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# MASTER THESIS

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“The Economic Integration of Muslim Women with a  
Migration Background in Germany Since the ‘*Gastarbeiter*’  
Policies”

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**Abstrakt** – Inmitten der starken Migrationsbewegung aus muslimischen Ländern nach Europa und insbesondere Deutschland kamen scharfe Diskussionen über die Wahrscheinlichkeit der sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Integration der muslimischen Bevölkerung in säkularen und christlichen europäischen Gesellschaften auf. Das Ziel dieser Abschlussarbeit ist es deshalb, die wirtschaftliche Integration muslimischer Frauen mit Migrationshintergrund zu verstehen, die sich schon einige Jahre in Deutschland aufhalten. Dies geschieht mithilfe einer Analyse von drei verschiedenen "Assimilationsmodellen" mit besonderem Augenmerk darauf, wie sowohl muslimische kulturelle Praktiken als auch deutsche strukturelle und rassistische Diskriminierung die volle wirtschaftliche Integration weiblicher muslimischer Flüchtlinge weitgehend verhindert haben.

**Abstract** – In the midst of high levels of migration from Muslim countries towards Europe, particularly Germany, tense discussions regarding the likelihood of the social and economic integration of Muslim populations into secular or Christian European societies have surfaced. This thesis thus seeks to understand the economic integration of Muslim women with migration backgrounds that have already been residing in Germany for some years. It does so through an analysis of three different 'assimilation models' with particular attention to both how Muslim cultural practices as well as German structural and racial discrimination have played a part in inhibiting Muslim female migrants' full economic integration.

*Key words: Islam, integration, Muslim, migration, Germany, economic.*

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## Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the data and narratives surrounding the economic integration of Muslim women in Germany who come from migration backgrounds. The academic and political relevance of this topic stems from a number of incidents and discussions that have taken place over recent months and years. Perhaps the most glaringly relevant event has been the the “European Migration Crisis,” where millions of residents of the Middle East, North Africa, and sub-Saharan Africa, have made their way towards Europe’s southernmost borders in search of refuge from political and religious persecution as well as more promising economic opportunities.<sup>1</sup> The height of this crisis thus far was reached in 2015, when more than 1 million migrants crossed Germany’s border alone. In fact, this author’s decision to focus this topic in the context of Germany is largely due to Germany’s unique history regarding Muslim migration juxtaposed to its current role in Europe’s migration crisis. Germany offers a rare chance to understand a country’s handling of current events through a comparison of its own recent history. In studying Germany’s history of Muslim immigration, we can better analyze the effectiveness of its economic integration methods based on the occurrences of former and current Muslim integration, so as to better decide which methods should be left as they are or altered in the near future.

The decision to focus on economic integration was made in response to the bias and often intangible deductions of political and social integration that are made when discussing Muslims in Germany. As nearly all of the migrants that have arrived in Germany are believed to be of the Muslim faith, discussions on the compatibility of Islam and Christian or secular societies have often been reduced to arguments on cultural superiority. Instead, this author seeks to develop more concrete understandings of the ways in which Muslim migration materialized in Germany society, particularly within an aging population that requires the economic participation of younger generations. These understandings are considerably easier to formulate when looking at the economic participation and welfare return rates of different populations than factors of a political or social nature. Furthermore, while this is not always the case, economic and educational integration are often strong indicators of a populations

overall well-being and belonging within a country, and so it is worth understanding the policies with which this sort of integration is associated.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the European Migration Crisis, or perhaps parallel to it, the events of Brexit, Donald Trump's election as President of the United States, and the overall increasing popularity of far-right parties across Europe have encouraged this author to explore the topic of Muslim integration in Germany. These events speak to, inter alia, the growing unpopularity of immigration in "western" societies – particularly the immigration of Muslims, who are often most notably identified through the sartorial norms of Muslim women (as the "burkini" debate in France made clear).<sup>3</sup> In response to the criticism of Muslim practices and, in many cases, of Muslim people, an oppositional "far-left" movement has also been established in recent years – one that is garnering the reputation for being so anti-populism that its desires and protests border on challenging the notion of free speech. As such, this thesis seeks to understand the issue of Muslim migration to Germany from a politically neutral stance, highlighting the concerns of both edges of the spectrum.

### General Findings

This study's general findings regarding the economic integration of Muslim women in Germany are arguably intuitive. As cultural norms are infamously difficult to adjust over short or even long periods of time, the expectations of men and women and their participation in the work force within Muslim countries largely carries over to Muslim diasporas in non-Muslim countries. That is to say, Muslim women with migration backgrounds in Germany participate less in the economy than non-Muslim women of both migration and non-migration backgrounds. The ways in which individuals identify is a factor to whether or not they take up work outside of the home, and the type of work they engage in. As such, cultural identities held by Muslim men and women, in addition to discrimination against those who many native Germans would identify as "non-Germans," may be the primary factors deciding the differences in economic participation rates.

That being said, economic integration cannot necessarily determine the degree to which one is socially integrated. In many instances, Muslims in Germany who have attained higher professional or educational levels are also more socially segregated.<sup>4</sup> Yet a large majority of Muslim migrants in Germany do wish to be fully integrated, and they are simultaneously faced with the obstacle of outward discrimination against them.<sup>5</sup>

### Considerations & Definitions

When considering the discussions within this thesis, it is important to recognize the particularities associated with each migrant and host society. That is to say that the conclusions of this study do not necessarily speak to all Muslim populations throughout the world, nor all societies that are hosts to Muslim or migrant populations. As written by Amelie Constant and Klaus Zimmerman in their paper for the Institute for the Study of Labor, “since immigration is the consequence of policy, migration policy is partly responsible for the types of immigrants a country receives, their economic performance, the functioning of the economy, and hence the natives’ perceptions towards immigrants. While attitudes and perceptions form or influence our behavior, they are also the outcome of a complex social, political and economic process, shaped through the engagement of the individuals in social and working life and influenced by public discourse and the media.”<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, as this thesis focuses on the Muslim populations throughout Germany, it is important to note that, for reasons of privacy, the German Federal Statistics Agency is not entitled to collect data about religious information.<sup>7</sup> As such, conclusions on the religious identity of portions of the German population as Muslim have been made off their original citizenship or that of their parents in the cases where this citizenship belongs to a predominantly Muslim country. There are, of course, problems with this method. First of all, those whose citizenship or background stems from predominantly Muslim countries are not necessarily Muslims, and in many cases may have left their birth states as a result of religious discrimination for their absence of Muslim beliefs and practices. Second, the term “Muslim” is not concrete in its definition. Individuals who identify as Muslim can fall along a wide spectrum of religious beliefs and practices, and in regards to the Kurdish and Turkish

populations within Germany, Muslim diasporas may very well be in greater conflict amongst each other than with host societies. As such, using the term “Muslim” in this thesis tends to toss a blanket over a large portion of Germany’s residents, unable to draw distinct lines between, for example, a Muslim who prays five times a day, dresses religiously, and abides by Islamic dietary restrictions, and a Muslim who simply identifies as Muslim but opts out of all or nearly all practices associated with Islam. It is even unable to differentiate by radical violent Muslims who profess their faith, and Muslims who condemn those very radicals. When discussing the ways in which women’s access to the labor market play out, these distinctions do indeed carry weight.

Furthermore, this thesis uses the term “migrant” and “second generation migrant” several times. It is thus worth defining these terms. The term “migrant” refers to an individual who has moved to a country from another country, regardless of the reason (be it seeking refuge from persecution, better economic opportunities, etc.). The term “second generation migrant” refers to an individual who has been born in what is considered the host country, but who has one or both parents who have been born in a country other than where the second generation migrant was born and currently resides. Second generation migrants are thus the off spring of migrants themselves.

### Outline & Methodology

The first chapter of this thesis addresses the history of Muslim migration to Germany. It begins with explaining Germany’s *gastarbeiter* policies after World War II as the first notable influx of Muslim migrants in Germany. It continues with outlining the further migration of Muslims in the 1970s as a result of the family reunification and political instability in parts of the Middle East. It then discusses how the breakup of Yugoslavia and the violence against Turkish Kurds further enabled Muslim migration to Germany, all of which speak to Germany’s ill-handling of migration and integration in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The chapter then goes on to discuss the ways in which Germany adjusted its approach to better suit Muslim families who intend on remaining in Germany, possibly for generations, and how the country has reacted to the most recent “European Refugee Crisis.”



The second chapter seeks to understand Islam's role in determining Muslim women's economic participation. It does so by exploring three conflicting yet commonly used interpretations of Islam among Muslim clergy as well as Muslim feminists that speak to whether or not a Muslim woman should participate in labor outside of the home. The purpose of this chapter is to better understand the overall topic from the viewpoint of the subjects rather than simply as an outsider keen on discussing Islam and gender, and so as to better understand the results that are explored in chapter three. The first viewpoint explored is that "Islam encourages women's economic participation," followed by the viewpoints that "Islam frees women from the burden of economic participation" and "Islam hinders Muslim women's economic participation." Each section pulls from Koranic verses or historical incidents in Muslim communities that represent the ways in which Islam has materialized regarding women in the work force.

Chapter three analyzes the actual female Muslim labor participation rates through three theoretical assimilation models. After the labor participation rates are presented, which paint a picture of comparatively lower labor rates for women in Germany of Muslim backgrounds, it attempts to make sense of those numbers through three different assimilation models; the Classical Assimilation Model, the Segmented Assimilation Model, and the Racial/Ethnic Disadvantage Assimilation Model. By doing so, the chapter discusses the ways in which both cultural stagnation as well as racial discrimination contribute to the low economic participation rates of Muslim women.

Chapter four, in response to chapter three, offers a range of policy suggestions aimed at countering the factors that are likely backing the lower economic participation rates of Muslim women in Germany. The policies are broken down into two spheres: easing access to the labor market for Muslim migrants to Germany and fostering a shared sense of identity for them as well. The first sphere speaks to the bureaucratic and structural obstacles that hinder all migrants, namely Muslim women, from entering the public work force. The second speaks to the ways in which identity and economic participation overlap, including the ways in which Muslim women may identify themselves in ways that are counterproductive to

taking up work outside of the home, or how Muslim men stick to particular, low-income professions as a means of acting in accordance with the identity of their group.

In researching and writing this thesis, a number of varying sources of information were consulted. For the first chapter, different news and government publications as well as historical reports served as the sources for understanding the history of Muslim migration to Germany, such as a migration report issued by the German Documentation Center and Museum for Migration in Germany and the Transatlantic Council on Migration. Chapter two, regarding Islam and its relation to the economic participation of Muslim women, was organized through information found in several books regarding gender and Islam, such as Ziba Mir-Hosseini's *Gender and Islam* and Christina Jones-Pauly and Abir Dajani Tugan's *Women under Islam: Gender, Justice and the Politics of Islamic Law*. The third chapter bases most of its content on the data research of MIPLEX and the study of migrant labor participation in European countries conducted by Anastasi Gorodzeisky and Moshe Semyonov at the University of Carlos III in Madrid, Spain, as well as German federal government reports and the European Science Foundation studies. The fourth chapter borrows from sources such as books such as Paul Collier's *Exodus* and Rachel Kranton and George Akerlof's *Politics and Identity* in order to give different policy suggestions regarding the problems presented in chapter three.

## Chapter 1: The History of Muslim Migration into Germany

### Introduction

Today, there are an estimated 16 million residents in Germany with an immigration background, about one-third of which are Muslim.<sup>8 9</sup> As the Muslim population in Germany increases each year, debates on whether or not Muslims are socially and economically integrating into German society grow louder. This chapter explores the history of Germany's immigration trends since the 1950's with particular attention to the development of a large, diverse Muslim diaspora. It highlights the different domestic and international factors that have contributed to Germany's migration trends as well as Germany's responses at a policy level, ultimately laying out the ways in which the support of immigration has shifted from economic to humanitarian rationale and to what extent integration policy was largely absent for the first decades of Muslim migration. Furthermore, this chapter will set the scene for the rest of this thesis by outlining the arguably tense relationship between the Muslim diaspora and the native German population of late.

