discourse surrounding the event, which she presented at the Freie University of Berlin’s “Festival Contre le Racisme.” Shea argued that the gendered discursive framing of the events of New Year’s had political effects, including an increase in the popularity of right-wing party Alternativ für Deutschland (AfD), or “Alternative for Germany.” The AfD picked up feminist discourses about gender equality to deliver racist and xenophobic messages under the guise of arguments about the importance of

287 Shea (German-Iranian social worker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
288 Eyob (Eritrean asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
women’s rights. The vagueness of the perpetrators descriptions as “Arab” or “North African” allowed Islam to be used as framing the whole region and representing a particularly violent, womanizing, male identity, which encompassed refugee men as well, as many of them were also from this region. This discourse also allowed sexism to be framed as something that was brought into Germany by these Others rather than existing in German culture among German people as well.

Immediately, media began using these discursive constructions of dangerous refugee men and turning them into graphic representations. One such image, from Focus Magazine, largely distributed throughout Germany, is shown in Figure 4.1. The image shows a naked, white, female body covered by black, presumably male handprints. The text in the upper left reads, “Exclusive: what really happened in Cologne night,” and the text on the red bands over the image reads, “Women complain about the sex attacks of migrants: are we still tolerant or blind?”

Thus, in addition to the connotations that come more directly with the word “refugee” itself, the refugee Other is also constructed through media discourse and images.

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289 Shea (German-Iranian social worker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
The refugee Other is constructed as everything the German subject is not. While the German self-identity is constructed as believing in gender equality, the refugee Other threatens that gender equality with victimized and oppressed women and dangerous and oppressive men. The refugee Other is represented in a victim-agent dichotomy which perpetuates inequality and therefore inhibits integrative processes.

Social Connections and Community Interfacing: Day-to-Day Interactions

The discursive constructions of Self and Other are part of a bottom-up form of integration in that they underlie social interactions and daily life. Both social connections and markers and means of integration may be partially predicated on understandings of Self and Other. This section will focus on social connections, and the next will address markers and means. Ager and Strang include social bonds, social bridges, and social links in their social connections level of the ten core domains of integration.291 In the following sections on each of these three core domains, I offer Ager and Strang’s descriptions of each, provide data from my own research, and assess to what extent discursive constructions of Self and Other impact these domains of integration.

Regarding integration, political scientist Joyce Mushaben notes, “The social integration of non-nationals cannot be mandated in top-down fashion; it occurs instead through day-to-day interactions with the host society.”292 Thus, to examine bottom-up integration, I use Mushaben’s concept of “community interfacing,” in which these day-to-day interactions are taken to have significant implications for the state of the integration process. Mushaben’s concept of community interfacing pairs nicely with Ager and Strang’s “social connection level.” Ager and Strang describe social connection as being the driver of integration “at a local level.” Social

connections, they argue, involve the “absence of conflict and ‘toleration,’” but also the active building of communities.\textsuperscript{293} Mushaben’s approach of community interfacing allows the examination of these day-to-day social interactions that are indicative of the integration process. From my interview questions and participant observation, I was able to hear about or witness a number of day-to-day interactions between asylum seekers and refugees and the larger German society.

Social Bonds

Ager and Strang describe social bonds as those social connections between refugees and their family members, co-ethnic, co-national, or co-religious groups, or other forms of community.\textsuperscript{294} This type of social connection is important for the resettlement of refugees and provides them with many benefits. Networks are significant factors in migration, often determining resettlement locations and facilitating the transition. Further, interpersonal networks are part of social capital, which can be converted into other forms of capital to secure or improve an individual’s social status.\textsuperscript{295}

For instance, Tarek discussed the various transnational movements of his family members and how he ended up coming to Germany specifically, and a lot of the family’s movements had to do largely with networks. In 2013, the year that Tarek cites as when a larger number of Syrians began to flee and when “the idea of Europe was starting to get more famous,” Tarek and his older brother were the only ones still in the family home in Syria. His father, younger brother, and sister had moved to Libya, where his father and younger brother could

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\textsuperscript{293} Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 177.
\textsuperscript{294} Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 178.
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work, and their mother was in Turkey with extended family. When Tarek left Syria, he headed for Libya where he had family waiting. There his father and younger brother facilitated the process of Tarek finding a job. However, once the situation in Libya became more unstable, the family made the decision that Tarek’s sister should get to Europe. As a dentist, she was able to apply for a visa to attend a dentistry conference in Italy. The family also decided that it would be best if only Tarek and his brother remained in Libya; due to the instability, they might have to fight or flee at any moment, and their elderly father was not as mobile. Thus, their father was sent to join their mother in Turkey.

In the meantime, Tarek’s sister made it to Italy and then travelled to Berlin, where she had a brother-in-law who was a permanent resident. Her brother-in-law had lived and worked in Germany for several years, and this social connection facilitated her entry into Europe. Finally, Tarek and his younger brother decided to flee Libya and head to Europe. If he could have gone anywhere, Tarek would have gone to the UK. Already fluent in English, Tarek believed the UK would be best due to not having to learn a new language. However, he explained, “What basically happened is that my sister was before me here, so we have to be together, and she was staying here for more than six month, and at that point when we arrived to Europe, she got her residence.” Tarek also explained that having his sister and her brother-in-law already familiar with Germany made the adjustment process easier for him and his younger brother. Their sister and her brother-in-law were able to share information with Tarek and his brother, and the four were able to form a stable support system rather than facing social isolation in a new country.296

A second example of the importance of social bonds comes from Ameera, a Syrian asylum seeker. Ameera explained that when she initially left Syria, she first travelled to Saudi

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296 Tarek (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
Arabia, where her uncle lived. Knowing that the country was unstable and also being aware of her abusive father, Ameera’s uncle had purchased a plane ticket for her to join him in Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, having a cousin who was studying in Germany and wanting to go to Europe herself, Ameera saved up money to buy another plane ticket to Germany. Once in Germany, Ameera immediately headed to her cousin’s flat, staying with her for several days before applying for asylum. For Ameera, her reasoning for coming to Germany rather than any other European country was based on knowing someone. She explained, “I thought that if I come to a country that I know someone in it would be easier for me as life. Because you being alone in a country is hard.”

