The challenged nation state

*How to successfully integrate refugees into German society*

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30 credits Master’s Thesis Spring 2016

Field of study: Religion in Peace and Conflict

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Abstract

This thesis examines the current process of refugee integration in Germany. It aims at finding out, how it will be possible for Germany to successfully integrate the high number of asylum seekers, particularly from the Middle East, that have arrived here since Angela Merkel’s decision of suspending the Dublin Regulations and opening Germany’s borders to refugees in late summer of 2015. In order to do so, this thesis first seeks to develop a better understanding of the concept of integration through presenting Hartmut Esser’s sociological integration theory. While previous research offers a range of theoretical works within migration and integration research, there is a lack of adequate literature analyzing the present integration process in Germany, due to the topicality of the subject. As the integration of refugees will significantly shape Germany’s sociopolitical future during the upcoming years, it is hoped that this paper can contribute to bridging this gap by creating a first evaluation of the current circumstances. For this, a content analysis of the existing sources has been combined with the results of a small-scale field study, in which ten Germans have been interviewed, conveying their expectations and worries with regard to the integration of refugees.

The findings of this research have given insight into the obstacles that Germany faces with regard to efficiently integrating the newly arrived refugees. It is, first and foremost, the lengthy bureaucratic procedures and the lack of an adequate integrative infrastructure that presently impede integration processes. An increasing dissatisfaction with the government’s unstructured plan of action has further given way to a tense atmosphere among the German population. Moreover, Germany’s perception of nationhood is, up until today, largely based on an ethnic concept. Together with the country’s past reluctance to accept its status as an immigration country, these factors constitute a hampering environment for the ongoing integration of refugees. Yet, the analysis of the interviews has displayed a partly shared understanding of the concept of integration among the German population, in which especially tolerance and mutual efforts are valued most. In view of the fact that Germans have previously shown great willingness to receive refugees, these results give reason for hope. In the near future, it will become of crucial importance that the German government creates a thorough strategy, in which measures to strengthen integration are clearly described. It is only through fast and concrete actions, which allow room for flexibility, that infrastructural omissions can be compensated and the population’s trust in a successful outcome can be renewed. Finally, it will be necessary that future research takes into account the voices of refugees themselves in order to generate a more complex understanding of how successful integration can look like in Germany.
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1. Introduction

The world currently experiences one of the biggest refugee movements since the end of World War II, with about 60 million people fleeing from violence, war, and persecution.\(^1\) Europe is one of the many regions that are severely impacted by an influx of refugees coming from the Middle East and Northern Africa, where war and instabilities have left them no other choice but to flee their home countries. Faced with the challenges ahead, anti-immigration sentiments are receiving increasing support across the European Union. While some countries have simply closed their borders to refugees, Germany seemed willing to show moral leadership affirmed and set a good example.\(^2\)

In late summer of 2015, Germany temporarily suspended the controversial Dublin Regulation for Syrian refugees.\(^3\) At its core, the regulation seeks to guarantee that only one member state of the European Union - namely the state in which asylum seekers have first entered the European Union - is responsible for processing an application for asylum.\(^4\) Germany justified its actions as an act of solidarity, supporting those countries that are especially affected by the influx of refugees due to their geographic location at the European Union’s external borders.\(^5\) Shortly afterwards, in the beginning of September 2015, Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel enforced another special provision, which opened Germany’s borders to refugees who were stuck in Hungary and let them pass without any further bureaucratic obstacles.\(^6\) As a result, almost half a million first-time applications for asylum have been filed in Germany last year. This is more than twice the number of petitions that have been lodged in 2014.\(^7\) Taken together, about two million immigrants\(^8\) have come to Germany during 2015. Although not all of them were asylum seekers, this number is nonetheless the highest that was ever measured during the history of the Federal Republic of Germany.\(^9\) In the beginning of 2016, applications for asylum were continuously high, with young male Syrians, Iraqis, and Afghans being the largest group of applicants.\(^10\)

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8. The terms immigrant, migrant, and migrant population will be used synonymously within this thesis.
While some Germans perceive the refugees to be a blessing for the state, arguing that they should be considered an investment in the country’s economic future, others feel increasingly threatened, being under the impression that refugees are challenging their own chances of participation on the labor market and in social life. These mixed feelings on the side of the German population, together with the fact that a continuous influx of refugees will be a shaping factor of Germany’s sociopolitical future, inevitably call for the necessity of analyzing, how Germany will be able to successfully integrate the newly arrived refugees into society. It is precisely this question that forms the core of the present thesis.

In order to provide answers to the above question, it is first necessary to take a closer look at what integration actually implies. In its original meaning, the term can be understood as a process of renewing or completing something. However, the concept of integration is generally characterized through its vagueness in terms of content, making it difficult to provide an easily understandable and universal definition. Hartmut Esser’s integration theory (2001) will therefore be introduced in this paper and form its theoretical foundation. It will help to shed light on the various processes that integration comprises and thus form an ideal starting point for analyzing the conditions necessary for integration. The research question further demands an evaluation of the obstacles that are currently impeding the sustainable integration of refugees in Germany. In order to do so, an extensive content analysis and a small field study, comprising interviews, in which ten Germans were asked about their perceptions of integration and their worries and expectations in view of the reception of refugees, have been carried out. It is hoped that the field study helps the topic come alive and provides a bridge between theoretical understandings of integration and more concrete perspectives, taken from people’s everyday life. Overall, this thesis aims to give inspiration for the measures necessary to enhance the integration of refugees in Germany in a sustainable manner. Within this, not only infrastructural and bureaucratic requirements are outlined, but also the individual and emotional component that integration comprises. Finally, this paper aspires to make a contribution to taking away the feeling of overpowering that is often connected to integration and to illustrate that, at the end of the day, integration does not have to be a herculean task, but can already be promoted through small gestures.

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15 Cf. Aumüller; Bretl (2008), p.16.
16 Cf. Castles; Korac; Vasta; Vertovec (2001), p.117.
Outline

After having presented the paper’s methodology, particular emphasis will first be given to establishing an understanding of integration and developing a working-definition. For this, Hartmut Esser’s theory will be examined briefly, concluding with a first definition of integration, which will be based on the works of various scholars in order to reflect the extensiveness of the concept in the best possible way. For the purpose of contextualizing the subject, the main part starts out with an introduction to the recent events in Germany, mainly focussing on how the population’s reactions to Angela Merkel’s actions have evolved over time. This section is followed by a synopsis of the German immigration and integration policy, which constitutes the institutional framework of the current integration process. Afterwards, the difficulties that Germany presently faces due to the influx of refugees will be analyzed, taking into account the results of the field study, as well as the knowledge gained from Esser’s theoretical work on integration. Main emphasis will be given to the aspects of increasing dissatisfaction among the German population, the lack of integrative measures, and the growing support for right-wing movements and political parties. Moreover, the media’s influence, as well as the existence of prejudices and ways of diminishing those will be studied more closely. Towards the end, the perceptions of integration that participants described in the interviews will be portrayed, aiming to shed light on recurring themes that could possibly give way to a more universal definition of integration within the German context. The thesis will then conclude with presenting sports as a highly integrative measure and briefly describing a promising project called Kicking Girls. Finally, the conclusion provides an overview of the results gained, as well as recommendations for the future.

State of research

This thesis faces a challenging starting point with regard to the state of research: Up until now, there is only little information available about the asylum seekers who have arrived in Germany since 2015. Thus, it is not surprising that the public image moves somewhere between the vague idea of Syrian dentists and Moroccan petty criminals. German research about refugees is generally only fragmentary and largely unsystematic, especially lacking the consideration of refugees’ voices. In

addition, it seems that refugees are rarely a topic considered within migration research. Due to the topicality of refugee integration in Germany, sources concerning the subject are further quite rare. The analysis of the current situation is hence largely based on newspaper articles and online publications. Overall, it is hoped that this paper can contribute to the literature needed for further research on this ongoing and important topic.

With Hartmut Esser’s (2001) sociological integration theory being one of the most influential contemporary concepts within German integration research, large parts of this paper are based on his theoretical work *Integration und ethnische Schichtung*. At the core of Esser’s theory is the distinction between system and social integration and the division of integration processes into four different levels that comprise the acquisition of culture and language, the positioning within society, the establishment of interethnic contact, and the development of emotional feelings towards the host society. While Hartmut Esser’s theory is certainly valuable and offers a concise description of the various elements that integration comprises, his understanding of integration is characterized by a rather assimilatory approach. Even though Esser acknowledges that integration is a process of mutual efforts from both the migrant population and the host society, he nonetheless perceives the vanishing of ethnic differences to be a task that is primarily to be undertaken by immigrants themselves. Within integration research, it is generally disputed whether it is legitimate to refer to the integration of migratory groups as assimilation. While Esser primarily defines assimilation as the disappearance of systematic differences and not as a one-sided adaption to the host society, scholars such as Friedrich Heckmann (2015) nonetheless oppose the term assimilation due to the negative connotations it evokes. It is therefore that, throughout this paper, the term integration will be used. Overall, Heckmann’s work *Integration von Migranten: Einwanderung und neue Nationenbildung* has provided an excellent overview of not only the concept of integration itself, but especially of the obstacles impeding integration processes, such as discrimination and prejudices. His book moreover takes into account the specific perspective of integration in Germany, which proved very helpful for the purpose of this thesis.

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24 Specifically see chapters eleven and twelve in Heckmann (2015).
In addition, David Reichel (2011) has offered a summary of Esser’s framework in *Staatsbürgerschaft und Integration: Die Bedeutung der Einbürgerung für MigrantInnen*. Reichel also provides criticism on Hartmut Esser’s work, arguing, for example, that his theory neglects the fact that the host society as such does not exist. According to Reichel, the heterogeneity of societal structures is not sufficiently depicted in Esser’s theory, especially with regard to the great variety of relationships that migrants can possibly engage in. Esser does, for instance, not differentiate between personal and institutional contacts, or individual and collective relationships.\(^{25}\) Further inspiration on both the theoretical and emotional components of integration was given by Thomas Eriksen's essay *The meaning of “we“* (2015), in which he suggests a distinction between social and cultural integration for the evaluation of the successfulness of integration processes. Aside from this, Eriksen also emphasizes that differentiating between strong and weak contacts can provide interesting results, as the latter offer the individual greater access to a variety of information and simultaneously better opportunities for integration.\(^{26}\)

Finally, Karin Sauer (2007) and Michaela Wendekamm (2014) have contributed to outlining the paradoxes within Germany’s immigration and integration policy and have highlighted the typical dichotomy of immigration being either considered a benefit or a burden.\(^{27}\) Overall, it is worth mentioning that Alastair Ager and Alison Strang’s so-called indicators of integration framework (2004) can offer valuable ideas for future research on integration processes in Germany. Ager and Strang’s model is based on ten key domains that each comprise about ten indicators, which are recommended as an instrument for assessing integration.\(^{28}\) As their work intends to help local projects and political decision-makers in the United Kingdom to evaluate the services provided to refugees, it has a more practical approach and thus the ability to complement Esser’s widespread, but rather academical and abstract theory.\(^{29}\)

\(^{27}\) See for example Sauer (2007), p.31ff and Wendekamm (2014), p.239.
2. Methodology

In order to grasp the complexity of successful integration, both qualitative and quantitative data are used in this paper. Main focus is, however, given to qualitative methods, as they are seen to be most adequate, considering the personal and human nature of the topic of integration.\(^{30}\) The core of this paper forms a discussion about current obstacles and future necessities with regard to integration in Germany. Within this discussion, knowledge gained from an extensive content analysis will be linked with the results of a small-scale field study conducted for this thesis. The field study comprised ten interviews with German citizens, as well as the visual component of drawings made by participants.\(^ {31}\) Within primary data collection, a qualitative approach was particularly beneficial, as it created comprehensive and rich data, while at the same time offering participants a chance to express their own perspectives and outlooks on the topic.\(^ {32}\)

Hartmut Esser’s theory of integration will form the theoretical foundation of this paper. It is used in order to limit the far-reaching topic of integration and will help in developing a better understanding of the various elements that integration comprises. Hence, the theory will enable readers to view integration from a more graspable perspective. Throughout this paper, Esser’s framework will serve as a guideline on how to promote a successful integration process and a point of reference when analyzing findings from both interviews and content analysis. It will therefore be of special importance for evaluating the integration process of refugees in Germany so far and for developing recommendations for the future.

This paper further makes use of secondary quantitative data to support the results gained from qualitative analysis. It is kept in mind that data collected by others should be taken with a pinch of salt, as such findings entail a risk of falsification.\(^ {33}\) Through using a variety of data types and sources, triangulation is applied to enhance the credibility and accuracy of this thesis. Hence, the subject of refugee integration is investigated from different angles, thereby hoping to shed light on the various sides of the topic in a most extensive manner.\(^ {34}\)

\(^ {31}\) Cf. Johnson (2012), p.49; Linton (2012), p.102; Winch; Todd; Baker; Blain; Smith (nd).
\(^ {33}\) Cf. White (2002), p.512/513, p.519; Winch; Todd; Baker; Blain; Smith (nd).
\(^ {34}\) Cf. Johnson (2012), p.93.
2.1. Interviews and drawings

The ten interviews conducted for this thesis were semi-structured in-depth interviews with German citizens, which took place during December 2015 and March 2016. Due to the spatial distance between Sweden and Germany, five of the interviews were Skype interviews, which were also audio-recorded. Two interviews were conducted face-to-face with Germans living in Sweden. They were also taped. The other three interviews were email-interviews, as participants preferred this method to Skype because of timely issues. Interviews were originally conducted in German and later translated into English. The interview schedule was intended to serve as a guideline, allowing for a certain flexibility - at least with regard to the Skype and face-to-face interviews. The questions asked in all types of interviews were the same. Overall, participants were asked 17 questions concerning the topic, which were inspired by the current public discourse in Germany and reflected on issues raised within the literature. Interviews started with a set of general questions, asking, for example, how participants perceived the management of refugee reception on part of the German government, or if they felt sufficiently informed about the subject through the media. The second part of the interview was then dedicated more specifically to the topic of integration and aimed at finding out which elements interviewees considered crucial for successful integration. Questions were, above all, interested in people’s attitudes. Interviews were transcribed conveying the gist of participants’ statements and not verbatim. The detailed interview questions can be found in the annex.

