Obstacles to Socioeconomic Mobility for Germany's Turkish Population

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## Introduction

Turks represent the single largest ethnic minority in Germany. In 2013, people with a Turkish immigration background accounted for 17.6 percent of all persons in Germany with an immigration background (Statistiches Bundesamt). Much of Germany's current integration policies have been implicitly designed with the Turkish population – frequently accused in the media of being "unwilling to integrate" in mind. The Turkish population also shares some important similarities that make them at least broadly comparable to today's asylum seekers, many of which come from majority-Muslim so-called third-countries (non-EU members). As Germany's immigration and asylum policies vary significantly depending on EU membership, this is not without consequence. Finally, Turks are considered to be the least well-integrated minority group in Germany.

## History of the Turkish Population in Germany

The first substantial influx of Turkish immigrants to Germany came as guest workers under an agreement between Turkey and the German Democratic Republic. In the wake of World War II, West Germany undertook a massive rebuilding effort. Faced with labor shortages, which were dramatically exacerbated by the erection of the Berlin Wall, the government looked first to their European peers including Portugal and Italy and eventually to third (non-European) countries including Turkey. West Germany concluded an agreement with Turkey in 1961. Guest workers, hailing primarily from poor, rural regions of Anatolia came to work in unskilled and semi-skilled positions throughout West Berlin. Confined to living in worker dorms or, in the case of Berlin, run-down sections of the city slated for urban renewal, guest workers were marginalized and faced discrimination. As temporary workers were expected to go home after a

few years, the government made no provisions for guest workers to learn German or help them adapt to life in Germany in any other substantial way. See undercover investigative reporter Gunter Walrath's *The Lowest of the Low* for an expose on some of the conditions they faced. Furthermore, Germany had long conceived of itself as a nation in which citizenship was tied directly to ethnicity. One could not *become* German; they could only be born that way. By default, then, Germany did not consider itself a country of immigration and guest workers had no path to citizenship.

Coinciding with the world oil crisis in 1973, demand for labor plummeted and the government terminated the guest worker program abruptly. But because 1973 was also a politically and economically unstable time in Turkey, and because guest workers who left Germany feared they would be unable to return, many rather than going home, instead brought their families to Germany via family reunification policies (Wilpert 2008). While the government began to provide incentives for leaving in 1983 which up to 250,000 Turks took advantage of, the Turkish population nonetheless continued to grow as a result of continued family reunification, which was permitted with few restrictions, and births (Yaşar 2013, 5). Only 3 in 10 Turkish guest workers ever returned home (Hinze 2013, 7).  Nevertheless, German policymakers remained insistent that Germany was not a country of immigration. Today, in significant part a legacy of the guest worker program, over one-fifth of the German population has an immigrant background. Of this one-fifth, Turks represent the largest group. In 2011 Turks represented approximately 20% of all people with an immigration background. In Berlin the figure was 26.5% meaning that more than 1 of every 4 people with an immigration background

in Berlin has a Turkish immigration background.[1] In raw numbers, there are approximately 3 million residents of Germany with a Turkish immigration background and, according to the 2012 census, approximately 200,000 in Berlin (Census). Furthermore, 500,000 of the 3 million Turks in Germany were born there.

## Socioeconomic Status of the Turkish Population in Germany

While it is certainly not hard to find success stories in the Turkish population in Berlin and Germany, empirically the population is still severely disadvantaged by most measures, including employment, income, and educational outcomes. What is more concerning is that they are disadvantaged even compared to other immigrant groups. In 2007, unemployment rates for those with an immigration background in Germany were 11.7 percentage points greater than the native German population. However, for people with a Turkish immigration background these rates were even higher. Working with a dataset spanning from 1988-2006, Hohne and Koopmans found that among immigrant populations, labor market integration is lowest for Turkish migrants (2010, 4). This is despite being one of the oldest immigrant groups in Germany.

In 2005, Germany made its first concerted efforts to address these problems. For the first time in its history obliquely acknowledging that Germany had become a country of immigration, it enshrined the responsibility to integrate foreign populations in federal law and began preparing a first-of-its-kind national integration plan.

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[1] It should be noted that much of what is officially considered the Turkish population in Germany and Berlin are ethnic Kurds who migrated from Turkey. Official German census

## Germany's Policy Response: Integration Policy

The German policy response to the socioeconomic disadvantage of migrant populations has been, broadly speaking, to increase integration efforts. What is Integration? According to Rinus Penninx of the Migration Policy Institute, "Integration is the process by which immigrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups." He continues, "this definition of integration is deliberately left open, because the particular requirements for acceptance by a receiving society vary greatly from country to country" (2003, 6). Academics and policymakers typically evaluate the content of integration policies by situating them between two poles, with multiculturalism on one end and assimilation on the other. Whereas multiculturalism policies encourage and promote the retention of cultural traits of the immigrant population within the host culture, assimilation policies call for immigrants to adopt the cultural traits and values of the host society. Patrick Simon writes, "Whereas countries that have adopted multiculturalism treat multiple national or ethnic identities as positive marks of a diverse heritage (e.g. Canada, the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom), assimilationist countries, with France in the lead, tend to insist on exclusive choices and consider the retention of an ethnic identity to be a sign of incomplete assimilation" (2012, 3).

## What is Germany's Integration Policy?

Germany's integration policies are premised on a classical understanding of integration, in which a migrant population gains social acceptance and socioeconomic mobility in the receiving society by adapting to the norms and values of the host culture. Such an understanding implies that if Turkish and other minority groups de-siloed from their ethnic enclaves, adopted German values and became more German and less Turkish, their economic and social problems

would go away. Fournier and Yurdakul write, "Many German state authorities argue that high levels of unemployment and low levels of educational achievement are related to immigrant incorporation. That is, in their view, once immigrants are better integrated into the German society, the problems of unemployment and educational achievement will automatically be solved" (2006, 175). To summarize, Germany's integration policy by and large views culture as the vehicle by which to resolve the socioeconomic obstacles facing the country's minorities. This orientation is reflected in an Integration policy, which focuses on "soft" factors such as social cohesion, encouraging interaction with ethnic Germans, and language acquisition. This soft approach is reflected in the Commission for Integration's definition of successful integration as, "feeling part of a community and developing a common understanding of how to live together in society" ("Integration").  Programs range from the federally sponsored integration courses, which teach German language and civic values to smaller local initiatives carried out by a wide array of local and regional government institutions and civil society actors. This policy is in contrast to other countries such as USA and Canada where rather than transmitting to newcomers a body of culture and values through top-down programs, government instead promotes "passive" acculturation to the host society by focusing its efforts on guaranteeing equal access to mainstream institutions, thereby "smoothing" the acculturation process.
Rather than viewing upward socioeconomic mobility as the path to a passive integration for migrant populations, German policy instead views active integration as the path to socioeconomic mobility.