This chapter will break up Germany's modern Muslim migration trends into five parts: First, the *gastarbeiter* (guest worker) policies, where Germany invited low-skilled laborers from different countries, namely predominately Muslim Turkey, to help meet its high labor demand, second, the family reunification and asylum-seeking period that took part in 1970's, third, the 1990's, where former Yugoslavian as well as Turkish politics contributed to further Muslim migration to Germany, fourth, the 2000s, in which Germany began adjusting its approach to Muslim diasporas and integration, and lastly, the more recent European "migration crisis," where Middle Eastern and North African migrants have constituted the bulk of Muslim migration to Germany of late.

### West Germany's *Gastarbeiter* (Guest worker) Policies of the 1950-60s

The first noticeable influx of Muslim migrants to Germany came from Turkey in the 1960s. After the Second World War, West Germany's *wirtschaftswunder*, or "economic miracle"

created a demand for labor supply. With economic growth rates of 12.1% in the 1950's, unemployment fell from 11% in 1950 to 1% in 1961.<sup>10</sup> The German government thus turned to temporarily employing foreign workers as a means to satisfy the country's labor demands. Italy, Turkey, Greece, Spain Portugal, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yugoslavia all signed contracts regarding the *Abkommen über Anwerbung und Vermittlung von Arbeitskräften*, or the Agreement on the Recruitment and Placement of Workers, sending over thousands of their low-skilled (mostly) men between the ages of 18 and 45 to be housed, trained, and supplied with means of remittances.<sup>11 12</sup> In fact, 57.9% of Germany's residents with migration background today stem from these labor contracts.<sup>13</sup>

These agreements were of interest to all countries involved—particularly Turkey. Turkey signed the *gastarbeiter* agreement with West Germany in 1961, leading to an initial flow of migrants from Turkey to Germany that benefitted both countries. Turkey, a member of NATO, was suffering from high unemployment rates that were contributing to its political and social instability.<sup>14</sup> West Germany thus had an interest in relieving its fellow NATO member from such pressure, and the Turkish government saw an opportunity to have its low-skilled labor force return to Turkey with new professional skills and knowledge after being trained in West Germany.<sup>15</sup> Turkey also saw the potential of remittances to boost expenditure, and in the age of Kemalism, it saw emigration as a means of setting off a process of modernization regarding gender roles and lifestyles at home by both affording the families of workers more social freedom as well as sending its more rural and thus pious citizens to be exposed to “Western” ways of life.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, German workers, as a result of this influx of labor supply, were able to move up into more favorable or qualified positions as a result of foreign labor meeting the need for unskilled work.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, the foreign labor forces boosted tax revenue without receiving welfare benefits, worked in harsher conditions for minimum wage, and were just as productive as their German counterparts, contributing greatly to West Germany's subsequent development.<sup>18 19</sup> Temporary employment of foreign labor was indeed key in making possible the extent of West Germany's post-war development.

Perhaps the first error made throughout the scheme of importing foreign labor was committed in 1964, when the “rotation clause” that was meant to limit Turkish workers to two years of work in Germany was removed from the Turkish-German *gastarbeiter* treaty. This was done at the pressure of West German employers who were upset with the costs of retraining new workers every two years.<sup>20</sup> With this adaptation, Turkish workers stayed longer than they had initially expected, essentially forming their own communities within West Germany. This was accompanied by measures that were counter-productive to societal integration, such as employing Turkish-German translators within factories, which made learning German unnecessary, as well as the creation of Turkish-language schools for Turkish children that aimed to facilitate their reintegration back into Turkey upon their expected repatriation.<sup>21 22</sup>

These measures, in combination with the 1966-67 recession in Germany, gave way to a less accepting atmosphere regarding the recruitment foreign labor. The first recession since the economic boom incited an insecurity over the employment of foreign workers, leading to a termination of some contracts and an overall fewer number of foreign workers arriving in Germany those years. Whether this reduction in foreign workers aided or exacerbated the recession is unclear, yet it certainly sparked a debate on the continued necessity of foreign labor recruitment. Between 1961 and 1973, the number of foreign labor workers had increased from 555,000 to 2.6 million, and in 1973 a ban on foreign labor recruitment was put into place.<sup>23</sup>

#### The 1973 Foreign Labor Ban, Family Reunification, & Political Instability

In the decades following the initial invitation of Turkish guest workers, Muslim migration continued towards Germany as a result of Turkish family reunification and political instability in parts of the Middle East such as Iran. With the 1973 oil crisis impacting prices in Germany, the government imposed a ban on the recruitment of foreign labor, bringing the *gastarbeiter* policies to an end at a time where Turks made up 23% of the foreign population in Germany.<sup>24</sup>

Nonetheless, the ban unrealistically relied on the voluntary return of non-European Economic Community guest workers, and essentially backfired in seeking to lessen the number of foreigners in Germany. While a considerable number of Turkish migrants did move back to Turkey, the Turkish population ultimately grew as those who decided to remain in Germany used their rights of family reunification and moved their spouses and children over to Germany to establish permanent residence.<sup>25 26</sup> As a result, although the foreign population grew, the labor participation of foreigners did not, implying Germany's shift from economically-driven migration policies towards humanitarian ones.<sup>27</sup>

The establishment of this diaspora served as a pull-factor for irregular migration of Turkish citizens who would then overstay their tourist visas and find jobs in the informal sector until gaining legal status through asylum or marriage. Meanwhile, laborers who had reunited with their families in Germany had moved from dormitories to affordable apartments, eventually creating the heavily Turkish neighborhoods seen throughout Germany today.<sup>28</sup> Turkish schools were established, and diasporas that consisted of conservative religious Turks (compared to the urban elite in Turkey that was in strong favor of Kemalist secularism and modernization) clung to Muslim values and traditions.\*<sup>29</sup>

German policies responded, again, with counter-productive methods. Rather than seeking to integrate the number of Turkish residents who had decided to make Germany their home, they continued to focus on policies that were intent on sending them back to Turkey.<sup>30</sup> In 1983, the German government introduced the *Gesetz zur Förderung der Rückkehrbereitschaft von Ausländern*, or the Foreigners Repatriation Incentives Law, that encouraged the return of immigrant workers and their families.<sup>31</sup> They offered the equivalence of 5,400 euro as an incentive for foreign families to return home, and approximately 250,000 Turks thus repatriated. Still, due to family reunification, the years following the foreign recruitment ban served only to increase the number of Turks living in Germany while decreasing their labor participation rate. Separate societies began to form and, with little to no effort being put towards instilling Turkish children with a German identity, a population of “bilingual illiterates” came to be.<sup>32</sup>

The end of the 1970's also saw the introduction of a new Muslim, albeit religiously moderate, diaspora. In the wake of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, secular Iranian Muslims, many of whom were doctors, political activists, and academics seeking protection from the new Islamic regime, applied for asylum in Germany. Men who opted out of fighting in the Iran-Iraq war as well as families with daughters who loathed the restrictive gender roles of the regime followed, establishing Iranian diasporas in Germany as well as France, the UK, and the US.<sup>33</sup>

Political violence in Turkey throughout the late 1970s also contributed to the number of Muslim asylum seekers in Germany. This group, however, differed largely in terms of piety and skill level from the originally more religious, less skilled labor migrants of the *gastarbeiter* era.<sup>34</sup> Yet the German policy response was, again, stacked against successful integration. Instead, it prevented the labor participation of highly qualified Turkish and Iranian migrants by limiting their legal status and not officially recognizing their qualifications.<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, by the 1980s, Muslim diasporas of varying nationalities and degrees of religiosity had been established in Germany.

#### Yugoslavia, Turkish Kurds, & the Asylum Compromise

Immigration figures remained modest in the early and mid 1980s. It was the late 1980s and early 1990s where, as a result of the breakup of Yugoslavia which largely affected Bosnia and the violations of Kurdish human rights in Turkey, Muslim migration towards Germany picked up once again.<sup>36</sup> By 1995, Germany had granted temporary asylum status to 345,000 Bosnian refugees, most of which have returned home by today.<sup>37</sup> Kurdish-Turks of Muslim background also applied for asylum in Germany, again pointing to the humanitarian rather than economic nature of Muslim migration to Germany after the *gastarbeiter* program.

In order to slow this migration trend, Germany made changes to its constitution in 1993. This "Asylum Compromise" altered Article 16 of the constitution to limit the rights of asylum to those who had not reached Germany by passing through "safe third states."<sup>38</sup> As a result, after the mid 1990s, asylum application rates in Germany dropped significantly from there on

out.<sup>39</sup> Nonetheless, Bosnian and Kurdish Muslim diasporas took form in these years, contributing to the diverse origins of Germany's Muslim population.

### Germany Adjusts its Approach

In the 2000s, despite the subsiding flows of Muslim migration towards Germany, the German government took a series of steps to encourage the linguistic and cultural integration of its foreign population.<sup>40 41</sup> In the year 2000, Germany enabled dual citizenship based on birth and residency (*jus soli*) rather than blood (*jus sanguis*), leading to 187,000 residents with immigration backgrounds to apply for German citizenship. This option, under the Nationalization Act, was available for those who had at least eight years of legal residence in Germany.<sup>42</sup> The largest group by far to apply for citizenship under this act by 2010 were former Turkish citizens, and the third, fifth, and seventh largest group were Iraqis, Afghans, and Iranians.<sup>43</sup> This gave German-born Muslims of migration backgrounds the opportunity to adopt an official German identity, which would arguably be Germany's first formalized attempt at integrating Muslim residents into German society. In fact, today MIPEX rates Germany to have one of the highest scores regarding access to citizenship for migrants and their children.<sup>44</sup>

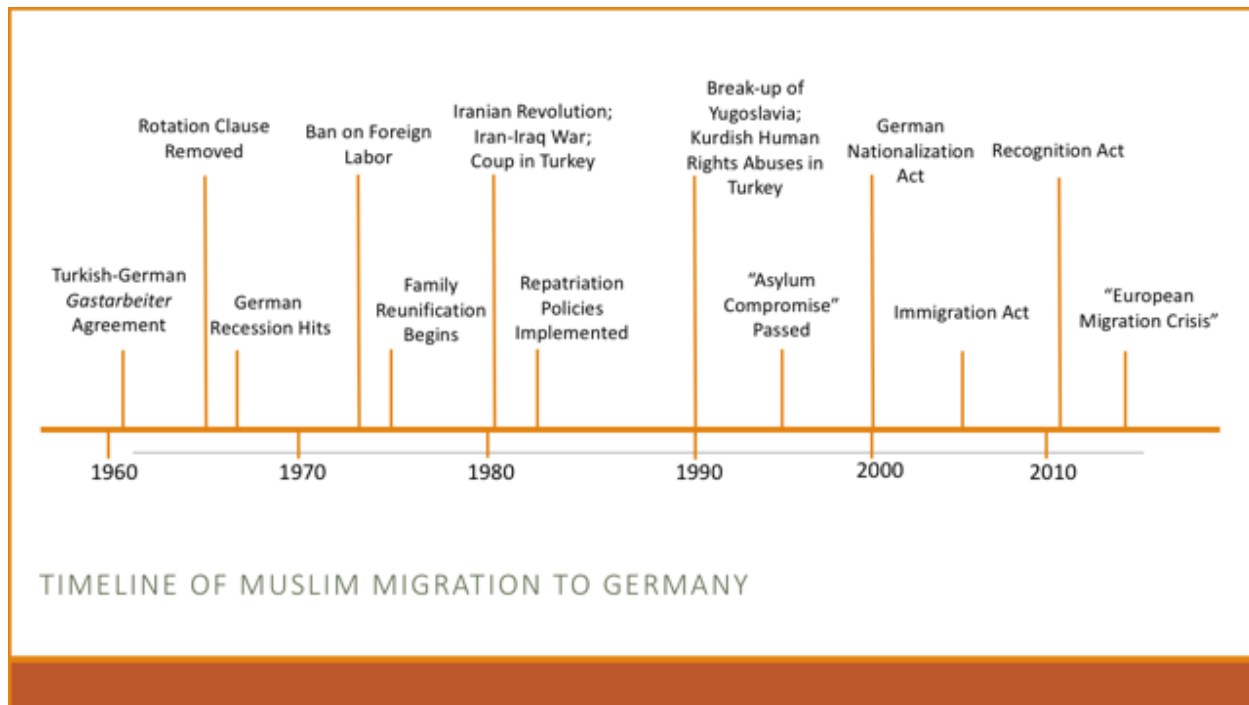
In 2005, Germany passed the Immigration Act, which further stressed the need for immigrants in Germany to learn the language and follow the customs and laws of German society. In the first five years of the act, the German government invested one billion euros into mandatory integration courses, which resulted in 35,634 graduation certificates.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, a 2003 Program for International Students Assessment (PISA) study suggested the educational success of students in Germany was linked heavily to the immigration background of his or her family.<sup>46</sup> It stated "that 15-year-olds who come from families in which Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian or Turkish or Kurdish is spoken and who attend a school in Germany exhibit lower reading competence than comparison groups in Norway, Austria, Sweden and Switzerland". The results of the study also made it clear that children of Turkish origin use German in day-to-day activities only "to a relatively small extent."<sup>47</sup>