Even though her cousin was not able to help her through much of the asylum process, Ameera was more at ease just knowing that she had a family member nearby.

My research shows that social bonds prove important in a number of ways. Through social bonds with family members, friends, or individuals of co-ethnic, co-religious, or co-national groups, asylum seekers may feel more comfortable and less isolated. Social bonds contribute to social integration in that they provide a sense of normalcy, a support system, and an improved quality of life for asylum seekers. Nonetheless, while Ager and Strang’s model holds up as the importance of social bonds are evidenced, Self-Other discourses are not apparent in this domain as the German Self is not emphasized. Social bonds have a greater significance when studying the decision-making factors of asylum seekers and refugees. Although social bonds are relevant for exploring the conditions in which asylum seekers and refugees can best integrate, they are not as influential of a domain when studying Self-Other discourses.

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297 Ameera (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
Social Bridges

In contrast to social bonds, which represent social connections between refugees and others of their own ethnic, religious, or cultural communities, social bridges form between refugees and “other communities.” Ager and Strang discuss social bridges as the relationships between refugees and members of the host community that can facilitate integration and prevent marginalization. The authors emphasize aspects of friendliness, inclusion, participation, involvement, and equality in creating social bridges. Likewise, they note that the perceived absence of these aspects can also inhibit successful integration. Thus, social bridges are important to examine when considering integration of refugees in Berlin. Over the course of my fieldwork, I heard about and witnessed both successful and unsuccessful social bridge-building.

For instance, one Syrian asylum seeker, Hasan, described his friendship with a German young woman fondly, stating,

A German girl, she helped me a lot actually. She even stand in my place in LaGeSo for seven hours, and she fighted for a lot of things for me. And whenever I had a problem in the camp, she was next to me.

Hasan discussed becoming friends with this German girl, and from his account, she seemed to use her place of relative privilege to try to help him in every way she could. Further, Hasan expressed that he felt that they were equals in their friendship, which is a significant factor in social bridges. This interaction affected how Hasan viewed Germans, and he explained that he thought most Germans would be willing to help refugees similarly.

I also witnessed a positive interaction between two asylum seekers, Zahar and Ara, and a German woman. Zahar is an Afghani asylum seeker who had travelled alone to Germany, and

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299 Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 179.
300 Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 180.
301 Hasan (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
Ara was a Syrian asylum seeker who had made the journey with her three-year-old daughter. Zahar and Ara had met in Germany and had become close friends. Both educated and fluent in English, they were able to communicate with each other and offer assistance to several other asylum seekers in their area. When I met them, they were living in Kyritz, a small town just northwest of Berlin. During some time visiting them there, we walked around the town and bicycled out to a lake. On our way to the lake, a German woman saw us from up the road, called out, and waved. She knew Zahar and Ara, and she offered them hugs. She spoke to the two of them in English, telling them that she had gotten approval to offer them a plot of land in the community garden. She was very happy about this and explained that taking care of the plot could be a shared responsibility between the two of them and any other friends they had in mind. She also pointed out that taking part in the garden would give them something to do and give them the opportunity to meet more people in the community, not to mention providing some home-grown food for them. This German woman appeared to be very aware of some of Zahar and Ara’s needs and the difficulties they were facing, as was evidenced by her reference to their inactivity and their non-interactions with the larger German community. These kinds of day-to-day interactions have positive implications for integration from a bottom-up approach.

However, examples of a lack of social bridges between asylum seekers and refugees and the larger German society also exist. For instance, one asylum seeker, Shakir, told me about an experience that he had found to be particularly disturbing. He explained,

I was one time in the U Bahn station and I was going upstairs and there was one guy who was coming in front of my face, and I was using my mobile and walking, and he came and he just stand and he said, ‘Ausländer aus!’ That mean, foreigners out.\textsuperscript{302}

\textsuperscript{302} Shakir (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
Hasan also had a negative experience on public transportation. He described the experience as follows:

Once I was in the S Bahn, putting my headphones and so on. A German man like forty-five years old, he start to talk to me, so I took my headphones out, and he start talking, and I told him, ‘I’m sorry I don’t speak German,’ in German, so you have to speak little bit. And he told me, ‘If you don’t speak German language, then you have illness in your mind.’ And so I told him, ‘Okay, thank you for your kindness,’ and he kept insulting me with his words, and he asked me, ‘Why did you come to Germany?!’ I told him, ‘Do you think I had another option? Do you think I want to come here to another tradition, to another world for me? I prefer to stay there, I had a lot of things there, my family is there.’ And he say, ‘Okay, but the war that’s happened to you, you deserve it as Syrians. You are terrorists,’ and so on. I told him I hope that will never happen to Germany, not because of you, but because of lot good people here.\textsuperscript{303}

Despite this experience, Hasan still had a positive outlook on Germans, believing that most were rather welcoming and helpful. Shakir and Hasan’s experiences are demonstrative of Self-Other thinking in that in these instances, the German man involved seems to think of himself as in some way better than the Syrian man. While the man who approached Shakir viewed him as a foreigner and therefore someone who should get out, the man who spoke to Hasan expressed viewing the German language as superior and viewing all Syrians as threats.

