Rethinking 'Religious Identity' in Refugee 'Integration': An Examination into Representations and Experiences of Syrian 'Religious Minority' Refugees in Berlin, Germany

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Declaration

I, Khatereh Eghdamian, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Acknowledgments

> Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent… The knowledge of such sciences, however, should be acquired as can profit the peoples of the earth… (Bahá'u'lláh)

I dedicate this thesis, first and foremost, to my parents. Thank you for instilling in me the importance of education and supporting me unconditionally in my efforts to contribute to the betterment of society, however piecemeal they may be. You embarked on an intercultural marriage, gifting me a rich Kurdish and Turkish cultural history, and started a family together. Then you made the unimaginable choice to flee your homeland of Iran due to religious persecution. At the forefront of both your minds has always been a better future for your children. As members of the Bahá'í Faith, among an array of state restrictions and persecutions, there is no opportunity to enter institutions of higher learning in Iran. Being barred from the right to education was a guiding force in your decision to flee the country you knew and loved. As such, your foremost and enduring question has been, and remains: "where is the best place for education?"

Anyone who knows me well knows that my life has been indelibly characterised with an everlasting obsession with education. It all started from those choices and priorities of my parents. My doctoral thesis, then, is my gift to my parents. Without your influence, example, and support, this would not have happened. Thank you.

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Abstract

This research contributes to existing but nascent literature examining the relationship between 'religious identity' and refugee 'integration'. It does so by exploring the nature and implications of discursive representations of Syrian refugees on Syrian 'religious minority' refugees (Christian, Druze, Ismaili, Alawite, and atheist) in Berlin, Germany. Drawing on 11 months of fieldwork and analyses of three German newspapers and magazines, the results of this study are four-fold: first, that the 'minority' label is a malleable construct influenced by historical, social and political factors; second, that (mis)assumptions of Syrian refugee identities, needs and experiences are often homogenous, Orientalist, and political in nature; third, that such (mis)assumptions inform and shape different forms of what Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2016c) refers to as "refugee-refugee relationality", at times characterised by religious prejudices; and fourth, that such (mis)assumptions about Syrian refugees are increasingly shaped by secularised biases of some institutional actors, which directly influence the experiences of 'religious minority' refugees in refugee-host contexts. These findings suggest that there is a need to: better understand the 'minority' label as it pertains to 'religious identity' and how it can be (mis)used in different contexts by different actors; examine the dynamics of refugee-refugee relationality, including those related to religious prejudices; and to rethink processes of 'integration' and the ways in which secular values and assumptions can shape and inform refugee experiences throughout such processes. In light of these findings, this research posits a challenge to rethink the desirability of 'integration' altogether, both as a process and outcome of refugee-refugee and refugee-host relations. It further calls for a need to explore the varied complexities, multiplicities, and contradictions of refugee 'religious identities' in contexts of religious diversity. Specifically, it asserts the importance of recognising and understanding how 'religious minority' refugees can (re)negotiate, contest, and narrate their identities, needs, and experiences in relation to both refugees and hosts. Such understanding can, in turn, enable appropriate, meaningful, and effective responses to refugees.

Impact Statement

My research on 'religious minority' Syrian refugees in Germany has increased appreciation for and understanding of the complex and multiples roles of religion for refugees in academic, policy, and practitioner circles. I have communicated my findings and insights via academic and public portals; included the topic of religion and religious identities in a graduate student course on refugee studies; and transferred my specialist knowledge to diverse actors in spaces dedicated to refugees and/or religion. This impact statement outlines some of these contributions in further detail.

Drawing on insights from my research to date, I have published a peer-reviewed article in the *Journal of Refugee Studies* and three articles in *The Conversation* on 1) how accepting only religious minority refugees divides, rather than protects, those in need; 2) why freedom of religion or belief matters for refugees; and 3) how to overcome religious prejudice among refugees. These articles have been widely shared (over 13,000 times), tweeted, commented on, and read by over 13,800 readers (numbers via *The Conversation* database). After completing my fieldwork, I sole-authored a book chapter on religious dimensions of immigration and asylum in Europe published in '*Religion and European Society*' *(*Wiley-Blackwell, 2019). This chapter communicates the importance of religion in broader debates on immigration based on my research experience. In my role as course convenor for the core module of the MA in Refugee Protection and Forced Migration Studies at the School of Advanced Studies, University of London, I included dimensions of religion and religious identities in refugee studies in both the course content and throughout group discussions, when relevant.

Recognising the need to address the media and to help journalists and the wider public to understand the major issues related to the (presumed or real) religious identity of refugees, I participated in radio and newspaper interviews. The radio

interview was with *ABC Religion and News Report* on why religion matters when assessing refugee status. The newspaper interview was with the Religion News Service for an article in *The Washington Post* entitled "Should refugees be vetted on the basis of religion?"

In addition to these outputs, I have presented my research at panels, seminars, and conferences to diverse audiences. These included speaking on the 'migrant crisis' at an event convened by the *LSE Human Rights Society* and the *Institute of Race Relations;* participating in a roundtable on how religion plays a role in fostering cohesive communities, which was attended by diverse religious and secular actors and organisations and hosted by the *UK Bahá'í Office of Public Affairs*; presenting my research at the *University of Birmingham*, *Cumberland Lodge*, the *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology*, the 'Refuge in a Moving World' network at *UCL*, and the *ESRC Social Science Research Day*. In addition to disseminating my findings widely, these opportunities also resulted in requests from other researchers on how to plan, formulate, undertake, and analyse research projects that are connected to refugees and/or religion.

Finally, my research helped inform two major research projects on religion and refugees. The first was a *Norwegian Church Aid* research project on protecting and sustaining religious minorities from Syria and Iraq. I advised the formulation of the project, undertook field research with Iraqi and Syrian refugees in Turkey, and advised on and reviewed the outputs of research from Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria, all of which included research with refugees. The final report was presented to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The second was a research project led by the *Joint-Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities* in collaboration with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), exploring the role of faith and local faith communities in supporting refugees, for which I was the local researcher in Germany. This project resulted in communicating good practice recommendations for UNHCR and its partners.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Abbreviations

AfD - Alternative for Germany

FBO - Faith-based Organisation

JLI - Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation

UNHCR - The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Chapter 1: Introduction

The ongoing conflict in Syria, now in its eighth year, has resulted in multiple and often devastating effects both nationally and globally. One of these effects has been the internal and international displacement of over 12 million Syrians from their homes (UNHCR 2019).[1] While neighbouring countries to Syria, such as Lebanon and Turkey, have hosted over 5 million Syrians (Ibid.), many European states have adopted restrictive policies and responses to the (potential or actual) arrival of Syrian asylum-seekers to their shores. In contrast, in August 2015, German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced that Germany would accept unrestricted numbers of Syrian asylum-seekers to its country. This move partially suspended the 2013 EU Dublin Regulation,[2] which meant that asylum-seekers were able to arrive in Germany and have their asylum claims processed there, without being returned to the first European country that they entered (European Commission 2019). Responses to Germany's unprecedented decision ranged from praise to outcry and condemnation, both within and outside the country. It was clear that such a decision began a process of far-reaching change unseen in decades.

Over a two-year period alone, Germany received an estimated one million asylum-seekers (2015-2016, inclusive).[3] Much of the immediate, short-term focus on the arrival of Syrian asylum-seekers was given to practical considerations such as processing asylum claims, health and safety concerns, and finding temporary accommodation for individuals (Funk 2016). Over time however, as the number of

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[1] Over 6.6 million Syrians are internally displaced and over 5.6 million have fled Syria since 2011 (UNHCR 2019).

[2] Adopted in 2013, the Dublin Regulation establishes which European Member State is responsible for the examination of an asylum application lodged within the European territory. The objective of the Dublin Regulation is to assist the efficient and, arguably, effective processing of asylum procedures (European Commission 2019).

[3] To illustrate, between 2015 and 2016, Germany received almost half of the asylum applications in Europe and more than a third of all EU asylum applications in 2015 (Eurostat 2016). In 2016, there was a significant rise in first-time asylum applications in Germany from 442,000 in 2015 to 722,000 in 2016 . Although these applications were not restricted by nationality, the vast majority were made by Syrians (Ibid.).

arrivals dropped,[4] notions of an 'identity crisis' that had long been a part of Germany's collective narrative of nationhood and "Germanness",[5] started to take focused space in mainstream public, policy, and political discourse (Karnitschnig 2015). Within this context, two parallel narratives emerged: one of a 'welcoming' Germany and one of a Germany heading for chaos (Funk 2016). As scholars across disciplines critiqued the notion of a *Flüchtlingskrise* ("refugee crisis") altogether (Bock 2018; Kosnick 2019; Sigona 2018),[6] the ways in which Syrian refugees are represented in a range of fora by different actors has been examined with great interest (Chouliaraki and Stolic 2017; Eghdamian 2014, 2016; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016b, 2016c; Holmes and Castañeda 2016; Rettberg and Gajjala 2016). In particular, the role of religion in public debates has increased (Vincze 2018), as has scholarly engagement on the nexus between religion and refugees (Ibid.). To date, however, the vast majority of research on this nexus has related to the "Muslim refugee" (see, for example, Benton and Nielsen 2013; Caldwell 2015; Hill et al. 2016; Silvestri 2016; Tobin 2018; Türk 2008; Zaman 2016), with initial contributions to the question of 'religious identity' in 'integration' processes predominantly responding to increased fears that there will be a realisation of Huntington's (2002) "clash of civilisations".[7]

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[4] In 2016, the number of arrivals of asylum-seekers steadied to around 280,00 and then dropped drastically by 2017 to 186,644 (Chase 2018).

[5] By 'collective narrative', I refer to the specific histories and discourses which construct and reflect Germany's conception of nationhood and "Germanness". These themes are further expanded on in Chapter 4, examining Germany's historical and contemporary refugee policies, practices, and realities.

[6] The term 'crisis' evokes notions of large, uncontrollable, and potentially dangerous numbers. Yet, numbers have also been exaggerated. In 2015, for instance, there were warnings that Merkel's statement would result in over 3 million asylum-seekers arriving in Germany in 2016 alone (Koser 2015). Yet, in 2016, only 280,000 asylum-seekers arrived to Germany (Bock and Macdonald 2019). Nevertheless, the narrative of a 'crisis' increased and frequently used, resulting in a proliferation of the use of the term *Flüchtlingskrise* ('refugee crisis') in Germany (Bock 2018; Bock and Macdonald 2019).

[7] Huntington (2002) proposed that post-Cold War conflicts would be primarily waged based on differences in religious and cultural identities, primarily between the 'East' and 'West'. One of the (arguably positive) impacts of this thesis and its initial popularity has been to reassert the importance of beliefs, identities and values in societies - albeit in the context of conflict. Yet, the 'clash of civilisations' thesis has been widely debunked for its essentialisation of conflicts as well as cultures and religions, given that no civilisation has fixed traits but rather are formed and evolved (see Elias 1995 and Katzenstein 2010).

My previous research has highlighted the ways in which different actors can evoke and mobilise sectarian narratives in the conflict,[8] which in turn, represent 'Syrian refugee' identities, needs, and experiences in religiously homogeneous ways (Eghdamian 2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2016; see also, Schmoller 2016). This is despite Syria having historically been, and remaining, a religiously diverse nation.[9] Noting the tendencies in public, political, and media discourse to associate 'Syria', the 'Syrian refugee crisis', and 'Islam' together (Mavelli and Wilson 2016), this thesis further examines, builds on, and critically interrogates these assumptions within the context of refugee 'integration' - a term at once applied and critically analysed throughout this study.[10] Specifically, it explores the nature of representations of 'Syrian refugees' and the implications of these representations on Syrian 'religious minority' refugees living in Berlin, Germany. In doing so, it aims to identify whether (and if so, how and why) representations of 'Syrian refugees' in the context of Germany reflect religious homogeneity, and to trace the constitutive effects of such representations on Syrian refugees who may fall outside of such framing - i.e. 'religious minority' refugees.

Throughout this study, I also simultaneously apply and interrogate terms such as 'religious identity' and 'religious minority'. One way in which this manifests itself is the inclusion of 'atheists' in the category of 'religious minorities'. Although it may appear to be a contradiction in terms, there were four participants in the study who self-identified as being both non-believers in God and as Ismaili, a branch of Shiite Islam. Therefore, the fluidity of the category of 'religious minority' was needed to

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[8] Indeed, the importance of religious affiliation in the Syrian context is not only a significant force between the ruling Alawite minority (an offshoot of Shiite Islam) and the country's Sunni Muslim majority – reported to support the opposition (Kawakibi 2013) - but also between other religious minority groups drawn into the conflict, including Christians, Druze, and Ismailis.

[9] It is estimated that the Syrian general population is made up of Sunni Islam (75 per cent), Alawite Islam (12 per cent), other Muslim (including Isma'ili) (2 per cent), Christianity (including Greek Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox, Maronite, Syrian Catholic, Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic) (10 per cent), Druze (3-4 per cent), Yazidis (1 per cent), with no official statistics on minorities such as Jews, Bahá'ís, and non-religionists (Minority Rights Group International 2018).

[10] As will be further explored in Chapters 2 and 8, 'integration' is only one way in which the arrival, response, and experiences of different people in a society are viewed, understood, and acted upon legally, politically, or socially. There are a cluster of concepts and policy goals, such as assimilation and multiculturalism, that may be subsumed under the term 'integration' or that contest it altogether, for example interpretations of 'superdiversity' to which this study simultaneously applies and interrogates.

reflect the ways in which it is understood by refugees themselves. While on the one hand, these labels are used as identifying tools by my interlocutors and in this thesis, on the other hand, it has been imperative to both the research process and conceptual framework of the study *not* to view or treat 'religious identity' and 'religious minority' as fixed realities but rather, as fluid ones. Ascribing a 'religious minority' label to the refugee participants in this study can fall into an essentialist trap of pre-assigning a label to any individual or group. For that reason, I simultaneously left open possibilities of a (re)construction of the label and the identities ascribed to them as participants chose to express. Indeed, my research findings further affirm the contentious, conflicting, and malleable nature of identity construction and its applications.

Specifically, I find and argue that 'religious identity', of which 'religious minority' identities are included, is an important theme for refugee and forced migration scholars to take seriously. To date, attention given to 'religious minorities' in the context of Syrian refugee and forced migration concerns has been largely relegated to questions over the *vulnerability* of 'religious minorities' from Syria and whether they are more deserving of, or should be prioritised in, asylum claims (Eghdamian 2015b, 2015c; Schmoller 2016). A focus on vulnerability has, in turn, limited or detracted from understandings of refugee agency in negotiating, constructing, and responding to religion in contexts of forced migration (Zaman 2016). Indeed, the place, experiences, and relations of 'religious minority' refugees need to be better understood throughout the 'refugee experience' - from causes of displacement through to journeys of transit and arrival to places of asylum and resettlement and thus, 'integration' (Dagtas 2017; Eghdamian 2016, 2018, 2019; Saunders et al. 2016; Schmoller 2016). Within each of these processes and spaces, 'religious minorities' are always in and must be understood in relation to others - among and outside 'religious minority' groups, other refugees, as well as host communities that include institutional actors, established migrant populations, and everyday hosts.

At the core of this thesis is the notion that Syrians are diverse, and such diversity can be reflected in and through a number of intersecting and overlapping identities,

including religious, ethnic, regional, gender, class, and other loyalties, affiliations, and experiences developed over a long and complex history. From the Syriac Orthodox to the Ismaili atheist, my research examines how Syrian refugees can at once share common roots, cultural traditions, and language while also being diverse in regards to religious labels, markers, values, and practices, and, in so doing, explores the implications of such diversity. As there is no single Syrian 'religion', therefore 'religion' cannot be used as a priori description of a 'Syrian refugee'. History, territory, politics, and culture are all embedded into multiple understandings of 'Syrian identity'. Recognising such complexity, therefore, cannot be left at the place of origin (i.e. Syria). From displacement through to resettlement, identities and histories travel with and through Syrian refugee experiences and encounters. Countries such as Germany which have received, processed, hosted, and/or resettled displaced persons, are faced with an important challenge to recognise, understand, and engage with such complexities - either voluntarily, or inevitably. As demonstrated by 'identity crisis' debates that have increased across the European continent and the subsequent rise in anti-immigrant and right-wing support, there is both a timely and urgent need to better understand and respond to these debates.

The selection of Germany as a field site to examine and explore these tensions and realities is apt for two reasons. First, Germany placed itself in a unique position when it accepted large numbers of Syrian refugees. Subsequently, scholars, commentators, and political actors look to the country for insights on how to engage with diversity, including I argue, the internal heterogeneity of refugees. Second, having accepted such large numbers of people, the so-called 'integration' of these new arrivals has further ignited a long-standing, contentious debate of what refugees can or should do in a host society and the 'burden' of responsibility for them and their experiences. Any discussion of 'integration', then, directly challenges notions of national 'identity'. More recently, these debates have been associated with religious terminology and implications of religious identity, particularly as it relates to or reflects Islamophobia (Eghdamian 2018, 2019; Fábos and Isotalo 2014). In this respect, understanding who is 'accepted' into a German society (including how, by

whom, and to what effect) cannot be examined merely through the question of numbers, nationality, and the 'legitimacy' of asylum-claims. At a time when (im)migration policies and agendas are intimately connected to questions and concerns around (foreign and national) security (Eghdamian 2019; Falk 2017; Mavelli and Wilson 2016), and the subsequent racialisation and thus, religionisation of security matters (Eghdamian 2019; Mavelli and Wilson 2016), 'religion' and 'religious identity' cannot be separated from the discussion of refugee 'integration'.