## Why Integration Policy?

While it is true that the Turkish population is empirically disadvantaged, German policymakers decision to attack these problems through integration are heavily influenced by public and media coverage of immigrant communities. While the socioeconomic plight of immigrant communities in Germany has been a topic of public debate for decades, especially since 2001 the issue has come to be discussed in the media in terms of "social problem" and "parallel societies" narratives. These accounts are typically sensationalized and rely heavily on stereotypes. In one infamous incident that came to symbolize the intractable social problems in immigrant communities, teachers at the Rutli school in Neukolln, whose student body was predominantly from an immigration background, demanded the school be shut down, citing fears for their safety and the delinquent behavior of the students. This problem is especially acute for coverage of Muslim immigrant populations, who are often portrayed as highly conservative, Islamist, and patriarchal. According to a government study of Muslim life in Germany, the percentage of Muslims in Germany who "do not have and do not wish to have" day-to-day contacts with Germans is no more than one percent. Unfortunately, a portion of the population does buy into these stereotypes. In 2010, Thilo Sarrazin, a politician from the left-leaning SPD party published what became the best-selling book of the year, *Germany Does Away with Itself* in which he argues among other things that Muslims are less intelligent than Germans and prefer to collect welfare rather than work (Foroutan 2013, 5). While official integration policy stresses that both the immigrant populations and the host society have a role in the integration process, if Sarrazin's book sales are any indication, a not insignificant portion of the ethnically German population sees the issues of Integration from a much more one-sided perspective. Muslims in Germany (the vast majority of which have Turkish migration backgrounds), must become civilized.

## Research Question

**How does German policy try to address the socioeconomic disadvantages of immigrant groups, particularly the Turkish population, and how has it succeeded and failed?**

## Methods

The basic details of the Turkish population in Berlin and Germany have been fairly well documented through statistics and other empirical measures, some of which were outlined above. The goal of this project was not to rehash these facts and figures but instead to fill in the gaps left by a strictly quantitative approach with qualitative details: to use ethnographic and qualitative data to both deepen and complicate the broader picture painted by the quantitative data. Thus the findings made here are intended to complement more empirical and comprehensive research carried out by academics and high-level research institutions. While all the observations and primary data collected here is perforce anecdotal, the findings in many instances coincide with the existing body of research. My own primary research was heavily supplemented by a large body of secondary literature in fields from immigration studies to economic sociology to anthropology. Due to the difficulty accessing detailed demographic data broken down by specific migration background from the federal government, I have had to rely on secondary data compiled by academics who have themselves gained access to the data. As a result I have sometimes had to settle for statistical measures that, while they can do a fine job illustrating the general socioeconomic position of Turks in Germany, are nevertheless not always as detailed or specific as would be ideal.

My research consisted of primarily short-informal surveys and longer, semi-structured interviews. Shorter interviews were structured around a short-form survey focused primarily on

current and past employment history. Longer interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to an hour and questions were formulated based on the interviewee's job or area of expertise. Generally speaking, questions pertained to the interview subjects' perceptions of employment obstacles in Berlin.

There were two groups of interview subjects. The first group consisted of the very broad category of Turkish employers and employees. The second group consisted of key informants – Employees of NGOs, local neighborhood associations, Turkish hometown associations, or other people who in a professional or other capacity had special insight into the questions I was seeking to answer. There was often overlap between the two groups. For instance, if key informants were Turkish, as they often were, we usually discussed both their personal and professional perspectives during the interview. Key informants were located largely via Internet research and cold-called or e-mailed with an interview request.

Most contacts were made informally by "deep hanging" out at local Turkish establishments. A handful of interviews were also secured through the help of a Turkish tandem partner, (a Turkish PhD student working to improve his English). I also spoke with Turkish friends and acquaintances that I made in other capacities (for instance, my Turkish language instructor). As a result of the "deep hanging out" method, a significant portion of my respondents came from people who lived within my own neighborhood.

Another problem was that despite efforts, most interview and survey respondents of Turkish employers or employees came from one of the three predominantly Turkish areas of Berlin. While these neighborhoods still feature high concentrations of Turkish residents, in recent years due to gentrification and for a variety of other factors, many Turkish people live in other areas of Berlin without significant ethnic Turkish populations. Although Wedding is one of

the three main Turkish enclaves in Berlin, it is in many ways socio-economically and demographically different from Berlin's other neighborhoods, including the two other Turkish districts. Early in my stay when still looking for a more permanent accommodation, multiple German-Turks warned me not to stay in Wedding – that it was dangerous and that the Turkish people there were a little "funny." Though I'm not quite sure what to make of this, it does suggest that in some way or other, Wedding may somehow be qualitatively *unlike* Neukolln or Kreuzberg, the two other predominantly Turkish areas in Berlin. Thus this could have influenced my findings.

All interviews were conducted either in Turkish or English. My inability to speak German was an obvious obstacle and in some cases, surprisingly, an asset. In some cases, I suspect that interviewees were in fact *more* willing to speak with me when they learned I was not German. A clearly non-Turkish white male who spoke no German but halting Turkish was often found to be something of a curiosity, and this sometimes worked in my favor. In several instances it generated enough curiosity to lead to an extended conversation.


