

„Wer darf Deutsch sein?“¹

The Racialization and Integration of Refugees in Germany

“What it comes to is that if we, who can scarcely be considered a white nation, persist in thinking of ourselves as one, we condemn ourselves, with the truly white nations, to sterility and decay, whereas if we could accept ourselves as we are, we might bring new life to the Western achievements, and transform them.”

-James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honors in the Geography Major
at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Madison, Wisconsin

May 2018.

¹ “Who is allowed to be German?”

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I cannot thank the refugees I worked with enough for their honesty, trust in me, and willingness to share vulnerable experiences. I can only hope to shine a light on their incredible resiliency. This thesis is dedicated to them. I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Professor Bob Kaiser, for his valuable feedback and for the classes I took with him that introduced me to performativity and bordering processes. I would also like to thank Professor Sonja Klocke and Professor Sabine Mödersheim for answering my endless number of questions. They gave me valuable insights into German history and helped me contextualize my own experiences within more nuanced knowledge of German culture. Finally, I would like to thank everyone that provided me with much needed emotional support throughout this difficult process and encouraged me not to give up. Without you I would not have been able to finish this project. Thank you all very much!

Abstract

Objectives. This thesis addresses problems with the integration of refugees in Germany, specifically focusing on refugees as the constitutive other to a popularly perceived white German identity. The purpose of this thesis is to highlight the resiliency of refugees and suggest ways refugees and Germans can successfully live together. *Methods.* The qualitative data in this thesis consists of anecdotes from refugees collected through ethnographic participant-observation research conducted in August 2017. A review of German literature and current articles represents the governmental and public German perspective. *Analysis.* The theory of performativity is used to analyze the bordering practices of racialization and othering. In addition, the author argues that refugees engage in acts of citizenship as a way to resist racialization and xenophobia. *Results.* The author believes that white ethnic German citizens should actively investigate their own Whiteness and the isolation from integration efforts that their privilege affords them. In order for Germany to collectively move forward, all members of German society, whether white or person of color, immigrant or ethnic native-born German, asylum seeker or German citizen, must attempt to identify in solidarity with their fellow neighbors and demand equitable treatment and equal access to rights under German law.

Introduction

James Baldwin's warning to Americans in the 1960s about persisting in whitewashing American identity could just as easily be applied to the current redefining of German identity. "Who is allowed to be German?" This is the question that German politicians, native-born "ethnic" Germans, immigrant German citizens, and asylum seekers alike, are all struggling to figure out. Much like Baldwin's claim that the United States will fail if diversity is not reflected in American identity, since World War II German identity has begun to transform from a strict understanding of German citizens being only those who have German blood to a more inclusive and accepting definition of who belongs in Germany. The idea of what it means to be German is undergoing a dramatic philosophical debate that has real consequences for residents of Germany. But in order to define who is German or who belongs in Germany, who doesn't belong must also be identified. How is the constitutive outside to German identity constructed as refugees, specifically refugees of color? Within a context of increasing global migration, refugee resettlement, and the essentialization of national identity, I specifically want to investigate the discursive performative bordering practices that constitute the racialization of refugees in Germany. In addition, what implications does this bordering have for the successful integration of refugees in Germany? How are refugees claiming belonging and altering ideas of what it means to be German?

Historical Background on Racialization & the Construction of German Identity

German identity as it is popularly conceptualized, has been racialized since its inception. The ongoing social construction of *Deutschsein*² and *Weißsein*³ are to this day still intertwined.

² "Germanness"

³ "Whiteness"

Of course Germany has never been a completely homogenous society, as nothing like that exists, and yet there is a legal history (up until the 1990s) of German citizenship being defined as having ethnic German blood (Koopmans et al., 2005). This legal history is to this day mirrored in the popular conception of collective German identity being white ethnic Germans, also called *Biodeutsche*.

Demographic Changes after WWII

After WWII, during the rebuilding of West Germany, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) needed workers to take on the unwanted hard labor positions. Beginning in 1955 and ending in 1973, the FRG contracted *Gastarbeiter* from Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, Morocco, Portugal, Tunisia, and Yugoslavia (in that order). The word ‘*Gastarbeiter*’ literally means ‘guest worker’ and indicates that the FRG planned on these workers being temporary. They were supposed to come to Germany, do the hard labor, and leave when the industries no longer needed them. But during those 18 years around 2.6 million *Gastarbeiter* came to Germany. The businesses they worked for didn’t want to constantly keep rotating through workers, so the *Gastarbeiter* stayed long-term, brought their families from their home countries, and many ended up permanently settling in Germany (Özoğuz, 2016, p. 2). These families often lived in crowded apartments and despite paying taxes, received very little social support from the FRG. In addition, they were excluded from German society through governmental policies and had minimal contact with Germans. When the Italians first came, they were racialized as non-white due to having darker hair, skin tones, and other perceived racial characteristics that made them stand out from the supposedly “blond-haired, blue-eyed” ethnic German population. Over time, European *Gastarbeiter* blended in more with the ethnic Germans and new groups of immigrants, such as the Turks, were subjected to exclusionary bordering practices based on racialization.

The FRG wasn't alone in contracting non-German workers; the German Democratic Republic (GDR) also hired workers they called '*Vertragsarbeiter*' ('contract workers'). Although many *Vertragsarbeiter* had similar experiences to the Gastarbeiter, it is important to note the differences of living in East Germany. During the Soviet-era, the workers coming into East Germany were naturally coming from communist countries such as Vietnam, Angola, Hungary, and Cuba. Some students were also allowed from certain countries and they were privileged as they could study in East Germany as part of an exchange between their countries. But the *Vertragsarbeiter* had very few privileges. In fact, some arrived in the GDR only to have their passports taken away and be forced to work for not much more than *Taschengeld* ('pocket money') (Zeug, 2009). These *Vertragsarbeiter* were treated especially poorly because they came from countries that owed East Germany, and essentially their wages were going directly to alleviate their countries' debt. The Stasi ('*Staatssicherheit*', the GDR's secret police force) made sure that these workers had no contact whatsoever with Germans, except in the churches. There were blatant aggressive displays of xenophobia, particularly against workers with darker skin. One worker from Angola, Moises Mvuama, remembers when his friend Amadeu Antonio was walking home from a bar one night and was beaten into a coma by a group of 50 teenagers, dying two weeks later (Zeug, 2009). This attack occurred right after the unification of Germany—alarming proof that immigrants living in Germany were not only constantly ostracized, but also at risk of being the victims of racialized violence.

In addition to migrant workers settling in Germany, there have been several waves of refugees since WWII, including the return of ethnic Germans (who had left Germany up to hundreds of years ago) from Russia and Poland. Although this group of foreign-born, ethnic Germans experienced discrimination, they had legal rights to German citizenship and thus were

relatively quickly absorbed into and accepted by the mainstream German culture (Koopmans et al., 2005, p. 37). The second wave of refugees resettling in Germany were refugees from the Yugoslavian wars in the 1990s, many of whom sought asylum in Germany and then returned later to their home countries. Most recently, the third wave of refugees are predominantly coming from Syria, Afghanistan, and other conflict-zones (Özoğuz, 2016, p. 22).

In 1996 there were around 7.5 million foreigners living in Germany (Seifert, 2012). This number included Gastarbeiter/Vertragsarbeiter and their German-born children and grandchildren, as well as refugees. Today around 20% of German citizens have non-ethnic German heritage. For decades these various groups of immigrants and refugees have constituted a major demographic shift in Germany and have provoked debate around what it means to be German. Since the late 1990s, both political and public opinion on German identity has undergone significant transformations.

Changes in governmental policies of Deutschsein

Even though the children and grandchildren of immigrants were born in Germany, they, along with first generation immigrants, were denied citizenship (and thus basic political rights) until 2000, when a change to Germany's nationality law (allowing naturalization for non-ethnic Germans) went into effect. All of these people, refugees and immigrants, have settled in Germany within the last 70 years. Yet up until two years ago, the German government has refused to officially acknowledge that Germany is a land of immigrants ("Merkel", 2015).

Particularly after the unification of Germany in 1990 and change in citizenship laws in 2000, there has been a revival in the debate around who is "allowed" to be German. The public exploration of belonging, citizenship, and self-identification has once again intensified with the most recent influx of asylum seekers in Germany. Today, although naturalization laws are more

open, an actual law allowing for legal immigration to Germany still does not exist (“Merkel”, 2015). This has led to intense debates about who has valid claims to asylum and who is simply an “economic migrant” looking for a job in Germany. Since 2015, along with the official acknowledgement of Germany as a land of immigrants, there has been a governmental policy shift to *Willkommenskultur*—the idea of a welcoming culture, open to all asylum seekers. This was strongly embraced by thousands of Germans that volunteered for the first time with refugees (Özoğuz, 2016, p. 22). But unfortunately, such a response is unsustainable without continuous dedication to cultural pluralism from more than just specific groups of citizens and individual politicians.