I was also able to experience some of the negative interactions between asylum seekers and Germans myself. One of my first days in Berlin, I went to a refugee camp in Bestensee, just outside Berlin, with Peter, a Kenyan man who had formerly lived there. We met at a train station and rode a bus along with several other people of color who I assumed were not Germans. Many of us exited the bus at the same stop, and Peter explained to me that these people were all asylum seekers who lived in the camp. We joined a trio of younger men who Peter knew, and we waited for cars to pass so we could cross the road to the camp. As the cars passed, one white, male passenger, who I assumed to be German, hung out the passenger side window and yelled and

\textsuperscript{303} Hasan (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
pumped his fist in our direction. The younger men shook their heads, and Peter told me simply, “You see, this kind of things happens to us. Some people will say bad things and yell at us, but we just must let it go. What can we do?” Although my initial reaction was a mix of fear and indignant frustration, it struck me that this was perhaps a common occurrence for them. Peter explained that many Germans in the area were very vocal about their distaste for refugees, and he said that he had found out that there had been a protest there before the camp was opened when the community first found out that the former boarding school grounds would be used as a refugee camp. Later that afternoon, when we got back on the bus, again amidst a group of asylum seekers, the German bus driver would not look at the asylum seekers as they paid their fares. He refused to take the money from their hands but made them set it on a clipboard and then touched it as if it was infected while making disgusted faces. As Peter approached him, he offered a cheerful, “Hallo, guten Tag!” and the driver responded with a scoff. Peter explained that many of the bus drivers who worked the route by the camp were racist, and this one was particularly bad and often behaved this way or shouted at the asylum seekers.

These experiences from my participant observation exemplify some of the negative interactions asylum seekers and refugees may face in Germany. Day-to-day interactions of this nature have implications for integration, just as the more positive interactions do. Understandings of Self and Other may significantly impact these interactions and the building or burning of social bridges. In the negative interactions that I heard about and observed, Germans seemed to see refugees as dangerous or dirty in some way, as is expressed by the German man’s remarks to Hasan on the S Bahn and the bus driver’s behavior towards asylum seekers in Bestensee. On the other hand, Hasan’s female friend as well as the German woman in Kyritz seemed to regard

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304 Peter (Kenyan refugee) in discussion with the author. May 2016.
305 Peter (Kenyan refugee) in discussion with the author. May 2016.
asylum seekers on more equal terms. It seems that negative interactions are more likely to occur the more distinct one understands the Self and the Other to be. Alternatively, the more equal one understands the Self and the Other to be, the more likely the occurrence of positive interactions that can create social bridges. While most of the asylum seekers and refugees with whom I spoke referred to the German people as generally friendly, almost everyone had had negative experiences that they felt made them guarded towards Germans. Further, a few had had mostly negative experiences thus far, making them rather jaded about the country they found themselves in and rather hesitant to continue interacting with the people.

Social Links

In addition to social bonds and social bridges, social links are another component of social connections in Ager and Strang’s conceptual framework. According to Ager and Strang, social links are social connections “with the structures of the state.”306 While this description may seem indicative of this domain of integration aligning more with government policies and practices, this domain is still situated as a social connection in Ager and Strang’s model. Moreover, the authors explain social links as “facilitation of access to services,” noting that “it is generally acknowledged in policy and practice that ‘connecting refugees to relevant services is a major task in supporting integration.’”307 The examples of social links that Ager and Strang mention are services in an ethnically diverse London community and translation services.308 Thus, rather than state based action, the domain of social links can more correctly be viewed as connections between refugees and services that assist with access to the structures of the state.

308 Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration,” 181.
In Berlin, a number of services facilitated the connections between asylum seekers and refugees on one side and the state on the other. These services were largely provided by various NGOs and citizens’ initiatives. In fact, a number of interviewees noted the culture of volunteerism in Berlin and remarked about the sheer number of projects and volunteers geared towards providing services for asylum seekers and refugees. For instance, Allie, the American volunteer I interviewed, remarked, “There’s a very strong movement to like volunteer with refugees in Berlin in Germany in general… I’d walk into a few initiatives, they’re like, ‘Oh yeah volunteer work with refugees is very popular, and it’s like a catch phrase.’” Tarek also commented on the range of activities available for asylum seekers and refugees in Berlin, especially compared to Hamburg, where he and his brother had initially been sent. He stated, “When I came in Berlin, the next week we find a lot of activates to do, to engage with two or three organizations that are volunteering with a lot of stuff.” Both volunteers and asylum seekers remarked about the large number of opportunities to get involved, connecting with each other through various organizations and projects.

Further, from my own experience trying to connect with NGOs and citizens’ initiatives to volunteer and meet potential interview participants, I also saw the volunteerism in Berlin. Berlin seemed to foster a positive environment for volunteering in general, and one can find opportunities to get involved in anything from mentoring teens, to playing with rescued pets in animal shelters, to providing company for senior citizens. However, with the current number of asylum seekers, a large volume of organizations and projects specifically related to this situation exists. During my fieldwork, services I found for asylum seekers and refugees included legal clinics, language cafes, art and theater workshops, dancing groups, music groups, sports groups,

309 Allie (American volunteer) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
310 Tarek (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
gardening groups, yoga groups, cooking groups, women’s groups, job training, job searching, educational opportunities, mentoring for specific groups (e.g. women, teens, children), translating services, and more.