I therefore argue throughout this study that in order to explore and better understand what 'integration' means in the context of Germany, there is inevitably a need to engage with assumptions about and responses to 'religious identity'. This in turn implies recognition of religious heterogeneity and the dynamics of such plurality in inter- and intra- religious, as well as non-religious, encounters among and between refugees and members of host communities (Saunders et al. 2016; Silvestri 2016). However, a caveat is necessary at this juncture. Throughout this thesis, I do not propose that 'religion or 'religious identity' are the *most* important or sole overarching frameworks for understanding, examining, or responding to diverse refugee identities, needs, or experiences. Rather, I posit that 'religion' and 'religious identity' are important concerns and matters that can be simultaneously drawn on and understood in conjunction with other identity markers, representations, and systems. Taken together, a more nuanced, balanced - even if at times, contradictory and complex - understanding of refugee identities, needs, and experiences emerges, which in turn can inform appropriate and effective responses to refugee assistance and protection.

Research Aims

The overall aim of this research is to examine the relationship between 'religious identity' and the 'integration' of refugees, through the lens of 'religious minority' refugees in a host country. Specifically, it explores the nature of representations of

'Syrian refugees' and the implications of these representations on Syrian 'religious minority' refugees living in Berlin, Germany.

The thesis explores three questions:

1. How and why are 'Syrian refugees' described, represented, referred to, and consequently constituted, and by whom?

This question explores representations of 'Syrian refugees' by critically examining three German newspapers and magazines (hereafter, referred to as publications) from across the political spectrum along with analyses of semi-structured interviews undertaken with 42 institutional actors from diverse sectors who engage with refugee populations in Germany. Institutional actors include refugee activists, religious leaders, and staff from non-governmental organisations, refugee advocacy organisations, faith-based organisations, refugee support agencies, and refugee centres.

2. What are the experiences of Syrian 'religious minority' refugees in Berlin and how, and to what extent, does 'religious identity' matter for refugee experiences of 'integration' in Berlin?

This question relates to refugee experiences both based on the perspectives and assumptions *about* Syrian refugee experiences and *from* religious minorities among the Syrian refugee population in Berlin, Germany. These insights were gained through semi-structured interviews with the above-mentioned institutional actors as well as through undertaking semi-structured interviews and focus groups with, and participant observations of, Syrian 'religious minority' refugees from Christian, Druze, Ismaili, Yazidi, Alawite, and atheist backgrounds and/or affiliations. A total of 39 refugees participated in this study. Of these, 30 individuals participated in semi-structured interviews and nine participated in two focus groups - one group was with four men (two Christian, one Druze, and one Yazidi) and the other was with five women (three Druze and two Ismaili).

3. What are the constitutive effects of representations of 'Syrian refugees' on the experiences of Syrian 'religious minority' refugees in 'integration' processes in Berlin, Germany?

By tracing and critically examining representations, constitutive effects can be better identified. Taking representations and experiences *together*, a relationship between how and why 'Syrian refugees' are represented in different ways and by different actors and their implications are better understood. For Syrian 'religious minority' refugees specifically, through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and participant observations, insights are gained as to how and why representations matter. In particular, the ways in which representations can influence, inform, and shape 'religious minority' refugee experiences, relations, and encounters, including 'integration' processes.

On Constitutive Effects

Throughout this thesis, I refer to representations of Syrian refugees and argue that they form a *discourse* on 'Syrian refugees' that must first be identified before being critically analysed (Faille 2011). In this research, discourse is understood to be "the content and construction of meaning and the organisation of knowledge in a particular realm" (Crawford 2004: 22; see also van Dijk 208). This definition implies that particular discursive practices make certain representations possible and are thus constitutive in their effects and not merely reflections of realities (Herrera and Braumoeller 2004: 16). As Rajaram (2002: 249) explains, strategies of representation (including in written text or oral accounts) "can lead to the imparting of knowledge about refugees that is abstracted from the social and political context". Discourses are not only identifiable through language; they convey meanings that serve specific purposes. Specifically, they serve performative functions (Butler 1999, 2011; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2009, 2011, 2014). That is, identities are produced by discourses

through "repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame" (Butler 1999: 25). These repeated acts are "re-citations" (Butler 2011) of identities, ever-changing and evolving, but not without limitations and constraints delineated by specific scripts. As Butler (1999: 25) further explains, "identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results". One's religion, therefore, is not something one *is* but rather something one *does* (Salih 2002: 55).

Thus, in order to trace the constitutive effects of representations, they must first be identified in order to consider and interrogate assumed 'knowledge' about certain refugee identities, needs, and experiences, and responses to them. Specifically, this thesis engages in a critical analysis by tracing the constitutive effects and implications of representations of 'Syrian refugees' on 'religious minority' refugees from Syria. In doing so, examining the nature and constitutive effects of multiple discourses (see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014) can uncover insights into broader perceptions and assumptions on the role of religion in refugee and forced migration spaces and thus, the place of religious plurality in such contexts. Taking note of context is particularly important in order to understand how discourses are produced and shared in different spaces (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2009, 2014; van Dijk 2008).

Finally, throughout this study, I note and take into account that the experiences of religious minorities and the realities of religious diversity are examined alongside and contextualised in relation to other aspects of identity. Although religious identity is prioritised in this research, it is not assumed that 'refugee identity' is primarily or exclusively tied up with 'religious identity'. The recognition of the intersectional dimensions of human identity and experience is thus important (Anthias 2008; Choo and Ferree 2010; McCall 2005). Following scholars such as Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2014), Saunders et al. (2016), Mole (2018), Wright (2014b), and others, 'refugee identity' is viewed alongside, in addition to, and in connection with other overlapping, multiple identities, including nationality, age, sexual orientation, gender, and ethnicity. Thus, how, where, and why 'religious identity' does or does not play a role in 'refugee identities' can be better understood through an

intersectionalist lens. An intersectionalist lens is both about these intersecting identities and how people are affected by and navigate multiple, intersecting structures of inequality and exclusion, including but not exclusive to Islamophobia, racism, sexism, and transphobia (Allsopp 2017; Anthias 2008; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016b; Grosfoguel et al. 2015; Lykke 2010; Saunders et al. 2016). My contributions in this study to the refugee and religion nexus, therefore, cannot be sufficiently or meaningfully understood in isolation from other features of human identity.

Thesis Structure

The structure of this thesis is as follows.

I first provide an overview of key debates primarily from forced migration and refugee studies literature (Chapter 2), to which this study contributes. I go on to present the research design and methodology (Chapter 3) that shaped this inquiry and lay the foundation for engaging critically and meaningfully with my fieldwork data, which make up four analytical chapters. Before proceeding to the analytical chapters, I first set the scene through a context chapter on Syria and Germany (Chapter 4). On Syria, I survey the country's historical and contemporary forms of governance and outline its religious diversity, whilst interrogating the predominant discourse of sectarianism as related to the Syrian conflict. I then review Germany's refugee politics, policies and practices by tracing its historical relationship with (im)migrant arrivals, reception and 'integration'. This includes Germany's encounters with religious and ethnic prejudices, its Turkish migrant and diaspora communities, and its contemporary responses to the arrival of Syrian asylum-seekers from 2015.

Chapter 5 grounds the importance of the 'minority' question at the outset. That is, why the 'minority' frame is often used (in both historical and contemporary terms for and in relation to Syria and Syrians) and why it matters for academic

engagement on refugee issues, including how it is often neglected or reduced to Muslim-minority issues in non-Muslim majority contexts (see for example, Adida, Laitin, and Valfort 2013; Brüß 2008; Carol et al. 2015; Trittler 2018, among others). I argue that the 'minority' label is a constructed entity that is interpreted and represented differently depending on memories and experiences of history and inequality, which is vital for understanding the ways in which minorities and minoritarianism[11] can be politicised. Further, I posit that the 'minority' label is not only a feature of conflict and for some, a cause of displacement, but it is also a *response* to conflict and displacement and can shape experiences of resettlement and 'integration'. My analysis departs from approaches to 'religious minority' issues in both academic and policy engagements on refugee-related topics that imply 'minority' to be a static or fixed identity (cf Saunders et al. 2016). It also contests simplistic human rights framing and language about minorities and the assumed a priori vulnerability of minority communities.

Having established the importance of the 'minority' label, Chapter 6 examines whether or how religion and 'religious identity' is described or referred to in newspaper and magazine articles in Germany and by institutional actors responding to or engaging with refugee needs and experiences. In particular, I find that it is apt to identify and examine whether or how 'minority' and/or 'religious identity' terms and labels are or are not used in this context and why. I identify that religion and 'religious minority' terms, identities, and experiences are either absent or, if mentioned, are primarily directed to Muslim identities and the role of Islam. My analysis finds that such homogenous representations of 'religious identity' in relation to 'Syrian refugees' are often superficial and largely, negative, reflecting Orientalist or political biases. Connections are further made in representations of

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[11] Chapters 3 and 5 explore what is meant by 'minoritarianism' in this study. At this juncture, it suffices to clarify that while minoritarianism can refer to the dominant rule of a minority group in politics (see Dajani 2015, for example, on minority regimes in the Middle East, such as Bahrain, Israel/Palestine, and Syria), it can also be used to describe the imposition of a minority status on individuals and the subsequent power (im)balances that result. This thesis primarily draws on insights from the latter, particularly the ways Deleuze and Guattari (1986) refer to 'becoming minoritarian' and its influence on identity relations. Such insights on minoritarian language have been insightfully applied to understanding the power of identity production in race (Albrecht-Crane 2003), ethnicity (Hein 1994), and gender (Goulimari 1999) identities.

'Syrian refugees' between religion and (the threat or presence of) violence and a lack of social cohesion, whether or not such relations are true. These connections reaffirm scholarship to date highlighting the increasing securitisation of (im)migration (Eghdamian 2019; Mavelli and Wilson 2016).

Whether or how these representations matter in practice occupies the focus of the final two discussion chapters of this study (Chapters 7 and 8). Specifically, I examine whether and how these limited and narrow conceptions of 'Syrian refugees' matter for understanding the nature of diverse refugee experiences and responses to religious minority refugees in 'integration' processes. I argue that these representations have different constitutive effects for both refugee-refugee relations and refugee-host relations. Each chapter explores how representations and the 'minority' label play out in both real and perceived ways for refugees - whether in relation to other refugees or hosts. I argue that representations of 'Syrian refugees' are actively negotiated and contested by 'religious minority' refugees themselves, in ways that not only challenge the assumptions underlying the representations but also affirm some of them. This includes how symbolic boundaries of exclusion are understood by refugees in relation to 'religious identity' and subsequently applied among refugees (not only by hosts), which reinforces the importance of understanding refugee agency.

Specifically, Chapter 7 focuses on refugee-refugee relations in 'integration' processes and identifies that religious prejudices, in particular, can inform and shape inter-religious encounters among refugees. Having examined the ways in which refugees' 'religious identities' (or lack thereof) are understood or (mis)represented, this chapter looks at how inclusionary and exclusionary perspectives of religion can influence refugee experiences of subtle or overt and perceived or real discrimination, hostility, conflict, and marginalisation between refugees.

Representations also matter for refugee-host relations and Chapter 8 examines such relationality by first acknowledging the plurality of 'hosts'. It examines how (mis)representations of religious diversity among refugees are informed by what I

argue are reductive views of religion and a secular bias, which impacts refugee-host relations. My research findings posit that representations and responses to religious diversity among refugees impact social and political life in host societies, reinforcing symbolic boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. This includes refugees performing acceptable 'religion' or secularity in order to be better 'integrated'. The chapter also challenges assumptions of the desirability of 'integration' as a process and outcome altogether, irrespective of whether or how religion 'fits' into an integration framework.

To conclude, I synthesise the main findings of this research and outline its theoretical and empirical contributions. In addition, I suggest areas for future research, particularly in regards to Syrian refugees, religious minority refugees, and the politics and implications of representation of refugees more broadly. Finally, I present a number of key recommendations for policy-makers and practitioners.

Chapter 2: Refugees, Religion, and 'Integration' — Contributions and Debates

Introduction

In this chapter, I survey the many ways that the terms 'religion' and 'religious identity' have been defined and used across the social sciences, with a particular focus on refugee and forced migration debates, including in contexts of 'integration'. Despite a notable and substantial degree of academic enquiry and engagement on refugee representations and specifically, religion and 'integration' debates (Ager and Ager 2015; El Nakib and Ager 2015; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011; Goździak and Shandy 2002; Hill et al. 2016; Nawyn 2005; Mayer 2007; Zaman 2016), there remains a paucity of qualitative analyses on the religion, refugee, and 'integration' nexus for a wide range of religious minorities (Eghdamian 2016).[12] This is a significant gap that this study contributes to, particularly as a response to often simplistic, monolithic conceptions of refugees and their experiences in host communities. As I review contributions and debates to date in this chapter, I note how valuable, necessary, and insightful developments in research and thought has been in these contexts.

Nevertheless, there remains a need for further development and interrogation on this nexus, particularly as a response to public, policy, and academic debates on the so-called 2015 'refugee crisis' in Europe (Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore 2018; Lyck-Bowen and Owen 2018; Strang, Baillot and Mignard 2018; Trittler 2018), in *diverse* contexts. This includes the 'integration' of multiple, conflict-induced,

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[12] For recent quantitative analyses of perceptions of 'religious identity', specifically related to 'religious plurality', in Europe and the impacts of the so-called "refugee crisis", see Pickel and Yendell (2017), Pickel (2018), and Vincze (2018).

displaced populations and how they are received and responded to in host communities with a long, complex history of multi-religious identities (Lyck-Bowen and Owen 2018). To date, the majority of academic engagement with 'minority' religious refugee issues specifically have predominantly addressed the identities, needs, and experiences of Muslim minorities in non-Muslim majority contexts (Eghdamian 2016).[13] Thus, there is a need to address gaps in understandings of diverse 'religious minority' identities and groups, including outside of Islam, in multi-religious contexts and demographics. Such engagement, however, requires critical analysis of the very terms of the debates themselves, such as 'religion', 'religious identity', 'minority', and 'integration'. How each of these terms are defined and used can fundamentally shift the nature and implications of what is understood and thus, the insights that are further applied from their analyses. It is to these definitions that I first examine in this chapter before moving on to substantive debates about their interrelations.

On Terms

'Religion': Individual, Irrational, Institutional?

Perhaps the most glaring social construct in this thesis is the term 'religion' and its multiple interpretations and contestations. Throughout this study, I do not refer to religion or 'religious identity' as static or fixed realities but as malleable and fluid ones. I particularly note how these terms and realities are responded to, performed, and negotiated differently by different people. In particular, how secularism interprets religion and how different religious and secular terminologies,

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[13] Indeed, one of the key insights from my previous research with Syrian 'religious minority' refugees in Jordan was that public, policy, and media representations of refugees often fall short of nuanced understanding of *diverse* refugee identities, needs and experiences when related to religion (Eghdamian 2015a, 2015b, 2016, 2017, 2018). This in turn informed and impacted the ways in which refugees were offered support, how they engaged with and were received by host communities, and thus, how they experienced transit and resettlement. Some of these experiences involved overt and subtle forms of (perceived or real) discrimination on the basis of religion, revealing a critical blind spot on the part of humanitarian and development actors committed to serving them.

perspectives and agendas may be contested or contradicted. As highly debated terms (Appleby 2015), they can lead to ambiguous uses in both theory and practice if they are not clarified. Indeed, researchers often distinguish between the terms 'faith', 'religion', and 'spirituality' (see Goździak and Shandy 2002; Lubkemann 2002), sometimes selecting the use of terms solely based on international covenants[14] despite their multiple meanings. Simplistic uses of these terms can lead to incongruence rather than depth of understanding. As such, the very aims of this study require a (re)examination of various assumptions held about religion by different actors, including understanding and interrogating how these assumptions (and potential biases) influence responses to refugee protection, assistance, and 'integration' in practice.[15] In order to understand whether and how these assumptions have shifted or changed over time, it is necessary first to explore the different ways the term 'religion' has been examined and understood in different contexts.