On the anniversary of Germany’s reunification, President Frank-Walter Steinmeier stated, “The big wall across our country is gone. But on September 24th it was clear: there are other walls that have developed, less visible, without barbed wire and death zones—but walls, that stand in the way of our collective ‘we’” (Steinmeier, 2017).⁴ Steinmeier was referring to the September 2017 elections in Germany, when, for the first time in over 50 years, an extreme right party was elected (with 13.6% of the vote) into federal parliament (Hawley, 2017). The Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland*—AfD) promotes discrimination against refugees, Muslims, and people of color in Germany. They use nationalistic slogans and claim to represent *das Volk* or “the People.” But this anti-refugee, anti-immigrant rhetoric doesn’t just come from the extreme right. Other conservative politicians, members of the CSU and CDU (the Christian Social Union and Christian Democratic Union), have also published statements with anti-Muslim sentiment. The most well-known would be that of the former Minister of the

⁴ Translation into English by author from: „Die große Mauer quer durch unser Land ist weg. Aber am 24. September wurde deutlich: Es sind andere Mauern entstanden, weniger sichtbare, ohne Stacheldraht und Todesstreifen—aber Mauern, die unserem gemeinsamen „Wir“ im Wege stehen.”
—Bundespräsident Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Festakt zum Tag der deutschen Einheit, 3. Oktober 2017

Interior Thomas Maizière, who published ten statements in May 2017 in order to spark more debate about what it means to be German. One of his most controversial claims was that as Germans “we show our faces. We are not the burka”⁵ (Puche, 2017). If statements like this from individual politicians, and from the AfD as a whole, are representative of the Germans who voted them into office, then it is clear that there are drastically different views of *Deutschsein* throughout the German public.

Changes in the public understanding of Deutschsein

Historical conceptions of *Deutschsein*, current governmental policies, and recent demographic shifts are all key factors in how the public understands what it means to be German. But nothing has a stronger influence on popular opinion than the constant bombardment of information about refugees through social media, TV, and newspapers. Media plays a critical role in presenting extreme opposing viewpoints that polarize public opinion instead of facilitating an open debate about German identity. As mass media presents the conversation, there are two opposing sides—*Leitkultur* and *Willkommenskultur*—and somehow no one in the middle is represented.

The lack of immigration policy and increasingly more-accepting laws on citizenship and asylum, have led to a very public backlash founded on identity politics and headed by groups such as PEGIDA⁶ (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the West) and the AfD. Naika Foroutan, a social scientist from the Berlin Institute of Integration and Migration Research, explains that Germany is experiencing not a refugee crisis but a “cultural panic” (Foroutan, lecture, February 28, 2017). Despite the fact that twenty percent of German citizens have a

⁵ Translation into English by author from: “*Wir zeigen unser Gesicht. Wir sind nicht burka.*” (Puche 2017)

⁶ German name: *Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes*

*Migrationshintergrund*⁷, there are still many white ethnic Germans who believe all people living in Germany need to assimilate into German *Leitkultur*, which is the idea of a dominant or leading culture. On the surface, *Leitkultur* is supposed to be comprised of German music, food, clothing, Christianity, the language, and adherence to the German constitution. *Leitkultur* presents a static interpretation of what culture actually is. It is the belief that traditions from the past have crystallized into the German culture that exists today and that one can somehow extract the essentials of German culture, as if it were something tangible, from the “tainted” parts of culture that immigrants and asylum seekers have brought with them. The whole point of *Leitkultur* is to preserve white ethnic and native-born German values, and subsequently a power structure of white supremacy. The entire concept is problematic and absurd, as no culture exists in isolation from other cultures, and even proponents of *Leitkultur* struggle to define what ‘German food’ and ‘German cultural values’ are actually supposed to include. The *Leitkultur* debate is in many ways the social and cultural continuation of the German government’s former assimilationist and ethnic perspective on citizenship.

In contrast, those who support *Willkommenskultur*, promote welcoming all people and embracing multiculturalism, specifically with the current refugees. Although the original push to welcome refugees with gatherings at train stations across Germany was a great sign of solidarity, sometimes this welcoming culture almost became rather superficial and xenophilic in nature—exotifying individuals and attracting supporters that love and glorify cultural differences versus love the actual refugees for who they are as people. Staunch supporters of *Willkommenskultur* have also failed to accept valid criticisms of the concept and have labeled critics as Nazis,

⁷ Translates to ‘migration background’. A term used by government agencies to identify individuals with non-ethnic German origins; can have rather negative connotations due to its exclusionary nature. Is not used as a codeword for people of color, as many German citizens with *Migrationshintergrund* are racialized as white and have origins in other EU countries, such as Poland.

leaving proponents of *Leitkultur* even more convinced that German culture is somehow threatened by the incoming refugees.

The publicity and politics surrounding *Leitkultur* and *Willkommenskultur* in popular media have lead to an apparent polarization of German society, yet within the general public, there are many more nuanced positions held by moderate white ethnic Germans, Germans with *Migrationshintergrund*, and refugees themselves. The public discourse has not allowed for a constructive critique of *Willkommenskultur* without the critic being associated with racism, Nazism, and *Leitkultur*. Thus, moderate white ethnic Germans are hesitant to openly voice concerns about *Willkommenskultur* or to discuss their opinions publicly for fear of being labeled as racist. In addition to blocking out moderate white Germans, this contentious debate among politicians, government officials, and academics has greatly overwhelmed the voices of Germans with *Migrationshintergrund*, who have for decades contributed to the discussion with literature around themes of German national identity and belonging. These books, such as *Wir neuen Deutschen: Wer wir sind, was wir wollen*⁸ (Topçu, Bota, & Pham, 2012) or May Ayim's *Grenzenlos und unverschämt*, describe the lives of Germans with *Migrationshintergrund* and actively seek to redefine what it means to be German. Such books often get placed in subcategories (such as “migrant literature”) and aren't given the attention or authority afforded to white ethnic German authors.

Just as the public debate does not give Germans of color a platform to speak, the voices of current refugees in Germany are articulated even less in media coverage. Often times people of color and refugees receive negative attention—portrayed either as victims or perpetrators—their words cut apart and distorted in quotes, rather than reporters focusing on their humanity

⁸ Translation: ‘We new Germans: Who we are, what we want’

(their hopes, and dreams of living in Germany). When a refugee commits a crime it is often reported as “Afghan refugee” does this or “African migrant” does that, compared to “Man assaults woman” when the perpetrator is a white ethnic German. When a refugee is the victim of a crime, the event is reported in a way that provokes pity and does not highlight the resiliency of the individual. The media portrays refugees as either people to be feared or pitied, but regardless of which side of the dichotomy, they are always still racialized—with little nuance involved and little description of their daily lives as people.

It is within this historical context of identity politics, that refugees are currently racialized as the constitutive outside to German identity. Although the *Gastarbeiter*, *Vertragsarbeiter*, and their descendants also continue to experience racism, they are in other ways afforded many more rights than refugees simply because they are German citizens. That being said, Professor Emeritus of International Relations Bassam Tibi described the feeling of living in Germany for decades and never being seen as belonging: „Perhaps today I am more German than many Germans, but I haven’t managed to be recognized as German. That is the résumé of my life story as a Syrian migrant in Germany. It is also the failure of integration”⁹ (Tibi, 2017). But instead of looking at it as the failure of integration, one might say it is rather the success of the racialization processes that have constituted German identity since the very beginning of collective national identity formation. Because the system is essentially still working for whom it was constructed—white ethnic Germans—the question is: how long will it take for the entire society to understand that this racialized national identity, and the horrendous racism as a result of this image, is not acceptable and must be actively changed?

⁹ Translation into English by author from: „Vielleicht bin ich heute deutscher als viele Deutsche, aber ich habe es nicht geschafft, als Deutscher anerkannt zu werden. Das ist das Resümee meiner Lebensgeschichte als syrischer Migrant in Deutschland. Es ist zugleich das Scheitern der Integration.“ –Professor Bassam Tibi (Tibi, 2017)

Theoretical Framework

The main theories I use to frame my analysis of the racialization of refugees and German identity formation are performativity, boundary maintenance, domestic politics, social exclusion, and acts of citizenship.

Looking at the process of identification and racialization as a discursive performative process is crucial to my analysis. Judith Butler's concept of performativity: "the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (Butler, 1993, p. 2), helps guide my analysis of identity formation. Through the repeated failure of performativity to achieve its effects, there is a necessity for constant reiteration. Identity categories continuously come into being through the daily actions and sayings of individuals, which—although repetitive—are by no means identical. Boundaries between social categories are constantly patrolled, reinforced, and redefined. These boundaries are then essentialized as being "normal" and "natural" and the social categories are looked at as fully created and established, when in actuality they are anything but completely defined. The constitutive other to an identity category is necessary for that category to be continuously reproduced. Without the border patrolling of who is "in" a group and who isn't, there would be no essentialized identity categories in the first place. In my analysis, I look at how the performative process of racialization continuously recreates a constitutive outside in order for *Deutschsein* to be defined. At the same time, I also explore how there is potential for a disruption in these citational practices.