While this culture of volunteerism can facilitate integration, this is not always the case. Services that various NGOs and citizens’ initiatives provide can simplify or expedite the process of asylum seekers and refugees becoming more equal, but this depends largely on the type of service and on the approach of the service providing organization. Allie had participated in a range of different activities, from going to cooking groups to serving food herself to providing medical assistance to a clinic for refugees. She specifically spent some time discussing her experience serving food at an emergency shelter for asylum seekers, explaining,

You basically just sign up for shifts at shelters so I did a few shifts serving food, um, which was okay, but I always felt like that didn’t seem like the best model, because, I don’t know, it seemed kind of strange to me just like come in to the shelter, you help with their food, you serve it, and like it seemed almost like demeaning for someone to have to come to like serve them food, and it seemed like that was really something they could do and like probably wanted to do themselves.  

Allie much preferred her experiences directly connecting with refugees and asylum seekers rather than being in a position of serving them or giving them something because she saw her experiences with more direct connections as better to foster a sense of equality.

Having volunteered in the same capacity in a kitchen myself before meeting Allie, her experience resonated with me. I had signed up to volunteer serving food during the dinner shifts at an emergency refugee shelter run by Berliner Stadtmission. My first day, I showed up in the afternoon and was escorted to a kitchen where an all-German staff (besides me) worked to prepare the evening’s food. Part of my job was to go through bread and pull out moldy pieces. At dinner time, we opened windows on one side of the kitchen. My job was to serve a sauce over

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311 Allie (American volunteer) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
the noodles that the German man immediately before me would slop onto the plates. The kitchen director specifically told me, “Do not hand the plate to the refugees. They have to wait until the end because they don’t know what to do if you give it to them.” After I gave them sauce, another woman was there to give them bread and an apple. After most of the people had been through the line, I was told to stay at the window in case anyone needed anything while the rest of the volunteers started some initial clean-up. Asylum seekers, especially the children, would come up to the window to get another apple. Under the direction of the kitchen supervisor, I had to pick the apples up from the bin and hand them to them, rather than letting them get an apple for themselves. The experience was uncomfortable and felt incredibly demeaning and patronizing towards the asylum seekers. I felt as if through our actions we were communicating, “If not for us, you wouldn’t have this food.”

Still, despite the experience working in the kitchen, I also interacted with a number of NGOs and citizens’ initiatives that seemed to provide much needed services from a less patronizing approach. For instance, a number of organizations host language cafes, where asylum seekers and refugees alike can come and practice speaking in German with people who are native speakers. As language was one important aspect of integration that all of my interview participants brought up consistently, these cafes meet a large need. Further, as the name implies, the language cafes usually take place in cafes around the city. As opposed to the German server-refugee served relationship that the kitchen created, the language cafes are set up to create a community, as people gather around tables sharing conversation over coffee or tea. In this way, the approach of the language cafes enabled a sense of equality, which is vital to the facilitation of integration.
One organization that I interacted with extensively that acknowledged the implications of approaches and labels in providing services for asylum seekers and refugees was SINGA Deutschland. SINGA Deutschland had a number of projects, mainly focused on three programs, social-cultural events, language cafes, and professional mentoring. Through all of their activities, SINGA Deutschland focused on seeing refugees as equals and building a community rather than seeing refugees as needing help. Rather than using the term “refugees,” they used the terms “newcomers” and “locals” to purposefully diffuse the political and legal implications of the terms “asylum seekers,” “refugees,” and “Germans.” Rather than separating the group based on legal status and emphasizing the belonging and in-group status of Germans as opposed to the out-group status of asylum seekers and refugees, SINGA chose to intentionally focus on people as equal. They saw their linguistic practices as important in creating a sense of equality as well, noting that everyone had something to contribute and that “newcomers’” and “locals’” statuses were nothing more than a result of where one happened to be.  

When I spoke with one of SINGA Deutschland’s founders, Sanna, about their goal of creating an inclusive and equal community, she said that they do this for multiple reasons. For Sanna, creating a community of members who are on equal terms is a more sustainable model for integration, provided cultural enrichment to all parties involved, and helped avoid exotification of refugees. However, at the heart of SINGA’s approach in creating a community of equals was the notion of humanity. Sanna explained,

> We’re dealing with people. We’re not dealing with, I don’t know, like animals in a zoo or something! We’re dealing with people. And I think it depends on what perspective you

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312 Sanna (one of the founders of SINGA Deutschland) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
313 Sanna did note that she did not like the term “integration” as she saw the German government and the German population using it; however, for the purposes of this research, integration is defined based on Lewicki’s conception as a process of becoming more equal.
come from, but if you come from a starting point which assumes that all people are equal, which we do, then there’s no other way to do it in my opinion. Sanna felt that it was not SINGA’s place to ask for people’s papers or check legal statuses. Rather, it was SINGA’s role to provide an inclusive community of the basis of human equality. Moreover, while SINGA’s selected terms “newcomer” and “local” might still imply in-group and out-group structure, the organization did not use the terms based on legal status or country of origin alone. For instance, when I attended one of SINGA’s social-cultural events, their “Living Room Storytelling,” a pair of Syrian cousins were hosting the event at their apartment. These Syrian men had been in Berlin for nearly two years, had been granted refugee status, had acquired jobs, and were well on their way to becoming fluent in German. They had a nice apartment with plenty of room for the twelve people who gathered there, and they served everyone a meal during the gathering. When introducing me, someone made the comment that these men were “basically locals;” however, I was introduced as a “newcomer” from the United States. Thus through their intentional use of other terms, SINGA Deutschland both acknowledged the connotations the word “refugee” can have and chose to use terms that attempt to create more equality instead.