To begin, religion must be taken seriously. As Amin (2009: 26) points out, "religions are part of the picture of reality and even constitute an important dimension of it". As such, it is important to analyse their social function and articulation in relation to what commonly constitutes conceptions on and about 'the modern world'; namely, the relationship between understandings of religion and theologies of modernity, capitalism, democracy, and secularism. Whereas religion can been viewed as a counterpoint to 'the modern', I adopt the position articulated by scholars such as Jazeel (2013: 10) that religion is in fact "bound integrally to the project and politics of…modernity", which has specific political, economic, social agendas and effects. Although modernity is often defined as "a straightforward narrative of progress from the religious to the secular" (Asad 2003: 1), this is a narrative increasingly debunked. This is particularly pertinent since religion and politics are intermingled continually on the global scale, in revolutions, overthrows of governments, the

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[14] For example, see Ojalehto and Wang (2008) and their use of the term 'spiritual development' as a human right, referring to children who are forcibly displaced.

[15] I explore this dynamic in relation to secular biases in Chapter 8.

spread of extremist movements, and even in democratic rhetoric and agendas (Cameron and Schewel 2018: 3).

The age of modernity, from the old to the new, is not detached from the sacred, spiritual, traditional, or religious but rather forms part of modernity's dialectic (Cameron and Schewel 2018). Secularism, then, was (and continues to be) pursued by primarily, although not exclusively, Western-educated elites informed by and aligned with Enlightenment values (Asad 2003; Berger 1999; and Hurd 2008). Given that modernity is the product of capitalism, the expansion of capitalism led to the dominance of secularism in the West (Amin 2009; Taylor 2007). It can be argued therefore that the expansion of capitalism is governed by a certain fundamental logic that leads to growing inequality in the world. One of these growing inequalities is in the realm of religion and religious understanding. As Amin (2009: 8) further argues, "universalist claims are systematically combined with culturalist arguments, in this case Eurocentric ones, which invalidate the possible significance of the former". In other words, modernisation paradigms from the West assume universality and generalisability (that modernisation can be applied in the same way in all places). Yet, the religious traditions of the non-West in particular, could not have the secularism of the West applied directly to it - despite, at times, appearing to do so (Madan 1987). I draw on those foundations of understanding 'modern' Western societies in Chapter 6, specifically exploring representations of refugees and how refugees are often positioned as the Eastern, primitive 'other' in contrast to the presumed civility and progressiveness of the 'desired' Western subject. Such conceptions of modernity, associated with a Western, Eurocentric view have manifold, often imperialistic, implications for 'other' (Southern, Eastern) contexts "located miles apart from the European factories of Enlightenment knowledge production" (Jazeel 2013: 12). Indeed, I find there are assumptions, positions, and values underlying, embedded, and articulated within 'modern', 'secular', discourses that need to be identified, critically examined, and potentially recast entirely. Some of these effects are also explored in Chapter 8 of this study.

Similarly, there is a need to be more critical of the use of the term 'religion' – particularly in considering its origins and developments – and to move away from its common use as a ubiquitous term. In doing so, there is the possibility of better understanding the relationships between religion and society, religion and politics, and religion and history, as distinct from religion as an abstract concept.[16] Indeed, as explored throughout this study, it is pertinent to ask how, why, and with what effect modern and secular discourses have influenced and continue to inform responses to refugees in different frameworks, theories, and practices. In particular, how secular biases and assumptions of modernity impact understandings of and responses to religion by different actors (Ager and Ager 2015). In effect, both religion and secularism are symbolic boundaries by which processes and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion are created and reinforced (Trittler 2018). This study investigates some of the effects of these symbolic boundaries in terms of actual or perceived exclusionary behaviour, discrimination, or prejudice for/against/by religious minority refugees.

In one respect, rethinking 'religion' in this study also requires recognising that uses of the term often overlook the role of the sacred (Asad 2003; Durkheim 1915). Following Durkheim (1915), it can be said that a core and common characteristic of religious belief involves dividing the world and all things into the sacred and the profane.[17] The sacred, then, is a distinct power worthy of critical exploration. The emphasis on the sacred is not to enforce a rigid separation between the material and immaterial but to recognise its contributions to religious beliefs and practice. In some contexts, the presence of a normative religious orthodoxy structures the types of debates about the place of religion in society and in the public sphere (Jazeel 2013). For instance, in the majority of contemporary Middle East states, religion is assumed to be Islam as *prior* to the secular/modern. Thus, as Jazeel (2013: 17) points out, following Abeysekara (2008), there is the assumption that "society and the sacred are

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[16] See Asad (1993, 2003) and Fitzgerald (2007) on the construction of religion as a category of study (particularly in Western scholarship) and its relationship to European colonialism.
[17] Although Durkheim (1915) positions the sacred and profane in radically opposing, absolute terms; for the purposes of this study, I refer to the sacred here in order to identify a distinguishable characteristic of religion. It is not used to imply or assert that *all* religious beliefs, rites, or systems are sacred.

two separate things". As a result, it is perceived as possible that religion can be separated from everyday life and space and disassociated with religion's social and political effects (see Fábos and Isotalo 2014). Yet, scholars such as Wilson (2014) and Zaman (2016), effectively weave in notions of the sacred in understanding religious practices in refugee contexts by taking account of experiences of transcendence and prayer. Other scholars emphasise the idea of community as a sacred space where shared values and enduring associations are experienced (Hirschman 2004: 1207).

In this study, I do not ascribe or assume the concept of religion being 'sacred' to any religious identity, act, belief, or position but rather draw attention to it here as a way of indicating that religion can be viewed as sacred by individuals. This includes religious practices as well as religious spaces (see Chapter 8). As distinct from other processes and forces, such as politics for example, religion *is* uniquely 'sacred' to some refugees and as such, should be treated as such by scholars engaging with the term (Goździak and Shandy 2002).

Contours and Limitations of 'Secularism'

Despite the secularisation thesis – that religion will become less prominent in social life and over time, eventually disappear – religion and religious convictions, communities, and practices continue to exist (Berger 1999; Habermas 2006; Toft, Philpott and Shah 2011). Cameron and Schewel (2018: 2) distinguish between different strands of the secularisation thesis. As they explain (ibid.),

> First, there is the differentiation thesis, which contends that religion will no longer ground modern social reality but rather will operate as one functional sphere among others (e.g., politics, economics, ethics, and family life). Second, there is the privatisation thesis, which holds that modern religion will gradually vacate public life and be relegated to the domain of private concern. And third, there is the decline of religion thesis, which claims that religion will gradually lose its ability to influence the thought and action of modern peoples. Classical secularisation theorists derived these claims by analysing modern Western Europe, yet they believed that all other cultures and peoples

would eventually follow the same path as they continued to develop and advance.

In contrast to these versions of the secularisation thesis, religion - beyond existing - is in some respects becoming more significant and taking on new forms (Casanova 1994; Hurd 2008; Norris and Ingelhart 2004). Therefore, as 'religion' is rethought, 'secularism' as a term also needs to be reconsidered and challenged.

Just as it is argued that 'religion' is manifested in complex and multifaceted ways, it can also be posited that the term 'secularism' has multiple uses and meanings (Warner 2010).[18] I understand secularism to be primarily an ideological creation (following Asad 2003; Casanova 2011; Hurd 2008; Wilson 2012, among others), which has influenced – and continues to shape – various political and social dimensions of society. In particular, although there are a range of secular theories and world views, there are assumptions about the role and nature of religion in society that are strongly 'secularist' in orientation. As mentioned, often these assumptions result in the role of religion being delegated to the private sphere. In other ways, religion and its nature are assumed to be fixed, unchanging, a matter of personal choice, and located mostly as a (largely irrational)[19] belief that is "embodied collectively through institutions" (Wilson 2014: 349).[20]

Yet, if we fail to move away from the restrictions of secular thinking, including limitations of a strictly institutionalised understanding of religion, it will inevitably shape research, policy and practice. This is important to recognise and challenge

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[18] Also described as the 'subtraction narrative' (Schewel 2015: 105) advanced by a positivistic naturalist view of society, which posits an inverse relationship between modernity and religion. Some secularist assumptions also posit that 'religion' exists in more or less the same way in different spaces and across time (Wilson 2014: 348), while other academics specifically argue that "there cannot be a universal definition of religion", as its "constitutive elements and relationships are historically specific, [and] because that definition itself is a historical by-product of discursive processes" (Asad 1993:29).

[19] See Habermas (2006) and Wilson (2012) for challenges concerning what is considered rational and irrational in relation to the nature of public debate. It is worth noting that Habermas remains loyal to secular reason by positing that public debates should be framed in a universal language whilst Wilson argues for moving away from binary categorisations (public/private, religious/secular, rational/irrational) altogether. Instead, Wilson proposes to use "intellectual engagement, emotional knowledge and spiritual insight" as alternative frameworks (see Wilson 2014: 356).

[20] In other words, a strongly Eurocentric, Christian (Protestant) conception of 'religion' (Wilson 2014).

because failing to do so will significantly limit "our understanding of the spiritual, metaphysical and transcendent dimensions of human existence… such as prayer, worship, giving, serving and hospitality" (Wilson 2014: 349) and their myriad implications (see also Ager and Ager 2015). To clarify, this argument does not imply that a scholar or researcher must be aligned to or considered 'spiritual' or 'religious' in order to be in a position to explore and seek understanding of the spiritual or religious. Indeed, whether one aligns to a secular, religious, spiritual, or other perspective, one can make sound analytical judgements. The argument here is that, in line with Foucault's notion of discourse, analytical judgements are always made from a position in relation to ideas - one is not necessarily better or worse than another, but each is different. There is no single analysis - whether secular, religious, or spiritual - that intrinsically deserves to be in a more privileged position to reveal the entire 'reality' of an object under examination.[21] However, the dominance of secular thinking and its related assumptions, concepts, and frameworks have limited a deeper, fuller, and arguably, more accurate, understanding of the realities of religious refugee identities, experiences, and needs (Eghdamian 2016). This secular dominance must be interrogated, rather than blindly accepted, and its implications better understood.

At the same time, it can be argued - in line with the secularisation thesis - that religion has lost, or is losing, its ability to "help establish the foundations for more expansive patterns of collective life" (Cameron and Schewel 2018: 2) by focusing on the exclusionary, conflictual, and domination forms of religion and religious life. In response to the prevalent failings of the secularisation theory regarding the role and place of religion in public life, a growing body of literature on 'post-secular' discourse has emerged. As a project, approach, and method, post-secularism

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[21] As Ghosh (2013: 1) effectively argues on the exclusionary nature and impact of secularism:

> If everything becomes inclusionist and constitutionally expostulatory and exhortative, what happens to the reflexive ethos of difference and diversity? Does secularism, in its fixed ways of principled manifestation, show a contradictory status where, in trying to be inclusionist, it, in effect, becomes fiercely exclusionist and thoroughly prejudiced to people who believe otherwise? Does it not make secularism a kind of violent mechanism to ensure that people who do not belong to the secular community are the ones who should be targeted as perilous, pernicious and, hence, eliminable?

challenges dominant Western secular discourses (Lyck-Bowen and Owen 2018: 6) in an effort to reconcile unity and difference (Cameron and Schewel 2018: 5). While some disavow the post-secular label entirely, others view post-secularism as a valuable and constructive approach to seeking to learn about how *both* religious and secular discourses can be complemented (Arat 2017). Following Habermas (2006), it can be argued that post-secularism looks to permit and engage with religious perspectives in public discourse normally associated with secularism. In doing so, there are efforts made to "work out norms of public discourse that foster complementary learning processes between citizens employing religious and secular modes of discourse" (Cameron and Schewel 2018: 5).

However, although post-secular scholars have retained interest in, support for, and engagement with religion and its role in the public sphere, it can be argued that post-secular thought remains "under the spell of secularisation" (Arat 2017: 29), particularly by discounting, ignoring, or entirely omitting God (or transcendence, divinity, or other related terms) (Ibid.: 33). Indeed, it can be seen that in many of the religion in integration debates specifically, post-secular references to religion are often reduced, or restricted, to a form of social identity and social practice, primarily analysed by its operational and functional nature or possibility (such as a source of resources in society) (Knott 2005). Nevertheless, while it is justifiable and legitimate to argue that religion is more-than its social function or practical manifestation, it is important to acknowledge that if religion was *only* viewed in the private sphere, one cannot reasonably or effectively consider its contributions, particularly constructively, to the public realities of social existence (Palmer 2018: 60). Indeed, in doing so, there is a possibility through post-secular enquiry to "achieve a new reconciliation of unity and difference" by learning to accommodate "overlapping and competing religious and non-religious identities and allegiances" (Camilleri cited in Cameron and Schewel 2018: 5).

Thus, in line with post-secular inquiry, one of the aims of this research is to identify what the assumptions are about 'religion' in responses to refugees and their arrival in host communities, which will inevitably influence policy and practice (Göle 2015;

Jacobsen and Landau 2003; Turton 2003). This *includes* identifying dimensions of secular thought and practice that react to or inform perspectives and responses to religion and the religious. In doing so, this research challenges some assumptions where a broader understanding of 'religion' may be required in light of realities and experiences shared by refugees themselves. One of the wider implications of this post-secular approach is seeking to understand the realities of religious identities and experiences of religious diversity.

'Religious Identity': Subjective, Adaptive, Responsive?

At times, this study refers to 'religious identity' rather than 'religion'. Like religion, religious identity is a difficult term to use - not only because it is contested but because, by its very nature and use, it can be normative. Although my intention is not to assume the presence or type of religious identity in my research participants, I did so in order to identify participants that 'fit' within the contours of my research aims. The risk I took in doing so was to presuppose what 'religious identity' meant. I mitigate this risk by asking, allowing, acknowledging and engaging with alternative representations, views, and languages of and about religion or religious identity, particularly by participants themselves. In this way, what was/is presumed may be subsumed, altered or overturned altogether. Nevertheless, it is important at this juncture to examine the concept of 'identity' and thus, 'religious identity', and its use in the conceptual framework of this study.

The term 'identity' is often used to describe a sense of self or a particular group affiliation, position, or status (Peek 2005: 217). This reference to self has been debated and requires clarification. Stuart Hall (1992) argues there are three conceptions of identity that have progressed over time. The first is the enlightenment subject, which is based on a conception that there is a unified, stable 'core' to an individual (Hall 1997). During modernity, there was the recognition of the sociological subject formed in the interaction between self and society. Finally, the third conception, the

postmodern subject' proposes no coherent "self" at all. Rather, the postmodern subject assumes different identities at different times, reflecting a fragmented self. This fragmentation is argued to be a result of modernising, or globalising, forces and processes such as economic and technological growth, and migration. As knowledge, connection, and communication on and about different cultures and ways of life increase, so does the number of forms and types of identities that individuals ascribe to themselves, or, indeed, not to identify or aspire to identify with a category or narrative altogether (Kinnvall 2004).

While there is a need to distinguish between types of 'self' and how they are conceived in light of or in response to different forces in society, this study does not assume or presuppose a postmodern subject - i.e. that people do not identify themselves with categories or coherent narratives. While some identities may overlap or be multi-faceted, it remains possible "but no less desirable, to think in terms of singular, integrated and harmonious identities" (Kinnvall 2004: 747). It is useful to think of identifies in both an individual and collective (societal) manner and recognise the mutually reinforcing nature of both. As Breakwall (2004: 29) points out, identity creation is a process of assimilation, accommodation, and evaluation in and through society, rather than in absence of it. Individual identities are organically tied to the social and communal identities of which they are a part of or associate with. As Seul (1999: 556) explains, group identity is, in essence, a manifestation of the individual identity impulse. This aspect of social and collective identities and the ways in which certain group identities are formed, and indeed, posed against each other through negative attitudes and exclusivity will be examined further in the section on minority identities and minoritarianism. However, in brief, it suffices to argue that narratives about identities find meaning within particular contexts and identities emerges from "the dialectic between individual and society" (Berger 1999; Luckmann 1967: 174). Indeed, "identity remains unintelligible unless it is located in a world. Any theorising about identity - and about specific identity types - must therefore occur within a framework of the theoretical interpretations within which it and they are located" (Ibid. 175). And once formed, and as they reform or are recreated, negotiated and contested, identities are performed (Butler 1999, 2011).

Although religion has many dimensions and manifestations (from the psychological to the metaphysical and theological), as mentioned, this study examines religion predominantly through a sociological lens and examines it as a social reality, phenomenon, and function. Therefore, 'religious identity' can be viewed as an affiliation, belief, practice, experience, or manner of self-understanding (Scheepers et al. 2002: 244). In this study, affiliation and self-understanding were the primary markers or dimensions of 'religious identity'. The religious identities of participants were not confirmed, determined, or validated by any practices, experiences, or specifics of belief. If an individual spoke of belonging to (whether through actual participation or not in a formal sense), then the religious identity was noted. In other words, in this study, it was 'enough' if the person self-identified belonging to, or identifying with, a religious identity. I did not measure, nor was I concerned with, the degree of a person's religiosity but rather the use of - or rejection of - labels and their implications. This included what Demerath (2000: 127) refers to as 'cultural religion', which is a term to describe when religion is used as part of a person's identity even if there is no ritual or belief associated with it - or as Storm (2009) describes, "belonging without believing" (for example, where a person associates their religious identity with their national identity or civic duty).