I frame my discussion through the process of racialization because I hope to avoid essentializing race by viewing the boundary creation and maintenance as a category of practice rather than a category of analysis (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Boundaries between social categories are necessary to simplify and understand the diversity in the world. But boundaries are

popularly conceived as permanent, rather than incomplete, dynamic, and fluid. Reece Jones explains that “boundaries are never finished or fixed, even if they appear to be, and must be refixed and reiterated to reify that perception” (Jones, 2009, p. 180). Jones uses the word “inchoate” to describe the incompleteness of boundaries. Because boundaries are only ever partially formed, they are performative processes that require constant reiteration. *Deutschsein* and who belongs to Germany is continuously being challenged and redefined. This category is never complete and cannot really be fully defined, but people try to define *Deutschsein* through boundary maintenance exemplified by exclusionary practices of Othering and racialization.

Similar to Brubaker’s and Cooper’s theories of identification processes and avoiding essentialism, Reece Jones, quoting Abbott, explains that “we should not look for boundaries of things but things of boundaries (Abbott, 1995: 857)” (Jones, 2009, p. 179). Examining bordering processes tells us a lot more about what the effect of the boundary marking is, than trying to study that concept as a category. It also helps reinforce that socially constructed categories, such as race, are not essential nor natural, but rather arbitrary categorization that is the effect of exclusionary practices used to oppress groups of people and to empower others. Power is intimately tied to social categorization, because it is through bordering that one can create seemingly natural in- and out-groups.

Another theory that helps contextualize the bordering practices I will discuss, is domopolitics. Domopolitics is the connection between imagining a collective national identity of people who belong to a nation-state, and then governing the nation-state as a home that needs protecting from those that don’t belong. It “is an attempt to contain citizenship, to uphold a certain statist conception of citizenship in the face of social forces that are tracing out other cultural and political possibilities” (Walters, 2004, pg. 256). Walters discusses how citizens of a

country place trust in governmental institutions to protect their economic and personal security. Economic security in western countries is often closely tied to immigrant workers, who support the system. But when economic security is jeopardized, citizens lose faith in the government and misplace the blame on immigrants (Walters, 2004, pg. 255). Walters argues that people in a country have to feel like they are economically taken care of and that the asylum and immigration policies work, in order to welcome immigrants and refugees. This is paired with the view of the political world as made up of imagined ethno-national homelands where each person “belongs” to a certain country. Those that engage in domopolitics essentialize identity categories like nationality and ethnicity in order to create reasons for why people like immigrants or refugees do not belong in certain places, and rather, only belong to the country seen as their proper “homeland”.

Much like domopolitics, Somers’ *Genealogies of Citizenship* relies upon ideas of a national group that feels left behind and socially excluded from the market and government assistance (Somers, 2008). Although Somers is writing in a U.S. context, her ideas are very applicable to the alt-right groups gaining popularity in Germany. I use her theory of social exclusion and domopolitics to analyze the unfounded, but nonetheless real (and quite prevalent), fear white ethnic Germans have in losing their identity and culture to refugees.

Finally, acts of citizenship, as discussed by Peter Nyers in “No One is Illegal Between City and Nation”, focus on the political actions and claims taken by migrants who do not have citizenship status. Nyers argues that “the lives of non-status people do not fit neatly into the frameworks of inclusion or exclusion, welcomed or rejected, dangerousness or victimage. Non-status migrants may be subjected to all of these discourses and practices, but...they are not merely the citizen’s Other” (Nyers, 2010, pg. 141). This process of acting like a citizen but not

being recognized as one, is an essential perspective in my analysis of the refugees' resiliency and agency in Germany.

In this paper, I attempt to point out the performative bordering processes that racialize refugees within a context of domopolitics and how that helps continuously recreate conceptions of German identity as only *Biodeutsche*. Acts of citizenship are highlighted as ruptures in the performative process dividing citizen and non-citizen.

Positionality

Before getting to the experiences of the refugees I worked with, I find it necessary to address the context within which I began working with these individuals. In the fall of 2016, I flew to Germany with the intention of volunteering in a facility for underage, unaccompanied refugees. I had no information about what I would be doing or with whom I would be working, or, indeed, what I was getting myself into. I decided I wanted to volunteer because of previous German and Geography research I had done in 2015 about the large numbers of refugees entering Germany. I was greatly emotionally impacted by my research and wanted to provide sustainable support to refugees—rather than a monetary donation or a two-week “mission trip.”¹⁰

I ended up doing an internship through the *Diakonie*¹¹ at a home for 27 refugee boys (half were from Afghanistan and the others from various countries in Africa including Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, and Sierra Leone). I spent nine weeks teaching German, assisting with social work, playing and cooking with the boys, and listening to their stories. Because I was an American learning German, and I was only a couple years older (or in

¹⁰ I strongly disagree with the idea of mission trips as they were not only originally meant to impose religion, but today they are also usually more for the emotional benefit of the volunteer. The people receiving aid, especially children, can be negatively emotionally impacted, as short mission trips can contribute to feelings of abandonment.

¹¹ A Protestant organization, with a mission similar to Caritas. They run hospitals, take care of the elderly, and are currently running a lot of facilities for refugees in Germany.

some cases, the same age—19), trusting relationships were quickly developed, as the boys felt that they could relate to me. When I left the position, I gave out my contact information and about 10 of the boys kept in touch with me during the spring of 2017. During that time, I went from being a teacher and caretaker to much more of a friend or an older sister. I also increasingly began to advocate for Afghan refugees to stay in Germany within my private life and throughout my further research.

I returned to Germany for two months in the summer of 2017 in order to do fieldwork for this thesis analyzing integration policies and practices in Germany. Once again my positionality shifted and I had to balance being a researcher and continuing my role as friend/advocate. Karen Ross's article, "'No Sir, She Was Not a Fool in the Field': Gendered Risks and Sexual Violence in Immersed Cross-Cultural Fieldwork", points out the flaws in a positionality often proposed from a feminist geographer perspective today. Much like Ross, I strongly believed that "researchers should try to reduce hierarchical distance by deeply immersing themselves in communities and establishing relationships and rapport based on mutual respect (Van Maanen, 1995)" (as cited by Ross, 2015). But throughout my time researching it became increasingly clear to me that I did not have the power or control over my own positionality within my research. It was evident that despite the certain privileges I had as an educated white woman working with people of color from various countries of origin, I was still an object of hierarchical gender power structures within the patriarchal German space (Ross, 2015). I realized that due to the intersectionality of my age and gender identity, my four main participants, and quite a few other participants, were interested in talking with me simply because they wanted to spend more time with me. My attempt to challenge power structures of race and class, by building trusting

and empathetic relationships with my participants (Ross, 2015), had unknowingly placed me in a very vulnerable and unwanted position.

It became increasingly difficult for me to enforce the distance between researcher/friend and girlfriend (especially because the German language only has one word for both female friend and girlfriend: *Freundin*). In some contexts, particularly among groups, I did not feel as though receiving cooked meals or small presents was a sign of anything other than welcoming me as a guest. But there were enough times where I would meet one-on-one with a participant and they would insist on buying me meals or giving me gifts, that I felt forced into an unacceptable position as an object of their romantic interest. During these moments, after initially refusing the token of their favor multiple times and explaining why it made me feel uncomfortable, I ended up having to accept it, in an attempt to avoid a public scene. At those times I would respond by strongly reemphasizing my position as a researcher much more than a friend.

Toward the end of my time in Germany and in the time since I came back, the continuing contact with many of my participants has led to multiple declarations of love and romantic interest through direct messages and posting pictures of me online with captions expressing love. Although I have tried to firmly respond that I am not interested, there have been several serious issues with emotional blackmail (if I were to leave their lives, they would hurt themselves etc...). That leaves me in the current position of a friend, to some, and to others I have completely fallen out of contact after refusing their advances and blocking them. They are aware that I will support them as a friend, but not as anything more than that. I am left contemplating how emotionally vulnerable many of these young men are, that they have formed attachments to me simply because they do not currently have someone in their lives, other than a few friends among other male refugees, that they feel they can trust in. My ability to empathize, listen, and be open, and

their human need to feel safe and secure in a friendship during an extremely uncertain time, were perhaps other catalysts to the situation that developed. The lack of access to mental health services, the lack of German friends (male or female), the isolation from their family, friends, and cultures, and past trauma they have experienced, all contribute to their ongoing need for stable, supportive relationships in their lives.

Although my positionality has shifted around this past year and certainly complicated my research and negatively impacted my personal life, I feel strongly that the relationships I formed were meaningful and I hope to do the refugees' stories justice as I describe a few of their experiences with racialization. But I am not writing this paper to tell their life stories. They are not mine to tell. I do not speak for the refugees I worked with. I am representing only myself and my own experiences. That being said, in this paper I did my best to portray these young men and the anecdotes as accurately as possible. But the truth of the matter is, no matter how many nuances I try to describe, I still am coming from a certain biased perspective, specifically that of a white American woman. My goal is to humanize refugees of color and describe the issues they face without victimizing and/or tokenizing them and, additionally, without blaming all white ethnic Germans for the racism these refugees have experienced. Labeling and categories do not help analyze but rather essentialize racist and discriminatory ideas. Therefore, I am approaching this paper by analyzing bordering processes and how systems of racialization are continuously reconstructed.