In response to this study, Germany held its first Integration Summit in 2006 in which the Federal Chancellor, religious representatives and communities, media, unions, sport associations, employers, charitable organizations and migrants took part. This Summit led to the development of the national integration plan, which focused on creating a dialogue with Muslims. As a result, the first Islam Summit also took place in 2006 in which the Government, Muslim associations and individuals participated.<sup>48</sup> In recent years, the educational success discrepancy between students of immigrant and non-immigrant backgrounds has grown smaller, but non-immigrant background students still score significantly higher than immigrant background students in all tested fields.<sup>49</sup>

In 2008, Germany further displayed a tendency towards integration policies by introducing a naturalization test, requiring the correct answering of 17 of 33 questions to receive German citizenship. Seeing as though the questions are all related to German language, law society, culture, and history, this test aimed to ease the integration of immigrants by requiring them to first understand the basics of German identity. Although a controversial introduction to the citizenship path, it spoke to Germany's understanding that migrants were no longer arriving for temporary periods, and that measures needed to be taken to ensure their sense of belonging into German society.<sup>50</sup>

The follow years saw Germany's further adjustments regarding treatment of migrant populations. In 2012, Germany passed the Recognition Act, easing the process for foreign workers of exceptionally high skill to have their academic and professional credentials recognized by the German state. That same year, Germany passed an act targeting racial profiling in employment, thus publicly acknowledging the disadvantages faced by Germans of foreign backgrounds and seeking to minimize those difficulties by punishing their executors. More recently in 2014, one of Germany's policies allowed dual nationality (with certain restrictions) for second-generation Germans of non-European ethnic backgrounds.<sup>51</sup>



### Europe's Refugee Crisis

The first decade of the new millennium was quiet regarding Muslim migration to Germany. For example, every year since 2006, more German residents of Turkish background have been leaving Germany than arriving, and the number of asylum applications by Turkish immigrants fell from 9,575 in 2002 to 1,457 in 2012 – numbers that this author expects to once again grow in response to the development of Turkish politics over the last year.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, the number of naturalizations from residents with Turkish backgrounds to German citizenship has been falling annually.<sup>53</sup> Yet with political unrest in the Middle East, particularly Syria, Germany saw as many as one million Muslims cross its borders in 2015 in what came to be known as the "Migration Crisis," bringing the question of Islam and its cohesion with German society back into light.<sup>54</sup>

New arrivals to Europe came from the Middle East and North Africa, most of which sought resettlement in Germany.<sup>55</sup> As such, Germany received the most asylum applications than any other European state in 2015, including half of all Syrian refugees in the EU<sup>56</sup>. Afghani,

Iraqi, and Pakistani migrants also contributed to the large numbers of Muslim migrants into Germany that year. In response, German policy and a large portion of German society initially created a comparatively welcoming atmosphere for incoming migrants, cheering their arrivals at train stations and donating scores of clothes, food, and in fewer cases, housing.<sup>57</sup> German Chancellor Angela Merkel further officially welcomed the migration of Muslim asylum seekers to Germany.<sup>58</sup>

Yet while some portions of the German population were welcoming to incoming Muslim migrants, others were not. *Alternativ für Deutschland* (AFD), a far-right political party in Germany, as well as PEGIDA, the anti-Muslim immigration movement that originated in East Germany, protested the arrival of Muslim immigrants throughout the Migration Crisis. The AFD gained popularity in elections, speaking to the segments of German society who agreed with their anti-immigration platform, while PEGIDA gained members.<sup>59</sup> Terror attacks committed by alleged ISIS members across Europe throughout 2015 and 2016 further contributed to anti-Muslim sentiments in Germany, and the Cologne Attacks on New Year's Eve, which consisted of hundreds of men of North African and Middle Eastern backgrounds molesting women throughout Cologne and other German cities, reignited the debate on whether or not Muslim men can co-exist in a society that values women's sexual liberty and safety.<sup>60</sup> These incidents, in combination with the anti-gay and anti-Semitic beliefs of many Muslims throughout Europe, contributed to what is now a tense relationship between Muslim diasporas and German natives.<sup>61</sup>

These questions of societal value have thus led many migration researchers to question the outcome of the Migration Crisis on a number of basis. Yet the question that applies most to this thesis is the Muslim understanding of a woman's role in society. Although the Migration Crisis has led to discussions on immigration based in humanitarian understandings, the economic outcome of such migration flows has also been called into question and in some cases used to advocate the migration of workers from these war-torn regions, particularly in regard to Germany's aging population and need for both low-skilled and high-skilled workers to maintain a welfare system. Yet opponents of Muslim migration to Europe argue that, from an economic level, the religion of Islam does not allow women to participate in the public

labor force, and that with the Muslim birth rate being nearly 50% higher than the native German birth rate, Muslim families with multiple children and only one bread-winner (who is on average lower income) will have trouble making ends meet without governmental assistance in the form of welfare.<sup>62</sup> As such, while Muslim migration was initiated in the 1950's as a means of building the German economy, the rationale for such migration is now based in a humanitarianism that has no clear economic outcome.

### Conclusion

This history of Muslim migration to Germany was thus rooted in the country's economic needs. As a result of poor planning and enforcement, temporary workers became permanent residents, and Muslim diasporas formed alongside German society. The German political response, for the first few decades aimed at persuading migrants to return home, proved to be a poor response to the growing problem of parallel societies and increased levels of family reunification. In the 2000s, the government recognized the failure of such policies and began adjusting its methods in ways that would now encourage residents of immigrant backgrounds to start adopting "German values" in places where Muslim values were arguably in conflict with their surroundings. Germany's policy backtracking, in combination with naturally lower levels of Muslim migration in the first decade of the 2000s, relieved pressure from the debate on whether or not Muslim values could exist peacefully under German legal and social norms. Still, naturalization tests became more demanding, and began to recognize the importance of shared language and values in seeking social harmony.

The Migration Crisis, which reached its peak in 2015, brought the question of Islam and European values back into the spotlight. Frequent or noticeable incidents of terrorism, assault on women, and anti-Semitism have contributed to the division of the German population into two camps; one that supports the acceptance of Muslim migrants fleeing conflict, and one that strongly rejects it. With the question of today's Muslim migration being discussed in terms of ethics and philosophy, understanding its outcome in terms of good or bad is nearly impossible. Yet while questions on society are more fluid, economics tend to be rooted in more observable facts. The question is, then, considering Germany's migration laws are no

longer centered merely on economic success, what has come to be of the argument that immigration is good for the German economy? And, considering the next chapter's discussion on Muslim women and the various understandings of their participation in the labor force, in combination with the higher birth rate of Muslim women in Germany, what specifically will be the outcome of receiving hundreds of thousands of Muslim women who have arrived in Germany primarily to flee political or social conflict in their homeland?

## Chapter 2: Islam & Gender & Economic Participation

### Introduction:

It is no question that religion plays a vital role in the cultural life of different spaces, thus influencing a society's political and socioeconomic trajectory. As Kamila Klingorova writes in *Religion & Gender Inequality: The Status of Women in the Societies of World Religions*, "the status of women in society is an outcome of the interpretation of religious texts and the cultural and institutional set-up of religious communities. But to what extent?"<sup>63</sup> This chapter seeks to explore the ways in which religious interpretation has contributed to the Muslim community's understanding of women and their economic participation, particularly in response to the assumption that, because Islam may forbid women from being seen in public, their contribution to the tax system through labor participation and their integration through socialization within the work place are handicapped and thus contribute to their social isolation, further weakening both the economy and the sense of community throughout the state in which they reside. As such, this chapter will discuss the ways in which Koranic interpretations regarding gender, labor, and economic maintenance a) encourage women to partake in the economy b) free women from the "burden" of providing economic maintenance for herself or her family and/or c) prohibit or hinder women's participation in the economy. This section will thus explore the conflicting understandings of Islam and its regulations on female labor participation in an attempt to better understand the connection between Islam and the economic participation of Muslim women.

This chapter is written based on three implicit understandings. First, when discussing the ways in which Islam benefits women, it interprets Koranic verses through a lens of "Muslim feminism." This is because many Muslims consider "Western feminism to be a 'derivative discourse' coming from an imperialist West infected with biases that seeks to delegitimize the social structure of of the Muslim world."<sup>64</sup> As the basis of women's grievance would then be within Muslim doctrine and interpretations, distancing oneself from Western feminism when seeking to criticize the gender discourses of Islam ensures greater credibility of the arguments within the Muslim community. This shift towards an "inside force" or a "from

within" perspective has been vital when critics seek to effectively nudge the Muslim community or authorities away from the dominant fundamentalist discourse.<sup>65 66</sup>

Nonetheless, Fereshteh Ahmadi writes that with an increasingly globalized online and physical community of feminists, "even those who never physically leave their communities of origin are more likely now to evaluate their own lives by placing their rights, options, and restriction in a comparative and global perspective," thus blurring the distinctive narratives of Muslim and Western feminism.<sup>67</sup>

The second understanding that this chapter operates on is the World Bank definition of "labor participation." The World Bank defines the "labor force participation rate" as "the proportion of the population ages 15 and older that is economically active: all people who supply labor for the production of goods and services during a specified period."<sup>68</sup> This definition excludes the rate of workers who perform household duties within their own home, such as cleaning, childrearing, cooking, and other forms of housekeeping. This chapter, and this entire thesis, will also exclude the housekeeping of one's own home when discussing Muslim women's labor participation rate. The reason for such exclusion is based on the idea that, when questioning the labor participation of Muslim women, one is often doing so less in order to understand the ways in which she is contributing to the functioning of an economy and more to understand the ways in which her community's religious beliefs may be hindering the maintenance or development of both her own livelihood as well as the maintenance or development of a successful welfare state—one in which there is a shared identity and generally equal concern for and contribution to public wellbeing. As such, even in instances where Islam "encourages" women's economic participation through demanding wages for household work, this interpretation does not contribute to Muslim women's economic or social integration at a state-level. Women thus constitute their own dimension of integration measurements, particularly because matters of women are believed to go beyond the public eye and into the home and familial structure of migrant families.<sup>69</sup> In other words, it is much easier to teach a migrant the German language and note his use of it in public spaces than it is to teach him the values of gender equality and observe his practice of them within the walls of his home.