This distinction, similarity, and overlap of religious identity with other terms such as cultural identity is important. In some ways, they are distinct but interwoven concepts and realities. For instance, religion can be viewed as an aspect of culture or social norms while culture informs a particular religious practice or belief, for example in the form of rites or rituals. Yet, in contrast to religious identity, 'cultural identity' as a term and construct has been a significant focus of social science research. The predominance and regularity of the use of 'culture' as a label and term reflects a degree of comfort and acceptance of the word and its importance to conceptions of society. Like religious identity, cultural identity is a sense of group membership or belonging, a psychological relationship with the cultural values and behaviours of a group, with components including language and traditions (see Haji

et al. 2011: 4; Phinney 1990: 499). Yet, conflating religious identity with other forms of identity is not always helpful, or accurate.

Thus, it is clear that how religious identity is defined determines how it is used as a marker of difference and how it is understood in analyses. For the purposes of this study, religious identity is viewed as a subjective but evolving and adaptive category based on the self-understanding of participants and their engagements and responses to the term. Religion and religious identity are thus used as part of a social science typology here, rather than as a mode of philosophical engagement or normative theological debate.

Having delineated how the terms 'religion', 'religious identity' and 'secularism' are used in this study, I will now outline contributions in refugee and forced migration literature to date on a) representations of refugees; b) religious identities of refugees; and c) religion in 'integration'.

Representations of Refugees: Critiques and Understandings

There is a well-established and insightful body of literature examining and critically asking how, why, and with what effect refugees are represented by different actors, including in media, public, and political discourses, in diverse contexts (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014; Höijer 2004; Malkki 1996; Rajaram 2002; Wright 2002, 2014a) on which this study builds on. This includes exploring how representations shift and alter depending on the 'type' of refugee being represented (Jenicek et al. 2009; Sigona 2014). Such an acknowledgement of the heterogeneity of refugees themselves has helped the assessment of representations in different contexts and forms, avoiding the tendency to conflate all refugee representations into one form or effect. Most relevant to this study is how the so-called 2015 'refugee crisis' in Europe

has been represented and how different arrivals to Europe, specifically Syrian refugees, have been perceived and spoken or written about. While there has been active and focused academic enquiry on refugee representations in Europe during and post-2015 (Holmes and Castañeda 2016; Kallius 2016), there remains a need for in-depth and focused attention on religion and 'religious identity' outside of, or in addition to, Muslim identities and the role of Islam and the impacts of Islamophobia in Europe (Silvestri 2016).

What follows is an overview of refugee representations and the development of thought in the refugee representations literature, which forms the basis from which all representations enquiries in this study proceed. The section concludes with an acknowledgement of postcolonial representations and in particular, clarify what I mean by referring to representations having 'constitutive effects' on refugees and hosts.

'Refugees': Universalised, Dehistoricised, Depoliticised?

Research on and about refugees and forced migration has long identified and critiqued a recurring, universalising representation of refugees with significant consequences – not only in and by the media but also by a range of humanitarian actors (see Malkki 1995, 1996). Specifically, there is a general consensus amongst refugee and forced migration scholars that discourses on refugees often adopt dangerous stereotypes, resulting in prejudicial views on and about refugees, as an 'other' (Greussing and Boomgaarden 2017; Krzyżanowski et al. 2018: 2). For instance, it has been argued that asylum and refugee rights organisations have also represented refugees in ways that have reinforced the 'vulnerable victim' universalised category of 'refugeedom' (see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014; Rajaram 2002), producing a dehistoricised and depoliticised 'refugee' (Malkki 1995, 1996). This process of dehistoricisation and depoliticisation is problematic, in one respect, because it conveys refugees as dependents with impaired capacity, unable to

self-determine or to narrate the truth of their experiences (Ibid.; Berg and Milibank 2009; Griffiths 2012; Sigona 2014). Although a 'refugee' can be identified through legal definitions, the multiple ways that multiple actors *represent* refugees to different audiences often shift and alter these legal definitions. For instance, if an individual or group of people do not "look" like refugees (Malkki 1996: 384), responses to them by humanitarian or civil society actors can also shift – irrespective of legal definitions. The image of the refugee is therefore intimately connected to whether a refugee is considered 'real' and can demarcate the different forms of conduct deemed 'acceptable' of a refugee (Ibid.). This determination of the degree of "refugeeness" of an individual has been critiqued broadly (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014) and specifically in relation to (presumed or real) identities, including religion (Eghdamian 2016; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014; Schmoller 2016; Zaman 2016), sexual orientation (Jenicek et al. 2009; Mole 2018), ethnicity (Colic-Peisker 2005; Fábos 2011; Hein 1994; Holmes and Castañeda 2016**)**, and gender (Achilli 2015; Allsop 2017; Turner 2019; Wright 2014b).

Despite the need to recognise the plurality of refugee crises and experiences, many representations of refugees "appear to have been left in a time-warp" (Wright 2014a: 463). Such representations often disregard specifics and present a universalised imagery of "refugees as a bare humanity" (Malkki 1996: 390), as a "mute and faceless physical mass" (Rajaram 2002: 247). For instance, the religious-specificities of refugee identities, needs, and experiences, when represented, are largely framed in hegemonic ways, often focusing on majority populations (Eghdamian 2016). This reveals a significant gap in the process of understanding, and subsequently responding to, *diverse* refugee populations (which are themselves internally heterogeneous) in *different* contexts. Indeed, as different social and political changes around the world have taken place, the dynamics of understanding and responses to refugees (and, as I and others argue, to religion) have changed. For instance, historical and contemporary events such as the 'Arab Spring' and the so-called European 'refugee crisis' not only impacted - and continues to influence - patterns of forced migration but also responses to forced migrants (Wright 2014a: 460; Sigona 2018). In some instances, representations of refugees have also shifted from the

image of a passive, voiceless victim (Malkki 1996) to perpetrators of violence, crime, and 'terrorism' (Wright 2014a). These new and changing dynamics of displacement, at a time of increasing securitisation of migration (Berry et al. 2015; Eghdamian 2019; Göle 2015; Mavelli and Wilson 2016) calls for reconsiderations and broadening of concepts related to the 'refugee' and 'refugeeness' (Hajdukowski-Ahmed et al. 2008). Indeed, debates continue on whether or when to use the term 'migrant', 'forced migrant', or 'refugee' (Greussing and Boomgaarden 2017; Kyriakides 2017) in different contexts and which terms, if any, are useful, problematic, restrictive, or broad and the consequences of using them.

What has become clear is that representations literature reveals contradictory views and confusion over what (or who) a refugee is and is not - despite legal definitions, such as the most commonly used definition from the 1951 Refugee Convention.[22] At times, refugees are represented simultaneously as individuals without agency and thus, helpless victims, while also being framed and treated as potential terrorists and threats to or burdens on society (cf Carpenter 2006; Zaman 2016). Part of the contradiction comes from misunderstandings about the origins, nature, and realities of "refugeeness" but also from an emphasis on the 'otherness' of the refugee - whoever s/he may be.[23] Whether they are helpless or they are dangerous, a refugee remains a deficient and never quite equal to the Western/European subject. Such stereotyping of refugees fails to acknowledge nuances and complexities; but importantly, these and other labels given to refugees significantly inform how public, civil society, and political actors interpret moral and legal obligations to refugees and shape responses to them (Sigona 2018).

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[22] Article 1 of the Convention defines a refugee as a person who is outside his/her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution (see UNHCR 2001).

[23] Refugee representations are also often gendered - women are often portrayed as victims and men largely framed as perpetrators or potential threats to safety and security (see Carpenter 2006: 3; Wright 2014). Reaffirming the importance of intersectionality, specific groups of men are more likely to be assumed to be dangerous or undesirable by virtue of their (presumed or real) religious or ethnic identity, such as in the case of Arab/Muslim men (see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016c, Turner 2019).

By analysing representations of Syrian refugees in Germany in this study, in the context of responses to the so-called 'refugee crisis' in Europe, I build on these works to date. In particular, I affirm the arguments made in research critiquing representations of displaced people and the negative connotations of how they are framed, specifically in regards to (often presumed) 'religious identity'. As Holmes and Castañeda (2016: 12) argue in the context of Germany, this process of analysing representations is important because,

> The discursive frames used in the media and in political and popular narratives can help us learn a great deal about how the responsibility for suffering is shifted; how fears of cultural, ethnic, and religious differences are mobilised; and how boundaries of social categories are made and unmade, sorting people into undeserving trespassers versus those who deserve rights and care from the state.

Thus, the importance of terminological clarity as well as a reframing of the moral 'deservingness' of refugees is needed, of which this study is concerned with exploring and better understanding.

Responding to (Mis)Representations: Who Can/Does but Who Should and How?

Ensuring that refugees' own histories, perspectives, and experiences are accounted for, particularly in official records held by humanitarian actors is a key response to (mis)representations of refugees (Sigona 2014; Turton 2003). However, as Malkki (1996: 384) points out, there is often a perception by humanitarian actors that refugees are "unreliable informants". When refugees give accounts of their experiences, they are seen as "stories" rather than as "facts". For those refugees who are able to share their political, moral, and social histories, they are often rejected by administrators as "subjective, unmanageable, hysterical" and thus, not able to be taken seriously (Ibid.: 385). The importance of accounting for – and indeed, prioritising – refugees' representations of their own identities, needs, and

experiences (Godin and Doná 2016) is imperative in any research. However, it is also important to note that refugee representations of their experiences, communities, and needs (and indeed, of the 'other' – whether it be members of the host community, including other refugee communities) are also impacted by social and political conditions (see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014; Jackson 2002; Leudar 2008; Malkki 1996). As such, processes of enabling refugees to bring themselves into representation or accounting for refugees' self-representations is neither apolitical nor equal (see Blommaert 2001) and must be engaged with critically.

Increasing visibility of a plurality of refugees can also be viewed as an act of expanding notions of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' when it comes to prioritising refugee protection and assistance. One of the dangers of an 'undeserving' narrative is the dehumanisation of the undeserving. As Esses, Medianu, and Lawson (2013: 522) point out,

> Dehumanization involves the denial of full humanness to others, and their exclusion from the human species... This is an extreme reaction to members of other groups, removing them from considerations that surround our treatment of other humans.

A core objective of this thesis, then, is ensuring that notions of who is a 'refugee' shifts from generalised conceptions or stereotyped framing towards a greater recognition of diversity, which includes scholarly interest in understanding such diversity. Indeed, "identifying and exposing the vulnerability of varied groups and defining them in terms that make them suitable objects of humanitarian action" (Landau 2014: 140; Polzer and Hammond 2008) has been a trend within humanitarian studies in particular. It is not that 'they' (different, marginalised, minoritised individuals and groups) do not exist, or have not existed, but it is that they have not been seen/heard (a process of silencing) or indeed, wanted to be seen/heard (a desire to be/remain hidden) (see Ross 2003; Spivak 1988).

This finding of the partiality of humanitarian representations and responses to refugees runs counter to the "moral ideals" of humanitarianism and development

that "there should be no social boundaries for qualifying as a victim worthy of help" (Höijer 2004: 516; see also Mole 2017). Whether it is the media, the state, or humanitarian organisations, particular groups of refugees are, and continue to be, represented and poised as 'better' or more 'ideal' victims than others (Höijer 2004; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014) and thus, more worthy of compassion and assistance (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014; Mole 2017; Sales 2002). It is therefore increasingly important to identify and critically engage with representations of refugees and how they shape discourses on refugee needs, identities, and experiences. Indeed, representations are important because they have very real effects (Eghdamian 2014, 2016; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2009, 2014; Godin and Doná 2016; Hall 1997; Malkki 1996; Rajaram 2002; Sommers 1995). One of these effects is the "de facto inability of particular refugees to represent *themselves* authoritatively in the inter- and transnational institutional domains where funds and resources circulate" (Malkki 1996: 386, my emphasis). As Höijer (2004: 517) points out, representations "frame the context within which government policy is formulated and humanitarian action is mounted". To that end, this study is also concerned with how representations of refugees are reflected in the discourse and practices of refugee 'integration'.

Finally, it is imperative to acknowledge postcolonial representations of refugees, particularly reflecting colonial assumptions of women as subjects of charity and of victims (McPherson 2015). Here, the key challenge is not invisibility itself, but how the visibility of refugees is presented as essentialist, reflecting hegemonic assumptions about their passivity and representing them as 'un-agentic victims' (McPherson 2015; Moore et al. 2012, 2018). This is often an area where the inclusion of 'refugee voices' is presented as a solution or appropriate response to counter and present different paradigms of representation. However, these too can be problematic by virtue of how - not whether - refugee voices are identified, gathered, and used. In contrast to the representation of refugees as victims, the polar opposite of victims as dangerous, violent, and threatening actors is also problematic not only because it is inaccurate but it evokes and instils fear, anxiety and uncertainty of potential hosts (Esses, Medianu and Lawson 2013: 519). It is for this reason that questions arise about whether or not refugees and other migrants should be

accepted into a country and if so, what the quota and qualification for entry should be. How potential migrants and refugees are presented to host nations significantly impacts whether or how they received, and the welcome and treatment they are offered upon arrival. The role of the media in this respect cannot be underestimated as any representation can move to senses of crises and threats quickly. This study specifically interrogates the underlying, essentialist and, as I argue in Chapter 6, Orientalist assumptions of hegemonic representations of specific refugee populations over others - in this case, Syrian refugees.

How and Why Representations Matter

Throughout this analysis of literature on how and why refugees are represented there is an underlying view that representations matter because they have very real effects. Throughout this study, I argue that representations have constitutive effects. By this, I mean that representations can, inter alia, impact the social climate of intergroup relations, frame everyday encounters, inform many public and private conversations, and shape conceptions of belonging. Indeed, how and why refugees are represented reflects the extent to which the demarcation and stigmatisation of specific groups of people results in feelings or experiences of exclusion, discrimination, or overt hostility (Trittler 2018) and how some groups are a priori framed and responded to as "suspect communities" (Hickman et al. 2011). Othering of refugees is a form of demarcation and stigmatisation. Examples of exclusionary and discriminatory behaviour resulting from this othering may include overt verbal and physical attacks, to more subtler forms of disrespect and mistreatment, such as avoidance, unfriendly looks, or an unwelcoming reception (Eghdamian 2015b, 2016).

Representations have these effects because they are believed to be true by audiences receiving and responding to them. As Greussing and Boomgaarden (2017: 1750) argue, "media coverage contributes to the construction of socially shared understandings and dominant representations of newly arriving people, which have

further consequences for attitudes, emotions, and behaviour towards them", thus impacting the so-called integration or otherwise of refugees and asylum seekers into society. When (forced) migration is constructed as a 'challenge', it is framed as a social and political issue that requires a social and political response (Kortofil and Motak 2018).

Significantly, representations also influence refugees. How they are viewed can inform the ways in which they view themselves and, as I argue in Chapter 7, how refugees view other refugees. Representations need to be taken seriously on this point alone - because it is also performative (Goffman 1959). That is, discourses are not only identifiable through language and images; they convey meanings that serve specific purposes (van Dijk 2008). Specifically, they serve performative functions (Butler 1999, 2011; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2009, 2011, 2014).

It is also important to note that the construction and dissemination of specific representations is often *deliberate*. Confirming much of the representations literature to date, Greussing and Boomgaarden (2017: 1751) found that media outlets normally select one of three types of framing of refugees in relation to the aims they wish to achieve: 1) as passive victims, 2) as threats (to culture, security or welfare), or 3) as dehumanised, anonymous (out-)group. Depending on the framing chosen, different outcomes will result in terms of public discourse, debate, policy, and practice. For example, choosing a victimisation frame of refugees can emphasise a humanitarian stance in asylum policy, including legal and moral obligations towards refugees, or it can be pejorative and present asylum seekers and refugees as completely dependent on external support (Rajaram 2002). This latter framing poses refugees as problems, associated with crime, terrorism, or illegality. Where the focus is on resources, an economisation frame is adopted shifting public attention away from whether or not an asylum claim is legitimate and towards whether they deserve sympathy and support. Which framing is chosen is highly dependent on the form of media - for instance, tabloids focusing on sensational news versus serious reporting outlets. Often, these forms of media are not independent or apolitical but intimately intertwined with agendas and priorities shaped by funders.

Thus, representations of refugees in different forums is strongly influenced by the political and social climate of the context in which the representation is made, shared, and received. It is for this reason that my examination of representations of 'Syrian refugees' in Germany includes three publications (newspapers and magazines) from different political allegiances. As has been identified elsewhere, if there is an interest to promote anti-Islam sentiments, for example in right-wing circles, there is a focus on increasing fears of (Jihadi/Islamist) terrorism in order to lead to the perception that Muslim (forced) migrants are to be feared as potential or real threats to the culture, safety, or traditions of a society (Falk 2017). Other studies have confirmed a similar trajectory (Mavelli and Wilson 2016). For instance, Krotofil and Motak (2018) analysed the construction, reproduction and dissemination of the role of religion in public and political responses to the so-called migration crisis in Polish media outlets. Among its findings, that study identified the ideological (often invisible) underpinnings of discourse that seek to reproduce and legitimise power relations inherent in the migration crisis (van Dijk 2008). In that context, power was religious and political and involved upholding the institutional privilege of the Catholic Church in Poland (Ibid. 62).[24] In the German context, Holmes and Castañeda (2016: 18) found that representations of refugees in German media and political discourse are in a Gramscian-like "war of position" over symbols, policies, and ultimately, social and material resources. Their analysis shows that representations of refugees in Germany have shifted from focusing blame on historical, political-economic structures and onto the displaced people themselves. In particular, media discourses demarcate the "deserving" refugees from the "undeserving" migrants and play into fears of cultural, religious, and ethnic differences (Ibid. 21).