## Findings

**Finding 1: Ethnic networks, which Integration Policy implicitly views as a source of dysfunction, are not in and of themselves the cause of Turks' socioeconomic disadvantage.**

Conventional narratives implicitly define the socioeconomic disadvantage of immigrant populations, and the Turkish population in particular, as the result of a failure to integrate into the host society. Turkish migrants, rejecting German society and its values and seeking to preserve their own, intentionally remain apart from German society. Perhaps the greatest symbol of this irreconcilable divide in popular narratives is the headscarf. As the anthropologist Ruth Mandel writes, "the headscarf has become a fetishistic signifier of Turkish intractability. This

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overdetermined symbol has been associated with the Turkish patriarchal oppression of women, an unwillingness to integrate and adopt German modernity, and a persistent Islamic presence (Mandel 2008, 11). In closing themselves off from Germans culturally and socially, the narrative holds, Turks also close themselves to economic mobility. Many of these same uninterrogated assumptions find themselves enshrined in Official Integration Policy, which espouses a social cohesion approach to Integration focused on addressing socioeconomic deficits by increasing interethnic contact.

In an effort to roughly gauge the relationship between Turks' economic well being and their level of interaction with ethnic Germans, I asked a number of Turks where they learned about their current and past jobs. Of my interviews, a large percentage of people reported learning about jobs through friends or family members. Of those people, a significant percentage of those contacts were Turkish. I observed that despite evidence of employment networks that were predominantly ethnically homogenous, these networks nevertheless did facilitate Turks helping each other find work. More concretely, in my interviews, ethnic networks were an important source of information about jobs for all but those with the highest educational credentials, and especially for those without any educational credentials working in the low-skill economy. In contrast to parallel society narratives that portray mono-ethnic social networks as a source of dysfunction, these networks instead seem to function more like coping mechanisms for Turks whose upward mobility is blocked by a lack of educational credentials. Turkish people are finding jobs without going outside their own enclave, but largely because they are not qualified for any jobs in the mainstream labor market. At least anecdotally, we could speculate that lack of interaction with the host culture, at least in the job search, does not in itself foreclose better

opportunities outside of the ethnic community but happens *because* of a lack of better opportunities in the broader society.

The case of Ali[2] illustrates how Turkish social networks help new members of the Turkish community get by. Having recently arrived on a Family Reunification visa after marrying a distant relative from his hometown on the Black Sea coast[3], Ali joined her and their newborn in Berlin. Through a Turkish friend of his wife's, he quickly found a job in a small Turkish-run barbershop in Wedding. With another baby on the way, on the weekends, he works a fast food job he found through another Turkish contact for extra money. He does not currently speak any German and is enrolled in the national integration course to learn. With only a high school education in Turkey and no command of German yet, the ethnic networks that helped him find these jobs will allow him to earn an income while he learns German. He works many hours and it will be a lengthy path toward German fluency, at which point he will still lack a recognized work credential. Although he was licensed as a barber in Turkey, his certification will not be recognized here for technical reasons. Nevertheless, given his lack of language skills, without the low-paid work he has now, he would likely be unemployable and almost immediately dependent on the state. Furthermore, though the owner of the barbershop where he works is Turkish and they speak Turkish to most customers, the shop also has ethnically German clients, and he will likely have some opportunities to pick up some German vocabulary and phrases related to his profession along the way. While he faces no short-term prospect of upward mobility, given Ali's relatively limited prospects at the moment, this arrangement provides much-needed income and social contact. A popular parallel society narrative would suggest that Ali, because he is surrounded by fellow Turks now, will never successfully learn German and

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[2] All the interviewees' names were changed.
[3] This is a very common arrangement.

continue to live only among Turks. However, what is the alternative? His Turkish network in Berlin allows him to work as opposed to remaining unemployed, which would almost certainly be the only alternative given his lack of language skills. While we cannot know what Ali's future will hold, a more likely obstacle to his upward mobility will not be his Turkish culture, but his lack of a professional credential that is recognized in Germany. Ali explained to me that while he was licensed as a men's barber in Turkey, professional regulations in Germany requires barbers to be trained to cut both men and women's hair. Thus he would be required to retrain in Berlin (and in a language he does not speak). Doing so would not be cheap and, given his heavy work schedule, would likely cut into his income in addition.

While Ali's trajectory remains to be seen, Mehmet, who came to Berlin fifteen years ago, also via a Family Reunification Visa, followed a narrative quite similar to Ali's in the beginning. Fifteen years later, however, he is, by the standards of German integration policy, well integrated into society. Though he relied on an exclusively Turkish support network of friends, neighbors, and family members to get started, he now speaks fluent German, is married to a German woman, and lives in an unremarkable neighborhood without many other Turks. However, his Turkish network continues to play a central role in social life. Later, when we met for an interview in the Kottbusser Tor area, known as "Little Istanbul" he greeted several Turkish friends and acquaintances in a matter of moments. Thus despite his successful integration into German society, his Turkish network remains strong, and he reported finding his last job through a Turkish-speaking work acquaintance. Thus, his Turkish network continues to serve an important social and economic function for him.

Beyond leading each other to employment opportunities, I observed in passing many instances of the way Turkish people in Berlin help each other in a variety of small but significant

ways. One of the most common informal ways of helping I observed is the practice of "visiting,"

which serves as an informal source of aid, especially for ethnic entrepreneurs. I observed

countless examples of Turks stopping in to their friend's shop, having a tea, and doing them an

impromptu favor such as going to the store for them, carrying supplies downstairs into the

kitchen, or manning the cash register for a few minutes while the owner went to run an errand.

Finally, these mutual aid networks were seen not only as a way to get by but also in some cases,

as an alternative to receiving support from the state, which was generally viewed negatively.

Indeed, although popular narratives, including Thilo Sarazzin's, accuse Turks of being heavily

welfare-dependent, among some of those I spoke to, particularly more recent arrivals to

Germany, there was a deep antipathy toward collecting welfare benefits from the State, with

some bristling at the mere idea. In a qualitative study of support networks, Bilecen also made a

similar finding. Among her twenty ethnically Turkish interviewees, she writes, "Even if they are

entitled to unemployment benefits, they prefer to seek employment based on the information

they receive through interpersonal networks, treating formal protection options as a last resort"

(Bilecen 2005, 248). This was further reaffirmed during an interview with Quartiersmangement

officer in Wedding. Speaking to Busra, the manager of the Wedding Quartiersmanagement office

and herself the child of Turkish guest workers, she said, "When Turkish people have a problem

they know who to go to and what to do to get it solved. They have their own way of doing

things." Do many Turks in Berlin rely on strong informal networks because of a strong cultural

desire for self-sufficiency, or instead because of an adversarial feeling toward state institutions?