Methods

My source of information for conceptions of contemporary German identity (from the perspective of German citizens) is mostly acquired through a review of German literature as well as popular articles in the media. But a racialized German identity isn't simply being constructed

through the production and consumption of mass media, but rather through the everyday interactions with refugees and people of color in German society who are othered and racialized. I recognize that the exclusionary processes of bordering German identity have had a significant negative impact on migrant workers during the last half of the 20th century. And I realize the current wave of refugees was not the first and will not be the last to enter Germany. My focus is more on the recent racialization through representations of refugees and people of color in the popular media and the everyday racialized experiences refugees have with Germans.

The anecdotes I use are from the perspective of refugees in Germany and come from my own fieldwork in July and August of 2017. I spent two months in Germany travelling around to visit refugees I had worked with in the fall of 2016. The refugees I still had contact with, and were willing to participate in my research, had spread to four different-sized cities (with about 5,000 inhabitants in a small town; 26,000 in a small city; 360,000 in a medium-sized city; and 3.67 million in the capital, Berlin). I formally interviewed four underage¹² male refugees (Ali, Raymond, Jasmin, and Joseph¹³), attempting to investigate their access to resources in Germany and the factors that limit or allow for better access. I was looking for signs that they had been accepted in Germany society, felt like they belonged, and were cared for (my own definition of successful integration based on ideas of inclusion). I specifically wanted to talk to the young men that I had previously worked with, as we had an established foundation of trust. This was critical, not only because they were more willing to share their stories with me, but also because interviewing individuals who have been exposed to trauma and lack sufficient mental health

¹² Almost all my participants were considered legally underage according to their temporary German documents administered upon legal registration for an asylum application (a few were 18). Many of the boys from Afghanistan did not know their exact birthdate but typically knew the year in which they were born. Many reported that German social workers recorded their ages as younger during registration in an attempt to keep them under the umbrella of the *Jugendamt* ('Youth Office' similar to Child Protective Services) for longer. Therefore, the participants' actual age range (which I will report) was around 15 to 20 years old. All the participants were male and unaccompanied.

¹³ Names are pseudonyms chosen by participants.

services requires careful navigation and ongoing support. They knew that I wasn't simply going to disappear from their lives after listening to their experiences and flying back to the U.S.

In addition to the formal interviews, I did many hours of participant-observation which included cooking with the refugees, touring and walking around the cities, playing board games, meeting their friends, and, in general, chatting about life issues. This method was much more natural and better received by the young men who had difficulty remembering and opening up during more formal questioning. In the participant-observation there were ten central participants¹⁴, with whom I had multiple informal one-on-one conversations. The conversations during participant-observation were liable to turn to any topic because I did not specifically question (in order to avoid triggering any sort of trauma). Experiences with racialization and racism came up in formal interviews, in stories related to me during participant-observation, and in my firsthand accounts during participant-observation.

Anecdotes

The following anecdotes are experiences from the four main participants in my research (Joseph, Jasmin, Ali, and Raymond), along with other participants including Hamed, Malik, and Karim.

Joseph, a 17-year-old Gambian refugee, had much higher contact (than the average participant) with white native-born Germans through his English abilities and involvement in soccer. An extremely gifted player, he has received an extraordinary amount of attention as a refugee and, in fact, he currently lives most of the time with a German family who took him in, in Berlin. His host father is a wealthy businessman and the owner of the soccer team that Joseph

¹⁴ There were additionally eight other refugees (who I knew from Fall 2016) and ten other young refugee men (who I had never met before), who joined in during various activities. I did not have one-on-one conversations with any of those refugees and they were more just friends that tagged along. I did get to know all of them in the context of group activities as they would often add their own thoughts and observations to the conversations.

plays for. I met the family over dinner and they seemed to have Joseph's best interests in mind. They consistently talked about how important it was for him to learn (specifically finish his schooling and speak German proficiently) and develop other aspects of himself, rather than just incessantly train (as he dreams of playing professional soccer). In Gambia, his dark skin blended in with most of the population, but in Germany Joseph naturally finds it difficult dealing with the racist micro-aggressions and hateful comments he receives on a daily basis. On a previous soccer team, he endured so much harassment that he had to switch teams. Comments like "Go home and wash your skin with soap and maybe you'll be white then" and common use of the N-word were his racialized welcome to Germany.

Jasmin, a 16-year old from Guinea-Bissau, loves soccer, fashion, and French and American hip hop music. He currently lives in an apartment with other refugees from Guinea-Bissau in a city of 360,000 in western Germany. Jasmin is vibrant, full of energy, and has a contagious smile. Despite his current apparent happiness, he has faced many challenges due to racialization in Germany. When he first arrived, he was living in a town of 5,000 in eastern Germany. For many months he dealt with insomnia due to trauma. He explained to me all the micro-aggressions that he faced from his caretakers, teachers, and social workers. He claimed that they would play favorites and readily give out extra food to the boys from Afghanistan, yet refused to give out food (outside of a scheduled mealtime) to the boys racialized as black (from Somalia, Eritrea, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia). The injustices he experienced in the community led him, and two other refugees from Guinea-Bissau, to run away to Berlin. Eventually they ended up in the city where they are now, further west of Berlin, and reapplied for asylum in this city. Although Jasmin's new social worker is aware that he previously applied for asylum elsewhere, the social worker is helping him fight demands that he be sent back to the

original city in Germany. In this new, much larger city, Jasmin has found himself very welcome (even quite popular among his all-white classmates) and has also found a sense of belonging within the local community of refugees from Guinea-Bissau.

One of Jasmin's friends, Malik, has also experienced discrimination because of his skin color. On the journey from Guinea-Bissau to Germany he was seen by a doctor in Spain. The doctor told him that he had a heart problem and needed to have surgery. When he got to Germany, he told his caretakers in the small town of 5,000, that he needed medical attention. They didn't believe him and, due to other conflicts with the caretakers and people living in the town, he ran away to Berlin with Jasmin and another refugee. In Berlin, Malik was in and out of the hospital for five months receiving the treatment he needed. He told me that despite always being stared at while using public transportation, he feels more accepted in Berlin. Now he is able to attend school, play soccer, make friends, and eat lots of bread—he is an aspiring baker and absolutely loves the bread in Germany.

Raymond and Ali were both interviewees from Afghanistan. They live in the town of 5,000 and the city of 26,000 respectively. They are part of a larger network of close-knit Afghan refugee boys, specifically Hazaras¹⁵, who hang out daily after school and on the weekends. In their free time, the boys often walk around town, travel to Berlin, visit friends, listen to music, drink and smoke, call family, work out, and learn German—quite similar activities to German youth (with the exception of learning German and calling family). The Hazara refugees in Germany, however, have experienced slightly different bordering processes than other refugees. Often times the Germans racialize the boys' facial features as belonging to Koreans or the

¹⁵ Major ethnic group in Afghanistan that has historically faced ethnic cleansing and persecution by the Afghan government and the Taliban, resulting in a large Hazara diaspora. They speak Hazaragi, a dialect of Dari (related to Farsi/Persian).

Chinese. Among the boys when they are alone, there are nicknames thrown around such as “Jackie,” which is a reference to Jackie Chan and therefore a reference to appearing Chinese. But the playful mocking of identity among the boys is clearly not received the same as deliberate boundary maintenance through racialization by the Germans.

Ali, in particular, felt very excluded in the community due to several experiences surrounding racialization. One friendship between Ali and a German girl from his school abruptly ended after a few weeks of texting because she found out that he didn’t come from South Korea, like she had assumed, and was actually an Afghan refugee. Ali still doesn’t know if her parents had advised her to stop talking to him after that, or if it was her decision, but the loss of a friendship that was just beginning was particularly hard because he has tried and failed to make any German friends his whole time in Germany. Ali had also joined a local gym and had saved up 80 Euros from his monthly food and clothing allowance in order to pay the fees to use this private facility. He even was required to open a bank account for this gym membership, which he did. After two weeks of going to the gym, the owner arrived one day and stated that Ali would not be allowed to continue his membership there. Somehow the owner found out that Ali was a refugee and he declared that all refugees who were still waiting to be granted asylum, or long-term residence within Germany, weren’t allowed to use his facility. Yet there were other Afghan refugees of another ethnicity (Pashtun¹⁶) without documentation that were not told to leave the gym. In both cases, the initial hope for just treatment was later on squashed by overt exclusionary practices.

Ali is extremely well educated, (he attended twelve years of Koran school before fleeing Afghanistan), but faces many obstacles in Germany. He is best described as an intellectual and

¹⁶ Some Afghan Pashtun refugees could be considered to be passing as White in Germany

spends most of his days reading and writing both German and Dari, discussing politics, and monitoring the situation in Afghanistan. He dreams of some day studying at a German university. Although the likelihood of that happening is very slim, he has, as of February 2018, a German passport. That barrier out of the way, he must now complete a 12th grade education¹⁷ and intensively study before attempting a language exam that would allow him to attend university. Both such requirements will take years to complete. These logistical barriers to his higher education are not overtly due to his status as a refugee, but such rules clearly make it exceptionally difficult for immigrants and refugees in Germany to obtain a university degree.