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[24] Indeed, religious institutions and actors are also producers of representations. See, for example, Althusser's argument that the 'Church' is a part of the ideological state apparatus (Hamza 2016).

Concluding Thoughts on Refugee Representations

My own research, aligned with Holmes and Castañeda's (2016: 20) conclusions, deliberately analyses representations in order to highlight where there are gaps or contestation, and what the effects of differing representations may be in practice. In order to trace the constitutive effects of representations (Fairclough 2001), they must first be identified in order to consider and challenge assumed 'knowledge' about certain refugee identities, needs, and experiences, and responses to them. In this study, I identified different ways in which Syrian refugees are represented in three German publications and by a range of institutional, including religious, actors (see Chapter 6). In doing so, I uncovered insights into broader perceptions and assumptions on the role of religion in refugee integration and the place of religious identity and diversity in the context of Germany (see Chapters 7 and 8). Taking note of context is particularly important in order to understand how discourses are produced and shared (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2009, 2014). For that reason, Germany's own history, politics, and contemporary debates on the so-called 'refugee crisis' are referred to and inform in my analyses.

Religion(s) and Religious Identity/ies in Refugee and Forced Migration Contexts

The subject of religion and religious identity has a strong foundation and focused attention in refugee and forced migration studies. A number of scholars (Ager and Ager 2017; Eghdamian 2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2016, 2017; Kidwai 2017; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2010, 2011, 2015; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Ager 2013; Mavelli and Wilson 2016; Parsitau 2011; Wilson 2011, and others) have sought to understand the multiple, varied, and at times conflicting or contradictory ways that religion informs responses to refugee assistance and protection; shapes refugee motivations, values,

and lives; and impacts refugee policies and practices in different contexts. While attention has been given to different religious affiliations, backgrounds, and contexts, there remains room for examination of diverse types of religions and the religious, including in spaces of inter-religious encounter and enquiry (Eghdamian 2016). As mentioned, this includes interrogating minority-majority labels, categories, and relations, including for minority-minority and majority-majority individuals, groups, and settings.

Akin to the development of thought on religion and religious identity more broadly in the social sciences, there has been a process of examining religion in refugee spaces from the private to the public, the individual to the institutional, including the immaterial and material functions and operations of religion and religious life. These three aspects - individual religion (motivation, values, culture, and behaviour), community religion (gatherings, social expectations, in-group/out-group dynamics), and institutional religion (faith-based organisations, religious actors, faith leaders, and civil society) - are all valid and important areas of religion to examine and understand. Yet, if explored solely in silos or as mutually exclusive domains of religion and religious life, overlapping and interconnected dimensions of religion and religious life may be lost or overlooked (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016b).

Debates on post-secularism and challenges to Western secular discourses are increasingly influencing understanding of humanitarian agendas and practices, including in refugee and forced migration contexts (Ager and Ager 2017; Kidwai 2017; Lant 2017; Mavelli and Wilson 2016). It has been argued that a secular orientation in development and humanitarian sectors is often expressed through a distrust of religious actors based on fears or assumptions of religion being at odds with other values, such as human rights (see Kidwai 2017). One of the many results of these fears and assumptions has been for faith-based organisations to conform to more secular parameters, frameworks, and language in order to be accepted by the development or humanitarian society, including in order to qualify for funding to do their work (Ager and Ager 2017). Yet, one of the consequences of taking religion out of development and humanitarian sectors has been an inability to respond to the

religious values and needs of beneficiary communities in appropriate ways (Kidwai 2017: 177). As I have argued previously (Eghdamian 2016, 2019), there may be consequences for overlooking, undermining, or rejecting religion and the religious, including heightened experiences of (perceived or real) discrimination, stigmatisation, (overt or subtle) hostility and conflict for some refugee populations.

In the context of the so-called 'refugee crisis' and responses to it in Europe, scholars have highlighted an increasing conflation and correlation in political, policy, and public debates between religion, Islam and the securitisation agenda (Greussing and Boomgaarden 2017; Holmes and Castañeda 2016; Mavelli and Wilson 2016). Debates about migration, including forced migration, to Europe are strongly informed by measures of secularism such as that religion is private, should be subject to or managed by the state (Beyer 2006), and that certain types of religion are undesirable. This is particularly true for minority religions in majority secular states in Europe, especially for Islam (Eghdamian 2018, 2019). Indeed, negative attitudes towards minority religious groups, such as Muslims, are often linked to a view that (public) religiosity is antithetical to European values and culture (Eghdamian 2019). In a post-secular age (Habermas 2006), it can be argued that religious and secular boundaries have resulted in a resurgence of religion. Indeed, in the context of the so-called 'refugee crisis' in Europe, this is particularly true in relation to questions of which asylum claims are more deserving than others and whether religious identity should play a role in determining asylum (Eghdamian 2015b, 2015c) and how religion impacts integration processes (Lyck-Owen and Owen 2018). Beyond (or in addition to) theoretical debates, there is a need for more empirical studies and data on the relationship between religion, religious identities, and 'integration' in Europe. This is particularly pertinent at a time when religion is correlated to ethnic and national identities, despite at times being separate categories, labels, and realities. The next section examines academic engagement to date on religion and integration debates in Europe.

Religion and 'Integration' in Europe: Inclusion/Exclusion Dynamics and Complexities

There is a well-established and growing body of literature on religion and integration (see Ager and Ager 2015; Alba and Foner 2017; Bijl and Verweij 2012; Brown and Bean 2006; Foner and Alba 2008; Hill et al. 2016; Pickel 2018; Silj 2010). As arrivals of migrants around the world come from increasingly diverse countries, there has been renewed attention in the religious diversity of both migrants and host communities (Ager and Ager 2017; Hill et al. 2016). In effect, the matter of 'religion' is often posited in one of two ways in relation to 'integration' processes and outcomes: as a positive aspect of (often assisting) 'integration' or as a negative aspect of (often preventing or delaying) integration (Lyck-Bowen and Owen 2018).[25] In determining whether religion is positive or negative for integration, religion is usually framed in strong institutional language, such as referring to religion as a church, a faith-based organisation, or as represented by a religious leader. Alternatively, as explained earlier, religion is perceived in multiple and conflicting ways, including through cultural and symbolic terms, such as religion being represented by the clothing, mannerisms, or behaviour of individuals and communities. Such cultural representations of religion are measured against assumptions of what it means to be "European-enough" or "secular-enough" in order for 'integration' to take place. Indeed, what religion means for 'integration' processes and outcomes is a subject of great debate and continues to be contested. To begin an exploration of this theme, it must be stated that it remains unclear what 'integration' means and what 'successful integration' looks like. Nevertheless, some broad contours of how the term is understood and applied in practice can be identified.

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[25] There has been a clear distinction made in the literature between religion and refugee debates in the context of the United States and North America compared to Europe. Indeed, in many accounts, religion is viewed more as an assistant to 'successful' integration in the United States than in Europe (Lyck-Bowen and Owen 2018: 6).

What is 'Integration'?

Despite strong debates on the concepts and definitions of 'integration' in policy, political, and public spaces engaged with or interested in the arrival, adjustment and settlement of (forced and other) migrants in Europe, it remains a prominent idea with general consensus that it is a desirable goal (Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore 2018). As integration is increasingly politicised, however, what it means in practice and how to achieve it is contested and lacks consensus. In particular, it is unclear how to identify or measure 'integration' (Ager and Strang 2008, 2010; Ndofor-Tah et al. 2019), let alone whether it is a desirable goal. To date, there has been an overemphasis and reliance on practical outcomes and empirical research, leading to narrow determinants and outcomes (Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore 2018: 181; Grzymala-Kazlowska 2015). From concepts of assimilation, adjustment, and belonging to a two-way process in interaction and participation (UNHCR Executive Committee 2005),[26] 'integration' has also been conceived as a *process* that promotes social, cultural, economic and civic engagement, rather than an end in itself. Underlying its conceptualisation and application in various political, policy, and public spaces, however, is a core assumption that in every society there is a dominant culture, identity, belief, and/or system in which 'newcomers' or 'arrivals' are included or excluded from in various ways (Czymara and Schmidt-Catran 2017). It is from this underlying assumption that 'integration' is institutionalised as a policy and objective within the context of European states.

Indeed, while there are chaotic, contested, and confusing aspects of this definition by virtue of its broadness, it nevertheless allows for 'successful' integration to be

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[26] The UNHCR Executive Committee (2005) defines refugee integration as:

> A dynamic and multifaceted two-way process which requires efforts by all parties concerned, including a preparedness on the part of refugees to adapt to the receiving society without having to forego their own cultural identity and a corresponding readiness on the part of the receiving communities and public institutions to welcome refugees and meet the needs of a diverse community.

measured in many ways. These may be through indicators of economic, cultural, social and/or civic *participation* of arrivals with the host community or a more subjective sense of *belonging*, depending on the perspectives and experiences of individuals and communities (Ndofar-Tah et al. 2019). Both participation and belonging mean different things for different people and as such, they are difficult to be conclusive about. Nevertheless, in policy and political terms, 'integration' remains quantifiable and measurable in order to 'determine' whether or how individuals meet certain conditions of their arrival, settlement, or adjustment to a society (Czymara and Schmidt-Catran 2017; Ndofar-Tah et al. 2019). For the purposes of this study, I use the concept of 'integration' to refer to the multiple processes by which people arriving to a new country engage with and view or are viewed as being a part of a society (Lyck-Bowen and Owen 2018: 7; Penninx and Garces-Mascarenas 2016). Depending on context, perspective, and engagement the term can and is adapted. The role of perception and indeed, representations, forms a core aspect of understanding, engaging with, and critically interrogating 'integration' in this study. In Chapter 8, for instance, I note that how 'Syrian refugees' are (mis)represented shift and inform how participation in society is viewed and indeed, which refugees are assumed to be "easier" or more "desirable" to integration. Indeed, I argue that even when viewed as a two-way (Ager and Strang 2010) or multiple (Ndofar-Tah 2019) process, the normative assumptions of 'integration' remain bounded by in-group and out-group framing, in which refugees are always the out-group (the 'other') and which, as will be explored, certain subgroups of refugees are marginalised within the out-group as well.

Thus, my research interrogates assumptions about what 'integration' is and is not and argues it is a fundamentally flawed concept. This argument is posited as a response to the underlying premise that there is a majority or dominant society in which individuals or groups are able to assimilate into, be accepted by, or belong to according to a set of predetermined or quantifiable social, economic, and other measures. As the latter discussion chapters show, a rigid and narrow definition of 'integration' loses conceptual and practical meaning and usefulness. By identifying and understanding the continuous construction, shaping, making and building of

relationships, encounters and interactions between arrivals and host communities, the use of an umbrella term such as 'integration', which is based on an exclusionary premise, becomes limited - and indeed, dangerous. Often, definitions of integration as a concept, policy, and practice assume and imply that there is a status quo - a fixed relation upon which processes of joining can be created, accelerated, or hindered. While this study uses 'integration' as an initial framework to examine multiple processes of refugee arrival and refugee-host and refugee-refugee relations, its findings highlight the limited - and at times, destructive - nature of the term and how it is applied in practice. It is for that reason that the study concludes with a reconsideration of the use of the term altogether. In particular, I argue in Chapter 8 that 'integration' fails to capture the complexities and contradictions of refugee encounters and experiences with diverse actors in different spaces.

In this study, superdiversity is considered a helpful term for rethinking normative integration paradigms toward an understanding of the multi-dimensionality of social encounters, processes, and relations (Meissner 2017). I define and delineate what is meant by 'superdiversity' later in this chapter. At this juncture, it suffices to mention that rather than reframing integration in different ways, such as in terms of a 'holistic' integration (Strang, Baillot and Mignard 2017), 'reciprocal' integration (Phillimore, Humphris and Khan 2017), 'embedding' integration (Ryan 2017), or as processes of adaptation and pathways of 'settlement' (Wessendorf 2017), it is possible to reconceptualise it altogether. That is, to (re)consider the relationship between so-called 'integration' and intersectionality, particularly focusing on "multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations" (Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore 2018: 189). That is, how various factors, such as gender, age, religion, ethnicity, and inequality, intersect with (forced) migration on global, national and local levels. In doing so, reconsidering how different ways of viewing and responding to the 'encounter' between different people cannot be understood or applied simply as processes of 'integration'.

What is the Role of Religion in 'Integration'?

As mentioned, often religion is viewed as either positive or negative to processes and outcomes of integration. I understand this binary view of religion for integration as a result of an inclusionary-exclusionary perspective of religion itself. As a specific symbolic boundary,[27] religion influences the inclusion or exclusion of specific groups of people through, for example, stereotyping and prejudices (Trittler 2018: 5). As Trittler (Ibid. 3) explains,

> ...religion constitutes an ambiguous boundary in itself including two different mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion: an exclusionary stance towards the religious 'other' based on cultural-religious identities, on the one hand, and an inclusionary stance towards the 'other' related to religious values and beliefs like inter-religious tolerance and support, on the other.

Therefore, as a social phenomenon, religion can at once bring about processes of participation and inclusion in society or the marginalisation and exclusion of individuals and communities. These processes of inclusion/exclusion are explored in detail both in terms of refugee-refugee relationality and dynamics of religious prejudice in Chapter 7, as well as among different groups of hosts in Chapter 8.

While there are strong quantitative studies on the role of religious and secular contexts on intergroup relations, Trittler (2018: 17) further identifies the need for additional, qualitative research to specifically examine the meanings and underlying mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion in these contexts. In the German context specifically, Trittler (2017) also found that religion is less about ethnicity and more related to respect for institutions, laws, and language skills, revealing how religion in Germany is linked to perceptions of national belonging (see also Mole 2011). Therefore, there is a need to explore different forms of religious inclusion and

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[27] As Trittler (2018) explains, a symbolic boundary represents a flexible and variable category that is socially constructed but also influenced by the boundary itself as it is made and interacted with by different actors in a society.

exclusion at different levels (local, regional, national) and with and among different groups. This is why the concept of symbolic boundaries matters in relation to religion and religious groups, labels, identities, and experiences and why, following Mole (2011), it is not religion per se that informs national identity narratives but *discourses* of religion that are constructed to legitimise a particular understanding of a national, political, or social community. Trittler (2018: 17) further and specifically identifies therefore the need for "additional research including qualitative analyses" that examine "the meaning of such (symbolic) boundaries for intergroup relations and the underlying mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion", to which this research contributes.

To that end, Chapters 3 and 4 posit that a key aspect of inclusion/exclusion dynamics and complexities is the ways in which (perceived or real) discrimination and experiences and accounts of prejudice are created. Prejudice, at its core, is antithetical to any process or outcome of integration. Many of the academic contributions to understanding prejudice in the context of refugee integration has focused on post-9/11 attacks in the US and the subsequent attention on and prejudice to Islam and Muslims, including in public discussions in Europe (Allen and Nielson 2002; Göle 2015; Sheridan and Gillett 2005; Strabac and Listhaug 2008).More recent research has tried to identify other complex factors related to integration and religion by recognising various contextual, environmental variables, including minority-majority group contact (Maliepaard and Phalet 2012) and discrimination as a result of religious identity in host and migrant communities (Adida, Laitin, and Valfort 2013). Indeed, as mentioned, a key to understanding how prejudice plays in the religion and integration debate is the way in which migration, and in particular *Muslim* migration, has been securitised and framed as a threat to tradition, culture, and social cohesion (Bock and Macdonald 2019; Eghdamian 2019; Falk 2017; Göle 2015; Hill et al. 2016; Lyck-Bowen and Owen 2018; Wagenvoorde 2017).

Therefore, this research explores how religious and secular symbolic boundaries (following Trittler 2018) inform, create, or impact exclusionary experiences and discrimination accounts where offered or shared by participants. Through

examining the representations of 'Syrian refugees' in Chapter 6, I identify a number of constitutive effects of symbolic religious boundaries in terms of both actual or perceived exclusionary behaviour or discrimination, as well as subtler forms of hostility or prejudice (see Chapters 3 and 4). These include how conversations were framed, how different groups interacted with others, and the ways in which exclusion or inclusion were expressed, based on how individuals described feeling stigmatised or demarcated primarily along (assumed or real) religious lines.

As discussed, in this study, religion is used in "multifaceted, dynamic and pervasive" (Lyck-Bowen and Owen 2018: 7) ways, referring to individuals and their search for meaning to the institutions, communities, and environments that encompass, represent, or influence 'religion'. As a result, it can be seen how a chosen definition of religion informs how it is applied to understandings of integration and whether or not it is desirable or necessary.