At this point, it is also useful to mention some critical reflections concerning the interview process: Among other things, using the term refugee crisis in the interviews should have been avoided, as it unintentionally may have added a negative connotation to the topic. Some questions should, moreover, have been rephrased, as their wording might have unconsciously manipulated participants’ answers. It would, for instance, have been better to ask “How do you feel about refugees being accommodated in refugee homes?” instead of “Do you consider it suitable to accommodate refugees in so called refugee homes?”. Whereas the second question almost automatically evokes an answer that is linked to refugee homes being an unsuitable solution, the

35 Cf. Johnson (2012), p.77-80; Winch; Todd; Baker; Blain; Smith (nd).
37 Cf. Few; McAvoy; Tarazona; Walden (2014), p.32.
38 For simplicity’s sake, the current situation of refugees fleeing their home countries will nonetheless mostly be called refugee crisis in this thesis. This term is chosen due to the lack of other suitable expressions. However, it is specifically emphasized that it is used without implying a negative connotation. Sometimes the term refugee situation will be used synonymously.
first phrase would have been more neutral.\textsuperscript{39} Finally, it would have been beneficial to end each interview with an open-ended question such as “Is there anything more you want to add with regard to the topic?”\textsuperscript{40} This might have generated some new insights and could have provided a new perspective on the subject of integration.

Elaborating on this paper’s methodology, it further has to be pointed out that participants in the field study were people with a close relationship with the researcher. The problems and bias that this so-called backyard research involves are further discussed in the next section.\textsuperscript{41} Yet, interviewees were nonetheless selected following the process of purposive sampling characteristic for qualitative research.\textsuperscript{42} Overall, it was tried to incorporate both male and female perspectives, voices from different age groups (20 to 64 years), and people with various educational backgrounds. The students Daniela and Andrea represent an academic point of view, whereas Reiner and Thomas provide a perspective from the occupational group. Hans and Charlotte, both retired, moreover, offer opinions from the older generation of German citizens. Regina and Michael, who both work as teachers, are thought to provide an interesting perspective on the relationship between education and integration. Finally, Clara and Melanie were selected due to their close contacts to refugees themselves, as they teach German classes in a refugee home. As the topic of refugee integration is currently heatedly discussed, participants placed importance on a certain anonymity, which is why only first names are published in this paper.

Aside from the interviews, the field study also comprised a visual component that allowed participants to express themselves creatively.\textsuperscript{43} At the end of each interview, interviewees were asked to figuratively portray their understanding of integration. Participants could choose freely, how to go about this task. It was merely suggested that they could draw, mind-map, make a collage, or a chart. The method of participant drawings was inspired by a remark made by Vaughan Robinson, who described integration as a chaotic concept, arguing that although the term is used by many, its meaning is understood differently by most people.\textsuperscript{44} The process of creative expression was perceived to be a good conclusion to gathering a variety of these personal and different

\textsuperscript{39} Cf. Buchanan-Smith; Cosgrave (2013), p.158.
\textsuperscript{40} Cf. Johnson (2012), p.78.
\textsuperscript{41} Cf. Creswell (2009), p. 177.
\textsuperscript{42} Cf. Boeije (2010), p.35.
\textsuperscript{43} This method was inspired by Linton (2012), p.102.
\textsuperscript{44} Cf. Ager; Strang (2002), p.3.
understandings of integration and to provide inspirations for the future integration process in Germany.

It would, without doubt, have been beneficial to include not only the voices of German citizens, but also of refugees, who have come to Germany. Yet, research involving human beings always requires a relationship of trust between researcher and research-participants. Thus, it has to be cautiously considered how to approach potential interview partners, and how to use information gained from interviews, without leaving participants with the notion of having been taken advantage of.\footnote{Cf. Coles (1997), loc.117, loc.902.} This is, of course, especially important when emotional events such as fleeing ones home country come into the picture. Unfortunately, time did not permit establishing such a close researcher-researched relationship with refugees.\footnote{Cf. Ibid, loc.690.} Thus, this thesis principally focusses on the integrative actions that are necessary on the side of the German population and their understanding of successful integration.

2.2. Remark on objectivity

Within research, it is generally tried to be as objective as possible, giving prominence to the data itself. Yet, scholars such as Andrew Johnson (2012) and Robert Coles (1997) argue that researchers themselves form an integral part of research, thus, making complete impartiality impossible.\footnote{Cf. Johnson (2012), p.144, p.177.} Exploring the lives and opinions of others, Coles points out that researchers inevitably have to engage with themselves and who they are.\footnote{Cf. Coles (1997), loc.91.} This is to say, that the social believes we follow, as well as what we have experienced in life, undoubtedly influence what we pay close attention to and what we consider to be uninteresting.\footnote{Cf. Ibid, loc.55, loc.82/83, loc.1002.} Aside from this, complete objectivity further becomes obsolete in face of what Robert Coles calls the “challenge of selection”.\footnote{See Coles (1997), loc.1021.} After all, it is up to the researcher to decide which snippets of interviews to highlight and which to mention only briefly or even leave out. As research always involves judgment from the researcher, it can be considered a subjective matter.\footnote{Cf. Ibid, loc.232/238, loc.1021.} Thus, it is crucial to keep in mind that “[…] anyone’s analysis, undertaken with a particular analyst, is only one possible series of hypothetical analyses […].”\footnote{Ibid, loc.1043.} Different research methods further establish different perspectives of reality. Thus, through choosing a particular
methodological framework, researchers almost automatically bias the results of their study. Research, moreover, often constructs an artificial environment, even closed spaces, within which real-world events are tried to be observed. However, real life is unpredictable and certainly not happening in completely closed off worlds, making it overall difficult to generalize findings. This is especially true for research involving human beings, which do at times behave differently when they are aware of being part of a study.\footnote{Cf. Johnson (2012), p.3/4, p.93, p.128.}

The above remarks have been kept in mind throughout the entire research process. Hence, this paper follows the premise that within research there can be no absolute truth.\footnote{See Coles’ remark: Coles (1997), loc.1043.} Rather than portraying a complete picture and making generalized assumptions about the German population’s point of view, this thesis aims at offering readers some of the many facets that together compose integration. Potential sources of bias such as the inevitable linkage between the researcher’s background and choices and interpretations made, as well as the close relationship between researcher and participants in the field study, are mentioned in advance in order to enable readers to take these into account.\footnote{Cf. Creswell (2009), p.177.} It is certainly true that backyard research frequently deals with problems such as power issues, prejudiced and biased information, and colliding obligations to honestly display gathered data. Nonetheless, the already existing relationship between researcher and research-participants has also proven beneficial in some ways: Interviewees generally seemed less anxious about being interviewed and talked very openly. Being on personal terms with participants also enabled quite lengthy interviews (about 45 minutes each) and interesting discussions, which might not have taken place within an anonymous environment. All in all, the reader’s confidence in the credibility of the findings is tried to be enhanced through linking information gained from the interviews with findings from the content analysis.\footnote{Cf. Creswell (2009), p.177.}
3. Integration as a theoretical framework

3.1. Integration theory according to Hartmut Esser

This section briefly illustrates Hartmut Esser’s integration theory and elaborates on some of the requirements necessary for successful integration processes. Put simply, Hartmut Esser describes integration as the cohesion of individual parts in a whole, in which the behavior and condition of each and every part affect the entire system and its members. Thus, integration is opposed to segmentation - an environment, in which individual parts are unconnected. Interdependence between actors can therefore be described as the foundation of integration. Overall, Esser makes an important distinction between the concepts of system and social integration: System integration refers to the type of relationship between the parts and subsystems of a social system. Social integration, on the other hand, focuses on individuals, and concerns the manner in which they are integrated into an existing system. While system and social integration are interlinked, one does not necessarily have to be accompanied by the other. This thesis will solely focus on Esser’s theory of social integration, as this is considered most relevant for the assessment of refugee integration in Germany. In his further discussion, Esser describes four different levels of social integration, which are all interlinked: Culturation (or cultural integration; Esser uses the German term Kulturation), positioning, interaction, and identification.

Culturation

Culturation refers to individuals possessing essential knowledge and particular skills in order to be able to act and interact in an appropriate, informed, and successful manner. It especially concerns language skills, as well as cultural norms and rules of behavior. These skills can generally be described as human resources, which require the investment of time and effort on part of the individual. Successful culturation strongly depends on opportunities and thus on establishing favorable circumstances early on. Social contacts between migrants and the host society can, for example, enable a more casual learning process. This is particularly important for acquiring

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58 Throughout this thesis, the terms social integration and integration are used interchangeably and refer to the same meaning.
language skills. It goes without saying, that learning the language is crucial for every individual, as it constitutes the key to a sustainable positioning within all other levels of integration.\textsuperscript{62} Overall, culturation mainly refers to the migrant population. However, it also entails cultural adaptations on part of the host society, if necessary. Hence, culturation can be understood as a mutual process.\textsuperscript{63}

**Positioning**

Positioning, as Esser argues, is the most important level of integration. It can be understood as an individual’s acquirement of a particular social position. The individual is thereby integrated into an already existing social system and its established functions. Positioning can take place through awarding individuals certain rights, such as the right to nationality. It can further be connected to taking on an occupation, or completing an education. Thus, positioning takes place on the market level and follows the rules of supply and demand.\textsuperscript{64}

Positioning is closely interlinked with culturation: Chances to get a job increase with growing language skills, while other cultural competences are simultaneously acquired and enhanced through one’s occupation or education. Overall, acceptance is a substantial part of positioning. Hence, discrimination against migrants can pose a huge obstacle.\textsuperscript{65} Discrimination can occur in a variety of forms, such as disrespectful behavior, unequal treatment, insults, or even physical attacks. Acceptance is further linked to the limitation and prevention of prejudices. Prejudices can generally be described as negative attitudes towards someone or even towards a group of people. On the basis of stereotyped perceptions, which often are built on simplified and false images, certain characteristics are ascribed to this particular group. Such preconceptions are usually not the result of personal experiences, but are rather taken over from others. Often, they are linked with feelings of threat and competition, especially regarding the labor and housing market, or regarding the fear that one’s culture is becoming increasingly dominated by foreign influences. It is worth mentioning that prejudices can also exist among migrants and concern the host society. Either way, they constitute a severe impediment for integration.\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{63} Cf. Heckmann (2015), p.72/73.
Interaction

Interaction is the third level of social integration and is described as a form of social conduct, in which individuals take a bearing on each other’s knowledge and behavior. Hence, it refers to the establishment of social contacts within an everyday environment. Just like with culturation, opportunities are a key to interaction, as is the willingness to accept offers of good neighborhood or friendship on both parts. Interaction is negatively influenced by ethnic segregation, such as the accommodation of migrants in particular parts of a city. Interaction further relies upon competences acquired through culturation, whereas cultural and language skills can only be obtained and improved through interaction with other members of the social system. According to Hartmut Esser, networking with members of the host society from an early stage onwards is a crucial determinant of successful integration.

Identification

Finally, identification is explained by Esser as the emotional relationship between individuals and the social system as a whole. This can for example be expressed through collective spirit or national pride. Thus, identification refers to integration as a process of becoming a member of the collective structures on a national, local, or ethnic level. This process is largely dependent on positive and interesting experiences within the host society. These experiences, in turn, rely upon one’s cultural and linguistic skills, showing, once again, the interdependence between the individual levels of social integration. Overall, it is crucial to keep in mind that integration requires the openness of the host society at all times. Thus, it is inevitably linked to a certain level of tolerance. Within this context, Esser interestingly points out that social distance towards others is a result of one’s own marginality - a statement that will be explored further within the main part of this thesis.

70 Cf. Ibid, p.12.
Summarizing, it can be stated that the success or failure of integration processes depends on a variety of preconditions that are of both contextual and individual nature: Of importance is, first and foremost, the environment that migrants encounter when arriving in the host country. Thus, promising conditions within the job and housing market and the educational system, as well as the prospects of a future for the following generations, are crucial. Moreover, integration relies upon the level of cultural difference between the host society and the country of origin. As a general rule, it can be assumed that the greater the contrast in language, religion, and eating or clothing habits, the harder the process of integration will be. In terms of favorable individual prerequisites, it is especially a migrant’s human capital, such as their education, that can influence the integration process in a positive manner. Integration is further linked to the migrant’s age at immigration, as well as the duration of one’s stay. Finally, integration is a process that evolves over time. It is relies upon a certain framing on part of the host society. This means that integration is unlikely to happen, if it is considered to be a marginal phenomenon. Thus, developing an awareness of being an immigration society and putting this awareness into practice in form of an integration policy are crucial requirements for successful integration.

Integration or assimilation?

Following the four levels, Esser highlights four possible outcomes of social integration: Multiple integration into both the country of origin and the host society, marginality and thus a complete lack of social integration, assimilation as social integration into the host society, and finally segmentation, which Esser understands as social integration into the country of origin or into ethnic communities in the host society. As the chances for multiple integration to occur are quite slim, Hartmut Esser argues that social integration only takes place through either assimilation or segmentation. Thus, what is commonly understood as successful integration within the context of refugee and migrant movements can solely result from assimilation.