Thus, similarly to social bridges, the understandings of Self and Other impact social links. Understandings of Self and Other seem to underlie the approaches that organizations take towards refugees. While some organizations seem to exotify or patronize the asylum seekers and refugees they engage with, others, like SINGA Deutschland, seem to approach them on equal terms. These approaches may be otherwise expressed through the difference between working for refugees and working with refugees. The second approach, which minimizes the Self-Other

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314 Sanna (one of the founders of SINGA Deutschland) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
difference and attempts to create a community of members who can see eye to eye, seems to better facilitate equality and therefore work more positively towards achieving integration.

**Markers and Means**

In addition to social connections (social bonds, social bridges, and social links), another aspect of bottom-up integration is “markers and means.” Ager and Strang explain this category as being both “indicative of successful integration” and “potential means to support the achievement of integration.”315 These markers and means include employment, housing, education, and health. This category is not as extensive as the others due to the fact that most of my interview participants were asylum seekers rather than refugees with official status. Thus, gaining employment, housing, and education were not yet possible. Therefore, rather than treating the four domains separately, I treat them together in this section. In the context of this research, these markers and means can be seen to be markers of a more equal standing between refugees and the German population or means to creating equality between refugees and the German population. My research demonstrates that otherizing discourses and conceptions of Self and Other as incongruent and disharmonious impact integration at this level.

One of the most frequently mentioned markers and means was employment, and asylum seekers noted that if they were to find a job it would in some way help them get onto more equal terms with Germans. Peter, a Kenyan refugee I spent a lot of time with, told me that, “for refugees, we are scared of deportations. But when we can work, it is significant because then you are in the system, you are a member of society, you pay the taxes. And then, you will not be deported.”316 Of course in reality, in order for refugees to work, they have to first be granted official refugee status, and that status protects them from deportation rather than the fact that

316 Peter (Kenyan refugee man) and Semere (asylum seeker from Chad) in conversation with the author, May 2016.
they are working. Nonetheless, for Peter and the asylum seekers who were talking with us, paying taxes was equated to contributing to society and belonging, so work in itself represented safety from deportation. In fact, most asylum seekers would prefer to start working right away. Hasan, for example, noted that he hated having to take the German government’s money and would prefer that they gave him nothing, but rather let him work.\footnote{Hasan (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.} Similarly, upon arriving in Germany, Tarek and his brother were disappointed that they could not yet work in Germany; having worked up to thirteen hours a day in Libya, the lack of activity was a large adjustment.\footnote{Tarek (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.} Both Hasan and Tarek noted that not being able to work made them feel inadequate, and they wondered how they could express to the German public that they are hard workers who did not come to live off the system when they had no choice but to live off the system.

Still, even after asylum seekers are granted refugee status and therefore allowed to work, they often struggle finding jobs. Recognizing that “getting a job is one of the key factors of integration, and people coming to Germany want to start working and contributing to the society as soon as possible,” one organization I interacted with, MigrantHire, was created with the sole purpose of connecting refugees to employment.\footnote{“Our Mission,” \textit{MigrantHire}, https://migranthire.com/mission.} One of MigrantHire’s representatives explained that the organization tries to address three kinds of barriers: cultural, language, and legal. He went on to explain that, “because the legal status for a lot of refugees is not clear… the company doesn’t know if they can hire refugee or not. And if they can hire, what they should give him paper or what he should bring paper?” A lot of uncertainty exists around the issue of employment of refugees, and MigrantHire sees that uncertainty as preventing refugees from getting jobs.\footnote{Representative from MigrantHire in discussion with the author, June 2016.} One of SINGA Deutschland’s main projects, professional mentoring, strives to
help with this situation, pairing a “newcomer” with a “local” in the same industry to help him navigate the industry norms in Germany and begin to build a professional network.\textsuperscript{321}

In addition to the unfamiliarity a “newcomer” is likely to experience, German companies often do not regard their educational background or previous training as valid or valuable. Sanna discussed this difficult situation that many newcomers face, stating,

I mean often degrees are not fully recognized, as if, like not seen as the same quality or level as a German one, so then what do you do? Do you go back to school? Like suddenly you’re forty-five and you were an accountant all your life and now you have to go back to school, you know.\textsuperscript{322}

As Sanna explained, refugees often struggle to find work because of their lack of German credentials. The understanding of the German Self as superior to the refugee Other plays a role regarding employment and education in that the education and experiences of refugees from other countries are regarded as lesser quality that German education. Further, Sanna pointed out that German companies often approach refugees in a patronizing manner:

I think the overall perception on the side of companies is – and that I’m struggling with trying to think about how we can improve – is not to see these people just as yeah, pathetic, needy refugees, like ‘Oh, I’m gonna do them a favor by giving them a job,’ or something. Instead of seeing them, ‘Wow, you should be so lucky that this person has come to you for a job,’ you know? They can contribute a lot.\textsuperscript{323}

Within this dynamic, the discursive framing of the German Self as superior to the refugee Other is again apparent. Instead of regarding refugees as human beings on equal terms who apply for jobs like any other individual, companies approach them as if they are needy and incapable.