These are questions for further exploration. Furthermore, the Turks I spoke to who were born in

Germany seemed more comfortable with availing themselves of the services of the *Arbeitsamt*

and the Job Center when necessary. From this we could speculate that some Turks' aversion to

these institutions may owe something to their unfamiliarity with these institutions. They could be intimidated by the complicated bureaucracy, for instance, or uncertainty over whether they are legally entitled to the services offered. One could in this vein envision a negative situation in which Turks' collective fear or unwillingness to avail themselves of resources they are entitled to such as training courses and unemployment benefits keeps them from taking advantage of government-sponsored opportunities for retraining, for instance. However, it must be stressed that the actual significance of, and extent to which Turks avoid formal institutions such as the Job Center, which administers long-term unemployment benefits, is not clear. German privacy laws make it very difficult to attain long-term unemployment statistics segmented by specific migration background.

To conclude, while ethnic networks play a role in Turkish communities in Berlin and certainly throughout Germany, popular narratives that seek to demonize these networks and blame them for Turks' socioeconomic disadvantage should be questioned. Especially in the case of new arrivals from Turkey, they seem to provide critical social and economic support. Strong ethnically homogenous social networks can help Turks cope with temporary or permanent blocked labor market mobility. Finally, they appear more likely to be a response to blocked socioeconomic mobility than a cause of it.

**FINDING 2: Germany's flexibilized labor system exacerbates the disadvantage of those without credentials.**

Berlin's economy follows a narrative similar to rust belt economies in America. With the decline of industry, the economy shifted from a large base of fairly secure manufacturing jobs to a two-tiered division of jobs: low-skilled and low paid service sector jobs and high-skilled knowledge-economy jobs. Guest workers were hardest hit by restructuring. Wilpert cites that

during this economic restructuring, "foreigners accounted for about 45 percent of the

redundancies between 1974 and 1977 and over 50 percent between 1980 and 1982 (2008, 238).

This statistic starkly illustrates the structural change in Germany's economy and illustrates how

migrants—those with low educational credentials and poor German skills—were left out.

As discussed above, first-generation guest workers, with limited language skills and few

educational credentials were ill prepared to find new places in the new economy.

Having in many cases never learned German or imperfectly at best, these workers had an

especially hard time finding a new place in the new service-oriented skills-based economy borne

of global economic restructuring. Unqualified or at least considered unqualified for outward-

looking jobs in retail and other sectors, many turned to entrepreneurship in low-skilled

industries, often out of a lack of viable alternatives.  As Wilpert writes, "economic restructuring

transformed the labor market, reducing jobs in manufacturing and adding to jobs in services.

This was accompanied by a growth in irregular, informal and precarious jobs as well as self-

employment (2008, 238).  On the other hand, many of those who lost their jobs in this period

never did find a place in the new economy, and have become long-term unemployed.

Beyond reduced and less stable wages, guest workers' transition from working in middle-

class industrial jobs to working in the informal economy and low-wage service sectors had

another important dynamic as well in that it in many cases severed Turks from more than just

stable wages. It also severed them from political representation. Labor unions traditionally

played a very strong role in Germany's industrial sector and, as guest workers and non-citizens

with no right to vote, guest workers found political representation through labor councils.

However, service sectors are less likely to be unionized and are in many cases more difficult to

unionize due to small firm sizes. Labor councils, which were well entrenched in the

manufacturing sector, are not always present in the retail sector. Unskilled Turks, once separated from their stable factory jobs, did not have the social or cultural capital to get back in. "It is very difficult to get a job in one of these big companies without knowing someone. You have to be a MiKi or a KuKi" (colleague of a current employee or family member of a current employee) Rudolph, the IG Metall spokesman, told me.

Although this is unfortunately a well-known story for the first generation of guest workers, more alarming is the impact it continues to have on newer generations. At the same time as the labor market has become segmented into stable and well-paying jobs and flexibilized low-income ones, the total number of unskilled jobs in general has, in the long run, declined continuously since the 1980s (Hohne and Koopmans 2015, 10) further squeezing those who depend on them to earn a living. Across Germany, the overall percentage of blue-collar workers decreased from 48.8 per cent in 1950 to 30.2 per cent in 2002, and the number of white-collar employees rose from 16.5 per cent to 51.8 per cent in the same period" (Bendel 2014). As a result, as in the U.S., the stakes of education have increased.

Young people with credentials are also underemployed and working in fields outside of their specialization. Speaking with a number of young Turkish-Germans, the general feeling was that while Berlin may not be a difficult place to find a job, it is a difficult place to find a *good* job. It is also a difficult place to find consistent and stable work. Ayşe's story provides some insight into one of the reasons why: the growth of contract work that allows employers to hire workers for shorter periods of time without committing to traditional full-time jobs and the additional benefits and protections afforded by them. In an attempt to make the labor market more attractive to employers, the German government introduced several reforms that make work more tenuous. Employers are allowed to hire workers on a contract basis. After two years,

employers must pay increased benefits. In practice, my interviews suggest that contracts often go unrenewed for no particular reason. For those workers, including those with educational credentials, who have not been able to land a coveted white-collar job and the stability it brings, moving from job to job is a common theme, which brings with it not only instability but also less potential to secure higher wages over the long-run. Furthermore, there is evidence that migrants from non-EU countries are more likely to be temporarily employed (Kogan 2011, 280).

I met 29-year old Ayşe while she was working as a secretary for a Turkish firm that helps Turkish citizens who have previously worked in Germany claim their retirement benefits. Despite a degree in economics from a respected university in Berlin, she described working a series of unskilled retail jobs, the most recent of which, with international fashion retailer Zara, ended because her contract was not renewed after two years, the point at which the firms are required to convert the job into a full-time, non-contract job with the greater benefits and security such a job affords. Ayşe's experience at Zara underscores the differences between traditional jobs and flexibilized contract work in the German economy. While she worked at Zara she organized a workers' council[4], which represents workers at the local level. While workers' councils are legally protected once created, they do not exist automatically and instead must be organized. Most firms do not want them for obvious reasons. No doubt in large part as a result of Ayşe's organizing efforts within her company, her contract was not renewed and thus, in her attempts to win better working conditions, she found herself out of a job. Today, as a secretary, she feels overqualified and underpaid and is actively looking for a new job. At 29, despite a college degree from a respected university, she continues to move from entry-level job to entry-level job, starting at the bottom with each new position.