The third implicit understanding of this chapter is regarding the vacillation between understanding the Muslim world as a homogenized culture while still seeking to distinguish between various realities of the status of women within different states and diasporas. For example, while the predominately Muslim region of the Middle East and North Africa consists of the lowest female labor participation rates of any region in the world, labor rates within these states can vary greatly and in some cases even compete with the labor rates of Western developed countries.<sup>70</sup> Iraq, for instance, with 97% of its citizens being Muslim, had a female labor participation rate of 15% in 2014. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, maintains 99.2% Muslim population and recorded a 64% female labor participation rate in the same year, higher than that of states that are considered trailblazers in matters of gender equality such as Sweden (60%), Canada (61%), and Norway (61%).<sup>71</sup> These findings speak to the truth that, while religion is a strong factor in determining the economic status of women within a state or diaspora, it is certainly not the only factor – which I will further discuss in Chapter 3 regarding different models of integration. A state’s modern political history, level of economic development, and legal structures must, in many cases, be taken into consideration with equal weight when seeking to understand factors influencing women’s participation in the work force.<sup>72</sup> Still, considering the Muslim world does in fact have a noticeably lower female labor participation rate of 22% compared to Europe and North America’s rates of 51% and 57%, religious influences cannot be dismissed as irrelevant or non-explanatory.<sup>73</sup>

A fourth and brief implicit understanding worth mentioning is that, despite comparing the economic situations of women in Muslim and non-Muslim countries and cultures, those of the “West” are certainly not perfect examples of the ways in which men and women are equal regarding their participation in the work force. In 2015, Germany felt the need to pass the “Law on Equal Participation of Women and Men in Leadership Positions in the Private and Public Sector,” meant to ensure that at least 30% of all supervisory board positions in Germany’s largest companies are held by women – noticeably lower than a rate of equality.<sup>74</sup> And while the proportion of women in supervisory boards and management positions in the Western world is painfully lower than the halfway mark, women in middle-management and



lower positions have and continue to report instances of discrimination and harassment in the work place primarily as a result of their gender.<sup>75</sup>

### Argument 1: The Ways in Which Islam Encourages Women's Economic Participation

Today, there are number of Koranic interpretations that ultimately encourage women to take on roles in the public work force. I will discuss these interpretations in the form of historical precedents as well as Koranic verses and interpretations regarding gender equality and sartorial mandates or recommendations.

The historical precedents of Muslim women's participation in the labor force speak to the ways in which Islam promotes the act rather than forbids or hinders it. This can be seen, for example, in 1800s Egypt, where Muslim jurist Ibn Abidin held that under Sharia Law, a woman "had the right to work even without the consent of her husband, as long as it was during the day."<sup>76</sup> He argued this based on two Islamic understandings; first, that allowing women to work kept them from giving in to "devilish temptations," and second, that women's choice to work was a matter of social justice and equality.<sup>77</sup> He further argued that when Muslim women divorced, their spouses were responsible for providing enough money for their children's daycare so that the woman could work throughout the day, rather than be financially dependent on her ex-spouse.<sup>78</sup> These readings relied on his interpretations of Sura 49:13, which states that all human beings are equal, and none should be classified based on sexual classification.<sup>79</sup>

Further historical demonstrations of Muslim women working can be found in Tunisia, albeit centuries ago around the year 700. Tunisian women had a monopoly over certain commercial work, such as door-to-door sales and the teaching of carpet weaving.<sup>80</sup> In fact, entire reputations of families in Tunisia were built around the capabilities of their women, and the wealth these women earned through different apprenticeships and masteries went towards sustaining their husbands and children.

More recent developments in the Muslim community regarding women's lifestyles have also spoken to their economic freedom in ways that even the United States of America are still grappling with. For example, interpretations by both Iranian and Egyptian Muslim scholars have maintained that contraception in no way conflicts with Islamic law.<sup>81</sup> Birth control methods were deemed to be in accordance with Sharia in 1937 by Egyptian Mufti Abdal Majid Salim and in 1953 a commission of Al Azhar University in Cairo issued a fatwa saying the same thing.<sup>82</sup> These interpretations have allowed Muslim women more control over their own bodies so that they are able to both postpone parenthood and pursue professional endeavors while also limiting the number of children born within a family, thus necessitating less time spent towards childrearing and more towards the personal and professional development of the woman herself. The United States government, particularly members of the Republican Party, is meanwhile in a state of ambivalence regarding the level of access a woman should legally have to birth control.

Further promotions of female labor participation can be found in the Koranic verses of Nisa 32, 65:6 and 2:333, all of which speak to the ideas that women and men should be entitled to keep what they earn for themselves (implying that they are already participating in some type of labor that yields payment), and that husbands should indeed pay wives for their efforts in childrearing and housekeeping, although we have briefly discussed the ways in which this does not necessarily address the underlying reasons for which the question of Muslim female labor participation is put forth.<sup>83</sup><sup>84</sup> In other words, the Koran considers women's household and familial work to be an essential form of employment and thus requires men to acknowledge its importance through financial contributions. Tahar Haddad, a Tunisian scholar of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, applied the Koranic verse of a women's right to demand wages for household work towards a broader understanding.<sup>85</sup> He argued that, if a wife must be paid for services in the household, then surely she had a choice to either work at home or to work outside the home. He argued that the principle of the verse is that if a woman does something to benefit her husband (i.e. raise their children or keep the family home), he must compensate her, and if she does not, he must not. As such, it was not her duty but her choice to perform these services, and that this choice extended to the type and location of work she would ultimately undertake.<sup>86</sup> In this sense, Sharia presented women of the world liberation

from widely held gender expectations held in Mosaic societies of the time. Even the German civil code of the 1920s allowed a man to threaten his wife with divorce if he felt that she was neglecting household work by taking jobs outside the home. The German civil code specified that wives were obliged to work in the household and men obliged to provide financial maintenance for familial matters.<sup>87</sup>

Interpretations of Islam's sartorial mandates have also been argued to favor women's economic participation. Some Muslim feminists argue that the hijab has legitimized women's presence in public by normalizing their mobility throughout public spaces and implying the moral correctness of mixed-gender spaces that include "modest dress."<sup>88</sup> Leila Ahmed, an Egyptian-American scholar of Islam and Muslim feminism, believes that "Islamic dress can be seen as the uniform, not of reaction, but of transition... the uniform of arrival, signaling entrance into, and determination to move forward in modernity."<sup>89</sup> Islam and adherence to its dress codes can thus be understood to offer women unlimited mobility throughout public spaces, even regarding work, contrary to criticisms of the religion on the basis of women's limited access to public, mix-gendered spaces.

As such, arguments that support the idea that Islam and women's economic participation are not mutually exclusive but rather related have been formed within Muslim feminism. These arguments have been further supported through the manifestation of women's employment as a *result of* Islamic society. For example, after the Iranian Islamic revolution in 1979, *Jihad Sazandegy* (The Reconstruction Struggle) and *Bassije* (The Mass Mobilization Effort) that was undertaken by the Islamic regime was designed to address a host of societal issues by involving Iranian women in the reconstruction of the Iranian state.<sup>90</sup> While women's employment generally tends to rise during times of war, thus mobilized Iranian Muslim women to rebuild the rural economy as a token of devotion to the Islamic government and community.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, Khomeini issued a nationwide commitment to eradicate illiteracy, not only employing women to do so in local mosques but also eventually empowering a largely illiterate female population with the ability to read and write.<sup>92</sup> Yet conflicting arguments within Muslim feminism also exist, one of which is that labor

participation is an unethical burden to be placed upon women, and that Sharia thus protects women from such situations.

### Argument 2: Islam frees women from the burden of economic participation

The actual act of performing labor can be understood in conflicting manners. Sometimes, performing labor can be fulfilling, meaningful, and necessary to enjoy the less-demanding aspects of life. Other times, labor can be considered solely a burden on the laborer, in which case freeing the laborer from labor would be considered ideal and admirable. As such, there exists the idea that, because labor can be a burden, Islam does in many senses free women from performing it out of necessity by mandating that men are solely responsible for the financial maintenance of his spouse and children.<sup>93</sup> Instead, Islam protects women and ensures that they are met with sustainable resources to raise children within the home, as domestic work should be their most preferred form of employment.<sup>94 95</sup>

Ziba Mir-Hosseini, an Iranian-born legal anthropologist with a specialization in Islamic law, gender, and development, explored a number of themes regarding women's rights in the Muslim world in her book, *Gender and Islam*. Throughout her book, she interviews different influential Iranian clerics regarding, among other themes, the economic participation of women in Islam. One of her subjects is Ayatollah Ahmad Azari-Qomi, a cleric of the first decade of the Islamic Republic of Iran who wrote the book *Sima-ye Zan dar Nezam-e Eslami*, *A Woman's Image in the Islamic Order*. Ultimately a "traditionalist," Azari spoke of men and women not in terms of equality, but in terms of providing one another with balance and complimentary attributes.

"The Creator has created men and women to complement each other. Both are independence and move toward a defined goal, but one cannot fulfill his/her duties without the other," Azari writes, "Men and women move side by side and with independent personalities, and complement each other in the division of labor and duties. Nowhere in the Koran has it been said that a woman's destiny is dependent on that of her husband."<sup>96</sup>

Azari essentially equates the value of labor of a man and a woman, implying that a woman who does not work is in no way “less” than her husband who works, but is instead vital in enabling both man and woman to perform Islamic duties. Here, Azari relieves women of the need to work outside the home by assigning them alternative duties as Muslims.

“Woman has appropriated the privilege of carrying the child and rearing it for a long period. Men and women have shared and specific duties and roles in the conception and rearing of children... Heavy jobs are assigned to men and light and delicate jobs to women; but they are the same in human value and greatness. The advantage of divine religions... is that men’s and women’s duties and responsibilities stem from their creation and nature; so all responsibilities are given to men,” he writes.<sup>97</sup> As such, while assigning women meaningful roles in the context of the family, he simultaneously excuses them from undertaking ultimate responsibility for the family’s success, instead placing that burden on men. While some, in fact many, would consider this to be unnecessarily paternalistic and condescending towards women who are perfectly capable of undertaking both familial and external responsibilities—and in often times, women *do* undertake the responsibility for the family’s wellbeing—others could consider this relative absence of responsibility to be a freedom issued only to women at the expense of men.

Azari also references the controversial idea that women should stay home by rejecting it. “Men and women believers are components of an Islamic collectivity and responsible to others. If ladies always stay at home,” he writes, “the important duty of ‘enjoining good and forbidding evil’—which heads all duties—will be left unperformed... Women’s presence in armed conflict is not obligatory, but this, and their participation in medical work, nursing, and other behind-the-lines tasks, are among their most important duties. Likewise, in early Islam women took part in treating the wounded.”<sup>98</sup>

Interestingly enough, Azari then does not support the idea that women should remain home at all costs, and even believes that doing so inhibits them from performing Muslim duties. As such, with Azari, we come across the Muslim understanding that while men and women should contribute in different ways to the well being of a family, and while a woman should

tend to childrearing rather than men, this does not mean that women are confined to the walls of the home, but instead means that they must, in order to fulfil their Muslim duties, be able and willing to go beyond their homes. This provides women with the liberty of mobility while freeing them from the burdens of labor and responsibility—a freedom he believes doesn't exist in Western countries.

“In capitalist countries,” he writes, “where their greedy men’s only object is to acquire more capital and to exploit the rest, including women, in the beautiful and magnificent name of ‘equality for men and women,’ women suffer the greatest cruelty. With the pretense that women in Eastern and Muslim societies have been deprived of their human rights, and with the conspiracy that hijab is an obstacle to women’s social activities, men have compelled Western women, in spite of their delicate nature, to do heavy work.” In other words, Azari identifies a way in which Muslim societies have offered women an escape from the “cruelty” faced by women in the West—work. He further criticizes Western societies for commenting on the norms of gender relations in the East as a means of manipulating Western women into appreciating their situations and placing doubt into the minds of women in the East.<sup>99</sup>

Furthermore, in response to Mir-Hosseini bringing up unequal Koranic inheritance laws for men and women, Azari points out the ways in which Islam “gave women economic independence and the Holy Koran explicitly declares a woman to possess her own wealth,” how Islam has “instituted the right of mothers to demand wages from husbands for breast-feeding and caring for their children,” and the fact that a woman has a “right to demand that her husband pay her dower, however large,” all of which speak to the ways in which Islam has contributed to a Muslim woman’s economic freedom. “Provision of complete personal maintenance for a wife,” he writes, “is incumbent on her husband, even if she is rich. Unlike a man, who is bound to provide for his wife and children and his own parents if they are poor, women have no duty to do so.”<sup>100</sup> Islam in Azari’s understanding, has provided Muslim women with absolute financial security at minimum cost.