Nonetheless, refugees are not only approached with pity; they are also approached with fear and distrust. The discursive framing of the refugee Other is such that the Other may be

\textsuperscript{321} Sanna (one of the founders of SINGA Deutschland) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
\textsuperscript{322} Sanna (one of the founders of SINGA Deutschland) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
\textsuperscript{323} Sanna (one of the founders of SINGA Deutschland) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
victimized and regarded as lacking agency, or the Other may be criminalized and regarded as a threat. Peter explained how this dynamic can be seen through housing, stating,

There are some who see us as a bad person because maybe he does not understand you… For example, there are some people where I live now who do not want us there or do not understand us. I greet this old couple in the morning. I say ‘Hallo,’ I say, ‘Guten Morgen,’ and they never say anything.\textsuperscript{324}

Peter explained how he, his wife, and their teenage daughter address the elderly couple with respect and always greet them. Nonetheless, their neighbors do not reciprocate the niceties. While we cannot know the conception of the refugee Other in the minds of the neighbors, the divide between Self and Other is evident. Still, Peter feels that it is his and other refugees’ responsibility to change the mentality of the German people. Peter explained,

I clean the stairs, sweep, not just by my house, but also over in front of the other doors where I don’t have to if I have the time to do it, you know? It isn’t the stairs at my door. Then, one day, this man was struggling to come in with his bicycle because he brings it in the house and does not leave it outside. And so I helped him get in with the bicycle. You see, I want to change their mentality… When we come, they think we are bad because of what they hear, but we need to show them that this is not true and we need to change their minds.\textsuperscript{325}

Peter consistently encouraged other refugees to share his outlook. While he noted that many Germans have been rude to him and that he has had a number of negative interactions, he felt that he was capable of changing people’s minds about refugees. He encouraged many younger asylum seekers to take the same approach, telling them that they should never cause trouble and always be friendly to promote a good image of refugees. Moreover, Peter refused to see the German public as monolithic. During an interview with an Eritrean man, Habtom, at while Peter was present, Habtom noted that many Germans are unfriendly toward refugees. Peter then remarked, “There are good people and bad people wherever you go.”\textsuperscript{326}

\textsuperscript{324} Peter (Kenyan refugee) in discussion with the author, May 2016.
\textsuperscript{325} Peter (Kenyan refugee) in discussion with the author, May 2016.
\textsuperscript{326} Peter (Kenyan refugee) and Habtom (Eritrean asylum seeker) in conversation with the author, May 2016.
A couple asylum seekers I met were lucky enough to meet and even live with some of those “good people.” For example, Ameera, a Syrian girl, got the opportunity to live with a German family after staying in a few different camps for asylum seekers for several months. As a young woman who had travelled alone, she was in a unique situation in the camps. While she tried to maintain a positive attitude in the camps, she did have difficulties there, and she struggled with depression. When a German family volunteered to offer a room for an asylum seeker, the camp master immediately thought of Ameera and offered to connect them. Ameera had a great experience with Germans related to housing and stated,

I fell in love with them. They were my heroes, angels. And yeah, we got along so well. I went with them on the weekend of the week, that week. And the first day they took me to Ikea, they got me stuff. And I’m moving out soon, but we got along. And I think – I actually consider them my family, yeah. They’re really nice. And then my whole life changed since then.\footnote{Ameera (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.}

Ameera was grateful that this opportunity had come her way, but she remarked that it is not at all common for asylum seekers to get the chance to live outside of the camps.

Still, some asylum seekers become so frustrated with their living conditions in the camps that they begin to search for other housing on their own. Fed up with the lack of privacy, lack of internet to find information, classes, and jobs, the distance of his camp from the main part of the city, and the dirty, cramped conditions, Hasan is one asylum seeker who did this. After exchanging emails with some people who had an available room, Hasan went to speak with them and see the room. He explained,

When I went there, there was two old women and one old man, and they opened the door for me, and they speak a little bit of English, not so much. When I get inside, I sit down there, and they seems nice in the beginning. Then, they started talking badly about us, then the old man told me, ‘Come with me, I will let you see the room that we can offer for you as a refugee,’ and he opened the toilet room.\footnote{Hasan (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.}
The German man who showed Hasan the toilet clearly regarded him as a refugee as inferior, perhaps dirty in some way. Thus, through Hasan’s experience, the impact of unequal understandings of Self and Other on integrative markers and means is apparent. Although Hasan believed Germans to be welcoming and helpful, he explained that this situation made him feel terrible. He said he was unable to speak to the man further because his actions and words had hurt him. Rather, he just said no thank you and left. Recounting his negative experiences with Germans, Hasan noted that they made him frustrated and more hesitant to learn about and adopt the German culture and way of life. He noted that the “experience I had in the flat really stopped me from looking for a flat at all.” Instead, Hasan is trying to remain content in a camp for asylum seekers where he has no close friends and no internet access to look for jobs or study German.