(Im)migrant and Refugee 'Integration' in Germany

There has been significant research interest in and, subsequently, a large number of research outputs on (im)migrant and refugee integration in Germany since 2015 (see Bock and Macdonald 2019). In contrast to dominant media representations of Germany as an open and tolerant society, scholars have also highlighted the dark side of Germany's so-called 'welcome culture' (Jäckle and König 2017). As this study directly examines representations and experiences of refugees in a German city, a brief overview of research in this context is pertinent.

Sociologists have long identified how some European states such as France and Germany negotiate identities of the nation, and thus, the 'immigrant' through the framing of the contributions or so-called value of the migrant (Kastoryano 2002). Indeed, there is a tendency of confusing or conflating 'migrant', 'immigrant', 'forced migrant', 'asylum seeker', and 'refugee' labels and terms in analyses (Kyriakides

2017). While there has been a paucity of studies on 'religious minorities' in relation to refugees and forced migrants (cf Eghdamian 2016; Lyck-Bowen and Owen 2018; Schmoeller 2016), there has long been active scholarly engagement of minority identities in relation to other categories of migrants. Since 9/11 in particular, there has been focused inquiry on Muslim minorities in immigrant debates in the United States, Europe, and other 'Western' states such as Australia and New Zealand (see, for example, Bowen 2007; Cavanaugh 2007; Etzinger 2003; Vásquez and Dewind 2014). In addition to being largely limited to Muslim issues (for exceptions, see Alper and Olson 2012; Broo et al. 2019; Rana et al. 2019; Yang and Ebauch 2002), academic examination of these themes has been primarily in relation to attitudes of nationalism and how it impacts responses to and experiences of Muslim minorities in spaces of immigration (Phalet et al. 2015; Platt 2013), specifically in relation to Islamophobia and integration (Bowen 2007; Fekete 2008).

As a result of the conflation of terms, nuances, complexities, and indeed, contradictions are lost. Nevertheless, the overall tone of each label tends to be negative:

> ...immigrants are sources and spreaders of infectious diseases, refugee claimants are bogus queue-jumpers who are trying to take advantage of lax refugee policies to gain entry to western nations, and terrorists are trying to gain entry to western nations as refugee claimants (Esses, Medianu and Lawson 2008: 524-525).

What follows is a review of literature that refers broadly to how (im)migrant identities (including forced migrants and refugees) are viewed in relation to the German state/nation, what it means to be "German", and the impact such conceptions of nationhood have on 'integration' processes and analyses of refugee integration outcomes specifically.

As a construct, the idea of a 'nation' is shaped by immigration. However, the identity of the (im)migrant matters differently depending on the context (history, cultural values, politics) of the country (Eghdamian 2019). For instance, while France draws

on the concept of *laicite* (secularism) in its assimilation of immigrants to its national identity, Germany draws on a segregationist model emphasising ethnicity, acknowledging differences and identifying diversity (Kastoryano 2002). The importance or focus on ethnic identity in Germany has significant implications for the ways in which minorities are received, included, integrated, or otherwise excluded or rejected by the state and/or its hosts (Mole 2011; Mushaben 2008). Indeed, some authors have criticised the segregationist approach in Germany, arguing it hinders the integration of minorities by rejecting multiculturalism (see Bock and Macdonald 2019).

As the literature on refugee representations highlighted, the role of the media and public discourse in aligning representations of refugees according to state interests and political agendas, has increasingly been linked to notions of the desirability of immigration or the (un)desirable migrant (Holmes and Castañeda 2016; Mole 2011; Sigona 2018). Similar to the deserving and undeserving refugee framework (following Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014), an (im)migrant is also desired based on its perceived contributions to society, and undesired according to the degree of burden or threat they pose, primarily in relation to national security or economic concerns (Moore et al. 2012: 1). The role of the media in reflecting political positions on (im)migration, particularly party politics, has been specifically identified in the case of Germany (see Bauder 2008), noting the levels of hysteria that media outlets can generate (Fernando and Giordano 2016). While countries such as the United Kingdom have a 'strong tabloid press' allowing for public opinion to be expressed (whether anti- or pro-immigration), it has been argued that German media is more divisive along political lines (Ibid.). This assumption is critically interrogated in Chapter 6, where I find that treatments of the 'religious identity' of refugees expresses Islamophobia and stereotypes of Muslim refugees, *irrespective* of the political leanings of German publications.

Bauder (2008)'s examination of migration and integration in Germany is most relevant to this study. Through a discourse analysis of over 600 articles published in

five German newspapers between 2001 and 2005,[28] Bauder examined how German media represents what he refers to as "humanitarian immigrants" (Ibid. 263), which he defines as asylum seekers and refugees, and the impact those representations have on the construction of the "German national identity" (Ibid. 68). Bauder found that German media, reflecting German state positions, passively responded to and participated in the legal or moral obligation of humanitarianism. Bauder argued that the discursive construction of humanitarian immigrants in German media separated German nationals as the 'self' and the humanitarian migrants as 'Other', reflecting orientalist trends in representations of refugees (Ibid. 269-270). It is poignant to consider to what extent this has changed in light of the so-called 'refugee crisis', a decade after Bauder's analysis, and Chapter 6 affirms Orientalist trends as well as identifies languages of worthiness/deservingness for some groups of refugees over others.

German Nationhood and "The Right of Blood"

Any attempt at examining how nationhood and thus (im)migration are understood and influenced in Germany, it is important to explore the historical and contemporary construction of the 'German' national and the 'Other' in relation to the 'German self'. Historically, scholars have noted that Germany has divided ethnic German nations (in-group) with non-German foreigners (out-group) through Wilhelmine concepts; citizenship legislation; and immigration policies. The Wilhelmine concept relates to the principle of *jus sanguinis* - "right of blood" - originating in Wilhelmine times, which has been traditionally applied to German citizenship from 1913 (Brubaker 1998). This is a privilege given to people on the basis of ancestry, thereby excluding all others. As Brubaker (1998: 28) argues, a nation based on blood, not territory, is a nation built on ethnocultural terms. Although this ethnocultural nationhood is not equivalent to the ethnoracial extremism of Nazi

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[28] The five German language newspapers were: Bild Zeitung, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Stuttgarter Zeitung, Süddeutsche Zeitung, and Die Tageszeitung.

ideology,[29] it can be argued that an exclusivist and segregationist approach to *Deutschtum*, or "Germanness", remained after the defeat of the Third Reich. And thus, the conception that ethnicity forms the basis of nationhood has been continually reinforced since. This is despite changes in 1998 when Chancellor Gerhard Schröder introduced the concept of *jus soli* - citizenship based on place of birth or long-term residence (Bock and Macdonald 2019). By challenging views on citizenship, this move disappointed many, resulted in new and highly contested debates on belonging and coexistence, and reflected political and public denial that Germany is a country of (im)migration (Ibid).

This reinforcement of "Germanness" and the othering of non-Germans is also aptly demonstrated through the historical creation and use of the term *Gastarbeiter*, or 'guest workers'. As mentioned earlier, Turks made up the majority of the population of guest workers and their treatment is illustrative of the discursive othering of migrants in the discourse of German identity (Mandel 2008). Using the term *Gastarbeiter* instead of, for example, immigrants who came to Germany to work, is demonstrative of German understanding of the 'other'. The Wilhelmine *jus sanguinis* concept of citizenship meant that there was no possibility for guest workers to obtain German citizenship, as they were not part of the ethnic community of descent. These guest workers were conceived as only in Germany to work in the labour market, *not* to participate in or contribute to German culture or society. The othering of Turkish guest workers in particular went beyond semantics and, according to Mandel (2008: 75), Turks "internalised this negative symbolism of social inferiority". Not only were they viewed and treated as non-permanent residents ("guests"), they were reduced to and dehumanised as mere labourers ("workers").

In the 1980s, the term *Gastarbeiter* was replaced with *Ausländer* (Mandel 2008: 55). Directly opposing the word *Inländer*, *Ausländer* means 'foreigner'. For Mandel (2008), the use of the word *Ausländer* is by no means neutral but reflects an ideological

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[29] Brubaker (1998: 166) clarifies a key distinction between Wilhelmine *jus sanguinis* citizenship - ethnonational, ethnocultural, and exclusive towards non-Germans - and the extremist Nazi ideology that was ethnoracial.

agenda that explicitly expresses social discontent, questions who belongs and who does not, and highlights difference (Mandel 2008: 56). To this end, the discourses around *Gastarbeiter*, *Inländer*, and *Ausländer* helped shape West Germany into a "nonmigration country" (Chin 2007: 93), emphasising the concept of "*Wir sind kein einwanderungsland*," or "We are not an immigration country" (Mandel 2008: 248). This is despite the growing diversification of migrant populations in Germany for decades (Bock and Macdonald 2019).

Understanding the perception of nationhood in Germany and the in-group, out-group dynamics of "Germanness", one cannot discount the impact and continuing tensions with and about Islam and Muslims in Germany (Bock and Macdonald 2019; Trittler 2017). As ever, the history of the Turkish population in Germany lays a foundation for understanding historical and contemporary reactions, responses to and engagements with the presence of Islam in the German conception of 'self' and 'other'. The perceptions of Turks and the German-ascribed Muslim identity on Turks, despite the presence and practice of secularism among Turks and in Turkey, has played a significant role in this respect. As Mandel (2008: 159) points out, "until they lose their prescribed foreignness, the cultural and political integration...cannot be achieved". The real and lived consequences of discursive formations of religious identity and national belonging in Germany therefore cannot be underestimated. Despite Chancellor Schröder's citizenship reform and its expansion of citizenship rights, new debates about belonging emerged that often portrayed Turkish and Arab migrants negatively in contrast to, for example, the 'good' Vietnamese and Chinese immigrants[30] (Bock and Macdonald 2019).

Indeed, the history and contemporary realities of Turkish identity and the presence and influence of Islam in Germany offers insights into the discursive othering for other migrants - whether or not from a (perceived or real) Islamic background. My research affirms that not all asylum seekers and refugees who arrived to Germany

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[30] Vietnamese and Chinese immigrants in Germany have long been viewed as hard-working and successful educationally and economically (Bock and Macdonald 2019; see also Rüther 2010).

over the so-called "refugee crisis" period are (Sunni) Muslim. Yet, the history of Turks in Germany as well as discursive representations of refugees from Syria assume a 'refugee as Muslim' identity, which influences the reception, engagement, and integration practices and experiences for them. Indeed, it can be argued that given the history of and discourses around foreigners in Germany, the origin of an asylum seeker does not matter as they historically merge - once again - with the *Gastarbeiter*; "as foreigners contributing to the *Überfremdung* (foreign overpopulation) of German society" (Kastoryano 2002: 17).

Despite the merging of national identity with ethnicity in Germany, religion has not explicitly been made a criteria for national belonging. However, as a symbolic boundary (Trittler 2018), religion remains a factor in inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics of (im)migrants and refugees in German society, particularly since 2015. For instance, Germany's public debates on (im)migration and 'integration' intensified after former President Christian Wulff announced that "now Islam also belongs to Germany" (Bock and Macdonald 2019: 9) during celebrations marking the anniversary of the country's reunification in October 2010. From the mid-2010s, and particularly after 2015, debates on immigration related topics were further heightened by the publication of books denouncing Islam directly (see for example, Abdel-Samad 2016; Schwarzer 2016). These included publications of books criticising multiculturalism in Germany as a result of immigration (see for example, Sarrazin 2010).

As Czymara and Schmidt-Catran (2017) found, the 'refugees welcome' rhetoric in Germany changed significantly as public perceptions of (im)migrants and refugees in shifted after the New Year's Eve sexual assaults in 2015/2016. Despite the fact that the perpetrators of the assaults were neither refugees, Arab, nor Muslim, there was a marked decrease in acceptance of Arab and African (im)migrants and refugees among the public (Ibid.). Indeed, as I argue in Chapter 6, historical misconceptions of the West about the East (and vice versa), in particular about the 'Muslim world', has led to deep misconceptions of the other which are easily manipulated and misunderstood. A core misconception is that Eastern, Muslim, values, customs and

norms are incompatible with Western, Christian, ones and thus, (im)migration is antithetical to social cohesion - a view I refer to as Orientalist in origin and manifestation. However, such simplistic binaries and categories fail to encapsulate the degree of diversity that comes with the 'West' and the 'East' and the processes of (im)migration, the realities of which I delineate in forthcoming chapters.

Beyond 'Integration'? Rethinking Normative Paradigms in Contexts of Superdiversity

For some scholars (see Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore 2018; Phillimore, Sigona, and Tonkiss 2017; Vertovec 2007; Wessendorf and Phillimore 2018), it is more helpful to consider the role and realities of 'superdiversity' and its multiple opportunities and challenges for understanding (im)migration and the arrival of individuals into a society (Meissner 2017). Superdiversity is conceptualised as "a condition wherein populations are diverse in wide ranging and intersecting ways, across different variables" (Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore 2018: 183; Vertovec 2007, 2011). This includes not only the diversity of people but also the diversity of structures and processes and the conditions in which people encounter societies (Strang, Baillot and Mignard 2018: 199). It can be argued that the so-called refugee crisis in Europe and its subsequent consequences are conditions and examples of 'superdiversity'.

As an emerging field of enquiry, there is much to be explored; specifically in this context, I consider whether the conditions of 'superdiversity' help us rethink 'integration' for refugee populations and the implications these have for understanding minority-majority relations, including the limits of such conceptual boundaries. As mentioned earlier, and as Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore (2018: 187) also argue, the use of the term 'integration', particularly in policy and public debates and policies, assumes that people either assimilate, separate or are marginalised in processes of inclusion or exclusion in society. Such assumption rests

on a fundamental view that there is a "somewhat singular culture and identity as well as belief and value system" to which an individual adapts and includes themselves into or not (Ibid.). To what extent is the term 'integration' useful in conditions of superdiversity?

Since the term 'superdiversity' is broad, it has been critiqued for being vague and difficult to operationalise. It has also been challenged as an illusionary concept that de-politicises difference by undermining underlying processes of structural inequality (Vickers, Craig and Atkin 2013). Yet, as a growing body of knowledge and insight less than a decade old, there is great potential for engaging with superdiversity in a way that not only recognises and engages with systemic and structural issues but also deeply interrogates them. Indeed, as Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore (2018: 185) argue, superdiversity can provide new ways of looking at inequalities "that can disrupt the status quo" rather than gloss over them. This is because superdiversity is "a tool through which to capture multi-dimensionality and complexity" (Ibid. 186). With complexity may come ambiguity but also opportunity for moving beyond fixed ideas, categories, and theories. As this study engages with a vague yet complex area of religion and 'religious identity' in a context of heightened political interest (refugee 'integration'), there is a tendency in both scholarship and political responses to the 'crisis' to highlight difference (see, for example, Bock and Macdonald 2019). Yet the term 'diversity' recognises plurality while not framing identities and experiences as a form of tension. As such, superdiversity may be a useful tool for rethinking assumptions about religion, refugees, and 'integration', allowing for an exploration of similarities as well as pluralities in identifications. Indeed, while superdiversity can be used as a rationale *for* mainstreaming 'integration', I posit that conditions and environments of superdiversity offer reasons for critically examining the processes of 'integration' itself (see also Meissner 2017).

'Minority' Rights, Sectarian Politics, and Minoritarianism

Trittler (2018: 2) argues that "the study of religion as a symbolic boundary of belonging and its consequences for the integration of religious minorities is of prime importance". Yet, it is often unclear what is meant by 'minority' in relation to refugees and in contexts of integration, including the consequences and limitations of the term and its use. It is therefore important to define 'minority', understand the term 'sectarianism' (as minority-majority rights are so often related to it) in relation to 'religious minority' identity politics, and interrogate the complexities of minoritarianism (or 'minority-ness'). I argue that, in line with the definitions and frameworks explored on 'religion' earlier, the 'minority' label is socially and politically constructed, which requires that 'religious minority' identities and practices be critically analysed rather than viewed as fixed, a priori, identities. Thus, this research examines this construction in contexts of both Syria and Germany.

What is 'Sectarianism'?

Scholars of Middle East politics, such as al-Rasheed 2011 and Hinnebusch 2016 argue there has been a 'resurgence' of sectarianism and sectarian violence in the Middle East after the Arab uprisings began in 2010 (Monier 2017). Yet, there is a lack of consensus on what sectarianism is (and is not) and the root causes, manifestations, and limits of the term. In a number of studies, sectarianism has been referred to as a contest over 'national truths' (see Haddad 2017) or 'as a strategy of patronage politics' (see Marashi 2014) rather than as a "straightforward expression of theological hostility" (Monier 2017: 1). Such debates and inconsistencies about the definition of sectarianism reveal its contested and malleable nature. Indeed, vague definitions help the term to be manipulated and mobilised in order to achieve certain

political ends. For this reason, I contest the usefulness of sectarianism in the context of this study and do not use it when referring to the participants and their experiences, unless they themselves explicitly use the term. I argue that it is not only a term that fails to describe the realities of the Syrian conflict and the relationship(s) between different groups of people, but that the perpetual use of the term has destructive effects, including fomenting discord. It is important to understand and critically examine the differences between 'sectarianism' and 'religion' and where each term may or may not be appropriate to use in order to describe or reflect an event, experience, or perspective.