Although Azari speaks of balance within a marriage, his attempts convincing the audience are arguably unsuccessful, particularly when he writes, “the affairs of the home, which

revolve around pure emotions and feelings, are entrusted to someone who has them [women], and affairs outside the home, which involve reason and wisdom, are entrusted to men. And because the general management of the family needs reason, wisdom, and management skill, man is the ultimate decision maker and woman is the adviser in the internal affairs of the family and what relates to them.<sup>101</sup> Although Azari attempts to issue equal importance of affairs to men and women, his doing so ultimately generalizes the male and female genders in ways that are condescending to both and are rooted in traditional understandings of gender that certainly do not apply across the board. Nonetheless, in dismissing the possibility that the nature of relationships varies based on the constitutive individuals, Azari believes his interpretation of Islam to be one that is conducive to the general freedom of women.

### Argument 3: Islam Hinders Muslim Women's Economic Participation

In addition to the narratives that suggest that Islam either encourages women's economic participation or frees them from it is a third, widely held understanding—that Islam ultimately hinders women from participating in the economy. The ways in which Islam does this can ultimately be broken down into two arguments. The first one is regarding Islam's restrictions on the mobility of women in public spaces, and the second speaks to Islam's discourse on women and their primary roles as mothers.

In a survey taken in Turkish universities in 1999, 84.5% of female students were in favor of women's employment outside the home, while only 15.9% of male students agreed with the proposition.<sup>102</sup> This speaks to the way in which Muslim communities may dismiss the will of its their female populations in favor of the preference of men. The Koran states that women should “abide quietly in your homes.”<sup>103</sup> This quote has been interpreted in a number of ways, some of which have enabled women to leave their homes if it is with a “purpose,” which can consist of everything from going to work to going out to see a friend<sup>104</sup>. It has also been interpreted in stricter ways that ultimately limit the mobility of a Muslim woman to the discretion of her husband, stating that women being seen in public is a violation of sacred law<sup>105</sup>. In some conservative Muslim countries, such as Saudi Arabia, due to societal norms, women can often not leave the house without male guardianship, which of course clearly

inhibits them from taking up employment.<sup>106107</sup> In the past, it has even been common judicial practice to directly pay the wife of a poor man rather than order the husband to allow her to work outside the home.<sup>108</sup> Taking these realities into consideration, Ziba Mir-Hosseini challenged the notion that Muslim women are free of economic burden when she stated, “men’s duty to pay maintenance is defined in relation to the wife’s duty of submission; one can’t be discussed without the other.”<sup>109</sup>

Muslim understandings of the differing responsibilities of parenthood are also a fundamental part of the argument that Islam hinders women’s economic participation. “One of the main duties of a Muslim woman is, on the one hand, to care for the physical and psychological well-being of the infant and, on the other, to cultivate the hidden talents of the child; and these two important tasks cannot take place unless husband and wife regulate their marital relations in accordance with sharia customs... She must bring them up correctly with kindness and affection—one of the characteristics of mothers.”<sup>110</sup> In today’s world, it is not difficult to understand the ways in which this interpretation of the Koran would indeed hinder women from pursuing an economic role outside the home. Raising children in of its own requires an immeasurable amount of time, and to assign the role of parenthood exclusively to the mother, rather than to both parents, places the mother at a disadvantage should she seek to take part in activities that do not directly fall under the umbrella of parenthood, such as employment. Furthermore, rather than simply raising children, she must cultivate their hidden talents—a task that nearly delegitimizes the entire sentiment with its vague expectations.

Women are, in some Muslim interpretations, also expected to concern themselves with, “ethically speaking, housework such as cooking, washing, childcare, feeling responsible, and cooperating in making ends meet,” according to Seyyed Zia Mortazavi, chief editor of Iran’s magazine *Payam-e Zan*, or Women’s Message, which writes about women’s issues in Iran and almost exclusively consists of male writers and editors.<sup>111</sup>

As such, Iran after the revolution of 1979 was an example of where women had abruptly come to be viewed primarily, if not exclusively, as mothers who belonged at home. Laws



were reversed from the Shah's time so that they would now fall in line with an orthodox interpretation of Islam. Yet low-income families were often unable to follow these laws as their families relied on two incomes for survival, and thus women continued to work albeit while "modestly" dressed.<sup>112</sup>

In addition to parenting roles and mobility restrictions, Koranic interpretations regarding polygamy have also served to limit women's participation in the economy. In rural areas of Muslim countries, for example, men often marry several wives as plantation workers. Keeping them as wives is cheaper for these men than hiring paid labor, and so Islam and its sanctioning of polygamy continue to force women to work without actually having them participate in the general economy.<sup>113</sup>

### Conclusion

Having looked at 3 different ways in which Islam interacts with women's employment, one way of better understanding these ideas in empirical terms is to look at statistics of women's employment in predominantly Muslim countries. One particularly interesting country to look at is Iran after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. In *Islamic Fundamentalism and Women's Economic Role: The Case of Iran*, Roksana Bahramitash argues that the empirical data of Iran in the 1990s show increased employment rates—rates that were much higher than during the 1960s and 1970s, where Iran was ruled by a largely secular government. Bahramitash believes that his sharp increase in women's employment seriously challenges the view that religion explains women's economic status in Muslim countries and that the international economy is a stronger determining factor of women's economic role. This reasoning, however, is flawed, considering that when comparing the pre-revolution and post-revolution era, between 1976 and 1986, the labor force participation of women had declined immensely from 12.9 percent down to 8.2 percent.<sup>114</sup>

Female employment rates in Iran could have grown in the 1990s instead as the result of the resistance of Iran's secular population in the decade. Feminist agitation with the regime's traditional interpretations of Islam forced the state to change its initial antagonistic position

towards female employment outside the home, and with the Ayatollah's death in 1989 and the election of a new president, new policies and norms that challenged the previous government were emerging, thus contributing to increased women's employment rates in this decade.<sup>115</sup> Another contributing factor to Iranian women's increased employment rates in the 1990s in comparison to the growth rates of the 1960s and the 1970s could be that, in 1960s and 1970s Iran, female employment rates were stagnant due to their already-established numbers that had come to be within the preceding decades of secularism. The immediate aftermath of the revolution resulted in dropping rates of women's employment, thus enabling noticeable growth in the years to come, speaking more to a relative growth rate in female employment in the 1990s than actual growth.<sup>116</sup> Taking both these counter arguments into consideration, increased rates of women's employment in 1990s Iran occurred not as a result of the Islamic Revolution, but in spite of it.

Iran is thus an example of the several different factors to consider when looking into the relationship between Islam and women's economic participation. Nonetheless, with the exceptionally low forms of female unemployment existing across a region with a shared religion yet different levels of economic development, geographical resources, and historical politics, speaks to value of further understanding in what ways the two are connected.<sup>117 118</sup> Yet as this thesis seeks to understand the ways in which Muslim women participate in the economy of their diaspora countries, in this case Germany, the next section will explore the facts, figures, and understandings of Muslim women in the labor force of non-Muslim countries with a focus on Germany.

### **Chapter 3: Understanding Female Muslim Labor Participation Rates Through Theoretical Assimilation Models**

#### Introduction

This chapter will first address the labor participation rates of Muslim women, as well as other sub-groups and native German women. In doing so, the first part of this chapter does indeed reveal the extent to which Muslim women are less employed than their Muslim men, native German women, and even non-Muslim migrant counterparts. It also discusses the ways in which Muslims in Germany on average tend to work in lower skill, lower paying jobs while highlighting statistics that imply these same workers generally collect more state benefits in terms of housing, health, and welfare than other groups. The first part of this chapter thus concludes that, on a collective level, Muslim migration to Germany does not necessarily benefit the state's welfare system, but rather weakens it.

Nonetheless, as this may seem to be a discriminatory conclusion aimed at further stigmatizing the Germany's Muslim population, the second part of this chapter seeks to understand what factors beyond religious belief are contributing to the unemployment and underemployment of Muslim women. In order to do so, this part of the chapter will highlight the number of structural, cultural, and racial elements that ultimately work against both migrants as a whole, as well as specific sub-groups of migrants and their children, such as those who come from predominantly Muslim countries. This chapter does so through the context of three main assimilation theoretical models; the classical assimilation model, the segmented assimilation model, and the racial/ethnic assimilation model.

#### Overview of Muslim Women's Participation in German Economy

Economists who argue in favor of migration tend to do so with the understanding that most migrants arrive as a result of the host society's selective process. In other words, migration is clearly economically beneficial when states decide which migrants can enter based on their ability to contribute to an economy's specific needs. Yet as Germany's migration policies

have tended to favor low-skilled migrants from the start and more recently have been dictated by humanitarian rationale, the effect of migration on the economy has had less than encouraging results.<sup>119</sup> Muslim residents of Germany, particularly those of Turkish descent, are disproportionately represented in the state's unemployment figures with an unemployment rate of 23% – more than twice the rate of native Germans.<sup>120</sup> Yet while Muslim men of Germany's both first and second generations are nearly on par with the employment rates of native German men (68% to 72%, respectively), differences between women are hardly as encouraging.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, while Muslim men may be employed at a relatively high rate, they more than often take part in low-skill jobs that both pay less than the average income in Germany and do little to foster their social integration.<sup>122</sup> In addition to holding low-skill, low-paying jobs that consist of little contact with native German-speakers, residents of predominantly Muslim neighborhoods are often disproportionate receivers of state welfare and housing benefits, ultimately arguing against the idea that Muslim migration is beneficial for economic functioning of the welfare state.<sup>123</sup>

In a 2014 study by the European Science Foundation, researchers conducted surveys regarding the labor participation rates among different immigrant populations in 10 different Western European countries. The immigrant subsets were divided into male and female, first and second generation groups of migrants of European origin, non-European origin, Muslims, and non-Muslims, comparing their labor participation rates with each other as well as those of the native European populations. Among these groups, first generation Muslim women in Europe maintained the lowest labor rate participation at 36%, compared to 63.7% of the native European female population and 57.5% of first generation non-Muslim women in Europe. In Germany alone, this discrepancy was more pronounced, with the labor participation rate of first generation Muslim women being as low as 31%, compared to Germany's native female population labor rate participation of 62% and first generation non-Muslim women's rate of 52%. The only surveyed country with lower participation rates of first generation Muslim women was Belgium, a state notoriously associated with the poor integration of Muslim migrants, with 27%. The Netherlands maintained the highest participation rate of first generation Muslim women with a rate of 49%.<sup>124</sup>

Nonetheless, second generation Muslim women fared much better than their own mothers with a labor participation rate of 47% in Germany, higher than the rates of second generation Muslim women in Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and France, falling only behind the surveyed Scandinavian countries as well as the Netherlands.<sup>125</sup> While such a noticeable increase within a single generation is surely commendable, second generation Muslim women in Germany still fell behind the native female population (63%), second generation female migrants of European origin (66%), as well as second generation non-Muslims of non-European origin (64%).<sup>126</sup> In fact, in all subgroups surveyed throughout the 10 Western European countries, the labor participation rates of Muslim women of both first and second generations were recorded to be, in general, the lowest of all migrant subgroups and substantially lower than all participation rates of native-born women. The study thus concluded that, despite often being attracted to Western Europe by its demand for workers, “immigrants of non-European origin and the Muslim faith in Western European countries, even in the second generation, are not fully integrated in the labor market of their host societies.”<sup>127</sup>

In addition to maintaining comparatively lower numbers of economic participation, Muslim migrants of both genders tend to, when employed, obtain positions that require low-skill levels and pay below the average salary within Germany. Young Muslim women who do work, for example, often occupy positions as hairdressers, assistants, and secretaries, while young Muslim men largely work in the fields of mining and in the textile industry. Young Muslim migrants of both sexes are also more likely than German natives to seek apprenticeships in occupational fields and less likely to pursue professional certificates.<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, within the fields of work that Muslim migrants often take up, most businesses are “ethnic businesses” that cater to Muslim migrants and their families, such as ethnically oriented restaurants or retail businesses. Conducted primarily within their own diaspora, these occupations limit workers’ access to social integration through contact with native-born Germans, challenging the notion that employment inherently begets integration.<sup>129</sup>