While many asylum seekers and refugees mentioned getting a house or getting a job as important parts of integration, the disparate understanding of Self and Other can complicate access to these markers and means of integration. Employment, housing, education, and health can create more equality between the German society and the refugee community; however, discursive framings of Self and Other seem to significantly hamper access to these integrative markers and means.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the impact of the discursive framings of Self and Other on “bottom-up integration” through an examination of seven of Ager and Strang’s core domains. I began by addressing the sub-question from chapter two that asks, “What are the discursive framings of self and other in Germany?” While the German Self has historically been discursively constructed in ethnic and cultural terms, the refugee Other is constructed as either

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329 Hasan (Syrian asylum seeker) in discussion with the author, June 2016.
victimized or criminalized. While victimization and criminalization may seem contradictory, these discursive framings operate as mutually reinforcing each other and the idea that the refugee Other is not equal with the German Self.

These discursive framings impact both social connection and markers and means of integration. While the discursive framing of Self and Other did not seem to have an impact on social bonds – likely because the German Self is absent in this domain of social connection – the research still demonstrates social bonds as important, and thus Ager and Strang’s conceptual framework holds. Still, the research demonstrates that at the social connection level, social bridges and social links are impacted by Self-Other understandings. Social bridges cannot form between the German host society and refugees if refugees are not addressed as equals. Additionally, social links between refugees and needed services may be difficult to make if organizations approach refugees in a patronizing manner. Self-Other understandings that criminalize or patronize refugees also impact markers and means of integration, making access to these domains more difficult.

In order to gain a fuller picture of integration of refugees, day-to-day interactions and experiences must be considered. While government policies and practices are indicative of integration processes, the examination of a “bottom-up” approach to integration that this chapter provides offers further insight into integration. While fieldwork demonstrated that asylum seekers’ and refugees’ interactions with the larger German society are a mixture of positive and negative experiences, the negative and otherizing experiences seem to be more impactful for asylum seekers and refugees and significantly impact their integrative processes.
CONCLUSION

Integration remains a concern in the FRG both among asylum seekers and refugees and among Germans. While 2015 represented the peak of the influx of asylum seekers into Germany, the numbers of asylum applications remained fairly constant in 2016 as well.330 As Germany received nearly half of all of Europe’s asylum seekers in 2015 and 2016,331 the country faces a significant challenge regarding the next steps towards achieving integration. Although some may believe that refugees are only in Europe temporarily, the FRG has told itself a similar lie before with regard to the Turkish guest workers. Perhaps due to this previous experience, public debate regarding integration is prominent. Often, the Turkish guest workers were used as the anti-example, as people referred to their failure at integration as a situation that Germany did not want to see happen again. The issues of integration, what integration means, and how it can best be achieved, were prominent topics in Berlin throughout my fieldwork and came up again and again at events that organizations were hosting.

What struck me as I attended various events and spoke to numerous individuals was that integration does not mean the same thing to everyone. One German official reasoned that they had worked hard to provide language and cultural orientation classes, so refugees should work hard to use those tools to integrate. On the other hand, one Afro-German young man recited slam poetry that used expletives toward integration and referred to integration as Germans trying to control his identity. When I asked interview participants what integration meant to them, I got a range of responses as well. Typically though, asylum seekers and refugees tended to define integration as involving the domains in Ager and Strang’s “Markers and Means” category, such as having a job and someplace to live other than the refugee camps. Further, asylum seekers and

refugees often referred to the importance of knowing the German language. On the other hand, those who worked closely with asylum seekers and refugees as volunteers and employees for NGOs and citizens’ initiatives also emphasized the importance of German values as part of integration.

While many definitions of integration exist, this thesis used Aleksandra Lewiki’s definition of integration as “a mechanism that gradually reduces institutionalized obstacles to individuals’ standing as equals.” Further, Ager and Strang’s conceptual framework of integration provides specific domains of investigation. Ager and Strang’s domains of integration are located on four levels: 1) “Foundation,” 2) “Facilitators,” 3) “Social Connection,” and 4) “Markers and Means.” Thus, in this thesis, I examined integration as the process of becoming more equal while surveying specific domains to explore that process. Moreover, this thesis investigated to what extent discursive framings of citizenship, nationhood, Self, and Other impact that integrative process. These discursive framings are used to communicate assumptions about identity that are involved in discourses on integration.

Chapters three and four discussed this process and explained how discursive framings of citizenship, nationhood, Self, and Other are present in both “top-down” and “bottom-up” perspectives on integration. Chapter three explained the discursive framings of citizenship and nationhood and discussed the “Foundation” level domain of citizenship and rights and the “Facilitators” level domains of language and culture and safety and stability. Although citizenship in Germany is no longer solely based on descent, or the jus sanguinis system, the discursive framing of citizenship still carries with it ethnocultural assumptions. Even after the 2000 citizenship reform, citizenship is still largely understood in terms of the historical

community-of-decent basis for belonging. Similarly, underlying the conception of nationhood are ethnocultural assumptions. The discursive framings of citizenship and nationhood create an ethnocultural understanding of what it means to belong in Germany.