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[4] Shop-floor organization representing workers at the local level. While they are not labor unions they are usually closely affiliated with labor unions.

Another young interviewee, Taylan, also illustrates the less easily quantifiable negative aspects of the current labor market: underemployment is common and many people are employed in jobs outside of their desired field. Taylan, who aspires to be a kindergarten teacher, was lucky to find an apprenticeship, but it is in a field he has no interest in. He complains that "It is very difficult to find a good job in Berlin these days. "While steadily employed in a supermarket, he complains about frequent disagreements and arguments with his boss, who he declares a racist. However, by purely empirical standards, Taylan might be considered lucky. For many migrants and Germans in general, finding apprenticeships in Germany's well-respected dual-education system is notoriously difficult. According to Rudolph, a union spokesman for IG Metall, this is partly due also to economic conditions. "Companies don't want to train people anymore. It is too expensive and the investment is too great. They say they can hire workers already qualified from other countries." Indeed, one of the major roles played by this union and another one I spoke to is to push their respective industries to take on more apprentices.

Another significant obstacle to mainstream labor market access for Turks in Germany is labor market discrimination. Perceptions of workforce discrimination were not uncommon among those I spoke with. One story went as follows: My brother has a very dark skin tone. He doesn't look Turkish and he has an unusual name. We are both sure that they thought he was Pakistani or something. If they thought he was Turkish, they never would have hired him!" The story underscores that Turks in particular are stigmatized. Ozan, a middle-aged office worker and SPD activist, told me, "You can write a perfect resume in perfect German, but as soon as they see you in person, it's over." However representative these responses are, they do speak to the perceptions some Turks–including this educated and politically engaged individual –have about how the host society thinks of them. In fact, though, empirically these perceptions are borne out.

According to a study by Jutta Hohne, those with a migration background and Turks especially across all levels of qualification were much less likely to be employed (Hohne and Buschoff, 2015).

A general ignorance of Turkish culture and diversity in Germany may contribute to discrimination in the labor market and other institutions. Popular conceptions of Turks in Germany depend on an anachronistic image of the Turkish population that frames most Turks as extremely religious, conservative, and patriarchal and who routinely engage in honor killings and forced marriages. This is probably due in part to the fact that a significant portion of the first generation guest workers were indeed conservative and rural. However, three generations later, the Turkish community is highly heterogeneous, comprising several religious sects and political orientations. Additionally, since the guest worker era, and especially in the 1990s many ethnic Turks came as asylum seekers. Today more Turks are leaving Germany than coming, and the most who are coming today are students from middle-class urban families and highly skilled workers. Yet these significant differences are often elided and the Turkish population in Germany is reduced to a symbol of poverty, welfare dependence, and backwardness. Although I did not speak to ethnic Germans directly about their perceptions of Turkish people, a few anecdotal experiences provide some evidence. Ozan perceived that Germans idea of Turks are anachronistic and rooted firmly in place. He remarked, "Many of the guest workers who first came here were villagers. They were poorly educated. Now no matter how well educated you are, to Germans, you are one of those villagers." Pecoud makes a similar finding: "Socio-economically successful immigrants…often complain that regardless of their socio-economic success, they lack proper recognition from Germans who are used to thinking of German-Turks as guest worker' descendants doing guest workers jobs." (2002, 502). Though it is difficult to

quantify the impact of this, it seems certain that this plays a role in discrimination. Hohne and Koopmans allude to the concept of imputed discrimination in which, "due to a lack of full information on the 'true' productivity of workers, potential employers impute group information instead."

The effect of this labor market discrimination can be devastating for minorities in a labor market like Europe's. Europe's labor market, where the route to social mobility are different than in the U.S., makes the consequences of this exclusion even more significant. "Continental Europe's regulated system makes mobility through self-employment more difficult for immigrants: the 'normal' way of achieving socio-economic success in Europe is finding a well-paid and well-protected job in the mainstream economy" (Pecoud 2002, 503). Such a system does not bode well for immigrants who face a high degree of discrimination. Anecdotally, Turks in Germany may have an understanding of this themselves. Despite living in a developed western European country with a generous welfare state, more than one doner shop employee I met dreamed of moving to the United States. Interest in the United States was noticeably less common among more economically successful Turks.

**FINDING 3: Residents with a Turkish immigration background still suffer from unequal access to the public education and training system and the labor market**

While I have tried to illustrate that German policy sees successful integration as the primary vehicle for socioeconomic mobility of migrant populations, many institutions which heavily influence the socioeconomic status of immigrant communities fall outside the purview of Integration Policy. While integration policies exist and are executed at multiple levels from local to federal, the majority of any German's interactions with government, including those with an immigrant background, are through non-ethnically oriented, mainstream institutions and

bureaucracies, most notably the labor market and the education system. For instance, education, which falls outside the purview of official integration policy, is handled at the state level (by the 16 federal states or *lander*) whereas welfare and unemployment policies are governed by federal policy (Bendel 2014, 5). Yet these institutions, especially the education system and the long-term unemployment system, present significant obstacles for immigrant populations that cannot be effectively addressed via integration policy alone.