Another component worth mentioning when discussing the economic integration of Muslim migrants within Germany, male or female, is welfare benefits. While it is difficult to

determine the largely asked question – do migrants, particularly Muslim migrants, ultimately put in more or less than they take from the welfare program – limited data on the allocation of city-run welfare and housing programs does exist. This data, based on assumptions that certain neighborhoods in different cities consist of predominantly Muslim residents, paints a picture of a Muslim diaspora throughout Germany that disproportionately benefits financially from government-run welfare programs and that has, between 2000 and 2010, negatively impacted the welfare system.<sup>130 131</sup> In Berlin's largely Turkish districts of Neukölln and Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, for example, the respective rates of welfare recipients of 14.3% and 13.% are far above Berlin's average 8% of residents who receive welfare. Some districts that consist of less foreign-born populations, such as Steglitz-Zehlendorf, have welfare recipient rates of as low as 4%.<sup>132</sup> The share of households in Neukölln and Kreuzberg receiving housing benefits is at 22.6% and 18.9% respectively, compared to the city's average of 14.6%. Again, although it is difficult to tie these numbers directly with the conclusion that Muslim diasporas in Germany benefit disproportionately from the state welfare and housing systems than native-born or non-Muslim residents of Germany, the figures do generally imply such a deduction, particularly when keeping in mind that migrant families tend to live in poorer housing with larger families.<sup>133</sup> Furthermore, residents with Turkish backgrounds fall ill more frequently from chronic, non-transferable diseases such as coronary heart conditions, infectious diseases such as hepatitis, obesity and psychosomatic illnesses. This, too, points to the disproportionate benefits Muslim migrants receive from a state-run, tax-funded healthcare program, ultimately backing the argument that Muslim migrants benefit more from than they contribute to state-run welfare, housing, and health programs.<sup>134</sup> In fact, a series of research papers written by Danish professor of economics Torben Andersen reveals that migration may make Scandinavian types of welfare systems unviable due to the combination of higher dependency ratios and lower skill levels of migrants.<sup>135</sup>

Taking into account that both Muslim men *and* women face similar difficulties in employment, housing, and health throughout the state of Germany, one begins to question whether or not all such particularities, and thus *any* such particularities, can be alone or primarily attributed to Islamic belief or practice. While the previous chapter made a

convincing case that the degree to which one adheres to Islam is inversely related to his or her advocacy of women's economic participation, and as this argument is best reflected in the empirical data regarding Muslim women's economic participation rates in Germany, it is important to note other factors regarding Muslim diasporas and their relations to a European welfare state that are seemingly unrelated to their religious belief. For example, considering that Muslim women's labor participation rates are still comparable to the rates of other migrant women, and considering it is the Muslim population on a whole rather than just the women who face greater issues in health, employment, and housing than native German or non-Muslim populations, it can be argued that there are factors that are, for the most part, unrelated to religious belief and interpretation that account for the lower economic status of Muslim populations in Germany, men and women alike. In other words, while Islam can and likely does influence the norms regarding Muslim women's labor participation rate, it is less likely to influence the fact that both male and female Muslims are highly represented in low-skill, low paying jobs throughout Germany. After all, Muslim countries throughout the Middle East obviously consist of doctors, lawyers, engineers, businessmen, and overall high net-worth individuals. It is thus difficult to attribute many of the factors that work against Muslims' contributions to a welfare state as a result of their religious beliefs.

As such, rather than seeking to understand Muslims' economic status in Germany only in relation to Islamic culture or scripture, this part of the chapter seeks to supplement the idea that, while Islamic belief does tend to lead to a decreased female labor participation rate, the way in which Muslim diasporas interact with their host societies rather than the ways in which they interact merely within themselves can be equally if not more explanatory of their relationship to their economic integration. Understanding the interactions between Muslim diasporas and non-Muslim societies – in this case Germany – can be explored in the context of three theoretical models of assimilation; the classical assimilation model, the segmented assimilation model, and the racial/ethnic assimilation model.

### Assimilation Models

Assimilation models seek to understand the different patterns of migrant assimilation into a

host society. Assimilation, a term that is often criticized by advocates of multicultural societies as being a form of cultural genocide, is also known as integration or incorporation, which in this thesis refer to “the process by which the characteristics of members of immigrant groups and host societies come to resemble one another.”<sup>136</sup> Economic assimilation can more specifically refer to the “rate at which the earnings of immigrants converge to the earnings of comparable natives due to their accumulation of human capital in the host country’s labor market with additional years of residence.”<sup>137</sup> As such, I will use the words assimilation and integration interchangeably, although aware that different groups consider them to be referring to different end-goals in a societal makeup.

While some migrant characteristics may come to mirror those of the host societies at a quicker pace or stronger magnitude than others, different diasporas may vary in the “completeness” of their assimilation process for a number of reasons. In exploring those reasons, the following models cite the factors such as the already-harbored cultural practices of diasporas to the structural barriers imbedded in a state’s integration procedure to ethnic discrimination displayed by host societies.

#### *The Classical Assimilation Theoretical Model*

The classical assimilation model expects migrant populations to follow a “straight-line” convergence with host societies, becoming more alike in economic status and social status with each passing generation. Noticing that Germany’s labor participation rate for second-generation Muslim women is 16 percentage points higher than its first, this theoretical models holds water in describing the main subject focus of this thesis, namely, Muslim women in Germany.<sup>138</sup> Yet as second-generation Muslim men in Germany have a slightly lower labor participation rate than first-generation Muslim men (67% to 69%, respectively), and considering the overall different labor participation rates for different migrant sub-groups, there are clearly more factors at play than the mere passing of time. Considering this vital shortcoming of the classical assimilation model, we can turn to the segmented assimilation model as a means of referencing the structural and cultural factors relevant to the slowed or blocked assimilation of migrant populations.



*The Segmented Assimilation Theoretical Model*

The segmented assimilation model opts out from prescribing a generalized expectation of migrant integration into host societies, instead citing that the rate and achievement of the different characteristics of assimilation are dependent on both the cultural origins of migrants as well as the structural integration models already in place within the host society.<sup>139</sup> This model is significantly more thorough in explaining the economic integration of Muslim migrants in Germany than the classical model. In terms of cultural barriers maintained by the Muslim diaspora in Germany, for example, the ways in which we have identified Islam to hinder the economic integration of Muslim women certainly applies within the segmented assimilation model. Further cultural hindrances, such as religious duties that are at odds with the average working norms of German society (prayers, holidays, special diet, etc.), or the hijab as an outward sign of adherence to a faith that is generally understood as “non-German,” also serve to limit the speed and magnitude of Muslim integration in German society.<sup>140</sup> One of the most apparent issues, however, is the absence of a strong grasp of the German language by second or third generation Muslim migrants, due largely to the persistence of their parents’ mother tongue in the home.<sup>141</sup>

Perhaps more to blame for Muslim’s lack of economic integration than these religious and cultural practices, however, are the structural barriers put in place by Germany’s integration and educational policies. Migrants in general often face an insecure residency status and lack of access to citizenship. Seeing as though today, non-German citizens living in Germany are often only allowed to take on a position if no unemployed German, member of an EU Member State, or national of an already privileged third country can be found for the job, finding employment has become increasingly difficult for migrants living in Germany. This leads to their further economic marginalization and that of their offspring.<sup>142</sup> Furthermore, some federal states forbid that a migrant take up an apprenticeship unless he or she have a residency permit. This leads to wasted educational and professional opportunities for young migrants who might otherwise be qualified for an apprenticeship, thus inhibiting their ability to take up higher-skilled, higher-paying positions.<sup>143</sup>

An additional exacerbating difficulty faced by migrants from non-European countries is that of qualification recognition. Although the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications Act was put into effect in 2012, and while the laws admirably intend to uphold a high standard for practicing professionals in a wide range of fields, migrants who have already achieved a significant educational or professional level often struggle to have their qualifications recognized in Germany.<sup>144</sup> Despite the well-meaning intentions of such a system, a lack of transparency in approval procedures and the exhausting bureaucratic process associated with having qualifications recognized makes it harder to integrate highly skilled migrants, thus relegating them to positions of lower skill, lower pay, and overall lower societal stature.<sup>145</sup>

In addition to these restrictions on the employment of migrants that can be considered fundamental factors in the absence of the economic assimilation of migrant populations in Germany, educational structures are also stacked against such assimilation. On a federal level, the difference in educational opportunities between German states also plays a role in the reinforcement of the economic isolation of migrants and their children. For example, Baden-Württemberg places a high number of foreign children into schools for children with learning disabilities – at a rate 3.5 times higher than other German states.<sup>146</sup> Such placement already renders them less likely to pursue higher-paying jobs, or depending on the level of their alleged disability, any job whatsoever. On a more local level, congested parts of cities that consist of a higher average number of migrants have come to be home to Germany's *Hauptschulen*, an educational system to which students of any grade point average are able to attend (thus usually being the lowest), essentially catering to the idea that immigrant neighborhoods are already expected to send their children to such a school to the point where they have unofficially been called *Türkenschulen*, or “schools for Turks”.<sup>147</sup> This early separation of pupils into a three-fold system has been widely criticized as discriminating against children with migration backgrounds, most notably by Vernor Munos, the former Commissioner of the UN on the right to education.<sup>148</sup>

While these regulations have contributed to the limited economic participation of migrant populations, affecting particularly those of non-European backgrounds as well as those with

cultural or religious practices that are at odds with the norms of German working society, a particular difficulty faces the practicing Muslim population: *Verfassungschutz*, or the internal intelligence service. Several Muslim organizations throughout Germany have been labelled as Islamist by the *Verfassungschutz*, including some that openly oppose the Islamist agenda, thus leaving them highly stigmatized and their members with little to no access to citizenship, much less to jobs in the public sector.

Although clearly obstructive of the participation of migrant populations in the German economy, most of these measures put in place by the German government can ultimately be understood to have good intentions in regards to the economic and physical protection of its citizens. By limiting access to the job market for non-Germans, the government is thus attempting to ensure access to employment for its own citizens. By establishing a 3-tier educational system, the state is theoretically seeking to best respond to different academic and professional capabilities of its youth. By monitoring and labeling Muslim organizations as Islamist, the state is likely seeking to both limit the adherence of residents to extremist organizations as well as to create a system that best responds to possible threats to a broadly defined set of German values. As such, these structural barriers are not necessarily flawed in their mere existence, but more so in their execution. The persistent misuse of such institutions, however, can be attributed to the third model of assimilation that this chapter is intent on exploring.

#### *The Racial/Ethnic Disadvantage Assimilation Model*

Beyond structural and cultural limitations to migrant integration into the German labor market is a theoretical model that attributes the heightened difficulty of migrants, particularly those of Turkish, North African, or Middle Eastern background, to discrimination based on race and ethnicity. A possible reason for this could be attributed to the interpretation of Germany's discussion on migration as security-focused rather than well-being-focused, leading to what economist Gary Becker defines as "taste-based discrimination."<sup>149</sup> In other words, according to this model, the success or failure of migrant economic integration can be largely attributed to the levels of racial discrimination practiced by members of the host

society, regardless of the migrants' religious affiliations, cultural understandings, linguistic abilities, or level of education. In this model, host society perceptions of skin color and the etymology of names are what contribute to the economic marginalization of some migrant populations more than others, and this model has been supported by a number of testimonials given by Turkish residents or citizens of Germany.