Assimilation can generally be described as a process within which ethnic groups adjust to each other. Once again, it has to be highlighted that Esser’s understanding of assimilation can by no means be equated to a complete adaption on the side of the migrant population. Individual
differences are still upheld, which is why assimilation should rather be understood as the vanishing of systematic differences concerning the distribution of capacities and resources. This means that social differences between individuals can occur despite of assimilation, yet these differences must be equal for all ethnic groups of a social system. Following the four levels of social integration, assimilation can take place through culturation, positioning, interaction, and identification. As has been mentioned in the introduction, the term integration will be used synonymously to Esser’s understanding of assimilation throughout this thesis.

3.2. Integration - A first definition

Before moving on to the matter of refugee integration within the specific context of Germany, it makes sense to establish a possible definition of integration by looking into the interpretations posed by a variety of scholars. Throughout this thesis, it has already been hinted at the fact that the term integration is quite complex, comprising a variety of different understandings and theories. It can therefore be stated that there “[…] is no single, generally accepted definition, theory or model of immigrant and refugee integration. The concept continues to be controversial and hotly debated.”

Aside from Hartmut Esser, Friedrich Heckmann (2015) probably provides the most concrete definition of integration. He bases his understanding on dynamics and perceives integration as both a process and outcome. As Heckmann argues, integration is the gradual process of becoming a member and adjusting one’s living conditions in the course of generations. It is a give and take that requires commitment from migrants, as well as openness and support from the host society. As an outcome, Heckmann understands integration as equal participation within the central levels of society, such as the political, economical, educational, and cultural institutions. Thus, differences between natives and migrants increasingly disappear, enabling everyone to benefit from equal opportunities, regardless of one’s social or ethnic background. Former migrants, hence, become new natives.

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79 Castles; Korac; Vasta; Vertovec (2001), p.117.  
Connecting integration with equal chances and participation follows Esser’s core understanding of assimilation or integration\(^{81}\) and is a quite common definition amongst scholars. It is also supported by Brigitte Hasenjürgen (2013),\(^{82}\) Claudio Caballero (2009),\(^{83}\) and Karin Sauer (2007). Sauer further emphasizes the reciprocity of integration processes, as they trigger changes among both migrants and the host society.\(^{84}\) In an echo of this, Germany’s former Head of State Christian Wulff has once interestingly stated that migration inevitably entails impositions, as the host society has to open itself to the unfamiliar, while the migrant population has to become acquainted with grown structures and moral concepts.\(^{85}\) Thus, it is not surprising that scholars such as Misun Han-Broich (2011) define integration as a process that requires the willingness to get to know each other.\(^{86}\) Han-Broich further places integration within an emotional context, stating: “Bei einer gelungenen Integration herrschen Zufriedenheit und Wohlbefinden bei den Gesellschaftsmitgliedern.”\(^{87}\) This emotional component has also been emphasized by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (2015). In the end, only an individual who feels welcome and needed can give back appreciation to society.\(^{88}\)

Often, however, integration is used as a concept of exclusion and distinction.\(^{89}\) It is inevitably linked to perceptions of what it normal and what is not, thereby expecting that migrants adjust to this normality. In the course of this expectation, migrants are often conceptualized as strangers or others.\(^{90}\) Thus, as Seyla Benhabib (2004) argues, integration comes down to encounters: \(^{91}\) “We have to learn to live with the otherness of others whose ways of being may be deeply threatening to our own.”\(^{92}\) For this learning process to occur, it is crucial to understand integration not only as multi-dimensional, dynamic, and continuous, but also as a concept which stands in relation to the local dominant culture: It is of utmost importance to keep in mind that integrating a new group is difficult, if the dominant groups are not integrated themselves.\(^{93}\) In order to grasp the meaning of integration, Thomas Eriksen (2015) finally suggests that our usage of the word needs to become

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87 Ibid, p.123. Translation: “Successful integration shows itself through contentedness and wellbeing among the members of society.”
89 Cf. Georgi; Bouklouâ; Simsar; Tsakiroglou (2015).
more thought-out and precise: “When the term ‘integration’ is being used it is necessary to clarify who is supposed to be integrated to [sic] what and by whom.”

It may be true that a universal definition of integration does not exist. Yet, even though perceptions of integration can be quite varied, they nonetheless hint at one common denominator: the human undertaking that integration is. It is a process involving struggles, fears, and adjustment. It is a gradual development towards equal rights and opportunities that takes place not only on an interpersonal level, but rather on multiple levels that are all closely intertwined. First and foremost, however, integration can be understood as a process in which we hand one another along, show our empathy, and meet each other on eye level.

4. The challenged nation state - How to successfully integrate refugees into German society

4.1. Background

With thousands of refugees being stuck in Hungary in late summer 2015, the governments of the European Union were increasingly under pressure to take actions and tackle the refugee crisis. In face of the inhumane circumstances, German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel reacted in an outstanding manner in the beginning of September: With the help of Austrian Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann, she enabled the refugees to enter Germany without having to face bureaucratic obstacles or border controls. As a result, more than 10,000 people arrived in Germany during only one weekend - with many more to follow. Most of them came by train, with Munich train station being one of the most important first destinations. Ever since then, Angela Merkel’s actions have been heatedly debated in Germany. While some perceived her behavior as an act of humanity, others found words of sharp criticism.

Shortly after the special regulation came into force, emotional pictures from Germany went around the world, with thousands of Germans receiving refugees at train stations and refugee homes with open arms, holding signs which said “refugees welcome”. The German population showed great efforts in helping out wherever possible by making donations or working as volunteers within aid

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95 Ibid, p.53.
97 Cf. Westfälische Nachrichten (2015-09-06).
for refugees. During that time, the term welcoming culture (*Willkommenskultur*) coined media reporting about Germany’s reaction to the refugee crisis.\(^99\) Welcoming culture can generally be explained as a way of behavior that aims to strengthen equal participation and integration through the openness of the host society towards immigrants.\(^100\)

Ever since her decision, Angela Merkel has insisted on a premise of “We’ll manage“ (”*Wir schaffen das*”), showing a great amount of optimism despite the challenges ahead. However, Germany’s welcoming culture has now given way to frustration, worry, and even fear of a collapse of the state.\(^101\) Cities and administrative districts have become increasingly overwhelmed by the task of accommodating, let alone integrating, refugees.\(^102\) Overall, Angela Merkel’s famous quote no longer seems to convince the German population.\(^103\) In many places, discontent has manifested itself in increasing support for right-wing movements such as the Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West (*Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes*, PEGIDA).\(^104\) For many Germans, the tense atmosphere that the refugee situation had caused culminated in the events of New Year’s Eve 2015: In big cities, such as Cologne, groups of men with a migratory background had sexually harassed women, confirming parts of the population in their worry that a clash of cultures would inevitably occur in Germany due to the reception of refugees. Media reports changed from complementing the German welcoming culture to accusations and stereotyped thinking, dividing the people involved in the events into perpetrators and victims. For a while, Germany’s public debate was centered around sexism, racism, and the Islamic religion being the root of the challenges that the country had to face. Yet, while arguing about the problems that the reception of refugees had brought with it, there were rarely discussions about solutions to these issues.\(^105\) Even though the situation has calmed down by now, the mood among the German population nonetheless remains significantly different than in September 2015.\(^106\) In February 2016, a public-opinion poll including 1.025 people questioned revealed that merely 11 percent were willing to receive more refugees without any kind of limitations.\(^107\)

\(^{101}\) Cf. Kolb (2015-09-15); Sommer (2016-01-26).
\(^{103}\) Cf. Sommer (2016-01-26).
\(^{104}\) Cf. Fuchs (2016-04-08).
\(^{105}\) Cf. Drobinski (2016-01-12); ARD Mediathek (2016-01-14).
\(^{106}\) Cf. Weimer (2016-01-12).
\(^{107}\) Cf. Spiegel Online (2016-02-29).
With this starting point in mind, the following sections will provide insights into the knowledge gained from content analysis and the findings from the ten in-depth interviews conducted for this thesis. The interviews generated rich and vivid data that were analyzed and interpreted through determining and coding reoccurring themes and categories.\textsuperscript{108} Codes not only took into account statements that were to be expected within the topic of integration, but also surprising and unusual information given in the interviews.\textsuperscript{109} Before delving deeper into the current circumstances in Germany, the chapter starts out with an overview of Germany’s immigration and integration policy, which provides the foundation for understanding the present difficulties and future necessities that will be discussed afterwards. Due to the extensiveness of the subject of integration, the analysis will be limited to only some of the current obstacles and requirements, which were selected based upon the most important topics emerging from the available literature and from the analysis of the interviews. Concluding, this section will investigate interviewees’ understanding of integration, including their creative tasks. Finally, sports will be presented as a factor which can have a highly positive impact on all levels of integration processes. Within this argumentation, a football project called Kicking Girls will be introduced briefly.

\textbf{4.2. Germany’s immigration and integration policy}

\textbf{4.2.1. Asylum seeker, refugee, or asylee?}

Talking about refugee integration in Germany, it makes sense to first take a closer look at the established formal and institutional regulations and to distinguish between terms such as asylum seeker, refugee, and asylee. Is is therefore, that interviews for the field study started out with an icebreaker question which asked participants, if they knew the difference between an asylum seeker and a refugee. The question was quite difficult to answer, as it was actually a trick question. However, it was not intended to provoke a right or wrong answer from interviewees. Rather, it was hoped that the question might introduce participants to the topic and get them thinking about it. Interestingly, six out of ten interviewees claimed to know the difference. De facto, however, only three out of the six gave an - only partially correct - answer. Even these three confused the terms asylum seeker and asylee in their explanation. Charlotte, a 60-year-old pensioner, for example first said that she knew how to keep apart the concepts: “An asylum seeker is someone who is allowed to

stay in Germany, whereas a refugee might have to go back to their home country. Hmm, then again, it makes more sense to say that a refugee is someone who applies for asylum.“ Finally, she admitted: “It seems that it is kind of difficult to understand the difference after all.“

However, the actual distinction between the terms is quite simple: Every person seeking shelter in Germany is an asylum seeker and will have to file an application for asylum at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, BAMF). The BAMF then determines, whether this person will receive an asylee- or refugee-status. The right of asylum only applies, if a person is politically persecuted. Only persecution through the state itself is taken into account. Other states of emergency, such as civil war or famine, do not constitute a reason for being granted asylum. According to the Geneva Convention, a refugee, on the other hand, is a person who is being persecuted due to their ethnicity, religion, nationality, political conviction, or belonging to a particular social group. This persecution can come from either the state itself, or other parties and organizations, which can be both state-based or non-state. Within all asylum proceedings in Germany, the BAMF is the first important contact that asylum seekers turn to after having arrived. Thus, it can be considered one of the core institutions of Germany’s immigration policy. Recognized refugees and asylees receive a residence permit, which is valid for three years, as well as a work permit. Their protection status is revised after three years. In case it is not revoked, a permanent residence permit can be granted.

As previously stated, the interviews’ aim was not to lead to generalized assumptions about the German population’s attitude towards refugees and their integration. However, participants’ confusion about the legal terms is likely to reflect a bigger picture, indicating that most people use the words asylum seeker, refugee, and asylee interchangeably in their everyday lives without being aware of the differences the terms entail. This tendency has for example been pointed out by Alastair Ager and Alison Strang (2004) who, while conducting primary qualitative research in London and Glasgow, found a prevalent confusion among non-refugees with regard to

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differentiating between the concepts of asylum seeker and refugee.\textsuperscript{116} This might further hint at the fact that foreigners seeking asylum in Germany are often perceived as a homogenous group of people. This generalization can then again enhance stereotyped thinking and prejudices among the population, which have been highlighted as serious obstacles to integration in Hartmut Esser’s theory.\textsuperscript{117}

\section*{4.2.2. Germany - An immigration country?}

As integration inevitably raises the question of being integrated into precisely which context,\textsuperscript{118} it becomes important to take a closer look at not only Germany’s immigration and integration policy, but also at the German perception of collective and national identity. Throughout decades, Germany’s immigration policy was characterized by the refusal to accept itself as an immigration country and a lack of concrete concepts for integration.\textsuperscript{119} From 2000 onwards, a gradual transformation towards an immigration society took place - however, without the establishment of a minority policy, thereby signaling immigrants to adjust to German traditions and norms.\textsuperscript{120} Thus, integration is, up until today, largely perceived to be an effort made on the side of the migrant population, which is urged to become as German as possible.\textsuperscript{121}

Overall, Germany’s immigration policy can be described as a policy following double standards: In the past, this contradiction manifested itself within the premise of fostering the immigration of individuals with German origins (such as \textit{Spätaussiedler}, who are emigrants returning to Germany long after World War II), whilst simultaneously neglecting its status as an immigration country. Some scholars, such as Wolf-Dietrich Bukow (2011), go as far as claiming that otherness is only accepted by German society, if it turns out to be of German origin and can be assimilated without trouble.\textsuperscript{122} Today, the discourse within German immigration policy still principally revolves around the antonymous idea of limiting and controlling immigration - although it now follows a different argumentation: In present-day, immigration is largely discussed within the context of labour market policy and economical thinking. Thus, economical advantages are often emphasized, turning

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{116} Cf. Ager; Strang (2004), p.10. For Germany, this tendency has also been pointed out in Deutscher Fussball-Bund; Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration (2015), p.9.
\bibitem{119} Cf. Mannitz; Schneider (2014), p.72.
\bibitem{121} Cf. Held (2009), p.122.
\end{thebibliography}
immigration - and with that also integration - into a question of weighing up costs against benefits.\textsuperscript{123} Even though the right to seek asylum is an individually actionable right, anchored in article 16a of the German Basic Law (Grundgesetz), integration is often understood as an only temporary and partial process. This is due to the fact that Germany’s Asylum and Refugee Acts mainly grant protection until an improvement of the circumstances in an individual’s home country has occurred.\textsuperscript{124} Hence, immigrants are faced with the paradox of integrating themselves, whilst at the same time having to be prepared to return back home.\textsuperscript{125}