The structure of Berlin's public education system inherently disadvantages immigrant groups by routing students into different tracks at a young age, typically at the age of 10. This system contributes to segregating students from a young age and often has the effect of concentrating children with an immigration background into slower-paced schools that do not lead to the credentials required to enter university or vocational training. Unlike the U.S. where all high school graduates receive one basic school leaving-certificate that, depending on their grades, makes them eligible for a four-year university, in Berlin and more or less every other German state, only a certain type of school, the *gymnasium* provides the high school-leaving certificate (the *abitur)* required for study at a traditional four-year university. *Realschule* falls somewhere in the middle, where it is possible to earn an *abitur* under some circumstances but typically students are prepared for future vocational education, and finally the *hauptschule,* where the weakest students are prepared for blue collar careers (Hinze 2013, 6). Statistically, students with migrant backgrounds are less likely to go to gymnasium and are concentrated in *hauptschules*. In 2009, for instance, the rates of students receiving the *abitur* with an immigration background was 14 compared to the German population average of 28 (Spiegel Online, 1/26/2009). According to Hinze, in the past it was not uncommon for children of guest workers—owing to their inability to speak German—to be put into classes for the mentally

disabled (2013, 65). Though these dark days are over, unequal educational outcomes persist. Many children of guest workers likely continue to be placed into lower educational tracks based on their lower German-language ability as a result of not speaking it in the home. Ayşe provided evidence of some other obstacles that the rigid education system can create. Tracked into a *realschule* at a young age, she graduated without an abitur and thus without the ability to pursue university studies. When she later decided she wanted to pursue her *abitur* at age 19, there was no easy path for her to do so. Her local high school was unwilling to accept her back due to her age and thus she found her only option was to attend a private school, a rare and unconventional path in Germany, but in her circumstances, the only way to gain the *abitur*. Ayşe was hard-working and determined to get the education she felt entitled to, but after graduating without an *abitur*, the school system is not set up to allow a second chance. Owing to the inflexibility of the school system, getting her *abitur* later required significant time and money out of her own pocket. Thus there may be other people in her position without her persistence or resources who give up and never get their *abitur*.

However, earning an *abitur* and going to university is not the only option for young people. Germany should be commended for its strong dual-education system, which creates pathways for non-academically inclined students to train for stable jobs in the trades. However, Germany's liberalized labor policies and the pressures of global competition mean that these jobs are not as plentiful as they used to be, for immigrant populations or anyone else. Furthermore, minorities and especially Turks are underrepresented in the dual education system. Ayşe, who with a leg up due to her abitur, reports applying to more than 100 traineeships with no success. As a result of a competitive labor market, even those with the *abitur* face stiff competition in gaining access to the vocational training system. Much like many jobs in the U.S. today require a

B.A. merely because they can, in Germany large firms prefer to take on trainees who have an *abitur* but either never went to or never finished university, thus creating a competitive environment for those without the *abitur*.

**Finding 4: Focusing on culturally oriented assimilation policies rather than mainstreamed policies may encourage ethnicisation or reactive-identity formation.**

As discussed above, German policy implicitly views the socioeconomic disadvantage of the Turkish population to be the product of poor integration into the host society and the Turkish community's self-isolation. As a result, it places strong emphasis on integration as a path toward solving these socioeconomic deficits. However, the top-down, assimilation oriented manner in which it pursues these goals risks alienating the very populations which it seeks to integrate. By implicitly suggesting to the Turkish population that their cultural traits are to blame for their socioeconomic deficits, some Turks may come to see integration policies as pushing them to give up or abandon their Turkish identity. This is especially relevant for Turkish diaspora communities throughout Europe, which have been found to maintain strong ties with their country of origin. Based on studies in France and other European countries, Turks as a migrant group are more likely to maintain strong connections to their home country (Simon 2012).

Turkish people in Germany, feeling that their cultural heritage is being judged negatively, may feel more strongly inclined to double down on their Turkishness. In his writing on the concept of Reactive Ethnicity Portes speaks of the role persecution, threats, and discrimination can play in the rise of a strong ethnic identity among a minority ethnic group (2001, 148). Whereas popular narratives often accuse Turks of purposefully isolating themselves from the host society in ethnic enclaves, this may in fact be a reaction to policies that continually remind Turks of, and ask them to minimize, their differences. Nevertheless, German policymakers have

not yet been willing to fully accept Turks' desire to retain their cultural identity, viewing it as an obstacle to integration into German society. This approach is almost certainly doing more harm than good.

Germany's citizenship policies are one of the most visible examples of policies that potentially alienate rather than integrate Turks. Conservative-leaning German political parties have long been wary of allowing for dual citizenship for fear that it would hinder integration by allowing migrants to cling to their previous identities, at the expense of forming a new German identity (Hinze 2013, 6). Before 2000, children born to non-citizen parents in Germany had no clear path to citizenship. Starting in 2000, children born to third-country nationals in Germany received German citizenship automatically, but because dual citizenship was not permitted for third-countries, had to decide between keeping their German citizenship or Turkish Citizenship between the ages of 18 and 23. If they took no action, their German citizenship was automatically cancelled. Before then, the options for obtaining citizenship were more limited. In the meantime, non-German children born to EU or Swiss nationals in Germany were eligible for dual-citizenship and thus never had to make this choice. Finally, at the end of 2014, children born to third-country nationals in Germany after 1990 were allowed to retain dual citizenship. However, this option remains closed to those born before 1990, a sore spot for many in the Turkish community. These kinds of restrictive citizenship policies also may backfire by producing stronger Turkish ethnic identity formation. The requirement, until 2014, to choose between German and Turkish citizenship, for youth especially created strong potential for reactive identity formation by forcing Turkish-Germans to choose between Germany and Turkey.

Although conventional wisdom holds that maintaining another citizenship would prevent building loyalty toward your new country, in reality in many cases it may have the opposite effect, causing Turkish people to resent the country which was forcing such a choice on them. Renouncing one's Turkish citizenship in order to hold on to German citizenship would be, in some senses to forsake your "true" heritage and people for citizenship in a country where many Turks feel, regardless of their legal status, they will never be accepted as a full member of society. The complexity of this issue is further compounded by mixed messages young people with a Turkish immigration background receive from various outlets. For instance, Turkey's current president famously called assimilation a "crime against humanity." While allowing for dual citizenship starting in 2014 is a crucial step in the right direction, it does not solve the problem at a single stroke. The reform does not benefit the 1st and 2nd generations Turks who still have no path to dual-citizenship. Furthermore, negative perceptions of the host society already formed as a result of these policies may not be quickly forgotten despite positive reforms. As Mandel writes, "The frustration and humiliation inherent in restrictive visa regimes, traumas of denied family reunion, and different sets of rights for resident aliens will be with us for some time." (2008, 15). Integration is a complicated social and sociological process with a long memory. In a country that as late as the 1990s politicians continued to insist was resolutely "not a country of immigration" and was very open and proactive about its desire to send back as many guest workers as possible, Turkish people have understandably felt unwanted and unwelcome. Indeed, until 2005, they were officially unwanted, and today, in the eyes of some citizens, they still are. Almost half of all Germans queried in a 2008 survey said there are too many Muslims living in Germany and more than half said that Muslims living in Germany are too demanding (Foroutan 2013, 6). Thus, however sharply policymakers may change tack (though thus far

changes have been extremely incremental), they face an uphill battle in winning back the trust of a community they have long spurned. Furthermore, as I will discuss later, the argument that migrants cannot accept a new culture while maintaining ties to the old is increasingly untenable in the face of new academic research into acculturation processes.