One of my experiences where Raymond was racialized, was not necessarily tied to his identity as Hazara, but rather as simply a person of color with me, a white woman, sitting in a Vietnamese-Fusion restaurant in Berlin. When the waiter approached us, he addressed me in German and Raymond in English. Despite the fact that Raymond does not speak English at all, German is not my native language, and the waiter himself was a young person of color who spoke Vietnamese, German, and English (most likely a second generation immigrant). The perception from the waiter was that I, the white woman, was German-speaking, and Raymond, the person of color, did not understand the language. Raymond has been in Germany for over two years now and this racialization tied to language has a profound impact on his life. When Germans try to talk to him in English, it is with the assumption that he does not belong or has not lived in Germany, solely because he is perceived as non-white.

Despite the different ways Hazara refugees are been racialized, many have experienced immediate negative racialization, specifically by the police. Both Hamed and Karim have had conflicts with the police while in Germany—something that is not at all uncommon as a refugee.

¹⁷ Ali's previous education won't be recognized as he has no documents (and even if immigrants and refugees have documents proving their education level, their degrees are often still not recognized as valid in Germany).

Hamed is a very giggly, fun-loving 16-year-old, who often tries to make the other boys laugh with his constant teasing and immature jokes. But behind all the smiles, Hamed struggles daily with the loss of his family members who were murdered in Afghanistan. He smokes and drinks in order to forget his painful reality. One morning he was extremely drunk and lying on a platform waiting for a train to take him home. An officer came up to him and asked for his ID. Hamed was frustrated and on edge because he was drunk and he didn't understand why he was being intensively questioned. He said he just wanted to go on his way and asked the police officer to go away and leave him alone so that he could get home. The policeman was annoyed and kept up his questioning and even gave Hamed a little shove on the shoulder. Hamed unfortunately took a few fingers and shoved the police officer right back and said "*Verpiss dich*," meaning "piss off." A female officer came, was more gentle, and eventually got Hamed to cooperate and told him that he was now in trouble because he touched an officer. When I left, he was still waiting to hear back about his punishment and what impact it might have on his asylum chances. In another incident with police, Karim, an 18-year-old Hazara refugee, got into an altercation with his German landlord. Having met this landlord myself, I completely believe that Karim was provoked. The landlord¹⁸, who I will call Dieter, had, according to Karim, hit him because Karim wasn't cooperating with Hannah, his caretaker. I am unsure about whether or not Karim defended himself or had actually hit Dieter first, but either way, Hannah called the cops and a total of five police cars showed up to deal with Karim. Karim felt that this was an excessive number of officers and he was upset that the police rushed to Dieter's aid and not to help him.

¹⁸ Dieter is paid by the Jugendamt (Youth Services) to house many of the boys I worked with in the town of 26,000. The majority of the refugees who live on his properties in shared apartments are underage unaccompanied Hazara refugees from Afghanistan.

In addition to specific experiences, there are also particular spaces where refugees are subjected to racialized discrimination. Trains and train stations are specifically racialized spaces where people of diverse backgrounds regularly come into contact. Almost all the refugees had a train story to relate to me. They explained that they are constantly watched on trains and quite frequently addressed with comments that make it clear that they are unwelcome: “*Scheiß Ausländer*”¹⁹ was the most common refrain. The term *scheiß Ausländer* was also used often among the refugees in a joking matter to refer to themselves, but it originates from comments on the street and in social media, as seen in this quote: ‘I am for the deportation of these dirtbags back to their homeland where they came from. The damn foreigners get everything when they come here (money, clothes, apartment, hot meals, the newest cellphone). They get more than the social welfare recipients’²⁰ (Marcel, 2015). Tirades like this using the term *scheiß Ausländer* in addition to “*Wir sind das Volk*,”²¹ are found not only online but sprayed in graffiti in cities like Dresden with large alt-right groups. Rallies of neo-Nazis, PEGIDA, and other extremists also use these phrases and other specific words, such as ‘Islam’, that in these contexts are quite blatantly coded and racialized to mean refugees and/or people of color. In both private and public places, refugees are racialized by Germans (and to a lesser extent by each other).

Analysis

Bordering practices, including racialization, are not specific to being in Germany, but these identification processes are definitely uniquely impacted by and tailored to the country’s particular past. Genocide committed both within Germany during WWII, and outside of the

¹⁹ Translates to bloody/damn/fucking foreigner

²⁰ Original quote: “*Ich bin dafür dieses komplette Dreckspack abzuschieben in ihr Heimatland wo sie hergekommen sind. Die scheiß Ausländer kriegen alles wenn sie hier her kommen (Geld, Klamotten, Wohnung, warmes Essen, das neuste Handy). Die kriegen ja schon mehr wie ein Hartz IV-Empfänger.*”

²¹ Translates to ‘We are the people’, meaning the *Biodeutsche* (white ethnic Germans)

country, in 19th century Namibia, against the Herero and Nama peoples, have had devastatingly tragic impacts that continue to shape the conversation about “race” in Germany today. It is rather difficult to have an open public conversation about racialization in Germany with white native-born Germans. Those that talk about “race” outside the privacy of their own homes are subjected to intense judgment. Discussing racialization within Germany is often misconstrued as a signifier of Nazism. And in Germany, no average person wants to discuss race due to the great fear of being labeled either a Naci or racist²². Yet there is this pervading historical and contemporary perception of Germany as an ethno-national homeland because through the everyday performative citations of racial hierarchies, German identity has been essentialized to *Biodeutsche*.

Only recently, when citizenship laws became more inclusive in 2000, was it possible for the *Gastarbeiter*, who had been living in Germany for multiple generations, to obtain citizenship. This legal shift, along with Chancellor Angela Merkel’s initial open-door policy to refugees in 2015, and the 2015 governmental policy shift that officially recognized Germany as a land of immigrants, were ruptures in the narrative that is otherwise formed through constant citation of racialization. Yet the popular media in Germany has exacerbated the extreme polarization of the public debate on German identity. Articles are written, which reinforce racial hierarchies and polarize the discussion around race. There is a strong dichotomy that has been created between *Willkommenskultur* and *Leitkultur*.

But the Whiteness promoted by *Leitkultur* proponents only exists through the active construction and maintenance of bordering people of color as the constitutive outside. The idea of *Leitkultur* is especially seductive to white ethnic Germans when they are experiencing

²² Which is literally one of the worst things you could say to someone. For the most part, derogatory racial slurs are much more acceptable than open discussions about race because that is seen as being a Nazi.

economic insecurity because there is a fear of change (loss of culture, job, etc.). This insecurity and mistrust in the government is then expressed through domestic politics. Populist movements to protect “the nation” and “the people”²³ have developed especially in the former GDR. These extreme right movements are founded upon an idea of social exclusion from welfare and access to the market (Somers, 2008). The narrative is framed through clearly defining the deserving and undeserving in terms of citizenship (Walters, 2002). For example, in a Eurobarometer survey of 1,554 German citizens conducted in October 2017, 71% of Germans believed immigrants to be a burden on the social welfare system. The German citizens receiving social welfare (Hartz IV Empfänger) are given the same amount of money from the government as the refugees, and this comparison helps support the alt-right’s appeals that “das Volk” are not being taken care of and are indeed the victims of the government. Within the discourse of PEGIDA and the AfD, there is a deliberate blurring of boundaries between differing in-group identities in order to assert that they alone are the homogenous “people” that belong in Germany. The alt-right have felt the need to define their identity as white ethnic Germans because they want to lay claim to government benefits as citizens and thus a protected status above that of refugees. But is it really just the alt-right doing this?

In Walters, “Deportation, Expulsion, and the International Police of Aliens”, he explains how citizenship has “come to imply a right to remain in one’s country” (Walters, 2002, pg. 228). And deportation is seen as a bordering process protecting and defining the essentialized category of citizenship. Recently reserved for non-citizens only, as compared to older conceptions of banishment and exile that were meant as punishment for anyone, regardless of citizenship status,

²³ It is important to note that alt-right extremist groups have been active in Germany and have sustained fairly consistent support (around 10%) since the 1990s. In *Contested Citizenship*, “ethnic and civic conceptions of nationhood” are specifically tied to the success of alt-right groups in Germany (Koopmans et al., 2005, p. 202).

deportation is only a threat to those who do not belong in Germany (Walters, 2002). The Eurobarometer face-to-face interview results show that 52% of Germans (significantly lower than the EU average of 68%) believe that acquiring German citizenship is important to the successful integration of immigrants (16% believe it is very important, 36% somewhat important, 45% not important). Germany ranked drastically low for that question at 25th out of the 28 EU member countries (EU Commission, 2018, p.94). So barely the majority of German citizens in this survey clearly valued citizenship as a right that should be granted to immigrants. Yet 92% of Germans believe that feeling like a member of German society is important for the successful integration of immigrants (EU Commission, 2018, p.91). The issue with these sentiments is that the German public believes immigrants should “feel” like they belong, but don’t need to acquire citizenship and be able to vote in order to be successfully integrated.

In *Contested Citizenship*, Koopmans et al. find that 53.4% of all claims made by migrants on immigration and ethnic relations had to do with racism, specifically non-institutional racism, xenophobia, and the extreme right (Koopmans et al., 2005, p. 141). This is significantly higher compared to the types of claims made by migrants in the Netherlands, Britain, and even France. In general, Germans would agree that discrimination against outsiders is a problem. But they aren’t necessarily willing to do anything about it. According to a Eurobarometer report, 65% of Germans think discrimination is a major obstacle and 24% think it is a minor obstacle—so 79% can agree that discrimination is some sort of obstacle for immigrants (EU Commission, 2018, p.100). Yet only 29% totally agree (39% tend to agree and 28% disagree) with “introducing stronger measures to tackle DISCRIMINATION against immigrants” (EU Commission, 2018, p.126, emphasis in original report). Once again this is an example of how Germans may believe in well-integrated refugees, and at the same time refuse to grant them certain rights like

citizenship and protection from persecution.