Thus, it is not surprising that, in 2001, the Independent Committee “Immigration“ (Unabhängige Kommission „Zuwanderung“) has criticized Germany’s integration policy as a pragmatic policy of improvising that impedes integration efforts.\textsuperscript{126} During recent years, some positive steps in the right direction have been made. Among those are the Nationality Act (Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz), the Immigration Law (Zuwanderungsgesetz), and the National Plan of Action Integration (Nationaler Aktionsplan Integration), which are briefly described below.\textsuperscript{127}

With the Nationality Act coming into force in January 2000, Germany’s policy on foreigners changed significantly: Previously, German nationality could only be obtained through having German origins, following the principle of \textit{jus sanguinis}. From 2000 onwards, a \textit{jus solis} principle was applied (Geburtsrecht), meaning that children born in Germany to parents of whom at least one had been a legal resident of the country for eight years had the right to claim German nationality. However, when turning 23, children still have to forfeit either German or their parents’ nationality. The establishment of the Immigration Law in 2005 further constituted a symbolic change in Germany’s notion of nationhood by formally acknowledging the country as an immigration country. However, the firmly established double standard of limiting immigration to some and enabling it to others - especially to highly qualified workers - was nonetheless upheld.\textsuperscript{128} Finally, the National Plan of Action Integration, which was presented in 2011, provided an agreement on more concrete and verifiable measures to enhance integration and described integration as an ongoing, joint responsibility that needs to be tackled in a sustainable and structural manner.\textsuperscript{129}

Only recently, in April 2016, the German government has also agreed on an Integration Law (Integrationsgesetz) that will most likely be voted through on May 24th. The Integration Law principally revolves around punishing those who do not want to integrate themselves into society. It intends to carry out reductions of benefits and a so called Wohnsitzauflage - a rule that appoints refugees to their new place of residence. Moreover, the law aims to make it easier for asylum seekers to enter the job market. Despite the enthusiasm among the governing parties, organizations such as Pro-Asyl have sharply criticized the new Integration Law, arguing that a law planning to carry out penalties will further strengthen the prejudice of refugees being unwilling to integrate themselves into society.\textsuperscript{130} This becomes especially clear in view of the fact that many Germans seem to perceive asylum seekers as a homogenous group of people as it is. Moreover, the new Integration Law mainly focusses on the labour market, but does not tackle other important issues, such as problems within education. Thus, it raises the danger of establishing a narrow understanding of integration, which - once again - centers around a discussion about how to gain the most use out of immigration.\textsuperscript{131} Yet, most importantly, the planned Integration Law fails to define one crucial question: At which point can integration be considered successful, and who is going to evaluate this successfulness? Overall, the goals of the Integration Law remain vague. With the short time left until the law is supposed to be drawn up, however, there will not be much possibilities for refinement.\textsuperscript{132}

Within all of the existent regulations and laws, Germany’s integration policy focusses on the premise of support and demand (Fördern und Fordern).\textsuperscript{133} Thus, the Federal Ministry of the Interior writes: “Zuwandernde sind angehalten, durch eigene Anstrengung und unterstützt durch staatliche Angebote, die deutsche Sprache zu erlernen und sich mit Rechtsordnung, Geschichte und Kultur sowie Werten, die in Deutschland wichtig sind, vertraut zu machen. Die Aufnahmegesellschaft ist gefordert, den zugewanderten Menschen einen durch Chancengleichheit und Gleichbehandlung gekennzeichneten Zugang zu allen wichtigen Bereichen von Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft und Politik zu gewährleisten, indem bestehende Barrieren erkannt und abgebaut werden.”\textsuperscript{134} Hence, Germany’s

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{130} Cf. Spiegel Online (2016-04-14).
\textsuperscript{131} Cf. Pranil (2016-04-14).
\textsuperscript{132} Cf. Mair (2016-04-14).
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid, p.51. Translation: “Immigrants are, through their own efforts and through options offered by the government, urged to learn the German language and familiarize themselves with the legal system, history, and culture, as well as values that are of importance in Germany. The host society is required to ensure immigrants, through equal treatment and equality of opportunities, access to all important areas of society, economy, and politics by recognizing and reducing existing obstacles.”
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understanding of integration follows the principle of mutual efforts and equal participation that Hartmut Esser and other scholars have highlighted in their definitions.

Finally, it has to be pointed out that Germany’s perception of nationhood has since the end of the 19th century been characterized by an ethnic nationalism. Despite the transformation towards a \textit{jus solis} principle, Germany’s immigration policy still remains influenced by the idea of a homogenous nation state. This not only constitutes a poor condition for integration processes to occur, but even forms a factor that can contribute to xenophobic sentiments and racism.\footnote{Cf. Bozay (2011), p.298.} Often, it is especially collective identities that are based on an understanding of nationalism that constitute a particularly strong defense mechanism to any foreign components and lead to the exclusion of other national or ethnic groups.\footnote{Cf. Bach (2015), p.165.} It is therefore not surprising that Kemal Bozay (2011) argues: “Wo „deutsche Identität“ an Profil gewinnt, werden vorhandene Selbstethnisierungstendenzen der Migrant(inn)en ebenfalls verstärkt.”\footnote{Bozay (2011), p.303. Translation: “Where “German identity“ improves its image, already existing tendencies of self-ethnicization are strengthened, too.”} Thus, successful refugee integration in Germany is strongly dependent on a flexible concept of nationality, within which being part of the nation state is not tied to one’s ethnic belonging.\footnote{Cf. Heckmann (2015), p.277.} It hence becomes necessary that Germany establishes an understanding of Germanness (\textit{Deutschsein}) that is based on a republican concept and enables participation within this community for every individual no matter their background.\footnote{Cf. Mannitz; Schneider (2014), p.88.} While some formal impediments of integration have been torn down during the last decade, the most difficult task remains to be tackled - namely, addressing the emotional component of integration and paving the way for what Hartmut Esser described as identification to occur.\footnote{Cf. Caballero (2009), p.57.} Else, Germany will stay a country with immigrants, but not an immigration country, in which different ethnic and cultural backgrounds shape the collective understanding of a German identity.
4.3. Paving the way towards integration - Current difficulties and future necessities

4.3.1. Increasing dissatisfaction

As the short introduction in the beginning of this chapter has shown, there has been a clear mood swing among the German population with regard to the reception of refugees, making it necessary to take a closer look at what might be the reasons for the increasingly tense atmosphere. In the interviews conducted for this paper, participants were therefore asked how they felt the refugee crisis was handled by the German government. In the past, Germany’s former Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schröder has commented on Angela Merkel’s actions in September 2015 the following way: “Die Bundeskanzlerin zeigte Herz, aber sie hatte keinen Plan.” This feeling was widely shared by interviewees, who, above all, made it clear that they were discontent with the management of the current situation. Six interviewees stated that the government had reacted in an unorganized and chaotic manner, when allowing the refugees to come to Germany. Surprisingly, only three people hinted at the reception of refugees being a positive gesture and the humane thing to do. While most of the interviewees said that the ongoing influx of refugees did not scare them, they nonetheless revealed worry. Regina, a 32-year-old infant teacher, for example said: “No, I am not afraid, but I am worried. Especially worried, how we are going to handle the situation.”

Overall, interviewees expressed the urgent need for actions from the government’s side. Two people specifically highlighted that they felt politicians were talking a lot about the refugee situation, without, however, letting their words be followed by actions. This is interesting, as it is also a topic reflected within recent news reporting. Marc Brost (2016), for instance, argues that the current discourse mainly revolves around controlling borders, instead of actually discussing potential measures to foster integration. Yet, what is crucial now is not only a debate about what to do with the people still waiting to seek shelter in Europe, but most importantly a debate about what to do with the refugees that are already staying in Germany. Hence, it becomes necessary for Angela Merkel to define more clearly, how the country will overcome the challenges ahead. In her interview, 20-year-old commercial clerk Clara, who volunteers in teaching German to refugees, emphasized precisely this issue: “It is not enough to say: ‘We’ll manage!’ People want to know

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141 Weber (2015). Translation: “The Federal Chancellor showed that she has a heart, but she did not have plan.”
exactly how we are going to manage it and what to expect. Uncertainty triggers fear, which in turn causes anger. “This lack of specific integration measures has also significantly influenced the public opinion: In a poll with 1.004 participants, 70 percent had a pessimistic attitude towards the current situation and expressed concern for the future. Only 18 percent were under the impression that the government was handling the refugee situation well.”

In the interviews carried out within this thesis, four participants further pointed out that Germany had ignored the context of the refugee crisis for too long and had merely looked away. “Although one could not have prevented the influx of refugees, one could have minimized it well in advance, for example by intervening earlier and supporting countries such as Italy and Greece“, Andrea, a 29-year-old student, said. Indeed, it is true that the current situation is part of a series of larger problems, which cannot be discussed within the extent of this paper. The Dublin Regulation can, for instance, be understood as a factor contributing to the intensification of the circumstances. As has already been pointed out in the introduction, the regulation has, up until now, passed on the challenge of managing the refugee crisis to a hand full of countries within the European Union, which are classic points of first arrival due to their geographic position. Thus, it can be considered an agreement that was flawed from its very beginning.

Andrea made another quite thought-provoking statement when commenting on the population’s voluntary commitment. “The government seems incapable of managing the situation on its own. Then again, it is not really forced to tackle it, because there are enough volunteers“, she said. Yet, according to catastrophe researcher Wolf Dombrowski, Germany’s welcoming culture is a sign of the country’s well-developed democracy. In an extraordinary situation like the present one, the spontaneous help form volunteers is usually a normal reaction, as the government is unable to organize such direct ways of helping on such short notice.

While this may be true, Andrea’s point of view was also supported by Charlotte, who stated: “I [ ] think it is important that volunteers receive something in return for their commitment. The government cannot expect that people will work for free in the long run.” What interviewees appeared to perceive as surprising was not the fact that Germans were sacrificing time and money to help refugees, but rather the lack of recognition they received for their commitment. This has also been pointed out by voluntary

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144 Cf. Kops (2016); Bräuninger; Peters; Schneider (2015), p.5.
workers themselves, who increasingly see themselves confronted with threatening letters and hostility. Overall, it seemed that some of the interviewees were under the impression that the governing parties were shifting the responsibility of managing both the reception and integration of refugees on to the voluntary helpers - a dangerous notion that might ultimately lead to citizens doubting the assertiveness of their government.

Participants were also asked whether they believed that the German welcoming culture was actually existent. In view of this, a majority of seven interviewees described the German population as sharply divided or even polarized. Only three participants considered the welcoming culture to be a common attitude. Current quantitative data also illustrate this disunity, showing that while 46 percent of the population see the refugees coming to Germany as an enrichment, 51 percent do not feel that way. The 26-year-old music pedagogue Michael further raised a quite surprising hypothesis by assuming that welcoming refugees was dependent on one’s generation: “In my opinion, the older generation is less open to changes, which is why you are less likely to see them standing at the train station, welcoming refugees”, he said. “I guess this is due to the fact that older Germans think more traditional. [...] The younger generation, on the other hand, is more open to the situation. Overall, I would say that there are two extreme sides: on the one hand, those people who are excessively welcoming towards refugees and, on the other hand, those who set refugee homes on fire.“ Interestingly, studies also indicate that older Germans are less open-minded towards migrant populations, with a majority of the over 60-year-olds demanding that immigrants adapt to the German culture. This tendency could, for example, be explained by Germany’s only recent official acknowledgement of its status as an immigration country. It is possible that this paradigm shift has not yet been internalized among older parts of the population, who are used to a different understanding of who is part of German society and who is not. Younger generations, on the other hand, have a different take on multiculturalism and multiethnic societies and often perceive them to be the norm.

Talking about Germany’s welcoming culture, Andrea further added that she felt almost everybody had an opinion about the reception of refugees. Charlotte agreed but interestingly mentioned the following: “The average population [...] seems almost afraid to speak up, because they fear being

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147 Cf. Spiegel Online (2016-02-29).
put in a pigeon-hole. At the moment, the atmosphere among the population is very tense. “The 25-year-old industrial business administrator Melanie also noted that, nowadays, it took a lot of courage to speak up. In addition, Hans, a 64-year-old pensioner, stated: “Very often, I feel as if expressing yourself critically about the refugee situation you are automatically assumed to be right-wing. And with being critical I do not mean being racist or xenophobic, but rather to openly address the problems that are occurring right now. And let us be honest, there are problems that we should not just sweep under the carpet.” It is precisely such accusations, in which the tense atmosphere that Germany currently faces finds its expression. What seems to be easily overlooked is that questioning Angela Merkel’s actions is not automatically linked to right-wing sentiments, but is rather the natural reaction to an exceptional situation, in which people’s right to receive answers and to have their concerns listened to has been largely ignored by German politicians so far.151

Concluding, it can be stated that the mood among the German population gives cause for concern. Not only are people dissatisfied with the reactions of their voted government, but they are also increasingly discouraged to speak their opinion and participate within the public debate. Yet, for the future course of integration, it is of utmost importance that a creative dialogue exists. The fact that Germans perceive the current situation to be out of control does, however, not only impede such dialogue, but also negatively impact society’s openness towards refugees - which has been outlined as a crucial requirement for integration by Esser.152 If the population continues to be discontent, it would not be surprising, if they also felt more and more demotivated to tackle the refugee crisis together.153 Due to her lack of action, Angela Merkel’s success in her further proceedings has largely become dependent on her moral legitimacy.154 Yet, it is questionable, if her humanity will be a sufficient foundation for managing not only the integration of refugees, but for also preventing a split among the own population, who is already torn in their perceptions of asylum seekers. In order to sustainably integrate the refugees who have recently arrived in Germany, it will be essential to have a structured plan of how to proceed, in which expectations for both refugees and Germans are clearly stated. Only under these conditions will the population gain renewed trust in the government and support its course of action.155

4.3.2. Lack of strategies and growing right-wing sentiments

In the further course of the interviews, participants were also asked what they considered to be the biggest problems that Germany will have to face with regard to the reception of refugees and what they expected from Germany’s political leaders in 2016. The answers to these questions provided a wide range of interesting opinions, of which some will be further examined on the pages below. Overall, interviewees referred to keywords such as housing shortage, financing integration, changes on the job market, increasing right-wing extremism, and a lack of control. More efficiency and faster bureaucratic procedures, as well as clearer guidelines on how to strengthen integration, were generally emphasized in view of future necessities.