Following scholars such as Hurd (2015a), Makdisi (2000), and Taylor (2007), it is poignant to considers alternative possibilities to the study of religion, particularly in contexts of displacement, resettlement, and integration, that are *non-sectarian* in nature. As these and other scholars argue, the realities of religious diversity should – to the extent possible – be disaggregated from sectarianism as a political project. On the one hand, by recognising the sociality and relationality of religion, it is not possible to avoid sectarian divides altogether. However, on the other hand, in order to account for the perspectives and experiences of the 'religious', it is necessary to give agency to them and not bind their religiosity with sectarian discourses. To associate religion with sectarianism is to codify religion as difference (Shields cited in Hurd 2015a: 72). It is perhaps more apt to argue that sectarianism is better understood as an outcome of complex social, historical and political processes seeking particular political ends and agendas (Hurd 2015a; Makdisi 2000). That is, sectarianism is not an apolitical reflection of divisions between religions. Indeed, by focusing on religious *difference*, there is the tendency to conflate religion with sectarianism. Whereas sectarianism is embedded in conflict, religion does not necessarily need to be so - though it can be. Indeed, often the distinctions between religions are used to explain causes of conflict (or displacement), which as Hurd (2015a: 73) argues, often "obscures a broader and more complex field of contestation" that is better understood in different terms (political, historical, etc) than in religious ones.

Hurd (Ibid.: 63) further explains,

> The discourse of sectarianism is a modern discourse of religion-in-politics invoked in specific times and places and authorised by particular authorities. It relies on and reproduces a fixed representation of what are in fact complex and unstable relations between (that which is designated as) religious or sectarian affiliation, belief and belonging, on the one hand, and politics, violence, conflict, and co-existence, on the other.

While such caution against using sectarianism can be understood as a warning against claiming religion to be a single category, perhaps it can also be examined differently. Recognising sectarianism as a political project is to be conscious of using religion to explain what is otherwise a political phenomenon, process or outcome. Religion, then, is best understood in relation to its local environment rather than detached from it (Hurd 2015b; Kaplan 2010; Makdisi 2000). That is, there is a distinction to be made between religious difference that is framed in sectarian terms (often authorised by those in positions in power, including the state) and the experiences of religious diversity, which is a non-sectarian approach. As the Syrian conflict is often perceived and portrayed as being 'sectarian' in nature, it is important to critically explore the ways in which assumptions about sectarianism influence the ways in which different actors perceive religious identity and 'religious minorities' in this context. As mentioned, my understanding and use of the term 'religion' in this study cautions against framing sectarian attacks and tensions as being synonymous to being religious in nature. Whereas religious discrimination and violence are increasingly found in the Middle East region, including in Syria, using the term 'sectarianism' to describe them is not often helpful - and, indeed, can be destructive. It is for this reason that I refer to religious plurality or diversity in relation to the religious identities of refugees, rather than the term religious difference.

What/Who is a 'Religious Minority'?

The 2011 uprising in Syria was not initially cloaked in sectarian language by protesters, activists, or even state actors but was rather framed in terms of universal political rights and governance reform (Ismail 2011). Yet, the Assad regime "played up the risks of civil war and society's sectarian and fundamentalist elements…" (International Crisis Group cited in Dajani 2015: 2523), in order to encourage Syrians to "stick to what they have for fear of ending up with something far worse" (Ibid.). This 'something far worse' was linked to assumptions propagated about what an Islamist majority would mean for minority groups – 'a sort of Masada complex' (Rodenbeck 2012) – that persecutions against them would arise again. Concerns about a change in regime, then, shifted from instabilities that can arise from a political threat to power, to apprehensions about the very survival of specific (religious) populations.

Indeed, the history of the politics of minority rights, rule and protection – particularly in the Middle East – has also been linked to political and security agendas leading to the use of different legal and political mechanisms by states (see Dajani 2015). Relationships between numerical presence and statuses of power are further complicated by the fact that minority groups have also been in ruling political positions in a state (sometimes referred to as 'minoritarian regimes')[31] in the Middle East. Syria, for instance, is led by the 'religious minority' Alawite Assad family since 1970. As such, different strategies to legitimate minority rule, for instance by prioritising minority rights over political liberalisation (Ibid.: 2517), have important implications for both the local population of that state but also for the broader Middle East region (for example, by avoiding political reform).

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[31] Dajani (2015: 2519) defines minoritarian regimes as being "controlled by members of an ethnic or religious group that is a numerical minority in the country and that they exclude from power a majority group with a competing claim to indigeneity".

It should also be noted that there is a distinction to be made between the terms 'minority' and 'minoritarianism' (Albrecht-Crane 2003). The term 'minoritarianism' is often used to describe rule by a dominant minority delineated by ethnic, religious, linguistic or other identifying factor (Dajani 2015). Alternatively, minoritarianism can also be used to describe the relationship (often a conflict) between one or two groups (often a majority and one or more minorities) (Goulimari 1999).

In contrast, the language of the 'minority' – whether on its own or in relation to minoritarianism – is the language of identity. Thus, the use of the term 'minority' is not always equivalent to numbers. As White (2011: 26) points out, "the term 'minority' became meaningful precisely because being a numerical minority was what made certain groups subordinate". For instance, women are often referred to as the 'minority sex' because conditions of patriarchy recognise relations of power (see Hacker 1951). In relation to other identifying factors, such as gender (Secomb 2009), being a minority can also be viewed as an act of transcendence and power[32] - or what Deleuze and Guattari (1986) describe as the act of "becoming minoritarian". Indeed, minoritarian movements, such as feminism (see Goulimari 1999), can be argued to position 'minority' groups in terms of self-sufficiency, confidence, and strength. While minoritarian movements do not necessarily seek representation, many of its advocates (including Deleuze and Guattari 1986) do posit the importance of minority recognition.

Different definitions of 'power' inform whether or how the term 'minority' is used - for instance, in international relations and political theory, the term 'minority' often refers to restricted access to resources (Monier 2017). However, this conception of power and the relevance of the minority label is not always accurate. To illustrate, the current political regime in Syria and the rule of the Assad family is shaped by minority rule. Numerically, the Alawites are a minority in the country yet their access to power is not restricted. Legitimating minority rule thus requires employing similar strategies to the "security of the group whose interests it claims to represent" (Dajani 2015: 2516). Indeed, as Pföstl and Kymlicka (2015: 2489) argue, the spectre of

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[32] See for example, Secomb (2009) on new dimensions in Beauvoir's 'The Second Sex'.

minority politics can also be seen to be "reinforcing older authoritarian, clientelistic or patriarchal political tendencies" rather the subjects (or victims) of conflict and political instability.

Therefore, it can be argued that the system of sovereign states created 'religious minorities' as a category and 'minority rights' as an agenda in order to avoid political interventions (Danchin 2008; Evans 1997). As Abeysekara (2008) critiqued, the very creation of and perpetuation of the minority/majority binary should be interrogated. Specifically, Abeysekara argues that the history of the majority/minority binary is one of violence, serving a democratic agenda not dissimilar to the creation of the citizen/illegal and Black/White binaries. Indeed, despite progress made towards greater respect and mutual regard between diverse groups of people, any new democratic laws will do little to question the political and genocidal distinctions between groups that are named and defined in terms of numerical categories. One of the consequences of this, then, is that the majority in any space will continually seek to marginalise the minority as a permanent "Other". Thus, in turn, we must "uninherit" these distinctions (through "active forgetting") and "imagine new domains of the political" (Ibid.: 88).[33]

By outlining, albeit briefly, the varied contours and dimensions of the 'minority' label and its uses, I am to highlight the complex and partial nature of understanding and responding to minorities, including the creation, mobilisation, and indeed at times, the manipulation of minority identities. Therefore, although this study is concerned with refugee 'minority' identities, needs, and experiences, such an undertaking cannot be detached from understanding and examining *other* political and social factors from sending and host countries of displacement, resettlement, and/or integration. For instance, by taking note of the relationships between refugee protection and collective security, democratic agendas and rights prioritisation in forced migration and refugee policies (who is included and excluded), and so on. Through these and other means, it is recognised that religious identity can be

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[33] Although conceptually interesting and challenging, however, precise applications of these reimaginations have yet to be explored in practice.

politicised and indeed, the role of religion in different spaces can vary considerably. In turn, to examine critically whether or when the term 'minority' is useful, illustrative, or reflective of what may otherwise be described or understood in different (political, or other) terms is an important undertaking. Acknowledging the role of context, then, implies that it is also important to identify and examine the relationship and influences between different geographical spaces (in both sending and host countries) to the religious experiences of refugees.

Thus, on the one hand, this study sought to identify 'religious minority' refugees as an identity *ascribed* to them. However, it also challenges the label and category itself and problematises the assumptions of what a 'religious minority' is or is not. Indeed, by deliberately not predetermining a single group or specific groups for the research, I have been open to plural, overlapping, interconnected, and intersectional identities. The point of comparison or incomparability, then, is whether or how individuals themselves identify with or speak of the framework of 'religious minority'. This includes whether or how they engage with the label and whether or how the label is useful, illustrative, or illuminating for understanding their experiences more accurately or deeply and the ways in which others in the host community represent and engage with them, and vice versa.

Conclusion

Addressing these debates and gaps delineated above, this study directly contributes to four key areas of research at the intersection of a number of subject areas, including the sociology of religion and refugee and forced migration studies.

The first is interrogating and critically analysing the uses and implications of the 'minority' label - not only for understanding dynamics of minoritarianism, minority rights, and sectarian politics, but also for exploring the complexities of intersectional refugee identities and experiences. The second is identifying how and why

representations of refugee identities, needs and experiences matter in relation to their constitutive effects. Namely, in this context, the implications of these representations for Syrian 'religious minority' refugees. The third is contributing insights into how 'religious identity' and its varied and contested uses in the social sciences and in contexts of forced migration can assist deeper understanding of refugee-refugee relationality. Finally, in relation to debates on refugee 'integration' broadly and in Germany specifically, this study contributes insights into the relationship between religion, religious diversity, and encounters of refugees with *both* hosts and other refugees.

Having laid out the conceptual contours of this study and the gaps it aims to fill in academic literature, the following chapter explains how the study was designed, as well as how I collected and analysed the data in order to fill these gaps.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The overall aim of this research is to examine the relationship between 'religious identity' and the 'integration' of 'religious minority' refugees in a host country. Specifically, it explores the nature and implications of representations of Syrian refugees for Syrian 'religious minority' refugees living in Berlin, Germany. In order to examine a research subject of this kind - with all its complexities, nuances, and dimensions - a qualitative research methodology is needed. The strength, validity, and contribution of a qualitative approach, particularly in a social context of invariable contestation, is that it offers *rich* data with a degree of "in-depth knowledge" that allows for the "refinement and elaboration of concepts" (Ragin and Amoroso 2011: 113). By drawing on qualitative methods in this study, it is possible to identify and locate meanings assigned to people, places, processes and structures (Miles and Huberman 1994: 10). For me, a qualitative approach helped develop an understanding of the multiple *meanings* created, carried, and contested by and between refugees and hosts in and throughout the processes of displacement, arrival, and experiences of host-refugee and refugee-refugee relationality in different spaces. Furthermore, as this study engages with "groups outside the mainstream" (Ibid.: 114) - both refugees and minority populations within refugee groups - it is appropriate that examining representations of these individuals and interviews with people with refugee backgrounds employs a qualitative approach. Such an approach not only provides more opportunities to engage with the perspectives and experiences of marginalised or hidden groups (Woodley and Lockard 2016: 321), it also explores how individuals are impacted by, relate to, and variously respond to these representations.

This chapter delineates the methodology employed in this study. The structure is as follows. First, it offers a brief overview of initial research undertaken by myself for my MPhil in Development Studies thesis at the University of Oxford that examined questions, collated data and offered an analysis on the religion-refugee nexus which formed the basis for this undertaking. I outline the core findings of that thesis and explain how it lays the foundation for this research and also how I build on, expand, and depart from it. Second, the chapter outlines the specific design and methods undertaken for this research, including a discussion of the challenges faced during the research process, the data collection and sampling techniques adopted, how I analysed the data, the contexts in which the research took place, and brief descriptive statistics of the research participants. The chapter concludes with an acknowledgement and critical examination of the limitations and ethical considerations of this research.

"We Shape and Are Shaped": A Note on Prospective Reflexivity and the Myth of the Neutral Researcher

Before proceeding and outlining the methods used in this research, there is a need for reflexivity on my part as the researcher. Given that some of the topics in this study, particularly that of 'religious identity', are highly contested, it is imperative to acknowledge the relational and partial nature of research. As Attia and Edge (2017: 34-35) effectively argue, understanding and identifying the role of the whole-person-researcher on research (prospective reflexivity) and the effect of the research on the researcher (retrospective reflexivity) is integral to any research process. Indeed, it must be understood that research is an encounter between subjects and subjectivities and that it is through such encounters that knowledge is co-produced (Clifford 1986) and through which both researchers and participants are impacted (Itani 2019).

Qualitative research, in particular, is an empathic undertaking that demands the ability of a researcher to relate to the social and psychological realities of others, and to be simultaneously humble in that undertaking *and* open in the process. Such humility requires that the researcher views and understands herself as a whole person, engaging with feelings, values, and needs - both of herself and those of others (Attia and Edge 2017: 34). A critical aspect of understanding oneself as a researcher, then, is the willingness and ability to identify the contexts, standpoints, histories, and thus, potential biases of a researcher (Itani 2019).

Admitting possible bias is important because it acknowledges that it is not possible to saturate knowledge about any given social reality and that exploration is always incomplete. Thus, qualitative research methods were deliberately used here in order to explore the subjectivities of sensitive and complex themes, such as 'religion' and 'religious identity'. Qualitative methods help to identify, understand, and explore the dynamic nature of human experiences.

Although qualitative methods are appropriate for dealing with such complexities, there are rigorous research principles that must be adhered to (see Jacobsen and Landau 2003). That is why, as a researcher, I must be reflexive about the conditions in which research is gathered, produced, shared, and subsequently received (Finlay 2002; Itani 2019). Such reflexivity requires recognition of the positionality of the researcher (identity, values, power relations), on the one hand, while ensuring the research tools are appropriately selected and used to avoid biased data (Jacobsen and Landau 2003). Thus, it is through a reflexive self-examination that I, as a researcher, can acknowledge my biases and work (and write) through them. My research cannot evade the personal experiences, commitment, and beliefs I have about refugees and the subject of religious freedom and minority issues. As Bourke (2014: 1) explains, "research represents a shared space, shaped by both researcher and participants... As such, the identities of both researcher and participants have the potential to impact the research process".

In some aspects, this research is personal. I was born in Iran with both Turkish and Kurdish heritage, and grew up in New Zealand as a refugee, having fled Iran with my family due to religious persecution. I am a member of the Bahá'í Faith, which is a religion that has adherents from all parts of the world. In Iran, Bahá'ís form the largest religious minority community and have been systematically persecuted for decades. My family and I escaped Iran to the border of Pakistan in the late 1980s and were recognised as refugees by UNHCR, given asylum and resettled in New Zealand. I have been involved in human rights research and advocacy for over a decade, focusing primarily on freedom of religion or belief issues, particularly as it relates to Iran but more recently, widely across the Middle East, including refugees fleeing religious persecution. My interest in refugee-related issues peaked during the beginnings of the so-called 'refugee crisis' in 2013 and continued after the large number of arrivals to Europe in 2015. All of these aspects of my identity inevitably shaped my motivations for undertaking the research, the types of research questions I formulated, the lens through which I approached the study, my status as both an outsider and insider during the research, including my access to refugees, the willingness of individuals to speak to me, as well as my interpretations of the data.

By situating my own experiences and knowledge here is to acknowledge that there is only a "partially objective knowledge" that can be sought (Lykke 2010: 4-5). My engagement with and access to knowledge on this subject is not entirely objective but "discursively located in time, space, body and historical power relations" (Ibid.). Thus, as a researcher, I can offer sound analysis while not claiming a lack of implication in the subject matter.

Sound analysis is made possible through reflection, interrogation of one's goals and approaches, and a commitment to integrity. Practically, this meant I kept a journal throughout the research process, regularly consulted with trusted individuals (while maintaining strict confidentiality and anonymity) on the process and challenges of the research, and openly noted insights from my analysis of the data and my reactions to them as I wrote. The value of reflexivity then, lies in the "individual

researcher's ability to construct an overall sense of *congruence* in their research practice" (Attia and Edge 2017: 36).[34]

The practice of reflexivity ensures a degree of trustworthiness, truthfulness, and respect - not only towards the research participants and the subjects of study but also to myself as the researcher ensuring I maintain integrity and coherence in my research. Indeed, as a researcher, I strive to uphold and apply ethical standards in my work. Acknowledging partiality does not mean giving permission to manipulate, misuse, or misrepresent the gathering, use, representation or analysis of data. Rather, it is an ontological acceptance of the role and dynamic of researcher experiences, identities, and subjectivities on the objects, processes, and outcomes of any research project - however small or inconsequential.