In other ways, too, German policy rhetoric continues to subtly send a message that Turks and migrants are to be tolerated rather than accepted as Germans. Germany's policy rhetoric sets a tone that undermines its claims to tolerance by trying to justify the presence of migrant communities based on their economic contributions rather than their fundamental belonging. This may actually sends a less-than-welcoming message that non-ethnic Germans must *earn* their acceptance by contributing to GDP rather than living in Germany by right and as Germans. This is especially reflected in the rhetoric of Germany's "world-openness" found throughout policy documents. "World-openness creates jobs." World-openness itself is posited as a concept that should be embraced for its economic impact and not merely because it is intrinsically good to accept others who are not exactly like you. Justifying the presence of minority groups primarily by pointing to their economic contributions indirectly sends a message that minorities should be tolerated for practical reasons rather than out of a fundamental imperative for humans to learn to live alongside and respect others who may not be like you. Even the language of academic research has come to valorize the economic potential of migrants, using terms such as "Diversity dividend" (Aytar and Rath 2011, 6). But justifying the acceptance of migrants into society on the basis of their potential economic contribution alone is morally bankrupt and unsustainable. There may not always be an economic justification. Furthermore, this may be sending a message to long-marginalized communities that the host society's tolerance of them is dependent on their economic contributions. That ethnic Germans' own acceptance as legitimate

members of society is not connected to their economic productivity but instead to their blood may provide justifications for Turks' claims that they are treated as second-class citizens. Furthermore, such instrumentalized justifications for migrant populations also have more practical pitfalls. When the economy is bad, or whenever, they are susceptible to counter-narratives of parasitism: migrants do not in fact contribute to the economy but instead prey on it. Mandel speaks of the terrorist acts carried out against Turkish and other minority population throughout the 1990s, when the economic troubles and high unemployment wrought by unification contributed to extreme right-wing violence (2008, 53). Today again, in the wake of new migration streams, right-wing attacks on immigrant shelters are on the rise. These attackers are unlikely to be appeased by, for instance, pointing out Germany's diminishing population and its dire need for immigrants to bolster the labor force.

Collectively, one could argue that these policies may produce or at least contributed to producing a distrust of the host society within the Turkish community that contributes to Turks generally avoiding formal avenues of participation, including participation in programs designed with integration in mind, as seen in the Quartiersmanagement case. According to Emre, a young Turkish-German who works for a local minority-oriented economic development NGO, one common problem the organization faces when reaching out to Turkish businesses to offer free consulting services is that ethnically Turkish business owners are deeply suspicious and suspect that rather than legitimately trying to help, company representatives may be covert investigators trying to catch Turkish entrepreneurs violating laws, such as paying workers under the table. In fact, Emre told me he was hired specifically because his Turkish immigration background makes it easier to approach Turkish business owners on behalf of the organization.

Another important shortcoming of policies that link immigrants' assimilation to the host culture as the route to socioeconomic mobility and acceptance by the host society is that even if immigrant populations do what Integration policy prescribes, such as learning the German language and adopting German values, it is not a guarantee that the host citizens themselves will accept the immigrants, creating a situation where Turks may do their prescribed part but still not be fully accepted. Governments have little control over the actual reception of immigrants into society at a person-to-person level. They cannot force ethnic Germans to accept immigrants as their peers and equals, no matter how closely immigrant groups fulfill certain criteria outlined in the integration policy. As Hinze points out, "even if they [immigrants] do abide by the rules of integration, general prejudices against certain minority groups may still exclude them from the national mainstream." (2013, 19). Top-down integration policies make a promise to immigrant communities that the government cannot necessarily keep.

Indeed, among some Turkish people I spoke with there was a sense that no matter what they did, or how economically successful they became, they would never be fully accepted as German by the host society. The sentiment was encapsulated succinctly by Ozan: "You can go out with Germans, have German friends, work with Germans, speak perfect German, and even feel German, but as long as your hair is black, none of that matters." No matter what Turkish people do, their markers of otherness continue to persist in German culture because German society, while it may generally accept the presence of the Turks, has not yet come to accept them as fundamentally German. Top-down integration policies which emphasize the need for migrants to conform to an essential set of German values may contribute to reifying these supposed innate cultural differences and worsening the underlying socioeconomic problems.

## Policy Recommendations

**Promote integration through policies that increase economic inclusion rather than via soft cultural measures.**

Whereas dominant policy discourses imply that social exclusion causes socioeconomic disadvantage, it may be that socioeconomic disadvantage actually promotes and perpetuates social exclusion. These socioeconomic disadvantages should be addressed head on through policies that target the socioeconomic deficits directly rather than indirectly through integration policies, which run the risk of alienating immigrant populations by implicitly linking their disadvantages to the supposed shortcomings of their culture. Forcing 'them' to become like 'us' in the old-fashioned assimilative way is not only counterproductive, but it may also provoke a reethnicisiation..." (Entzinger 2006, 18). Treating social problems as "ethnic problems" further exacerbates difference and lack of belonging (Pecoud 2002, 503). The mere idea that there is a "Turkish problem" rather than a general socioeconomic problem continues to reify difference rather than promote acceptance.

In the same vein, if socioeconomic disadvantage is acknowledged as the problem itself (as it should be) rather than the byproduct of failed assimilation, these disadvantages should be rectified through mainstream institutions, primarily via the education and labor systems, which fall outside the purview of official integration policy.  However, these systems themselves must be better adapted to suit the needs of a diverse population. Turkish-speaking employees should be a priority not only for institutions and initiatives directly related to or funded by Integration policy,  but also all state institutions, including the *Arbeitsamt* and Job Center where all Germans go for employment counseling and unemployment benefits regardless of migration background, and which relate to their socioeconomic issues directly rather than obliquely as in the case of Integration policy.