While Germany has a score of 58 regarding anti-discrimination methods on MIPEX's scale, one third of men with Turkish origin in Germany, for example, report feeling discriminated against in at least one crucial field of social life due to their ethnic origin.<sup>150</sup> Young Turks in Germany also make up for the largest population who say they have been discriminated against when seeking access to bars, restaurants, and clubs as well as been rejected by landlords when looking for accommodation and employers when looking for employment as a result of their ethnicity. In some cases, discriminatory advertisements for employment have been published in newspapers and on the internet through statements such as "Germans only." As for high-skilled jobs, particularly in the banking and insurance sectors, studies have shown that employers discriminate significantly against Turkish applicants. In the field of services, some cab companies racially distinguish their employees by enabling their clients to choose between a "German" and a "foreign" cab driver. They also report having felt discriminated against by police and in court.<sup>151</sup>

The existence of racial discrimination in Germany against Muslim migrants is undeniable. According to this model, such blatant difference in treatment by the German host society may even prompt a reactionary response among some residents of Germany with migrant backgrounds, pushing them to cling tighter to the stereotypes of their diaspora and adopt an "oppositional" attitude to that of German society.<sup>152</sup> Even more interesting, these oppositional attitudes can be gendered. For example, a case study of Muslim men and women in Germany revealed that Muslim women, in response to discrimination and stigmatization, can engage in "stigma management." Toed between the expectations of submission by traditional Muslim patriarchs, while battling the anti-Islamic sentiment prevalent through certain groups in German society, Muslim women argue in favor of more strict interpretations of Islam, while men are able to understand their roles as Muslims to be more

flexible and compatible with German values, leading to their accentuation of their Islamic identity.<sup>153</sup> Additionally, systematic discrimination can lead discriminated groups to “give up” in trying to overcome such obstacles, relegating themselves to lower standards of work and life overall.<sup>154</sup> This model is thus most likely to lead towards “negative” assimilation, or an increased sense of separation in economic and social stature between diasporas and host societies.

### Conclusion

This chapter has confirmed that Muslim women migrants of both the first and second generation are less economically integrated in German society than native born German women and men, Muslim men, and male and female migrants of all other backgrounds. While the aforementioned arguments of chapter 2 argue that restrictive interpretations of Islamic scripture may be a fundamental factor for this, it is important to note that, first, Muslim women’s economic participation is on the rise with each passing generation, second, the overall discrepancy between the participation rate of second-generation Muslim women is comparable to that of second-generation non-Muslim, non-European women. As such, in addition to Islamic interpretations, there are likely additional factors at play contributing to the gap between Muslim women migrant’s and native German women’s labor participation rates.

To understand these additional factors, we looked at three models that try to predict the pattern of migrant assimilation. The classical assimilation model, primarily stating that assimilation simply requires time, did not account for the varying experiences of different diasporas in Germany and Europe. The segmented assimilation model better addressed these discrepancies, citing that the barriers to integration are specific to migrant populations and host societies. The racial/ethnic model further explained the lack of migrant economic integration by referencing the ubiquity of racism and discrimination that certain migrant populations face within host societies. As such, while Islam is very likely a factor in the lack of economic integration of Muslim women in Germany, there are additional non-religious barriers that must be addressed at a government level, such as qualification recognition, ease

of access to the job market and apprenticeships for migrants, more nuanced declarations by the *Verfassungsschutz*, and more educational opportunities in Germany's less affluent neighborhoods. Furthermore, in order to ensure a greater likelihood of being employed, Muslim migrants will have to adapt to more secular-functioning work places that, in many cases, do not accommodate multiple daily prayers, restrictive diets, or face-covering religious dress. The responsibility of the host society in enabling greater migrant economic integration will be to challenge their own discriminatory employment practices that serve to further marginalize foreigners seeking work. The next and final chapter will suggest different means of achieving such adjustments from governments as well as migrant and host populations.

## **Chapter 4: Policy Recommendations to Increase the Economic Participation of Muslim Women in Germany**

### Introduction

While Muslim migration to Germany began in the 1960s, a majority of Germany's Muslim population within recent years does in some sense regard itself as German: 82% of Muslims in Germany surveyed stated their intention to stay in the country, and 89% find it important to continue the process of integration into German society.<sup>155</sup> Additionally, in 2015, Germany entered MIPEX's "Top 10" on integration policy with an overall score of 61/100, indicating that its policies "slightly promote equal opportunities and a welcoming culture" for migrants.<sup>156</sup> Nonetheless, according to a study conducted at the Institute of Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence at the University of Bielefeld, about 25% of Germans believe that "Muslims should be refused permission to migrate to Germany."<sup>157</sup>

The results of these surveys compliment the labor participation rates of Muslim migrant women in Germany that we saw last chapter so as to speak to a number of factors to consider when developing integration policy in Germany. The surveys imply that a majority of Muslim migrants in Germany are ready and willing to uptake the responsibilities necessary to further integrate into their surroundings, and they also illustrate that discrimination against Muslims remains prevalent enough in German society to likely counter Muslim efforts towards developing a German identity. Taking into account the influx of Muslim migrants to Germany in recent years, effective policy aimed at not repeating similar mistakes made by the German government decades ago must be established sooner rather than later.

This chapter will thus suggest the adoption of policies that are aimed at fostering the further economic integration of Muslim females in Germany with a migration background, particularly through easing migrants' access to the German labor market as well as encouraging a shared sense of German identity among Muslims in Germany with a migration background.

### Easing Access to the Labor Market for Muslim Migrants in Germany

As we saw with our segmented assimilation model in the previous chapter, there a number of structural barriers hindering the economic integration of female Muslim migrants, and migrants of all genders and origins alike. These barriers range from difficulty in obtaining a work permit to underfunded and vulnerable “immigrant neighborhoods” that consist of less-developed schools. In order to foster the economic of integration of Muslim females in Germany, as well as all migrants, the state must adjust a number of its regulations regarding access to the market in the first place.

For example, Germany has already adjusted its recognition of the foreign qualifications system in 2012 with the Recognition Act. Since then, over 26,000 foreign experts in Germany have applied to have their qualifications formally recognized in Germany, and 96% of those applications have been successful.<sup>158</sup> Yet barriers persist for a number of migrants who do maintain employable skills or academic degrees and have yet been able to apply those skills and degrees towards generating an income.

Considering a large portion of Muslim migrants who have recently arrived in Germany are currently registered as asylum seekers, perhaps the first place to start is by easing access to the labor market for individuals going through the asylum process. One way Germany has successfully addressed this is by adding 100,000 government-funded jobs aimed especially at introducing refugees to the labor market.<sup>159</sup> Yet today, asylum seekers in Germany face significant labor market restrictions regarding jobs, vocational training, and even internships for the first four years of their asylum process. Even when asylum seekers have stayed beyond 3 months (of which they are not allowed to work under any conditions), they face restrictions in the form of the *Vorrangprüfung*, or the law stating that asylum seekers can only be hired for a position of there is no German or EU citizen who is qualified. Asylum seekers are also not allowed to pursue self-employment, as they do not carry the necessary residence title necessary for permission to do so.<sup>160 161</sup>



Professor Barbara John, Berlin's Commissioner on Foreigners, considers the fields of employment and education to be central pillars of integration, enabling migrants to gain self-esteem and skills through work.<sup>162</sup> Implementing a work ban on recently arrived migrants immediately targets the self-worth and independence of asylum seekers who have, in many cases, been driven from their homes where they were once hardworking income-earners. As such, to both maximize migrant contribution to the economy, as well as to ensure that the integration process starts as soon as possible, asylum seekers should be given access to the job market as soon as their asylum application is lodged.

Furthermore, a way that work bans in Germany disproportionately affect migrant women is through the family reunification labor laws. Families who are reunited with asylum seekers are not allowed to work either. Seeing as though asylum seekers from Muslim countries have been disproportionately young males in recent years, their female family members who are seeking reunification in Germany are thus offered more restricted access to the labor market than the male migrants themselves, contributing to their long-time un- or underemployment.<sup>163 164</sup>

Another means of increasing the participation of migrants in the labor market, and indirectly the participation of female Muslim migrants, is through the proper spatial dispersion of recently arrived migrants into Germany's urban districts. As noted in Chapter 1, some of the first Muslim migrants in Germany began to move from government housing into affordable neighborhoods, creating heavily Muslim neighborhoods throughout Germany's larger cities. These neighborhoods, as noted in chapter 3, have come to benefit from fewer financial and educational resources than more native-inhabited neighborhoods.<sup>165</sup> This contributes to cyclical disadvantages in educational and occupational work opportunities for neighborhood residents. Furthermore, Douglas Masey and Nancy Denton, in their book *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, suggest that segregated neighborhoods can create the structural conditions for individuals to develop an oppositional culture that devalues work and education, impeding the success of their oneself as well as the larger economy.<sup>166</sup> As such, housing segregation can and must be challenged through a number of policies.

The first policy worth mentioning is fairly simple; federal and state money should be more funneled towards the educational systems of otherwise economically disadvantaged neighborhoods.<sup>167</sup> This would make them more attractive to the general German population, leading to their desegregation as families of all socio-economic backgrounds begin to inhabit otherwise racially segregated districts. This desegregation naturally leads to the better social integration and, coupled with stronger educational resources, long-term economic integration of migrants, male and female, living within these neighborhoods.

Another way to prevent the economic marginalization of the recently arrived Muslim population is to invest in the migrant's human capital through establishing state-funded residential educational programs that seek to reach Germany's most vulnerable migrant youth. A similar project by the name of Job Corps was established in the US which enrolled "at-risk youth" in classroom, practical, and work-based learning experiences, leading to increased employment and income for the program's participants. To reduce the program's expenses, Jobstart was established, which essentially mirrored Job Corps in all aspects, except it was not a residential program. Success rates were noticeable lower for Jobstart than Job Corps, speaking to the importance of reaching at-risk youth and placing them in an environment where they are surrounded by similarly motivated peers.<sup>168</sup> A similar program could thus exponentially help young male and female migrants whose education has been interrupted by the instability in their home countries and now the insecurity of their status in Germany. Doing so would further interrupt the cycle of low-income that plagues most families whose parents have been unable to achieve a quality education, and it would hinder asylum seekers' tendency to "fall behind" in their education, as is often the case for applications that take months or years in their processing. Furthermore, coupling these residential programs with relaxed work regulations could enable young migrants to take part in traineeships and apprenticeships, contributing to their long-term contribution to Germany's economy and their incremental development of employable skills.

Another way of challenging the structural barriers of housing segregation would be to, from the outset, avoid the establishment of "parallel societies" for recently arrived Muslim

migrants by dispersing them throughout different districts and states in Germany. While this is a controversial approach to fostering the integration of migrants as it speaks to their limited access to mobility, distance between individuals and already-established diasporas undeniably increases their need to learn the local language and form connections with native Germans that would otherwise go unestablished.<sup>169</sup> This would also circumvent the inevitable and ubiquitous housing discrimination that takes place between landlords and potential tenants, who are often influenced by unfair pricing to remain in “immigrant” neighborhoods.<sup>170</sup> Germany has, in fact, passed a bill that gives the authorities the power to assign asylum-seekers a compulsory place of residence for their first three years in the country, in a measure designed to prevent the ghettoisation of major cities.<sup>171</sup>

A final barrier worth adjusting would be the employability restrictions associated with the *Verfassungsschutz* mentioned in Chapter 3. Werner Schiffauer, a cultural scientist and Islam expert at the European University of Viadrina in Frankfurt, believes that the *Verfassungsschutz* “dramatizes” the threat of Islamic terrorism, lumping together Salafists of both violent and non-violent natures.<sup>172</sup> This results in the stigmatization of several Muslim organizations throughout Germany, often barring the employment of their members, as several jobs require that their employees be checked with the *Verfassungsschutz* database. By better nuancing the organizations that fall under the *Verfassungsschutz* list, organization members will be more likely to take part in German economy, specifically those of Muslim backgrounds.

### Fostering a Shared Sense of Identity for Muslim Migrants in Germany

As mentioned, Muslim men and women in Germany face a number of structural and societal obstacles when seeking to integrate economically. Several of these issues stem from the differences in perceived identities between Muslim migrants and non-Muslim German natives. Identity, consisting of a number of norms, values, and rules, is thus an important factor when regarding one’s disposition towards female labor in the public economy. While George Akerlof and Rachel Kranton in *Identity Economics: How our Identities Shape our Work, Wages, and Well-being* believe that “identity accounts for trends in occupational

segregation and allows us to evaluate policy,” Collier writes that establishing a national identity “may also be helpful in motivating the workforce in the public sector.”<sup>173 174</sup> An empirical study in the UK found that ethnic identity, heavily influenced by one’s social environment, is linked to their likelihood of seeking and maintaining employment.<sup>175</sup>

In Germany’s case, where Muslims from various origin countries form racial minority groups, society falls prey to the theory of longer-term racial identification formation. In sum, “if there is a dominant or majority group or culture and a subordinate minority group or culture in a country, individuals in the minority group will either identify with the majority (in hopes of being recognized and accepted by the majority) or they will develop what is called oppositional identities and fight the majority culture because they know they will not be accepted by the majority.”<sup>176</sup> In Germany, where Muslim values regarding women’s employment can arguably conflict with those of modern German values, fostering both the minority and majority’s development of a national rather than an ethnic or religious identity is therefore pertinent to proper policy design on Muslim women’s economic integration, and doing so can very well lead to a change in economic integration patterns.