So what is the cause of this extremism and racialized violence in Germany? Through daily interactions and bordering at the level of individual bodies, there are several key categories created that have a big impact on the lives of refugees. Islam is used as a codeword for refugee, so when alt-right groups like PEGIDA march through the streets saying they don't want Muslims, they are saying deport refugees and people of color. They clearly would not have a problem with a white, German speaking man who is a Muslim. And additionally, they do not account for intersectionality when they racialize refugees. For example, black Christians from Eritrea are not usually welcomed with open arms by PEGIDA members. If their message was truly about religion and not about racialization, then they should be very accepting of refugees who are Christians. But the people who are part of PEGIDA are the people who are openly hostile to refugees who are racialized as non-White—I doubt PEGIDA supporters first ask what religion refugees practice before discriminating against them.

It is obvious that extreme right groups hostile to immigrants and refugees are not new in Germany, but they have been on the rise these last few years due to the increase in refugees in Germany. The xenophobic and racist activities of groups such as the NPD (National Democratic Party of Germany²⁴) and NSU (National Socialist Underground²⁵) have been under supervision by German intelligence services for years and yet still are allowed to continue. These older groups that promote an “ethnically pure” Germany, provide foundations for newer racist

²⁴ German name: *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, extreme right political party founded in 1964 (Bundesministerium des Innern, 2016, p. 79)

²⁵ German name: *Nationalsozialistischer Underground*, extreme right terror cell that targeted, murdered, and bombed immigrants in Germany from 2000-2007

organizations and political parties such as Der III. Weg²⁶, pro-NRW²⁷, PEGIDA, and the AfD. The German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution²⁸ estimates that in 2016 there were around 24,350 registered members of extreme right organizations under surveillance in Germany (Bundesministerium des Innern, 2017, p. 40). Considering that in January of 2015, PEGIDA alone had demonstrations attracting up to 25,000 people (Bundesministerium des Innern, 2016, p. 64), and that the AfD currently has 29,000 members—clearly the alt-right movement in Germany is much more expansive than it appears. Members of these groups engage in political demonstrations and openly insult or attack refugees and immigrants. Other groups, such as the Reichsbürger²⁹ and Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland³⁰, aren't necessarily actively promoting attacks, but they are still based on racist ideologies that promote a “pure ethnic” German nation and that do not recognize the current German government as legitimate (Hüllen, Homburg, & Krüger, 2015). What all of these groups have in common, is their constant racialization of refugees in order to maintain an image of German as a white ethno-national homeland where Germans should get more access to better services because they “belong” there.

Those that do not attempt to be “colorblind”, perpetuate a lot of blatant racism toward refugees with dark skin in Germany. This is due to the perception that the refugees are simply economic migrants looking to “get rich” off of the German welfare system. Of course not all refugees have fled conflict zones, but the violence, political upheaval, and extreme class disparities along the coast of western Africa, still are valid reasons to flee to Europe. Joseph fled

²⁶ Name means “the third way”, based on nazism, antisemitism, xenophobia; founded 2013 (Bundesministerium des Innern, 2016, p. 85)

²⁷ German name: *Bürgerbewegung pro NRW* (citizen movement for Nordrhein-Westfalen, a federal state), advocate against Islam and refugees, founded 2007 (Bundesministerium des Innern, 2016, p. 86)

²⁸ German name: *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV)*

²⁹ The Reichsbürger believe that the true German government is that of the former Reich

³⁰ German name: *Identitäre Bewegung Deutschlands*, shares many ideals with the Reichsbürger movement

political persecution in Gambia where his family members are currently imprisoned, yet he often has to hear people tell him he came to Germany just to make it big as a soccer player.

In stark contrast, the racialization of the Hazara refugees initially allows them privileges associated with being tourists³¹ when travelling alone or in pairs (in a group it is more apparent that they are refugees). In the case of Ali, when the Germans realized that he was from Afghanistan, clear boundaries were drawn and he was treated much differently. This was most obvious when the German girl he was friends with abruptly stopped talking with him when she found out he was from Afghanistan. Despite the fact that the boys engaging in name calling within their group, they are offended when outsiders racialize them as Chinese or Korean. They are proud of their heritage as Afghans because their people have suffered ethnic persecution for hundreds of years by dominant ethnic groups, despite living in Afghanistan for 800+ years.

Similar to the reiteration of “Jackie” among the Hazara boys, when they repeat “*scheiß Ausländer*” among themselves it is with a tone of biting sarcasm. They know their own worth and value each other. The jokes serve to dislodge the palpable xenophobia and knowledge that they are not welcome in Germany: “we do not belong”, they say, “there is no room for us here.” But despite the joking nature of these utterances, there is bitter irony at work here as the statements crystallize their racialization and subsequent exclusion from German identity.

The particular concern with the reiteration of “*scheiß Ausländer*” by the refugees is that this is an example of social uptake or the performative repetition of norms that over time that seemingly naturalizes identities. In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler also describes how performativity “works not only through reiteration, but through exclusion as well” (Butler, 1993, p. 188). No

³¹ The racialization of Asians in Germany does not have much nuance. Despite the many Vietnamese living in Germany, individuals with “Asiatic facial characteristics” are often greeted with “Ni Hao!” and assumed to be Chinese tourists—this is still a problematic everyday racialization process that occurs throughout Germany.

matter what the refugees, or the Germans of color do, they remain “scheiß Ausländer” in their daily interactions with other Germans. A rap from Eko Fresh, the son of a Turkish Gastarbeiter, clearly emphasizes this point when he claims in his song Quotentürke, “*Ganz egal, wie sehr ich mich auch änder’/Ich bleib’ immer dieser scheiß Ausländer*” (‘No matter how much I change myself, I will always be this bloody foreigner’) (Eko Fresh, 2013). Through the everyday constant repetition of this slur in trains, in music, and scrawled all over in graffiti, the identity “*scheiß Ausländer*” is essentialized and becomes a natural abject category in German society.

Other examples of the performative process that solidifies the exclusion of refugees from *Deutschsein* is apparent in the racial profiling by police and the obstacles to healthcare for refugees. In Malik’s case, he was allowed emergency medical services to treat his heart condition, and yet his access to health care was blocked by his own caretakers. They acted as gatekeepers to the health care by not believing his claim of chest pain. Refugees in Germany only qualify for basic and emergency health services until they are granted residency or have lived in Germany for 18 months. These services do not include access to mental health care professionals. One refugee, Asra, was suffering from PTSD due to a lifetime of sexual abuse from older men in his community. When he arrived in Germany, he was unable to function and would bang his head against the wall. It took eight months and several visits to the ER before he was able to see a psychologist. Many refugees suffer from severe trauma—I have seen the parallel scars on their forearms and the debilitating effects of insomnia, like what Jasmin went through. The self-harm and self-medication is the only way to escape their trauma when they have no access to mental health professionals.

When non-White refugees do self-medicate, like Hamed, and even when they don’t, they are at a great risk of being stopped by the police for no reason. German police are allowed by law

to stop individuals in trains, train stations, or airports and ask for identification. This, of course, means that people of color are often stopped because they are perceived to not belong—even if they are actually German citizens. In 2013, the racial profiling of Turkish-German immigrant youth was a huge issue in Hamburg (Gezer and Popp, 2013). But the police don't just racially profile on a regular basis, sometimes they turn a blind eye to discrimination. In the 1990s, police officers and white German citizens stood by and watched Neonazi groups attack refugees and burn down refugee housing (Ayim, 2002, p. 94). Or in Karim's case, many more police officers arrived than was necessary to handle the situation.

These individual acts of racially profiling refugees and denying them full health care, result in a seemingly “natural” border between Germans and refugees. The idea develops that white Germans belong in Germany and therefore deserve protection from the police and services to preserve their health. Non-white refugees (and often times immigrants and non-white German citizens) simply don't fit into the category of “Germanness” because it is essentialized to be “Whiteness”—they aren't believed or trusted in their daily interactions and thus are excluded from the rights supposedly granted to all people living in Germany.

In summary, Muslims are equated to refugees, refugees or “*scheiß Ausländer*” in general are equated to people of color (and often vice versa), black refugees are equated to economic migrants, and being German is still in collective imagination popularly understood and essentialized as white. These identities are inscribed upon particular bodies through performative boundary processes of racialization.

A Way Forward

Although refugees in Germany have no control over how they are racialized, they have utilized their agency in ways that have ruptured the performative bordering of their identities.