In addition, participants’ interviews have given rise to possible future research questions within the field of integration research through mentioning aspects such as cultural, ethnic, and especially religious differences and expressing concern about such contrasts. Keeping in mind that many Germans seem to view asylum seekers as a homogeneous group, it might be particularly intriguing to take a closer look at how, for example, preconceptions about religious identities and islamophobia play into the success or failure of integration processes. Within this, it could further be interesting to analyze how refugees’ religious identities influence Hartmut Esser’s level of identification and even how these identities conform with Germany’s understanding of nationhood. However, for now, this thesis will focus on other, more immediate barriers to refugee integration, as they are considered most important at the current stage of the integration process.

Bureaucratic procedures and infrastructural measures

At the moment, one of the most problematic obstacles to integration is the long waiting time for a final decision about refugees’ status of protection on part of the BAMF: On average, Syrians have to wait 2,4 months, Afghans on the other hand 15,4 months, and Pakistanis even 20,8 months. In addition to this time, it can take various weeks until asylum seekers file a petition for asylum or are able to file one. The biggest impediment to speeding up the decision process is the fact that the BAMF has severely fallen behind with processing applications since 2008, entering the current phase of refugee reception with about 900,000 outstanding other applications. It is not surprising

that such numbers evoke worry among the population.\textsuperscript{158} This is especially true in view of the 441.899 first-time applications for asylum that have been filed during the entire year of 2015. In addition, the BAMF received another 117.392 first-time applications during January and February 2016 alone.\textsuperscript{159}

First and foremost, long asylum processes make it more difficult for refugees to integrate themselves into society and especially into the job market. It is particularly the state of uncertainty with regard to one’s future in Germany that has problematic consequences. Without having received a recognized refugee status, chances for being employed are quite slim, as employers usually look for a stable employment relationship.\textsuperscript{160} Yet, it is only through obtaining work and being able to pay for their expenses themselves that refugees gain back their self-confidence.\textsuperscript{161} According to statistics, refugees’ positioning on the job market takes a significant amount of time as it is, making fast decisions about residence permits essential. The longer a person is unemployed, the more difficult it is to re-enter the job market.\textsuperscript{162} Moreover, long waiting periods have a significant impact on individual’s efforts for integration, psychosocial stability, and even on one’s health.\textsuperscript{163} Months of uncertainty clearly constitute a tremendous burden for refugees, making it difficult not to lose perspective.\textsuperscript{164} In addition, faster bureaucratic procedures help to clarify at an early stage who is allowed to stay in Germany and who will be deported. Through fast deportations, capacities for the reception of those who are actually in need of protection can then be increased.\textsuperscript{165}

Hence, it will be important to work off the number of applications for asylum that have so far been unattended as soon as possible. For this, hiring more personnel, as well as enhancing the quality of decisions becomes crucial.\textsuperscript{166} Potential inspiration for an improvement of Germany’s asylum proceedings can come from Switzerland, where applications are categorized and divided into easy and difficult decisions before being reviewed. There even are so called fast track proceedings, in which decisions are made within 48 hours. These measures mainly concern asylum seekers who are

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{158} Cf. Weber (2015).
\item \textsuperscript{159} Cf. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (2016), p.4-7.
\item \textsuperscript{161} Cf. Weber (2015).
\item \textsuperscript{162} Cf. Spiegel Online (2016-03-21).
\item \textsuperscript{163} Cf. Robert Bosch Stiftung (2016), p.75.
\item \textsuperscript{164} Cf. Thränhardt (2015), p.2.
\item \textsuperscript{165} Cf. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (2015), p.21.
\item \textsuperscript{166} Cf. Bertelsmann Stiftung (2015-05-26).
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unlikely to be granted asylum. Applications from these countries have significantly declined due to the new course of action.\(^{167}\)

Overall, four out of ten interviewees felt that in order to promote a more successful integration process better infrastructural conditions had to be established in Germany. Thus, the 28-year-old customs officer Thomas pointed out: “A better social infrastructure, especially designed to address integration, will need to be built up during the next years. This means more personnel, more jobs, and the likes.” The necessity of building an adequate infrastructure has also been argued for by Herbert Brücker (2015). In view of the likelihood that Germany will stay impacted by a continuously high number of asylum seekers during the next years, Brücker demands more offers within a broad range of sectors such as the job market, educational institutions, and healthcare.\(^{168}\) So far, the government’s omission of establishing a comprehensive framework for fostering integration has been compensated by the efforts of volunteers. In the long run, however, it once again becomes necessary that the government takes actions itself.\(^{169}\)

*Limiting refugee reception?*

The amount of applications for asylum that Germany has accepted during 2015, as well as the excessive demands made on the BAMF raise the question of introducing a limit for the reception of refugees. In the field study, three participants interestingly perceived integration itself to be the biggest of all future problems. Thomas, for example, said: “In my opinion, successful integration is also connected to the amount of refugees we receive in a country. With the amount of refugees we are welcoming at the moment, we do hardly have any other possibility but to accommodate them in refugee homes, thus impeding a process of building up contact between Germans and refugees.” This view was also supported by Michael and later by Hans. Reiner, a 58-year-old mechanic, felt the same way, saying: “Right now, we have a completely unrealistic amount of people that are supposed to be integrated.” Hans added to this: “We finally need some clear structures. Moreover, I think that it will be important to consider an upper limit […] it is only common sense that our federal states will, at some point, inevitably reach their limit“, he explained.

\(^{169}\) Cf. Popp (2016-02-10).
According to sociologist Friedrich Heckmann, successful integration indeed always relies upon the number of people who are supposed to be integrated. This is due to the unavoidable limits of capacity and other factors such as the time needed to initiate measures that foster integration. Thus, Heckmann emphasizes the importance of controlled immigration, which he considers to be a crucial, even though not sufficient, prerequisite for sustainable integration. Most importantly, the host society needs to be under the impression that immigration processes are controlled. If this is not the case, reactions of hostility and overpowering are likely to occur.\textsuperscript{170} Thus, it is especially worrying that German society perceives the reception of refugees to be handled in a chaotic manner by the government. Even if many citizens are willing to welcome and integrate refugees, most will only show enthusiasm if they know this situation is an exception from the rule. In this context, participants’ claims for restricting the influx of refugees become understandable. Yet, while it is correct that efficient integration will depend on the number of refugees arriving in Germany, the introduction of a national upper limit is not the answer to the problem. Rather, it becomes ever more pressing to find an European solution to the refugee crisis, in which all countries show equal efforts to receive asylum seekers.\textsuperscript{171}

\textit{Issues within culturation and positioning}

Culturation and especially positioning have been outlined by Hartmut Esser as important levels to consider with regard to integration. Yet, within both levels Germany is currently struggling severely: At the center of governmental actions to foster cultural integration are integration courses, in which refugees and asylees not only learn the German language, but are also informed about German culture, history, and the legal system.\textsuperscript{172} However, participation in these programs relies upon the likelihood of receiving a residence permit in Germany. Afghans, for instance, are currently excluded from participating in language and integration courses, as only 47 percent of Afghani asylum seekers receive a status of protection. Obviously, allowing attendance in such programs to some and denying it to others is not congenial to integration.\textsuperscript{173} Moreover, already in 2014, more than half of the eligible participants for integration courses had to wait longer than two months to receive a place, clearly showing the need for the establishment of more courses.\textsuperscript{174}

\textsuperscript{171} Cf. Krach (2016-01-30).
\textsuperscript{172} Bundesministerium des Inneren (2014), p.71.
\textsuperscript{173} Cf. Staib (2016-03-16).
\textsuperscript{174} Cf. Reimann (2016-03-30); Diekmann; Klovert; Kwasniewski; Reimann (2015-12-30).
It further makes sense to allow asylum seekers to learn German even during the time they have to wait for their application to be processed. That way, they can get acquainted to the German language from an early stage onwards. Yet, up until now, this is only possible in five out of the sixteen German federal states. Finally, it would be beneficial to let all asylum seekers participate in language and integration courses, even if their chances to be granted a residence permit are slim. Asylum seekers who have been denied asylum will nonetheless stay in Germany for some time, before they can return to their home country, and it might prove advantageous for their future to have acquired a foreign language. Learning the language and creating the possibilities for refugees to do so as early as possible is of crucial importance and has been pointed out by both participants in the field study and Hartmut Esser. A lack of language skills can result in self-doubt, which in turn influences an individual’s behavior towards the host society. In view of the interconnectedness of the different levels of integration, it further negatively impacts the establishment of social contacts and chances for employment.

With regard to integration into the labor market, Germany has become a victim of its own comprehensive set of rules and regulations. There are, for example, complex guidelines which regulate who of the refugees is allowed to intern at a company, work within subcontracted employment, or receive a permanent position. First and foremost, it is thus important that Germany - and especially the German economy - becomes more flexible and is willing to improvise. In the town of Hof in Bavaria, a creative approach has already led to promising results. Here, three Syrians have taken measures into their own hands, asking if they could help out in an old people’s home. All three of them were unable to find work within their previous education. They had time to kill after their integration courses and wanted to give something back to the German population, as 31-year-old refugee Saad Saad, who has worked as a journalist in the past, explained. The three refugees are now part of the Federal Volunteers Service (Bundesfreiwilligendienst). They chat with the residents, look after them on excursions, and serve food. According to Sabine Dippold, warden of the old people’s home, the residents are excited about the addition to the staff and enjoy hearing stories about Syria. The refugees, on the other hand, are not only learning the German language, but are also told a lot about German traditions.

179 Cf. Spiegel Online (2016-03-31).
180 Cf. Spiegel Online (2016-03-29).
A special program within the Federal Volunteers Service, exclusively designed for refugees, was created in autumn 2015, planning to provide 10,000 additional open positions every year. The program will run until the end of December 2018. It addresses both recognized refugees and asylees, as well as asylum seekers. However, once again, only asylum seekers who are likely to receive a residence permit are admitted. Despite this limitation, and despite the fact that participants only receive pocket money, such initiatives provide an excellent starting point for further integration processes, both within the level of culturation, positioning, interaction, and even identification.

However, as the above example has shown, a clear effort from refugees is necessary for such programs to be efficient. Yet, interestingly enough, it seems that some options within the German job market, such as starting an apprenticeship, are not very popular among refugees’ future plans. In many of their home countries, apprenticeships are equated with low-wage work, whereas, in Germany, they are actually well appreciated positions, enabling a good income in the long run. Thus, it is crucial to better explain to refugees the various professional perspectives they have and to advertise for promising options that might else be overlooked. In view of this, it is moreover necessary that refugees’ general education and previous work experience are recorded when arriving in Germany. Up until now, this only happens in an insufficient manner. Thomas has hinted at this requirement in his interview, saying: “I think in order to promote integration, it will be crucial to take into account a refugee’s personal background and ask: What has this person been doing before? A refugee is not only a refugee, but an individual. And this needs to be considered for the future of this person in Germany.“ This aspect has also been highlighted by two refugees in France, who were questioned for a study conducted by the United Nations Refugee Agency. They pointed out that employment agencies did not care about refugees’ prior experiences and qualifications but rather automatically tried to place them within unskilled work. In the same study, refugee professionals, such as lawyers and teachers, further expressed the feeling of having their qualifications overlooked only because they were acquired overseas.

Another crucial impediment to the level of positioning is the so called Vorrangprüfung. Generally, all asylum seekers are allowed to start working after having stayed in Germany for three months. However, as part of the Vorrangprüfung, asylum seekers will not get an open position, if a German

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181 Cf. Spiegel Online (2016-03-29).
184 Cf. Spiegel Online (2016-03-21).
or European Union citizen has also applied for it. The Vorrangprüfung is omitted after 15 months of residence in Germany.\textsuperscript{186} It does not apply to recognized refugees or asylees,\textsuperscript{187} however its negative impact becomes quite clear in view of the long time that some refugees have to wait until they receive their official protection status.\textsuperscript{188} An adjournment of the Vorrangprüfung is planned within the new Integration Law, constituting a first step in the right direction by showing that Germany is willing to become more flexible and change established rules in the face of the extraordinary circumstances.\textsuperscript{189}

Overall, the refugees’ positioning on Germany’s labor market will require the initial investment of time and adequate measures. According to the German Federal Employment Agency, there is a disproportionally large number of refugees that are either well qualified or insufficiently qualified. Medium-level qualifications, however, seem to be quite rare. This u-shaped qualification structure makes it necessary to help refugees acquire the qualifications needed for employment as early as possible.\textsuperscript{190} Finally, there is an urgency for close collaboration between state-run institutions and other organizations on both the federal and the regional state level. Only then can measures within labor market policy be connected to actions within education and language courses and provide the most extensive possibilities for counseling, support, and arrangements of employment.\textsuperscript{191}

\textit{A dangerous notion of being overlooked}

Among the challenges that Germany currently has to face, interviewees Andrea and Clara emphasized another important issue that is more indirectly related to the influx of refugees. “For me, the most worrying thing is that more and more people are leaning to the right. I do not want to live in a country that is guided by right-wing attitudes”, Andrea stated. As already indicated, Germany has indeed experienced an incline in right-wing and anti-immigration sentiments. Offenses against refugee homes have, for example, significantly increased from 199 offenses in 2014 to 1.005 offenses in 2015.\textsuperscript{192} This number may simply be the logical result of a higher number of refugee homes than in previous years. Yet, such tendencies are also reflected in the right-wing populist party Alternative for Germany (\textit{Alternative für Deutschland, AfD}) gaining growing support.