**Embrace rather than discourage transnational citizenship and support and allow for acculturation to happen in a variety of ways.**

In addition to the negative responses assimilation-oriented integration policies can provoke in immigrant populations, these policies are also misguided for other reasons. They do not accurately reflect the reality of Germany's multicultural makeup today nor do they reflect the most up-to-date understandings of the acculturation process by which migrants adopt to life in a new host society. Despite some token gestures toward multiculturalism, Germany's integration policy is still premised on what is at its core an understanding of acculturation as a linear process of assimilation to the host society. Working in the American context, Portes shows that the traditional understanding of acculturation, in which immigrants gradually adopt the customs and values of the host culture, is only one of multiple patterns in which immigrants acculturate to a host society. For example, Portes finds that in the American context "immigrant youth who remain firmly ensconced in their respective ethnic communities, may, by virtue of this fact, have a better chance of educational and economic mobility through access to the resources that their communities make available." (2001, 251). Portes describes the Punjabi immigrant community, an extremely successful migrant community in the U.S. who outperform natives in school. He writes, Punjabi parents pressured their children to avoid too much contact with white peers who may 'dishonor' the immigrants' families and defined 'becoming Americanized' as forgetting one's roots and adopting the most disparaged traits of the majority." (2001, 251). Thus the Punjabi community in the U.S. has attained socio-economic mobility precisely by encouraging their children *not* to assimilate.

**Promote policies that capitalize on ethnic ties, rather than condemn them.**

Current integration policy tends to implicitly demonize ethnic bonds by linking failed

upward mobility to a failure to integrate with the majority society. The evidence for this is weak and narrowly applicable. As Patrick Simon points out in his assessment of similar failures in French integration policy, strong ethnic bonds do not necessarily ensure economic marginalization and preclude integration. Instead, they can actually be assets. He writes, "Being able to navigate among plural identities offers resources in our globalized societies, whereas assimilationist requirements create more stigmatization of ethnic minorities and undermine integration prospects" (Simon 2012, 1). By embracing a wider definition of integration that allows immigrants to forge a new transnational identity rather than give up their old one, policymakers could harness these social ties and incorporate them into policy interventions. My interviews and other secondary data have shown that social ties are valuable including, and sometimes especially, those ties rooted in ethnic solidarity. The strong bonds among ethnic Turks may provide a natural strategy or channel for economic development.

Furthermore, the medium of integration policy is as important as the message. Not only the substance of Germany's integration policy, but *how* it tries to implement its integration goals is itself critical. German integration policies must try to advance their goals in ways that appeal to the Turkish population and do not alienate them further. Despite media portrayals, Turkish immigrants I spoke to showed strong entrepreneurial inclinations and a desire to stand on their own feet. Furthermore, they see themselves and their own networks, rather than the government or wider community, as the way to solve their problems or find support. In this regard, local integration policy stands out as the ideal level for action. In this respect Germany and particularly Berlin is already doing many things right. For instance, integration policy at the local level relies heavily on the involvement of civil society organizations. There are numerous different organizations throughout Berlin that, with funding from state, local, and federal

governments as well as the European Union, offer subsidized consulting for aspiring and current ethnic entrepreneurs and other forms of aid. Programs like these, which help Turkish people help themselves and that align directly with their economic interests are more likely to attract their interest and gain their participation than policies that seek to encourage or valorize certain kinds of norms and behaviors, which are more likely to be seen as a challenge to their cultural heritage. However, these are only piecemeal programs that reach a comparatively small portion of the population with an immigrant background, compared to the critical importance of mainstream institutions, as discussed above. Although the education and labor system fall outside of official integration policy, they touch the lives of immigrants at a much larger scale than targeted integration programs. Greater efforts should be made to ensure Turks and other immigrant groups have equal access to those institutions.

**Live up to the two-way street promise by promoting intercultural citizenship.**

While Germany's National Integration Plan holds that successful integration "is a two-way street," requiring the active engagement of both the immigrant population and the host society in the integration process, in practice the integration process as it plays out on a national level is rather one-sided. That Angela Merkel herself has on more than one occasion pronounced the "failure of multiculturalism" and harshly called for assimilation in public speeches underscores the gap between policy and reality. The official motto of the national integration policy "Promoting and Demanding" more subtly underscores the assimilation demand at the heart of the policy. Finally, the abandoned effort by a major political party to enforce German not only as the national language, which it of course is, but as the only language allowed to be spoken in *households* in Germany underscores the extent to which the dated assimilation model still holds sway in some political circles. Furthermore, media debates continue to frame Turks as

"unwilling to integrate." There is resistance both on the part of the government and parts of the society to accept the reality of a multicultural state.

While many people in society are tolerant of Turks (and refugees) in the abstract, successfully welcoming them into society requires more than mere tolerance. Extolling the long acknowledged "economic potential" of the Turkish and other migrant communities (Aytar and Rath 2011, 1) is not enough to make people with a migration background feel welcome and accepted as equals. German policy must find ways to encourage Germans not to tolerate migrant populations based on their economic contributions or other criteria, but see them as their fellow Germans. Hinze writes, "The immigrant can only become an integrated member of society if the general perception of the national mainstream is expanded to include the immigrant's unchangeable features of difference, such as an as accent, a different sounding name, or a different skin color. Otherwise the immigrant will remain permanently excluded (2013, 22). This would admittedly require a fundamental transformation in longstanding definitions of Germanness as rooted in blood that still persist among a significant segment of the ethnically German population. While there is no quick or easy answer to the question of how this can be achieved, it is worth pointing out that the path toward a solution may demand doing less rather than more when it comes to top-down integration policies. As multicultural societies like Canada and the United States have shown, mutual acculturation processes usually happen over a long period of time and often without any specific integration policies in place. One possibility is promoting the study of Turkish as a foreign language by ethnic German students. While Integration Policy perhaps understandably places critical importance on immigrant populations learning to speak German, there has been little to no emphasis on the other direction: encouraging Germans to learn Turkish. While German gymnasiums students typically learn an

additional foreign language after English, currently there is only one bilingual German-Turkish school in Berlin despite its sizable Turkish population. Learning each other's language could be an important first gesture of good will and a necessary early step on Germany's long road toward a more inclusive national identity.

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