Refugees have exhibited their resiliency through engaging in ‘acts of citizenship.’ Peter Nyers has written that publically identifying as a non-citizen has allowed “non-status groups to extract themselves from the hegemonic categories by which political identity is normally understood” (Nyers, 2010, pg. 141). Demonstrations at airports attempting to stop the deportation of Afghan refugees are one example of mass political organization of non-status people in the face of injustice. Hundreds of Afghan refugees living in Germany, along with their allies, have come together to protest the deportations at various airports such as in Frankfurt (Weidlich & Hintermeier, 2016), Leipzig (“Demonstration gegen Abschiebung am Leipziger Flughafen, 2017), and most recently in Düsseldorf (Grunau, 2018). More specifically, refugees are challenging racialization and the construction of German identity through their politically-charged daily interactions with white ethnic Germans.

For example, while I was visiting a group of Afghan refugees at their apartment, Dieter, the landlord (of white ethnic German descent), came by demanding the boys dig up some bushes and small trees on one of his properties and haul them down the street to the property their apartment was on. I was appalled by this blatant attempt to exploit underage refugees and I asked if they were paid for their labor. The landlord replied saying that they were just helping him out occasionally since he “let” them live there (he was paid rent by German Youth Services on behalf of the refugees). At that moment, Ali spoke up and stated that they didn’t want to work today and that they might help out tomorrow but didn’t have to anyways. I vocally supported his decision and we all rose to leave the property and head into town. The landlord was infuriated, threatened to take away the boys’ wifi (their only way to communicate with family), and banned me from the property. But as we walked away, Ali told me that previously he had refused to do the strenuous physical labor and had actually told the landlord that he was engaging in child

abuse. Dieter responded by bringing him a book on German law and retorted that until Ali had read this whole book he didn't have any clue about what it meant to live in Germany and abide by German law. Ali subsequently started quoting his legal rights and told Dieter he had already read it and knew he was protected by Youth Services if the landlord tried to make him work anymore. In all actuality, Ali had not read the book, but he was informed enough about his rights that he scared and embarrassed Dieter not only by his knowledge of German law, but by claiming he would take action to protect himself with that law if necessary.

Acts of citizenship don't always have to have a particular target audience to witness the departure from typical habits (Walters, 2002, pg. 192). Simple actions where the public norm is not reified, such as creating a group centered on a specific culture, publically celebrating non Judeo-Christian religious holidays, and organizing gatherings of communities experiencing diaspora, are all examples of claiming rights and de facto citizenship. All these actions take up space and clearly state "we are here to stay" and "we belong". Claiming rights and taking on the role of an educated German citizen has enabled refugees to actively redefine what it means to be German and who is allowed to be German. In addition, when refugees from different backgrounds demonstrate together, there is power in claiming that all refugees (even those labelled "economic migrants") should be allowed to settle in Germany and become citizens.

Acts of citizenship aren't the only progress in disrupting exclusionary bordering processes. Other initiatives from German citizens collaborating with refugees have created inclusion in particular communities. For example, Project Längenloh in Freiburg was a social project where 72 university students and 150 refugees lived in the same housing complex for a year (Schieber, 2017). This was an extremely successful undertaking, as refugees, students, and other community members came together to participate in group activities and get to know each

other. With some slight adjustments (so that the communal activities are organized by both refugees and students—and not just students), this type of housing situation could be very helpful for the inclusion of refugees in other cities in Germany. The close contact between refugees and students fostered long-term friendships that will hopefully last beyond the short length of this project.

Another initiative that radically included refugees, is Banda Internationale. This band is politically active in the resistance against right extremist groups in Dresden. The music group consists of professional German, refugee, and immigrant musicians. They play a mixture of different styles of music from around the world and work with German and refugee youth to overcome prejudice through music (Lopez, 2016). Both Banda Internationale and Project Längenloh have actively redefined what integration looks like through their average everyday interactions. They have focused on building sustainable relationships between refugees and German citizens. There is no longer an ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ mentality, but instead a deep shared sense of community and belonging in these organizations. Within these inclusive spaces that have developed, dominant ideas of what it means to be German are challenged and more nuanced ideas of identity and bordering have come into being.

Areas for Further Research

This thesis attempts to identify some of the ways refugees are constructed as the constitutive other to *Deutschsein* and how they react to problems that arise from racialization, othering, and belonging in German society. Although the short-term impact of some of their experiences is documented and shared in this paper, there are many further areas that need to be researched. Most of these issues require long-term studies and yet these problems must be addressed immediately, due to their dramatic short-term implications. The main areas for future

research include how racialization impacts the current mental health of refugees, their documentation status in Germany, and future success in the work force.

The most pressing issue to address is the state of many refugees' mental health. Many refugees have little or no access to mental health professionals. Due to the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act³², refugees don't have access to full health care until they have been granted asylum or have lived in Germany for 15 months (from 2007 to 2015 it was actually 4 years) with limited status (Bozorgmehr & Razum, 2015). From twelve weeks after arrival until they are granted asylum, deported, or have lived in Germany for 15 months, refugee benefits are restricted to food, clothing, housing, and health care deemed essential to preserve health (ex. prenatal care and delivery, treatment of painful conditions, emergency medical care). After 15 months they can receive a regular health insurance card (Bozorgmehr & Razum, 2015). The restricted health care does not include access to mental health professionals except in very few limited cases, such as with Asra, when appeals can be made to cover the costs of psychotherapy.

The vast majority of refugees have experienced some form of trauma either in their country of origin, during their journey to Germany, or while in Germany. There are misconceptions that the problems of a refugee disappear, or are lessened, once they cross the border into the country where they begin the asylum process. But sadly, for many, that is where the problems multiply. Living in a foreign country, learning a new language, and exploring a new culture can be difficult burdens to bear, but are often exciting in that they represent hope for a future life. In contrast, the separation from loved ones, the excruciatingly long wait to find out whether or not they will be deported, and the constant xenophobia are psychological stressors that produce new trauma. Whether past or present, these traumas take a daily toll on most

³² Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz (AsylbLG)

refugees in the form of insomnia, depression, anxiety, self-harm, self-isolation, irritation, hopelessness, suicidal thoughts, and, in some cases, aggression. A study has proven that the symptoms of PTSD are much more severe among refugees with insecure residency status in Germany than those with secure status (Gerlach & Pietrowsky, 2012). It is critical that refugees have access to mental health support

whether that be therapy or simply group activities that bring Germans and refugees together and promote a sense of meaning and belonging. In addition to the limited access to mental health professionals, the language barrier is also a huge problem to overcome. Many refugees may not feel comfortable using a translator to discuss personal experiences and emotions and their German abilities are probably not well-developed enough to discuss such concepts in German. There are also cultural differences in approaching mental health that must be kept in consideration.

Right now the only way refugees can access mental health professionals is through private mental health clinics. The map shows the 26 centers that are a part of the Nationwide Association of Psycho-Social Centers for Refugees and Victims of Torture³³. In a year these

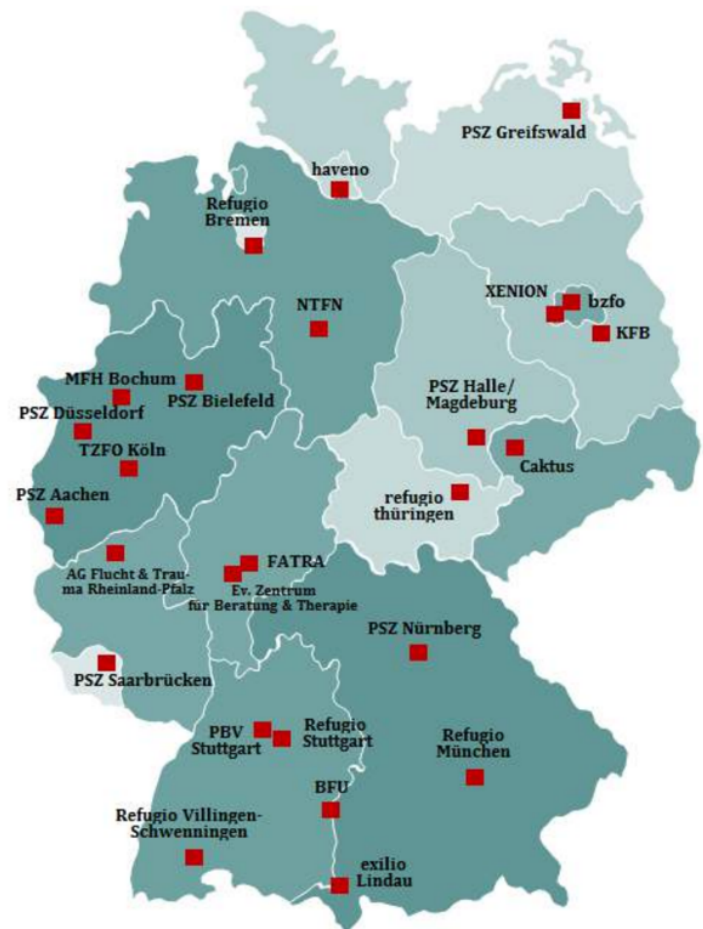


Abbildung 1: Die 26 Psychosozialen Zentren für Flüchtlinge und Folteropfer

³³ Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der psychosozialen Zentren für Flüchtlinge und Folteropfer,

centers serve almost 11,000 refugees, about 25% of whom are under 18 (BAfF, 2015, p.34). On average there are around 1,000 on the waitlist nationwide and this number is only the people who are officially seeking help from one of the centers. One quarter of those on the waitlist will have to wait more than a year to get accepted (BAfF, 2015). There are many, many more who need help but don't know where to seek it and/or are located far away from one of these centers.