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\item Cf. Tagesschau.de (2015-12-09); Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (2016-01-27).
\item Cf. Staib (2016-03-16).
\item Cf. Spiegel Online (2016-04-14).
\item Cf. Zeit Online (2016-01-28).
\end{enumerate}
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from the population. During the most recent regional elections in four federal states, the only three year old political party received votes that ran into double figures. According to a public opinion poll, the majority of AfD-voters based their voting-decision on the fact that they were disappointed in other political parties. Moreover, many considered the AfD to be a plain speaker. Other voters further stated that they felt powerless in view of the governing parties.\(^{193}\)

When asked about how to avoid right-wing movements and political parties from receiving increasing support due to the refugee crisis, participants’ answers provided thought-provoking insights. Regina and Clara, for example, emphasized the importance of education. “[…] I feel it is necessary to address such topics more within education and encourage our children to think about it. In this way, we can have a positive impact on future generations’ attitudes”, Regina believed. Daniela, a 25-year-old student, and Michael put the issue into a broader context, stating that in order to diminish people’s negative feelings towards refugees it would, first and foremost, be crucial that the government integrated refugees successfully. Three interviewees also perceived the growing support for right-wing movements to be connected to people being afraid and angry. Reiner, for example, stated: “For me, the fact that most European countries currently experience a shift to the right is a sign of people being afraid. I believe that many think that this [voting for such parties] is the only possibility to prevent what is happening.” Thomas supported this point of view, adding that, in his opinion, many felt that politicians had made choices above their heads with regard to allowing refugees to enter Germany. “Politicians are not asking how many refugees we can welcome without it leading to problems”, Hans added. Moreover, Charlotte highlighted the importance of taking the population’s fears seriously and assuring them that their own needs will not be forgotten.

It seems that precisely this feeling of being treated in an unfair manner has become widespread among certain parts of society. For years, people have unsuccessfully fought for their children's school receiving more qualified personnel. Now that the refugees have arrived, the government suddenly seems willing to react on such demands.\(^ {194}\) Since the population’s worries can have a crucial impact on the public atmosphere, they should not be underestimated. In the past, election results in countries such as France or Poland have shown, how ignoring these worries can fuel right-

\(^{193}\) Cf. Elmer; Hebel (2016-03-14); Elmer; Meiritz (2016-03-25).

wing sentiments and political parties. As integration is almost always connected to short-term costs, be they financial or organizational, it becomes essential to make sure that the German population does not feel passed over. Yet, simply assuring citizens that there is nothing to be afraid of is not a sufficient measure. It is out of importance for politicians to emphasize the positive impacts that the current situation might have on Germany in the long run. Humanity needs to recombined with utility, however, without falling back into the established antonymous perception of immigration being either useful or a burden. Yet, up until now, Angela Merkel seems uninterested in counteracting some citizens’ perceived unjust treatment. In February 2016, for instance, Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel suggested more expenses for social projects benefiting the German population in the running fiscal year. However, Merkel did reject Gabriel’s proposal, insisting on a balanced government budget. Yet, the successful integration of refugees will hardly depend on a balanced budget. Rather, as Hartmut Esser has emphasized, it relies upon the degree of integration of the German population itself. Underprivileged groups within German society, or simply people who feel that they are passed over, are more likely to develop negative feelings towards the migrant population.

4.3.3. Media reporting and prejudices

The media discourse

In the further course of the interviews, some participants mentioned that fighting prejudices among the population and being more open-minded will be essential requirements for the future of Germany’s integration process. Interestingly, Regina perceived the media to play a crucial role in this: “Overall, I feel that the media should report way more about positive news and the successes that have already been achieved. This will help lessen the population’s fears.” Melanie and Andrea agreed with this view and further linked the media’s often hysterical reporting with the increasing support for right-wing movements. Overall, six out of ten interviewees believed that the media did not provide enough information on the reception of refugees and their integration. Only three people felt sufficiently informed through the media. Clara, for example, said: “To be quite honest,

196 Cf. Bräuninger; Peters; Schneider (2015), p.15.
198 Cf. Spiegel Online (2016-02-26a).
199 Cf. Spiegel Online (2016-02-26b).
all the reporting about the refugee situation sometimes even gets on my nerves.” Others, however, were under the impression that they only received information in waves. Overall, three interviewees claimed that the media steered information in a particular direction, and two people even experienced the media as unreliable. “To me, it seems the media do whatever they want to do. If they want the population to be all stirred up, then they stir them up”, Michael said.

As the media affect our perception of reality, they can have a tremendous influence on the success or failure of integration processes.\footnote{Cf. Yidiz (2011), p.274, p.277/278.} It is especially the tone of voice used in articles, as well as the frequency of reporting about immigration that can influence the readers’ attitude towards migratory movements.\footnote{Cf. Wendekamm (2014), p.206-208.} While topics such as cultural diversity are increasingly addressed through the media, a problem-oriented approach with regard to immigration is still dominant in Germany.\footnote{Cf. Die Bundesregierung (2011), p.19.} Positive news about immigration are often linked to highly skilled workers, thereby reflecting the typical German logic of dividing immigration into useful and useless.\footnote{Cf. Spindler (2011), p.284/285.} In the face of the current reception of refugees, the media have predominantly reported on problems to find adequate housing and an increasing number of asylum seekers. It is not surprising that such stories have affected the climate of integration in a negative manner.\footnote{Cf. Thränhardt (2015), p.6.} Whenever words such as crisis, chaos, and fear are used within news reporting, notions of worry can be caused among the population. Combined with photographs of crowds of people, these patterns of interpreting the refugee situation establish sentiments of fear that are not easily dissolved with logical argumentation.\footnote{Cf. Weber (2015).} The same is true for terms related to natural catastrophes, such as refugee wave or flood of refugees, which are frequent metaphors used by the media.\footnote{Cf. Heckmann (2015), p.208.}

Moreover, linguist Elisabeth Bruckner adds an interesting perspective to the current refugee discourse, arguing that the term refugee already transmits a negative connotation. The German word for refugee is Flüchtling. The ending -ing is a diminutive form and is commonly used to devalue or mock something. Research further indicates that a word’s gender influences our perception and arises certain implications. As der Flüchtling has a male article, the term is subconsciously connected to a person who is rather strong than in need and aggressive instead of sociable, which has explosive implications for refugee integration. Hence, Bruckner suggests to avoid using the...
In addition, vague reporting on the subject can create a clouded picture of the migrant population. This image can then strengthen discrimination and negative attitudes on the side of the host society. Overall, media reports concerning migrants often generalize and thus provide a starting point for further generalizations among the population, thereby giving way for the establishment of prejudices.

**Diminishing prejudices**

As was outlined in the theory part, prejudices can constitute serious obstacles to social integration and especially to positioning. They can also be considered one of the most difficult tasks within the current integration process of refugees in Germany. This is due to the fact that the dissolution of preconceptions often follows the principles of a vicious circle: For prejudices to decrease and for interaction to be strengthened, it is important that encounters between refugees and the host society are provided. At the same time, however, the establishment of close and meaningful relationships between the host society and refugees is impeded by the existence of stereotypes and negative perceptions, which are largely based on myths or misinterpretations and are a result of the lack of contact between the two groups. Hartmut Esser argues that prejudices can hardly be diminished through social relationships or education, as positive feelings resulting from interethnic contact are mostly linked to particular situations or people and can thus not be generalized. Friedrich Heckmann, on the other hand, believes that prejudices can - at least to a certain extent - be influenced through education, as there exists empirical prove of a connection between higher education and a lower chance to be prejudiced. Thus, he considers it important to touch upon interculturality at school, in art exhibitions, in the media, or at conferences concerning the topic. In addition to education, however, the emotional component of prejudices needs to be addressed through positive experiences gained through celebrations or sports events. Cultural programs can further have a positive impact. Experiencing one’s own culture in a foreign country can enhance a notion of feeling at home while, at the same time, introducing members of the host society to a piece of one’s own background.

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208 Cf. Bruckner (2016-02-17).
In Grünwald, one of Munich’s most prosperous districts, many of such opportunities of intercultural exchange have been established by the local support group. 282 asylum seekers live here - many only have a remote chance for receiving an official refugee-status from the BAMF. There are voluntary German courses, possibilities of playing basketball and handball, as well as runners meets, and cookery courses. Twice a week, the asylum seekers cook themselves. All locals are invited to join and can buy a meal for only two Euros. Only recently, the support group has arranged an “International Cafe“, giving locals and asylum seekers the opportunity to exchange stories and get to know each other. Of course, there is also protest among the German citizens living in the district. Yet, in the long run, the support group could not only have a positive impact on the experiences of asylum seekers in Germany, but also on the local solidarity: Many of the helpers have completely distinct social backgrounds. Some of them live in Grünwald’s villas, whereas others’ financial circumstances are quite contrasting. Helping the asylum seekers, however, has forged a bond between all these people.\textsuperscript{215} The positive impact of helping has further been mentioned by Andrea, who said: “[…] [P]eople do not understand that our welcoming culture can also be seen as a way to unite us Germans, as we show our solidarity with those affected by war; and as a way to stand together against radical movements.”

Overall, integration is made easier where refugees are given a face, where they become human beings with names and a personal history, instead of numbers in a statistical analysis of immigration.\textsuperscript{216} Through social contact, individuals make their own experience with members of the other group. This process can be described as a way of humanizing the other, as Ervin Staub has called it. It is ideal to create opportunities of encounters in places where people with different backgrounds would usually meet, such as at school. Thus, making such possibilities part of people’s everyday routine can be a promising approach.\textsuperscript{217} This perception was also shared by interviewee Clara, who pointed out: “I think that integration works best in everyday life. Refugees need to socialize. There has to be contact between both parties.”.

The chances for such contact to occur are also dependent on continuity with regard to refugees’ accommodation. Only if refugees stay at a particular place for a longer time, it is possible to enhance contact with members of the host society, making faster bureaucratic processes yet again

\textsuperscript{215} Cf. Truscheit (2016-03-13).
\textsuperscript{216} Cf. ZDF Zoom (2016-03-02).
an essential requirement. Through timely decisions on individuals’ applications of asylum, refugees can be relocated to their new municipalities faster. Overall, nine out of ten interviewees considered the accommodation of refugees in so-called refugee homes to be an unsuitable solution. Daniela, for example, explained: “The problem is [ ] that people living in refugee homes are under great emotional pressure. If they do not have a meaningful occupation, conflict and aggression will be inevitable, especially due to differences in culture and language among the refugees themselves.” In addition, other interviewees emphasized the danger of ghettoization and parallel societies. Thus, decentralized refugee accommodation becomes a necessity, without which neither social contact with members of the host society, nor social integration can occur. This is especially true since people with different backgrounds are usually less likely to meet as it is.

Finally, a successful social and economical policy can control the formation of prejudices among the population. This once again takes up the present notion of being left out on parts of the German population. If members of the host society feel content and cared for by the state, the likelihood of frustrated or underprivileged groups to divert their discontent on ethnic minorities and scapegoat them decreases significantly. Thus, it becomes ever more urgent that the German government takes actions that make both refugees and Germans feel equally treated. Moreover, social integration is connected to the individual feeling at home and having a sense of belonging with regard to the new country of residence. In his interview, Thomas emphasized precisely this aspect when describing what integration meant to him: “Successful integration is when refugees are feeling comfortable and steadfast in Germany and are able to have their roots here. Germany has to become their home country, too. At the same time, the locals have to be willing to accept this.” Even though such feelings may only develop in the second or even third generation, they can nonetheless be directed in beneficial directions early on. This is a task in which both refugees and Germans need to pull in the same direction. Living in an immigration country inevitably requires all inhabitants to continuously adapt themselves to new circumstances and contexts. It makes it necessary to be willing to get to know different ways of living and to see further than the end of one’s nose.

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222 Cf. Ibid.
4.4. Perceptions of integration

4.4.1. General remarks

After having analyzed the formal requirements necessary to strengthen refugee integration, it is time to take a closer look at the less specific aspects of integration. How did interviewees in the field study understand integration and what did they perceive as essential elements of a successful integration process? The following paragraphs will shed light on these questions, aiming to add to the definitions of integration outlined in the theory part of this paper.