There is a wide range of angles from which to approach the development of a shared identity among inhabitants of a country. The first one we will look at is improving access to citizenship for migrants in Germany. As Paul Collier writes in *Exodus: How Migration is Changing our World*, “citizenship is neither primarily about entitlements to government benefits nor about obligations to respect the law: it is about attitudes towards others.”<sup>177</sup> In other words, citizenship speaks towards the collective identity of citizenship-holders of a certain country, enabling them to share membership of a both legal and social group. With this in mind, improved access to citizenship for Germany’s both old and recently arrived Muslim populations may contribute to a slow but steady shift in their values and self-perception, including the ways in which they view women’s economic participation.

Currently, Germany is ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in MIPEX’s survey of countries that offer best access to citizenship for migrants.<sup>178</sup> For first-generation migrants, naturalization is conditional on eight years of legal residency, after which oral and written examinations on the applicant’s

German skills must be taken and passed. A clean criminal record and a commitment to respecting the German constitution, as well as giving up any other additional nationalities that are not EU or Swiss, are necessary for gaining German citizenship.<sup>179</sup>

For the children of non-EU originating parents, such as the large German-born Turkish community in Germany, citizenship is given at birth and dual citizenship is allowed until the individual reaches the age of 23, at which she must decide between the two citizenships unless, at age 21, she can prove that she has lived in Germany for at least 8 years or has gone to school in Germany for 6 years resulting in school-leaving qualifications.<sup>180</sup>

For recently arrived migrants who apply for refugee status, Germany currently offers temporary residence permits for up to 3 years, after which authorities will reassess the situation of the refugee's home country and determine whether or not permanent residence should be issued. Those who are granted asylum must live in Germany for 6-8 years and speak sufficient German before applying for citizenship, and when possible, they must also give up any other citizenships.<sup>181</sup>

These restrictions do in a sense limit migrants' ability to work towards developing a "German identity" that may better contribute to their economic integration. In having to choose between one or the other, German residents with migrant backgrounds develop "either or" understandings of their German identity, leading them to react to such limited options by outwardly rejecting the German identity. In order to foster a shared identity through access to citizenship, Germany should allow dual citizenship beyond a certain age limit or educational attainment for its German-born Muslim population. This will allow German citizens with migrant backgrounds to understand their values in ways that must not conflict. Similar Western immigration countries, such as the US, allow for the holding of dual citizenship, while US immigrants of countries such as India and Iran, as well as the children of those immigrants, remain highly above the average income and educational level, speaking to the ability to hold two citizenships while thriving academically and economically.<sup>182</sup>

In addition to allowing dual citizenship for German citizens with non-EU origins, citizenship should be made easier for recently arrived migrants who have no ability to return to their country of origin anytime soon, and who thus intend on remaining in Germany and building their lives there for the foreseeable future. While language and legal qualifications should remain in place when testing for German citizenship, such as attaining a certain level of proficiency and demonstrating sufficient knowledge of the German legal system while maintaining a clear criminal record, the minimum time that applicant's must have resided in Germany should be reduced. Doing so will enable recently arrived migrants to apply for citizenship earlier, likely prompting their efforts towards understanding the German language, legal system, and culture.

This suggestion goes hand in hand with Germany's need to offer free, flexible, and professional language and cultural classes to all recently arrived migrants who legally remain in the country. Doing so would directly better enable migrants to communicate with their surroundings and understand the ways in which German culture's view of female labor participation contrasts with that of their country of origin. A recent law passed in Germany, in fact, made language and integration courses compulsory for asylum-seekers and refugees, where non-attendance would result in a diminishment of government benefits.<sup>183</sup>

Nonetheless, Germany's capacity to offer such courses has proven to be limited. In 2016, Germany's federal government doubled its budget for language courses to almost 600 million Euro. This amount would only cover the costs of 300,000 refugees to attend an accumulative 660-hour course on German language and society. As a result, nearly three-quarters of recently arrived asylum-seekers will struggle to secure placement in one of their city's courses. Furthermore, as the courses offer only a rudimentary understanding of the language, migrants who are seeking to become fluent (which is arguably necessary for eventually identifying as a German) will have to continue their learning elsewhere on their own wallet. As such, the demand for asylum-seeker and refugee-oriented German language and culture courses outweighs the supply.<sup>184</sup>

Another means of fostering a shared identity among German natives and Muslim diasporas that has been discussed is the training of European Imams so that a European Islam can be established and disseminated across Europe's Muslim population. The necessary religious infrastructure must be in place for successful integration and social cohesion of Muslim communities, and Imams remain a significant influence among Muslim diasporas throughout Europe, though they have been traditionally educated and sourced from beyond the continent. This has led to a fear that a lack of "home-grown" Imams has left a vacuum of religious leadership that has been filled with ideology and interpretation that run counter to "European values" such as the equality of men and women, heterosexuals and homosexuals, and believers of all faiths.<sup>185</sup>

Akerlof and Kranton write that, if individuals achieve their "ideal self" and comfortable with their identity, then their utility increases and that, within this framework, it is possible that individuals choose non-optimal occupations that better fit with their identity.<sup>186</sup> As such, if Imams in Germany are trained to stress an interpretation of Islam that enables followers to, inter alia, not consider female economic participation to be anti-Islamic, then the likelihood of Muslim women taking up employment would increase. In other words, by establishing more locally trained Imams in Germany, the hope is that more moderate and representative figures will emerge, stressing the integration of the Muslim community.<sup>187 188</sup>

Thus far, Germany has put effort towards such developments. The Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs, for example, has partnered with Goethe University to offer an Islamic Studies program, while the University of Osnabrück offers a Master's Program in Islamic Religious Education so as to remedy the inadequate quality of the teaching of Islam among both teachers and community leaders.<sup>189</sup> The *Deutsche Islam Konferenz*, or the German Islam Conference mentioned in Chapter 1, was also a platform for dialogue communication and agreement between the German federal government and its Muslim communities.<sup>190</sup> These developments welcome a sort of ethnic or religious diversity without encouraging a drastic separation of identity, being genuinely inclusive to Germany's inhabitants of various backgrounds.<sup>191</sup>

A final suggestion on fostering a sense of belonging for Germany's Muslim population would be to better define, identify, and punish discrimination and hate crimes throughout the country. As seen in the previous chapter, discrimination puts Germany's Muslims at a noticeable disadvantage when seeking employment as well as social integration.<sup>192</sup> In 2006, Germany passed the *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz*, or the General Act on Equal Treatment, in line with EU Anti-Discrimination Directives. Employers are thus prohibited from discriminating against job applicants on a basis of race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, gender, age, or sexual orientation.<sup>193</sup> Nonetheless, discrimination in employment based on race and religion remains prevalent throughout Germany, and the upholding and carrying-out of relevant punishments must be held to a higher standard.<sup>194</sup>

### Conclusion

In this first 3 chapters of this thesis, we discussed the historical, ideological, and structural aspects of Muslim female participation in Germany. We came to understand the different ways Muslim women, and migrants in general, are discouraged from joining the German work force, and the ways in which the experiences of migrants within a country are in many ways a representation of the policies put for by that country.

While there are several cultural factors at play in the Muslim faith that inhibit women's economic participation, most notably seen regarding their lack of participation across their countries of origin, there is certainly something to be said for the ways in which German law and society regard Muslim migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees, and their off spring. Moving forward, Germany should seek to remove the structural barriers barring migrants of all sorts from taking up legal work. Reducing minimum time periods in the country before being able to obtain a work permit, allowing young migrants to take up traineeships and apprenticeships, and being sure to avoid the ghettoization of Germany's urban spaces so that proper educational opportunities are available to all inhabitants are good places to start.

Equally, if not more importantly, Germany must work to shift its social understanding of what constitutes a "German" so that non-ethnic residents of Germany can begin to identify as



nationals. Sharing in a common national identity can certainly help to bridge the unemployment rates of Muslim women and overall gap in communication between Muslim and non-Muslim societies in the country. Access to citizenship, language courses, and interpretations of Islam that are consistent with German values while actively battling discriminatory practices of employers, will lead to the better economic and social integration of both Muslim women and migrant communities on a whole throughout Germany.

## **Thesis Conclusion**

In the context of Germany and wider Europe's current situation regarding Muslim migrant integration, understanding the extent to which economic integration has and can take place in Germany is both politically and academically relevant. This thesis has thus explored, from different angles, the ways in which economic integration for Muslim female migrants in Germany have failed and may succeed. It has concluded that, while Muslim females of a migration background in Germany are noticeably less economically integrated in the public work force, the ways of addressing the discrepancy must include both the host populations as well as the migrant populations. While host populations must seek to counter discrimination and remove barriers that bar migrant access to the work force, Muslim migrant societies must adapt to the cultural and religious norms of host societies so as to best ensure that their profiles as employees are beneficial to employers.

In the course of the research conducted for this thesis, this author recognized several missing elements that may contribute to a stronger, more complete study of the subject in the future. For example, although a few data sets and analysis that discuss the economic participation of migrants in European countries were available, more thorough data sets and analysis are certainly welcome in the field. Data sets that break particular European countries such as Germany and France into their numerous states and accurately portray the number of residents with migration backgrounds from Muslim and non-Muslim countries would be useful to compare to the data sets used in this thesis. This information juxtaposed with the different laws and regulations that European states have passed so as to increase the economic participation of migrant women would also be helpful. When discussing identity, in-depth interviews with both Muslim migrants and native Germans would have been helpful. Understanding what specifically contributes to or hinders the development of a "German identity" for these two groups would enable better policy suggestions on the issue.

Nonetheless, when discussing the history of Muslim migration to Germany, this author concludes that the utilization of proper integration methods was neglected for far too long – long enough so that the repercussions are still being felt and residue from the separation of

Muslims and non-Muslims in German society is manifesting in today's refugee crisis. In other words, the inertia of such separation is strong.

Yet the varying degrees of which Islam can be practiced in Europe is also a factor that requires controlling for future studies on this topic. In some cases, being Muslim has little to no effect on whether or not a woman in Germany has access to the labor market, while in other cases, it is the absolute deciding factor. We saw the ways in which Islam and gender labor participation were discussed in chapter two, and so we saw the varying understandings that Islam can profess on the topic. Interpretation of religious scripture and how these interpretations manifest has always been difficult to categorize for societies of all eras and regions, and so conducting a study on how Islam relates to gender representation in the public work force can clearly deduce understandings from potentially unrelated occurrences. Yet if the rationale behind such deductions is sufficiently explained, readers can accept or reject them on their own basis.

In response to policy recommendations given in chapter four, those regarding the countering of discriminatory practices by employers of host societies are worth briefly touching on. Countering discriminatory practices is not only a question of policy, but a question of media representation. Often, Muslims are characterized in media portrayals as frightening, terrorists, or in many respects, anti-West. While this is on occasion the case, in most instances it certainly is not. Yet suggesting policy that regulates the media's portrayal of different subgroups is often futile. As such, when seeking to counter discrimination against migrant populations, civil society does play a large role that is difficult or impossible to police through government regulations.

In conclusion, while women in Germany of Muslim migration backgrounds do in fact have lower economic participation rates than any other religious or gendered subgroup, rates are increasing by generation to generation. This speaks to the success of the attempts of both migrant and host societies in Germany to reach full economic participation in due time. If Germany continues to remove structural and racial barriers for incoming migrants, and if incoming migrants continue to adapt to the needs and expectations of German employers,

then the hope that economic participation rates will be equal among all genders and migrant or religious subgroups can one day become a reality.

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Pledge of Honesty

On my honour as a student of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, I submit this work in good faith and pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sheeva Seyfi". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Sheeva" and last name "Seyfi" clearly distinguishable.

Sheeva Seyfi