These discursive framings of citizenship and nationhood impact the “top-down” integration process, which is evident through investigating Ager and Strang’s “Foundation” and “Facilitators” levels. The “Foundation” level of citizenship and rights is of course framed by the discursive construction of citizenship and nationhood, as the exclusivist assumptions in these concepts are carried over into limited possibilities for citizenship and restricted rights for asylum seekers and refugees. Although citizenship is attainable for asylum seekers and refugees in Germany, it is so distant that it may not be a possibility in their minds. Nonetheless, asylum seekers and refugees are active in their pursuit of more rights, as seen with the activities of The Refugee Movement, International Women Space, and Corasol, among other organizations. Further, at the “Facilitators” level, language and culture classes make certain assumptions about what is required to reach a state of equality and emphasize distinct divisions between those who belong and those who do not. Nevertheless, as these classes are not available until one is granted official refugee status, the integrative process is hindered upon arrival. In addition to the domain of language and culture, Ager and Strang note the importance of safety and stability. Asylum seekers are often placed unsafe and unstable environments of hostility. The notion of asylum seekers as dangerous or inconvenient further reflects the ethnocultural sense of belonging still present in Germany. Notably, each of these three domains addressed in chapter three can be regarded as the government’s responsibility more than the responsibilities of asylum seekers and refugees. Lingering and enduring understandings of citizenship and nationhood in ethnocultural
terms seem to impact understandings about who deserves what rights, what it means to be equal, and what environments asylum seekers are forced to tolerate.

Still, while this exploration of “top-down” perspectives of integration provides much information about the integration system in Germany, to better understand the integrative experiences of asylum seekers and refugees, a “bottom-up” approach is also necessary. Chapter four discussed discursive framings of Self and Other and explored Ager and Strang’s “Social Connections” and “Markers and Means” levels. The ethnocultural understanding of citizenship and nationhood produces a similar ethnocultural understanding of the German Self. This Self is constructed in contrast to the foreign Other. Further, the Muslim Other specifically is contrasted as an unassimilable body, and therefore as a threat. However, while the portrayal of the Other as both a threat and a victim without agency exist, these discursive framings can be seen as two means of dehumanization. Notably, these framings are gendered; while the construction of the Other as a dangerous threat applies most often to males, the construction of the Other as an un-agentic victim applies most often to females.

These discursive framings of Self and Other underlie the “bottom-up” perspective of the integrative process. To investigate this perspective, chapter four explored Ager and Strang’s “Social Connections” level, including social bonds, social bridges, and social links. The discursive framings of the German Self and the refugee Other impact these social connections in that asylum seekers and refugees often experienced being treated as inferior and being unwelcomed and excluded. Daily interactions that asylum seekers and refugees had with Germans were often problematic, making them feel either patronized or criminalized, and hindering the integrative process. Moreover, although many asylum seekers and refugees did report positive experiences with Germans as well, the negative interactions and failed social
bridges seemed more impactful, often causing asylum seekers and refugees to withdraw from society or to only hesitantly and cautiously approach Germans. In addition to exploring these social connections, chapter four also discussed “Markers and Means” of integration, including employment, housing, education, and health. An investigation of this level of integration domains demonstrates that although these markers and means can create more equality between newcomers and the larger German community, otherizing discourses may impede access to these domains.

While this research investigated integration as a multifaceted concept and aimed to take into account many perspectives and experiences of integration, a number of limitations should be noted. First, as I am neither a German national, nor an asylum seeker or refugee, as a researcher I was an outsider for both groups. This caused some challenges when approaching potential interview participants and building rapport. Furthermore, as I only conducted fieldwork for this research in Berlin and the surrounding areas, these findings may not be applicable to Germany as a whole. Many interviewees noted unique characteristics of Berlin, including that it is a more liberal and more international city than other German cities and that it fosters a culture of volunteerism and activism unlike many other cities. Another factor limiting this research is the characteristics of the asylum seekers and refugees with whom I spoke. While origins of asylum seekers and refugees included several Middle Eastern and African countries, their experiences may not apply for all asylum seekers and refugees. Further, as most of my asylum seeker and refugee interview participants were male, this research may neglect a deeper female perspective. Additionally, most of my interview participants were younger adults, generally in their early twenties to mid-thirties, thus neglecting a broader range of asylum seekers and refugees. Further, many of these young adults were college educated and fluent in English. Nonetheless, while
these conditions limited the research, this research is not necessarily meant to be representative of a larger sample. Rather, the primary goal of this research was to investigate the central research question in a specific context and share individuals’ stories and experiences. Further research should explore larger groups to gain a deeper understanding of more diverse populations as well. Additionally, further research to investigate the integrative process of asylum seekers and refugees in other countries.

The integrative process is complex and multifaceted, with many actors and domains. This research examined the impact of discursive framings of citizenship, nationhood, Self, and Other on both “bottom-up” and “top-down” perspectives of the integrative process. Overall, my findings demonstrate the challenges of entering Germany as an asylum seeker and experiencing the bureaucratic German asylum system. This situation is further complicated by the assumptions about identity that are constructed and communicated through discursive framings of citizenship, nationhood, Self, and Other. Within this framework, in which asylum seekers and refugees are consistently otherized, the integrative process, or the process of becoming more equal, is significantly hindered.
References


APPENDIX I

LIST OF INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

The following chart lists all interview participants from the research fieldwork in Berlin. All participants have been given pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

Color Coding:

Green: asylum seeker participants
Yellow: refugee participants
Blue: participants who volunteer/work with asylum seekers and refugees

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<td>Charlotte</td>
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APPENDIX II

THEMES AND CATEGORIZATIONS

The following list shows the themes that emerged from the interview transcription data. Themes were categorized and grouped with similar and related themes.

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Themes</th>
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<td>- Volunteerism in Berlin</td>
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<td>- Isolation</td>
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<td>- Stereotypes</td>
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<td>- Criminalization</td>
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<td>- Gender Inequality</td>
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<td>- Islam and the West</td>
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<td>- Hope</td>
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<td>- Refugees’ Responsibilities vs. Germans’ Responsibilities</td>
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