First and foremost, it is worth mentioning that participants largely expressed positive feelings towards refugees. Three interviewees said they were open-minded, and two that they would meet refugees in a friendly way. “The key is to remember that you are treated as you treat others“, as Hans expressed it. Melanie was under the same impression, explaining: “I am relatively open-minded towards refugees. In my opinion, every human being is the same and has the right to be treated as an equal.“ While five participants admitted that they were a bit reserved when meeting refugees, three also felt curious about refugees’ stories and their lives in their home country. Overall, it seemed that the reservedness was not due to reticence, but rather because interacting with refugees was a new situation for participants. Interviewees who stated they were reserved, for example, expressed concerns such as the language barrier or mentioned that they were generally a bit shy when meeting new people. Firas Alshater, a Syrian who has been living in Germany for two years now, has experienced Germans to be quite open-minded. In a TV-discussion he pointed out that it took some time for the population to warm up, but once the initial reservedness was overcome, the Germans were, as Firas said, unstoppable.224 “Darum glaube ich, die Integration wird klappen“,225 he stated. Funnily, Firas equated integration with becoming a member of a penguin colony - a rather catchy metaphor. In his view, Germans are living together just like penguins, keeping each other warm and showing solidarity, leaving him to be an outsider to this closed community for now.226 “Ich bin von draußen gekommen und brauche Platz drinnen“,227 Firas highlighted.

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224 Cf. ZDF Mediathek (2016-02-18).
225 Ibid. Translation: “That is why I believe that the integration process will be successful.“
226 Cf. Ibid.
227 Ibid. Translation: “I came from the outside and I need a place on the inside.“
When asked what precisely they perceived to be the key to successful integration, a majority of six interviewees referred to learning the German language. Three people felt that Esser’s level of positioning was most important and thus stated that education and going to work were the core of integration. Melanie said: “For me, the key lies within education. Going to work makes it easier for people to learn the language, improve their knowledge, and get to know Germans.” Thus, her argumentation largely followed Hartmut Esser’s understanding of integration being a multi-dimensional process, in which all levels interact with and influence each other. Overall, participants placed great importance on refugees learning about German culture, values, traditions, and customs and respecting those.

Interestingly, some participants seemed to struggle with the general idea of integration. Reiner, for example, explained: “But, you know, it is us who are now wondering how we can integrate people. How many of them want to be integrated?” Michael, on the other hand, had a rather different point of view: “Most refugees who come here, want to be integrated, but I think not all Germans see this willingness. People do not come to Germany, because they want to take advantage of the state, but because they are hoping for a better life”, he believed. Generally, it is most likely that the majority of asylum seekers have left their home countries with the shared hope of a better life and future. Nonetheless, migration researcher Hacı-Halil Uslucan also argues that the success of integration strongly depends on the individual’s involvement in the decision to migrate. Forced migration, as is the case when talking about refugees, can thus cause problems, as migrants feel less responsible for their decision and were usually unable to prepare in advance for adjusting themselves to the new circumstances. This aspect makes it even more important to strengthen refugees’ participation in society by diminishing obstacles, thereby not only letting them know that they are needed, but also giving them a feeling of being able to shape their future in Germany.

Keeping in mind Germany’s understanding of nationhood being centered around an ethnic concept, participants were further asked if they thought it was possible to become German. A majority perceived this to be difficult to impossible. Clara, for example, argued: “I hope not! I believe it is exciting that other cultures will introduce different ways of life to German society.” Surprisingly, otherness was overall not understood as problematic in the interviews. Two people, for

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example, stated that perceiving refugees as others could not be avoided. In addition, three participants felt that refugees simply were foreigners: “For me, there is nothing wrong with the term foreigner, since it does not impede me treating them [refugees] on equal terms. It has to do with openness”, Reiner said. Hans agreed with this point of view, emphasizing that tolerance was the important thing to keep in mind. Charlotte, on the other hand, had a more assimilatory outlook, believing that refugees’ perception of otherness would decrease with them adapting to German customs. Thus, she suggested that it would be important to take off headscarves and burkas.

Reiner, having moved from Germany to Sweden more than ten years ago, provided another thought-provoking assumption when talking about Germanness: “No, I do not think [one can become German], since I am a migrant myself. There are many aspects where I think: I am never going to be that Swedish, many cultural aspects, for example”, he said and then added: “Maybe it is a question of age - how old you are when you migrate to another country. It is different when your cultural shaping is already completed. My children, on the other hand, have become Swedes.“

When describing Hartmut Esser’s theoretical framework, it has already been mentioned that an individual’s age at the time of immigration influences the integration process itself. Older immigrants are, for instance, more likely to remain within their culture of origin and their native langue.233

With regard to the acquisition of cultural elements one can differentiate between enculturation and acculturation. The former refers to the very first processes of internalizing cultural norms and traditions, which ultimately leads to the development of an individual’s socio-cultural personality. The later, on the other hand, defines the process of taking over elements that originate from another culture. When immigrants arrive in their new country of residence, they carry with them their so-called basic personality which was influenced by their native culture over a long period of time and can thus not be given up easily. Hence, the older an individual, the stronger their basic personality, which makes it more difficult to adjust to a new cultural environment.234 Moreover, some of the refugees have a personality that enables them to socialize easily and to reach out to the host society, while others find it difficult to leave their past lives behind and struggle with the traumatic experiences they have made.235 Thomas put this aspect in a nutshell, stating: “It is always you

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yourself who sets a limit. And others will notice, whether you are willing to open up to them or not.“ Regina and Daniela also hinted at the problem of a completed enculturation phase, when pointing out that refugees would most likely still be the people they grew up to be and be influenced by their original culture. What is outstanding is the fact that all ten participants emphasized that integration, in their point of view, was not connected to refugees becoming German. “No. I have not become a Swede to integrate myself. I integrated myself, because I accepted the Swedish people just as they are, I attempted to establish contact with them, and I met them at eye level“, Reiner explained. Overall, these interview-statements can be interpreted as a positive starting point for the current integration process, especially since they might indicate that the German population is willing to let go of the prevalent ethnic understanding of Germanness and work on a new concept of shared identity.

While participants’ definitions of integration differed quite a lot, they also showed some recurring themes. Frequently used terms were tolerance, acceptance, co-existence, cooperation, and - most importantly - mutual efforts. Andrea stated the following: “For me, integration means accepting and adopting our values and our Basic Law. But other than that, one can definitely have a different religious belief and cultural background. The important thing is tolerance from both sides and meeting each other with respect.“ Regina and Thomas also highlighted the importance of both Germans and refugees being open-minded towards each other. Regina, for example, said: “Successful integration is when a former refugee speaks German, accepts the German way of life and German traditions, and is, overall, open towards our culture. At the same time, however, integration means that the German population treats the refugee not as a refugee, but as an ordinary part of society.“ In a study carried out in 1999, interviews with refugees in the - at that time - fifteen member states of the European Union showed that a majority of refugees also understood integration as a mutual concept, related to the process of accepting and being accepted in the new country. Yet, they further commonly linked integration to the vision of equal participation, opportunities and rights, as well as to the acknowledgement of cultural diversity.236 Interestingly, these were perceptions that were rarely directly emphasized in the field study with German participants. It was also noticeable that even though most of the German interviewees understood integration as a question of give and take, almost everybody nonetheless emphasized the importance

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of refugees showing an effort. “They have the same rights and responsibilities as us Germans. Up until now, I often feel as if they only have rights and no responsibilities”, Charlotte said.

Thus, it can be concluded that while most interviewees did not understand integration as a complete assimilation from the refugees’ side, they definitely placed importance on respecting certain German rules, laws, and traditions and adapting to the German way of life. Hence, participants’ understandings of integration largely coincided with the remarks made by Hartmut Esser, who argued that while successful integration depends on both refugees’ and the host society’s commitment, it always requires a certain degree of cultural adaption on the part of the migrant population.\(^{237}\) This might point at the predominance of a slightly one-sided, imbalanced understanding of integration within German society.\(^{238}\) So far, it seems that Germans have mostly considered the integrative efforts necessary from the refugees. Yet, it will be indispensable to establish an awareness of a more mutual involvement within the integration process. Finally, Clara and Charlotte also highlighted the everyday-life aspect within integration. For Charlotte being integrated was connected to celebrating together, greeting each other, and helping one another out. Clara’s explanation was the most striking and provides an inspiring ending to this section. She said: “[Integration is] co-existence. Our everyday routine. No matter if work, school, sports, or going to the bakery in the morning. Integration is happening in everyday life. […] Integration is not perfect, but still absolute - somehow human.”

### 4.4.2. Drawings

Closing, participants’ creative angle on explaining the concept of integration will be briefly summarized below. Interviewees’ drawings are displayed in alphabetical order in the annex of this thesis, including the descriptions of their works. Much like their oral definitions, none of the drawings were the same. Some interviewees expressed themselves in a more abstract manner, while others gave integration specific faces and drew people. Moreover, some pictures were more emotionally laden than others: Michael and Daniela, for example, had a rather theoretical take on integration, whereas Regina’s and Clara’s works rather focussed on the human side of it and were strongly connected to feelings such as kindness, friendship, and happiness. Charlotte had a very clear and detailed perception of how integration should look like and managed to transmit it in a

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\(^{238}\) This has also been pointed out by Held (2009), p.122.
comprehensive diagram. Others, such as Melanie, Thomas, and Reiner showed that they understood integration in a broader, less specific sense, thereby demonstrating their struggle with the concept’s vagueness.

Overall, Vaughan Robinson’s initial remark on integration being a chaotic concept with many different understandings can only be agreed on to a certain extent. Despite the variety of subjective interpretations, the drawings clearly reflected a common ground, in which the recurring themes already mentioned in the interviews found their figurative expression. This observation provides a rather valuable insight: It seems there exists an agreement on at least some aspects of successful integration among the German population. Recalling these partly shared perceptions can be particularly beneficial, as they constitute an ideal basis for developing a future plan of action that aims to strengthen integration processes. While this might not be groundbreaking news, it is sometimes easier to tackle a huge obstacle by starting with the lowest common denominator and continue step by step.

4.5. Kicking Girls - Sports as a promoter of integration

Towards the end of his interview, Michael mentioned singing a song called “Music has no borders“ with his children in class, where every child explains to their classmates how to say “Hello, how are you?“ in their native language. “The idea behind it is to remember that we are all humans, we have music in every culture, all around the world - so let’s just sing together“, Michael explained. Much like music, sports does not speak a particular langue, but can nonetheless impact all four of Hartmut Esser’s levels of integration. It was Nelson Mandela who once stated that sports has the power to bring people together and change the world. How exactly it is that engaging in physical activities can have a uniting and even integrating effect, will be briefly described below.

Sports is a common leisure time activity around the world. During training, individuals are not only able to subconsciously pick up the local language, but also values and even traditions. It is especially intercultural sports activities that constitute a win-win-situation for all participants, as they enable cultural exchange and broadening one’s mind within a casual environment. Through

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239 Cf. Ager; Strang (2002), p.3.
240 Cf. Daneshmandi (2016-04-02).
241 Cf. Ibid.
sports, rules such as fair play are conveyed and cooperation among players is strengthened.\textsuperscript{242} Taking part in joint physical activities can moreover decrease prejudices through a united positive experience.\textsuperscript{243} As most refugees lack social contacts in their vicinity, making the first step is largely up to sports clubs themselves. Intercultural competences or even trainers with an own migratory background can be of help when establishing contact with refugees. Through events, such as a fair play tournament or the possibility of an orientation training, a meeting place can be created and refugees can be interested in the activities that local sports clubs provide.\textsuperscript{244} Dieter Porschien works as a social education worker in a refugee home and describes the impact of sports on integration in the following way: “Fußball ist für unsere Bewohner sinnstiftend und tagfüllend. Sie können Kontakte knüpfen, deutsch sprechen, einfach mal rauskommen. Zusammen mit dem Nachbarverein bieten wir ein Fußballtraining an. Jeder, der Lust hat, kann mitspielen.”\textsuperscript{245} Thus, sports can also help in offering refugees a meaningful pastime, which is an essential condition for refugees wellbeing, as Daniela has pointed out in her interview.

In Germany, sports clubs are of high importance in the organization of leisure activities. As a result, they constitute a relevant part in many Germans’ free time and social life, thereby offering excellent possibilities for interactions between refugees and Germans.\textsuperscript{246} As sports is usually equated with fun and a carefree atmosphere, it enables integration processes to take place almost automatically, without leaving a notion of forced efforts.\textsuperscript{247} More importantly, sports provides an ideal basis for passing Hartmut Esser’s levels of social integration in a trial run: Through meeting other people at the sports club, langue and cultural skills are enhanced, while simultaneously establishing a network of social contacts. Being part of a sports club, for example becoming a goal keeper or a striker, can further be understood as a process of positioning oneself within the closed off environment of one’s team. Finally, participation in sports can even have a positive impact on identification, as team spirit will inevitably arise. Sport’s biggest advantage, however, is the fact that it provides integrative effects on two levels: Thus, not only the so called \textit{Binnenintegration} (the level of integration within the sports club itself) is enhanced through participation, but also an individual’s \textit{Aussenintegration},

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\textsuperscript{244} Cf. Deutscher Fussball-Bund; Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration (2015), p.11.
\textsuperscript{245} Ibid, p.10. Translation: “For our residents, football is meaningful and day filling. They can make new contacts, speak German, and simply get out. Together with the neighboring sports club, we offer a football training. Everyone who wants to, can take part in it.”
\textsuperscript{247} Cf. Daneshmandi (2016-04-02).
\end{flushright}
which primarily concerns the phenomenon of transferring competences and skills acquired within a particular circumstance to other situations. Thus, becoming a member of a sports club can have a significantly positive effect on an individual’s integration into society as a whole.248

Football without Offside (*Fussball ohne Abseits*) is one of the many promising sports projects, that aim at enhancing integration processes. The project was founded within the 1.FC Ohmstede in the city of Oldenburg and was directed at presenting girls form a variety of backgrounds to the topic of football within sports clubs. As mentioned before, it is often difficult to interest certain parts of the population to participate in organized sports. This is especially true for girls with a migratory background. Reasons for this can be the lack of suitable projects in the close social surroundings, or children’s parents opposing the idea. Keeping in mind these obstacles, the girls in Oldenburg were first brought in contact with football through working groups at school - with steadily increasing interest. As the working groups collaborated with local sports clubs, they provided a low-threshold access to the discipline, thereby simultaneously making it easier to pave the way for girls to take part within organized sports. The project comprised four different elements, namely working groups at school, school tournaments, football-camps for girls, as well as training young girls for becoming football assistants. Soon, the initiative proved successful, arousing the interest of both the target group and their parents. In 2006, the German Football Association adopted the idea and started ten projects called Social Integration of Girls through Football (*Soziale Integration von Mädchen durch Fussball*). Since 2011, the project is an initiative dedicated primarily to the task of integrating deprived girls into society. The name of the project has changed to Kicking Girls in the meantime. Overall, the project follows the central themes of integration, recognition, participation, and empowerment.249

The success of Kicking Girls is largely based on the fact that girls can feel safe within the environment of a homogeneous group of other girls. In addition, it is beneficial that the initiative is connected to the girls’ school, which is perceived as a reliable institution by parents. Female trainers are also regarded as positive, especially by Muslim parents. Through taking part in tournaments a feeling of team spirit and belonging is established. Playing football can further boost the girls’ self confidence in the long run and even work as a starting point for emancipation and empowerment. Projects such as Kicking Girls become increasingly important in view of the fact that the lives of a

growing amount of children with a migratory background are characterized through poverty, which makes it difficult for them to participate in Germany’s social life.\textsuperscript{250} It might just be true that sports has what it takes to at least change an individual’s little part of the world - often with big implications. As Michael would have put it, sports helps seeing the human being behind an person’s social background or color of skin. It is a matter of just doing something fun together without overthinking possible positive outcomes. Moreover, integration through sports does not need a new set of rules and guidelines or a granted refugee status. Often, all that is necessary is a ball and a sports field. Being one of the world’s leading football nations, Germany surely has more than enough of these.