The fact that these centers even need to exist is because refugees with restricted healthcare can't access mental health professionals and politicians aren't increasing access supposedly due to concerns about money. Yet a recent study of asylum seekers and refugees benefiting from restricted healthcare versus those receiving full benefits found that the restricted health care cost around 40% more than the health care in the regular system (Bozorgmehr & Razum, 2015). This clearly disputes political claims that the restricted healthcare is supposed to save money. There is an urgent need to do more research about health care, specifically mental health care access for refugees and investigating the impacts of insecure residency, previous trauma, and being a person of color in Germany. How does the racialization of refugees in Germany create further trauma and mental health problems? And what does racialization have to do with access to mental health care?

One of the most alarming areas racialization might impact refugees in Germany, is in the decision making, indeed, the asylum application process as a whole. Policies articulated by politicians about which countries of origin are "safe" and policies carried out by individual judges about who to deport vary greatly and may be impacted by the racialization of refugees and the location of the asylum decision. A recent study from the University of Konstanz came out called: "Decentralized asylum policy discriminates: A comparison of asylum recognition

e.V. (BAfF)

rates in the federal states of Germany”. This study “reinforces the suspicion that asylum seekers have very different chances of being recognized as refugees” based on which federal state their

Tabelle 1: Zahl der Asylanträge, Anerkennungs- und Ablehnungsquoten sowie Anerkennungsquote für wichtige Herkunftsstaaten nach Bundesländern, 2010-2015

	Zahl der Gesuche	Anerkennungsquote in %	Durchschnittliche Anerkennungsquote in %	Ablehnungsquote in %	Durchschnittliche Ablehnungsquote in %	Anerkennungsquote		
						Syrien	Irak	Afghanistan
Baden-Württemberg	64174	30,3	21,3	43,4	48,9	87,2	64,9	15,1
Bayern	81306	31,9	24,2	38,0	42,2	86,2	66,6	12,9
Berlin	35343	24,6	16,2	38,2	48,6	87,5	64,2	23,3
Brandenburg	23451	31,2	15,4	35,8	47,7	90,7	42,4	10,0
Bremen	7030	55,7	37,8	26,6	37,3	90,3	67,9	31,8
Hamburg	20685	29,5	19,8	38,8	41,3	79,2	74,4	15,0
Hessen	45184	34,1	27,5	39,4	40,1	81,5	65,7	19,8
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	19470	44,8	22,0	26,6	42,9	90,6	44,0	11,4
Niedersachsen	64432	31,5	23,6	35,2	40,0	72,6	75,5	31,3
Nordrhein-Westfalen	150108	27,9	21,8	41,5	45,5	78,8	72,6	34,4
Rheinland-Pfalz	30297	31,7	22,6	36,8	41,7	81,0	56,9	23,2
Saarland	12456	69,0	37,6	14,1	30,0	91,5	61,2	26,9
Sachsen	31305	26,9	15,7	42,2	46,5	91,3	56,1	13,9
Sachsen-Anhalt	23928	32,4	18,1	39,9	50,1	82,3	37,6	13,3
Schleswig-Holstein	19030	39,1	27,5	32,3	41,5	78,4	60,6	14,9
Thüringen	17491	31,1	21,4	39,9	47,3	85,9	60,9	23,2
Deutschland gesamt	645690	31,7	23,3	38,3	43,3	83,5	67,9	20,0

asylum application is processed in Germany (Riedel & Schneider, 2017, p.21). This has a huge impact on refugees because it is proven that xenophobia negatively impacts the chances certain refugees have for asylum. For example, this table from the study shows that from 2010 to 2015, 10% of Afghan refugees in Brandenburg (compared to 90.7% of Syrians) were given refugee status, yet 34.4% of Afghan refugees were granted asylum in Nordrhein-Westfalen (Riedel & Schneider, 2017). The refugees most successful are those who come from the few countries that politicians deem war zones (such as Syria, Eritrea, Somalia, and Iraq). But the political discourse around Afghanistan is that it has “safe” regions that refugees can be deported back to and that refugees are coming to Germany for economic reasons. In 2015, Angela Merkel stated: “where

refugees come hoping for a better life - and I know that this hope is big for many - that is no reason to get asylum status or residency status here” (Conrad, 2015). In 2016, the ban on deporting refugees was lifted and limited deportations of asylum seekers who were criminals, deemed dangerous, or had faked their identity, have occurred over the past couple of years, despite many protests from liberal politicians, refugees, and pro-asylum organizations. The policies granting Afghans asylum clearly differ between the federal states as seen in the table where more conservative states tend to grant fewer Afghans asylum, but in general Afghan refugees are placed in an abject category. Their asylum status is left up to a geographical lottery.

It is not too hard to envision how there may be other undocumented discrimination within the asylum process by country of origin. But what exactly are the ties between xenophobia, racialization, and the final asylum decisions? White refugees (ex. from Albania) may be quickly turned away due to having “illegitimate” claims to asylum. In addition, dark-skinned refugees from the west coast of Africa can be hastily judged to be “economic migrants”. How do processes of bordering during daily interactions create racialization that is then essentialized and has major impacts on asylum application outcomes? How might the racialization of refugees impact their path to asylum and/or citizenship?

Another area racialization may potentially impact, is the ability of refugees to be successful in the workforce. Although refugees are typically incredibly resourceful and resilient individuals, there are often social and political barriers in place to keep them from success in German society. Refugees have to deal with micro-aggressions and must face xenophobia on a daily basis, whether from commuters on a train, their coworkers in the workplace, or their own landlord. These bordering practices create communities of refugees and communities of Germans that are completely isolated from each other. These developments especially occur in rural areas

where the community is not actively engaged in building relationships with refugees. This lack of contact leads to lower chances of refugees developing German language skills and large social networks—both of which are essential to finding a well-paying job. In addition, refugees' previous schooling and their skills are often not recognized in Germany. This results in refugees having to redo much of their secondary education, as well as any higher degrees they may have achieved in their country of origin. But redoing all those degrees is also extremely difficult, as one has to pass certain tests of German language ability, complete a high school equivalent certificate, be accepted to study at a German institution, and then study hard, and graduate—no easy feat. Therefore, a lot of refugees do internships for less-skilled jobs in order to start working right away instead of spending years without making money. At the end of the day, even if they do get good jobs, they are still likely to deal with xenophobia and aggression from Germans who believe they shouldn't have those jobs. What impact does racialization have on the ability of refugees to obtain a higher education and a well-paying job?

When I set out writing about the impact racialization has on the integration of refugees in Germany, I knew I would barely be able to scratch the surface with the materials and data I collected. I came up with far too many questions than I could possibly answer in a thesis, but these areas for further research aren't just questions I am throwing out there. These questions describe some of the most pressing needs refugees have right now. It is essential that these problems are investigated and that culturally appropriate solutions are developed in coordination with the refugees themselves, so that their needs are equitably met, and they are able to not just simply have access to opportunities Germans have, but be able to achieve success and a sense of belonging in German society.

Conclusion

Racialization occurs in day-to-day encounters where individuals cite racial hierarchies, knowingly and unknowingly, in order to categorize refugees. These power structures are reproduced in articles, social media, and through political statements which only exacerbate the polarization of German identity politics. Once racialized and perceived as non-German on an individual basis, assumptions of criminality, reasons for entering Germany, refugee status, religion, and German language abilities quickly follow for whole groups of refugees and people of color living in Germany. A movement to actively disidentify *Deutschsein* with *Weißsein* in the everyday interactions of Germans and refugees is necessary in order to counter the polarization and naturalization of racial conceptions in German society. White ethnic Germans must discover for themselves the truth in James Baldwin's statement—if refugees and Germans of color are not accepted as having a right to belong to and claim German identity, then the society will decay. Ultimately, the only possible solution to combat these divisive bordering practices, is for people from diverse backgrounds to develop long-term relationships and friendships with each other in Germany. It takes genuine inclusion, equitable treatment, and a realization, that the success of others does not mean the failure of oneself, in order for Germany society to collectively advance in the 21st century.

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Tables and Figures

Figure 1: Map of independent mental health clinics for refugees in Germany (pg. 41)

BAfF: Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der psychosozialen Zentren für Flüchtlinge und Folteropfer, e.V. (2015). “Versorgungsbericht zur psychosozialen Versorgung von Flüchtlingen und Folteropfern in Deutschland,” p. 24. http://www.baff-zentren.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Versorgungsbericht_mit-Umschlag_2015.compressed.pdf Accessed May 7, 2018.

Table 1: Table of number of asylum applications, acceptances, and denials for each federal state (including successful asylum cases per important country of origin and federal state) (pg. 43)

Riedel, L. & Schneider, G. (2017). “Dezentraler Asylvollzug diskriminiert: Anerkennungsquoten von Flüchtlingen im bundesdeutschen Vergleich, 2010-2015”. *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 58(1), 21-48. <https://www.uni-konstanz.de/universitaet/aktuelles-und-medien/aktuelle-meldungen/aktuelles/aktuelles/asyl-zentral-gesteuert-foederal-interpretiert/>. Accessed May 8, 2018.