5. Conclusion

Migration researcher Klaus Bade has once argued that within a reluctant immigration country it is not surprising to see reluctant immigrants. While the success or failure of integrating the refugees who have arrived in Germany since the autumn of 2015 is dependent on a variety of aspects, it is, first and foremost, Germany’s former aversion of acknowledging itself as an immigration country that still sets the tone. In the past, measures to strengthen integration processes have only been undertaken hesitantly, leading to severe consequences by negatively affecting migrants’ social and professional life and thereby also influencing the way previous generations of immigrants and the German population have perceived each other. These omissions might now overshadow the current integration process, as it is possible that the population’s prevalent tendency of homogenizing migrant groups has already led to a stereotyped image of immigrants being unwilling to integrate themselves, which is now transferred to the newly arrived refugees.\textsuperscript{251}

At the same time, Germany’s collective identity, which is still based on an ethnic perception of nationhood,\textsuperscript{252} does not leave much room for immigrants to indeed fully integrate themselves. Even if refugees were to have successfully completed Hartmut Esser’s levels of culturation, positioning, and interaction, they would still face the obstacle of identifying themselves with a society that determines Germanness with German origins. In the face of the present circumstances, it is hence necessary to give way to a new definition of German identity, in which all members of society,\textsuperscript{253}

\textsuperscript{251} Cf. Uslucan (2013), p.36.
regardless their ethnic background, are included.\textsuperscript{253} The fact that participants in the field study did not link integration with refugees becoming German gives reason for hoping that such a development is possible: Maybe it can be precisely the united experience of successful integration that not only forges a bond between Germans and refugees, but that can also allow for the creation of a new collective notion of belonging.\textsuperscript{254}

Overall, Germany’s socio-political environment is currently characterized by a large amount of obstacles that still impede the successful integration of refugees. However, this was to be expected in view of the short amount of time that has passed since the first refugees have arrived here. Yet, even though integration processes evolve over years,\textsuperscript{255} Germany has no time to lose with the promotion of strengthening measures. Throughout this thesis, the urgency of quick actions from the government’s side and the creation of a reliable infrastructural framework have become quite clear. More specifically this means the employment of more personnel that can help with bureaucratic issues, counsel refugees, and provide them with support during the first, crucial steps along the way.\textsuperscript{256} The earlier such measures are applied, the bigger their impact will be in the long run. The timely pressure, however, requires that Germany’s usual thoroughness and adherence to principles gives way to flexibility and pragmatism. In view of the extraordinary circumstances, it can be beneficial for Germany to allow exceptions to the rules.\textsuperscript{257} The planned adjournment of the \textit{Vorrangprüfung} can be considered a promising example for this, showing the country’s readiness for changing established orders.\textsuperscript{258} For the future, it will moreover be important that the government clearly expresses what is expected from both refugees and Germans.\textsuperscript{259} Once this is done, there will be more room for individual efforts made to strengthen and multiply integration processes.

Up until now, the few actions undertaken by the German government were hasty and lacked thorough planning, as the example of the new Integration Law has shown. Such measures bear the danger of interim solutions with unpredictable outcomes that are likely to be doomed to fail. Thus, it can be concluded that Germany currently finds itself in a quandary, being forced to find an adequate balance between the need for organized actions on the one hand, and the requirement of more flexibility on the other. While doing so, special attention also needs to be paid to the fears and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{253} Cf. Mannitz; Schneider (2014), p.88.
\item \textsuperscript{254} Cf. Truscheit (2016-03-13).
\item \textsuperscript{255} Cf. Heckmann (2015), p.82.
\item \textsuperscript{256} Cf. Brücker (2015), p.12.
\item \textsuperscript{257} Cf. Ehrenstein (2015-09-03); Thranhardt (2015), p.3, p.21.
\item \textsuperscript{258} Cf. Spiegel Online (2016-04-14).
\item \textsuperscript{259} Cf. Weber (2015).
\end{itemize}
needs of the German citizens. If this is not the case, the continuous dissatisfaction of certain parts of the population will inevitably lead to more prejudices against refugees and increased anti-immigration sentiments.\textsuperscript{260}

It is only under the above conditions that German civil society will be able to gain renewed trust in the government and be motivated to offer their help in enabling a successful outcome to a process of integration that is only just at its beginnings.\textsuperscript{261} This is precisely where the country’s advantage, namely the fact that Germans have initially shown great efforts in helping and welcoming refugees, comes into effect.\textsuperscript{262} As the findings from the interviews have indicated, the population is generally open-minded towards immigrants. Hence, it seems reasonable to conclude that - with the help of an adequate governmental framework - the German citizens are willing to face refugees with the openness required for a successful integration process.\textsuperscript{263}

In addition, participants’ understandings of integration have indicated that there exists a vague, but prevalent common ground when assessing the elements that integration comprises. Keywords such as tolerance, cooperation, and mutual efforts can thus provide the starting point for specifying the measures necessary to strengthen integration. This partly shared perception of integration on the side of the German population further expresses the urgent need for future research on how refugees living in Germany define integration, and what their expectations and worries with regard to the topic are. As integration will depend on Germans and refugees alike,\textsuperscript{264} an informed debate about the requirements for successful integration is only possible with the inclusion of refugees’ voices. As previously mentioned, it will also be necessary to address the impact of religious identities on integration processes in more depth within future research. This has become especially clear as many participants in the field study expressed concern about religious and cultural changes due to the influx of refugees. Moreover, such an analysis might lead to interesting results, particularly in relation to religious preconceptions among the German population. In general, the religious component within integration processes deserves to be given greater attention within integration research, as (perceived) religious differences between asylum seekers and members of the host society can complicate integration processes.\textsuperscript{265}

\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{261} Cf. Weber (2015).
    \item \textsuperscript{262} Cf. Fuchs (2016-04-08).
    \item \textsuperscript{263} Cf. Heckmann (2015), p.73.
    \item \textsuperscript{264} Cf. Esser (2001), p.1; Heckmann (2015), p.82.
    \item \textsuperscript{265} See, for example, Esser (2001), p.25.
\end{itemize}
Concluding, it is necessary to keep in mind that integration is not only connected to a tremendous amount of guidelines, rules, and bureaucratic paperwork. Rather, as the example of the Kicking Girls project has demonstrated, integration can often be enhanced in quite simple ways. Integration relies upon every single one of us - no matter if they have been born in Germany or just arrived here - to meet halfway, to open up to each other, and to see the human being in the person facing us. It does not necessarily require a grand gesture to humanize the other.\textsuperscript{266} Sometimes all that is needed is a friendly conversation with the refugee who has just moved in next door. Such actions can not only help to motivate refugees to be more outgoing, but also decrease prejudices against immigrants on the side of the German population. Finally, as Clara has expressed it in her memorable definition, integration is a question of our common humanity, of our shared need for belonging to a greater whole and feeling protected. Our heart will instinctively tell us what integration means and how to promote it - it is just a matter of listening to it.\textsuperscript{267}

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\textsuperscript{267} Cf. ARD Mediathek (2016-02-29). Uwe Hück, Chairman of the Staff Council at Porsche, has expressed this notion in perfect words during a TV-discussion, saying: “Wir müssen vielleicht mehr an unser Herz fragen und nicht nur an den Geldbeutel.” Translation: “Maybe we rather need to question our heart, instead of our purse.”
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Annex 1 - Interview questions

GUIDELINE INTERVIEW REFUGEE INTEGRATION

Icebreaker question
1. Do you know the difference between an asylum-seeker and a refugee?

Recent history
2. Do you feel that media offers you sufficient information about the refugee crisis and the reception of refugees in Germany?
3. In your opinion, how was the refugee crisis handled by German politics?
4. What do you expect from Germany’s political leaders in 2016?
5. Do you think that Germany is indeed welcoming refugees with open arms (Willkommenskultur), like the media suggests?
6. Do you feel threatened by the ongoing influx of refugees? Why/Why not?

Difficulties and necessities
7. In your opinion, what are the biggest problems that Germany will have to face with regard to the refugee crisis? Why?
8. How can these problems be tackled?
9. How can it be avoided that right-wing political parties and movements receive increasing support as a result of the refugee crisis?
10. Which elements need to change in order to promote a more sustainable integration process? (e.g. speeding up bureaucratic processes)

Feelings towards refugees
12. How can it be avoided to perceive refugees as others (foreigners)?

Perception of integration
13. What do you think is the key to integration? (e.g. work, language, etc.)
14. Do you consider it suitable to accommodate refugees in so-called refugee homes?
15. Can one learn to become German?
16. Is integration, in your opinion, connected to becoming German?
17. In your opinion, what does successful integration look like?

**Creative part**

18. Please figuratively portray what integration means to you and describe your drawing.
“Integration, in my opinion, means that there are no borders; that people are included into society. This does not mean that we have to become alike, but rather to value our differences.”
“Successful integration depends on a chain of events. First, there needs to be an upper limit in Germany. Other European countries will have to receive refugees as well. Then, refugees will have to attend mandatory language and integration courses, if they do not want their benefits to be reduced. Moreover, headscarves and burkas should be taken off. Integration also depends on having a “normal“ social and working life. Thus, children will have to attend kindergarten and grown ups will have to work. When all of those circumstances are fulfilled, it will lead to a peaceful and friendly cooperation.”

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268 Translation of the text in Charlotte’s diagram, following the arrows: “European upper limit; language and integration courses for everyone; taking off headscarves; going to school, kindergarten, and work; celebrating with each other and having conversations.”
Clara, 20, commercial clerk

“It does not matter who you are and where you come from. Emotions, feelings, events… These are not only things that make us different, but that also unite us! Integration works, if everyone opens up a little and recognizes our wonderful common ground. SEE, FEEL, ACT!“
Daniela, 25, student

“The puzzle I drew symbolizes our society. The yellow pieces are the German population. They all match perfectly and melt together because of their same, round inlets. The inlets, even though (as the drawing shows) they differ in size and shape, symbolize that all of the yellow pieces have the same values and norms. The blue pieces in the puzzle do not have round inlets, but square ones. Those symbolize the refugees’ various cultural backgrounds. Despite holding on to the square inlets, the pieces are adapting in a way that will enable merging with the rest of the puzzle, completing and enriching it. Overall, all pieces taken together form one bigger picture and every piece contributes to this. The colors were chosen unintentionally and are merely used for better visualization.”
“Integration depends on working together. Every European country, every citizen, politics, and economy alike need to be committed to integrating refugees. For this, it will be important that the wall in people’s minds is torn down.”

269 Translation of the text in Hans’ drawing: “Overcoming walls is only possible in a joint effort.”
“My drawing shows planet earth. In a functioning world, integration would not be necessary. Looking down on earth from above, one does not see people’s color of skin. One does not see, if someone is rich or poor. We are all human beings and each and every one of us matters.”
“The picture shows how three groups, which are displayed as three different colors and forms, are joining together to one big picture in society.”
Regina, 32, infant teacher

“The drawing shows integration within a social framework. You can see two families having a street party and chatting with each other. In the background, you can see the children of both families playing together. Overall, both refugees and Germans get along very well and do not only live next to each other, but also coexist peacefully.“
Reiner, 58, mechanic

“Integration is possible with a limited number of people; a number that we can actually manage in terms of available places within schools, the housing market, and the job market. Everything surpassing this will not result in integration. I cannot integrate someone who is unable to provide for themselves. Integration, for me, does not mean to provide for others. [...] I can draw the world peace sign, that is the only thing I can think of. Because if we had peace, no integration would be necessary.”
“I drew a desert and a tree with leaves, which, obviously, is very untypical. The world is continuously changing, meaning that there is a constant process of adaption taking place. To me, integration is precisely this adaption process. It means integrating into the existing system, like the tree that decided to grow in the desert, no matter what. Maybe one day, the desert will be vibrant and green again and the two components will form a stable ecosystem.”