Previous Research

This study builds on and is an extension of my MPhil in Development Studies thesis undertaken at the University of Oxford between 2013 and 2015. My MPhil thesis explored the nature and implications of international non-governmental organisations' and UN agencies' representations of Syrian refugees living in Jordan (see Eghdamian 2015a, 2016). Over a two-month period (July – August 2014 inclusive), I undertook 29 semi-structured interviews with a total of 47 Syrian refugees identifying as or affiliated with two distinct religious groups (Christians and Druze) across three urban centres in Jordan (Amman, Mafraq, and Irbid). I also

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[34] Attia and Edge (2017: 37) explain in further detail what is meant by 'congruence':

> The on-going search for researcher congruence entails realising a fit between the professional principles that we declare and our actual professional behaviour. It also entails an openness to new ways of being and knowing through the development of original research methods that still confirm the values that we most prize. It entails, too, the expression of our *personal* values, along with the use of our *personal* skills, in our *professional* lives and vice versa. As researchers, we are hoping to achieve a sense of wholeness as people-who-research, where how we seem is how we are and what other people see is what they get. This overall goal is what we have termed *congruence*.

conducted semi-structured interviews with 32 humanitarian actors responding to the Syrian humanitarian "crisis", including faith-based organisations and UNHCR staff.

The findings of the study further highlighted the importance of 'religious identity' for 'religious minority' experiences of international displacement, including how humanitarian actors responded to minority assistance and protection needs in Jordan. Specific vulnerabilities among the Syrian 'religious minority' refugee population were identified, including isolation, stigmatisation, and discrimination in accessing humanitarian aid and assistance. The research also found that humanitarian actors tended to avoid engaging with religion in responding to displacement due to assumptions that religion is a non-essential feature of displacement or a source of conflict and identity politics, further affirming the dominance and influence of a secular bias in humanitarian and development spaces. Finally, although there were examples of religion's constructive role for refugee communities' experiences of displacement, my MPhil demonstrated that further research is needed into examining the multiple opportunities and challenges of religion in displacement contexts.

This current study, then, expands my MPhil findings by developing a more in-depth analysis of representations of Syrian refugees and the experiences of religious minorities in 'integration'. Further, it significantly contrasts with my earlier research by engaging critically with its initial findings and identifying important changes, differences, as well as continuities and similarities in both the refugee populations and institutional actors of another host country with distinct geographical, social, political, historical, and cultural foundations. In particular, this thesis directly interrogates terms such as the 'minority' label, the desirability of 'integration' as a process and outcome, as well as the ways in which 'representations' of Syrian refugees impact these processes for a broader range of 'religious minority' refugees. The focus on 'integration' and thus, refugee-refugee relationality and refugee-host relationality are particularly distinct emphases in this thesis, which were absent from my previous analyses and findings.

Research Design: Three Layers

In order to examine the nature and implications of discursive representations of Syrian refugees for Syrian 'religious minority' refugees in Berlin, this research employed a three-layered research design. Each layer has an overarching aim and taken together, assist in answering the core research question.

The three layers are:

1) **Representations** of 'Syrian refugees' in Germany;
2) **Experiences** of Syrian 'religious minority' refugees in Berlin, Germany; and
3) The **constitutive effects** of the above-mentioned representations on the experiences of Syrian 'religious minority' refugees, in 'integration' processes in Berlin, Germany.

For clarity, I will introduce each layer separately, outline the research design of each layer, and discuss how they are in conversation with one another. The use of multiple research methods was deliberately chosen in order to add "rigour, breadth, and depth" to my investigation (Denzin and Lincoln 2000: 2). The variety and multiplicity of layers in this research design reflects a "holistic" approach to research (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2006, 2011).

1. Representations of 'Syrian Refugees' in Germany

The first layer of the research design relates to exploring representations of Syrian refugees in Germany. The question guiding this aspect of the research is: how are Syrian refugees referred to, described, and identified (and consequently constituted) in both written and oral language, and by whom?

To explore this question, I undertook two methods of data collection. The first employed a discourse analysis focused on textual representations of selected online publications. The second explored representations as understood and linguistically conveyed by individuals working with, or responding to, refugees in Germany. I will explain the purpose and process of each method separately as well as the data analysis methods used.

Textual Representations

As a source of knowledge, publications such as newspapers and magazines can be used to understand specific contexts and political and social agendas related to historical and contemporary issues and events. In order to gain a focused understanding of the different dimensions and varied nature of representations of refugees in Germany, I searched for and identified specific articles from three German language publications that fall across a wide political spectrum (left, central, and right). I used the following keyword searches in both English and German: *'Flüchtling' UND 'Religion'* ('refugee' AND 'religion'); *'Flüchtling' UND 'Integration'* ('refugee' AND 'integration'); and *'Flüchtling' UND 'Minderheit'* ('refugee' AND 'minority'). I limited search results to a three year period (2015-2017, inclusive). This time frame was chosen in order to limit the scope of representations on Syrian refugees - starting from the time of the height of the so-called 'refugee crisis' in 2015. Since the writing of this research project began in 2018, I stopped collecting this data in December 2017.

The three publications selected were Spiegel Online (left-liberal), Süddeutsche Zeitung (moderate), and Compact (right-wing). Briefly, I will outline why I selected these three publications and an overview of their scope, readership, and format. Despite the political variations of each publication, they are all national publications and have engaged readership representative of a range of political leanings. Süddeutsche Zeitung is a newspaper and the other two are described as magazines.

There is a long and dynamic history with media and press freedom in Germany and my selection of these three publications sought to represent that diversity (Thomaß and Horz 2019). Of over 300 hundred local, regional and national newspapers in Germany, the most popular national newspaper is the Süddeutsche Zeitung. It has the largest circulation, reaching 1.1 million readers every day, and is described as a centre-left publication (BBC 2006).[35] Der Spiegel, described as the largest political magazine with a circulation of 6.79 million (Thomaß and Horz 2019) represents liberal political viewpoints in Germany (Maurer and Reinemann 2007). Its online outlet is Spiegel Online, which has been very successful, not only in terms of the large numbers of visitors to the site, but also as an important agenda setter (Thomaß and Horz 2019). On the other side of the political spectrum is the right-wing publication, Compact-Magazin Für Souveränität ('Compact Magazine for Sovereignty') established in 2010 (Nasr 2016). I selected this monthly online magazine in order to provide a right-wing political perspective to representations of refugees in Germany. Although its reach is limited (approximately 40,000 readers with over 90,000 "likes" on its Facebook page), its readership is active and expresses itself as being committed to an anti-immigrant agenda (Nasr 2016).

After identifying and collecting 334 relevant articles, the title of each article was translated from German to English with the help of a bilingual research assistant. The following table outlines the number of articles from each publication in each year that met the search criteria.

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[35] The political alignment of Süddeutsche Zeitung has also been described as 'left-liberal' (Hachmeister 2019) and 'critical-liberal' (Preisinger 2002).

Table 1: <u>List of **German Publications** Analysed</u>

Publication Name	2015	2016	2017
Spiegel Online	47	27	19
Süddeutsche Zeitung	52	37	47
Compact	29	52	24

These materials reflect and give insights into the social, political, and economic dimensions, conditions, and responses to refugees in Germany by different actors. I will later discuss how I analysed each document and the relationship these have to other interviews and observations in this study.

Representations of 'Syrian Refugees' by Institutional Actors

Similar to the textual analysis above, representations can also be understood through verbal language. To add this verbal dimension to understanding representations of Syrian refugees and the various assumptions, concepts, and labels associated with them, I undertook 42 semi-structured interviews with individuals who work with refugees or refugee-related issues in Germany. These included civil society groups, faith-based organisations (including Christian, Muslim, and Jewish organisations), religious groups, non-governmental organisations, and research agencies.

For ease of reference, the following table outlines the number of institutional actor interviewees, anonymised but categorised by way of sector.

Table 2: <u>List of **Institutional Actor Interviewees** Undertaken</u>

Sector	Number
Faith-Based Organisations	7
Non-Governmental Organisations, including Refugee Advocacy or Support Organisations	24
Refugee Activists	2
Refugee centres - Managers and Social Workers	5
Religious Leaders (Catholic, Chaldean Syrian, Syriac Orthodox and Ismaili)	4

The process of selecting participants began with online searches and conversations with other refugee researchers for advice on where to start and who to speak with. I then found and used a list of organisations in Berlin that work with refugees from a general address book on refugee advice.[36] In some instances, individuals who participated in the research gave me the names and contact information for other potential participants. I would then contact these individuals to try and set up interviews. By speaking to and hearing the perspectives of different actors, including journalists, governmental and non-governmental staff, and religious leaders, I was able to gain a multi-dimensional picture of how Syrian refugees are viewed, described, referred to, and thus, represented in this context.

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[36] Entitled "Adressbuch Flüchtlingsberatung Berlin 2018 ", which refers to "The Address Book on Refugee Advice in Berlin 2018". Available at:
http://www.fluechtlingsinfo-berlin.de/fr/arbeitshilfen/adrflueberatung.pdf (Accessed 13 August 2019).

All interviewees were based in Berlin. Where possible, interviews were conducted in person at a location chosen by the interviewee, which was often an office or a cafe. Only three interviews were conducted via Skype due to scheduling difficulties. All interviews were conducted in English with the exception of two interviews - one was conducted in Arabic and the other in German. I employed an interpreter for these interviews, who was a graduate student fluent in Arabic, English, and German.[37] The interviews lasted between one and two hours. All interviewees were given an information sheet and consent form at the start of the interview. For those who did not wish to sign the form, which was the case for the majority of interviewees, oral consent was received and recorded my myself (or the interpreter) either on the audio recording or verbally received, as necessary. Where consent was given to audio record the interview, transcription took place on the same day, where possible. In the absence of a recording, I took notes throughout the interview and then wrote reflections at the end of each interview.

On Anonymity

There is significant debate across social science literature and particularly among refugee and forced migration scholars regarding anonymising participants in 'sensitive' studies, including participants who work in institutions. I employ the principle of 'blanket anonymisation' throughout this study, which means that where possible, I do not refer to any identifying features of a participant. I acknowledge that complete and effective anonymisation is never entirely possible (Van den Hoonaard 2003), particularly as the location of the interviews, sectors, and the general subject matter are known. Nevertheless, it is possible to manage the identifying details of the research project and its participants, which is what I have chosen to do here (Giordano et al. 2007). I acknowledge that in some research

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[37] I would ask the questions in English and when needed, the interpreter would ask the questions in Arabic or German. Participants would answer the questions in their language of choice, which for the majority was English. After the interview, the interpreter and I would discuss the content of the interview and explore the nuances and dynamics of the interview answers. I further explore the nature and limitations of using an interpreter in research later in this chapter.

projects, participants wish to be cited. This should be respected but was not the case in this study. Almost all participants - refugees and institutional actors alike - requested to remain anonymous. Two religious leaders and four representatives of non-governmental organisations agreed to be named. Rather than affording some participants anonymity and presenting identifying features for others, I have chosen not to refer to any participants by name or pseudonym (Baez 2002; Saunders et al. 2015). However, I indicate the sector and any other relevant information related to the institutional actor interviewed.

The purpose of these interviews was to gather and critically examine the web of discourses that surround Syrian refugees, and specifically, the religious dimension of representing, understanding, and responding to, Syrian refugee identities, experiences, and needs. By employing a semi-structured interview guide, I sought a continuity of topics to be covered in each interview while allowing for some flexibility. Permitting variation in interviews (Fontana and Frey 2000) gives interviewees an opportunity to explore a range of opinions, experiences, and insights, as well as allowing interlocutors to explore concepts more thoroughly where they find it relevant to do so (Rubin and Rubin 1995).

The interview structure was as follows. I began by asking the individuals to describe the nature of their work and their experiences of working with, assisting, or otherwise engaging with refugees in Berlin. In particular, what they felt were the core needs of Syrian refugees in Germany, if they had met any 'religious minority' refugees from Syria, and the nature and role of religion in their work. I asked whether they felt religion or 'religious identity' mattered for refugees and refugee 'integration' in Germany. A copy of the interview guide used for institutional actor interviews can be found in Appendix A.

Analysis of Representations Data

I employed distinct data analysis methods for representations data based on the methods chosen to gather the data. Although I outline each method separately, there are overlaps and connections between them. Each method draws on discourse analysis in order to identify, understand, and critically examine representations. Each method is used to "dive in and out of the text" in order to gain deeper insights into the ideologies behind them and how language is used to create specific representations of refugees (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011: 238). However, when representations data are taken together and viewed holistically, deep insights emerge into how 'Syrian refugees' are represented in Germany by different actors and in different contexts, as explored in Chapter 6.

Both sets of data employ a content analysis approach, which involves taking information and looking for messages and symbols that may not be readily apparent (Krippendorf 1989). Whether the method of communication is verbal or written, each method of communication represents an idea, perspective, or meaning. It is important to identify, extract, and seek to understand the themes in the communication and remember that each one has a purpose. Attempting to identify intent is a challenge but nevertheless, an imperative to understand how representations are formed and to what effect. As Brians et al. (2011: 204-205) explain, "...whether it be description, persuasion, exhortation, direction, self-protection, or even obfuscation...we must attempt to interpret their content in the context of their apparent purpose". By looking for purpose, then, one also identifies "relations of power and inequality" (Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000: 447). Therefore, in this study, I did not focus on quantifying the number of specific references to 'Syrian refugees' or 'religious minority' refugees in Germany but rather sought a qualitative analysis of the content and manner in which references were - or were not - made textually or verbally. Focus was specifically given to whether or how refugees

are referred to, what terms are used, and any references to religion or religious identity.

Finally, although I will attempt to describe the sequential method of my data analysis for both the publications and interviews, it should be noted that the nature of qualitative data and its analysis implies a certain degree of complexity and messiness. Human relationships, interactions, and processes involve complex networks of events, interwoven causal factors, and both invisible and visible realities (Miles and Huberman 1994). Claiming a finality to any qualitative analysis then would be futile; yet, there are clear patterns and insights that qualitative analysis offers and on which I draw here. Indeed, one of the advantages of using and analysing qualitative data is its ability to offer an overview of a picture while also providing details of specifics.

Newspapers and Magazines: A Textual Analysis

After identifying relevant articles by the search words noted above, I collected each article and filed them into folders on my computer, which were separated and organised by year in the first instance and then by topic (based on the search words). Each article was then uploaded to NVivo in order to identify recurring concepts and themes.

My focus on the analysis was to note the specific ways that refugees, and specifically 'Syrian refugees', are referred to, defined and described over a specified period of time. After organising the data in this way, I coded the data by identifying recurring concepts and themes.

To identify these concepts and themes, I reflected on the following questions for each article:

- Does the article refer to religion, religious groups, or religious identities in any way? If so, does it use positive or negative language?

- Does the article focus on agreements or disagreements between groups of people on the basis of religion?
- Does the article make reference to how refugees are or are not following 'German' customs or norms? If so, does it refer to religion in this context? How?

The first set of themes were general and broad and related to religion, refugee identity, and responses to the so-called 'refugee crisis'. After re-reading the data and referring back to the identified themes, I either deleted some themes or coded new themes as necessary. This was an iterative process and not a linear one.

Following Strauss and Corbin (1990), I employed "open coding" methods, where I would read each article several times and reflect on each sentence, phrase, and sometimes, single words (Ibid. 72). My aim was to find the main idea in each sentence or paragraph and then to find connections between different ideas and categories - what Strauss and Corbin (Ibid. 97) refer to as "axial coding". New themes and categories reflected changes in both the range and focus of the articles that emerged over the years as well as my understanding and reflections on the subject throughout the research. Patterns emerged and I would identify the evidence to support the relationship(s) I found from my research data. Finally, I undertook selective coding where I wanted to collapse some of the categories into one if there was an abstract idea or concept that could encompass more than one category. These then formed the 'core' categories from my data, which was a necessary part of the analysis process "in order to achieve the tight integration and the dense development of categories required" (Strauss and Corbin 1990: 121).

After this initial process of coding the data, there was a need to identify, understand, and describe the relationships between them and the meanings they conveyed. This form of discourse analysis moves beyond identifying words and recognises that labels and categories have multiple, often 'hidden' meanings. Understanding that words and concepts may have multiple meanings requires a cognitive and coding approach to analysis that helps interpret the assumptions and knowledge systems

that produce multiplicity. Practically, this meant I took note of other factors other than the words and concepts that I identified. I also considered the content, context, and background of each piece in question. For instance, I would note for each article who the author was, the political motives of each publication, and who the intended audience of the article may be. These questions help to identify intention and purpose, which recognises that language is not neutral or apolitical but are used to convey meanings that have certain effects (Agger 1991).[38]

Although I used NVivo to code from the text, I was also conscious of holding onto human engagement with each article. Often, with coding software, it is easier to identify what is present in the text, rather than what is absent from it. I was conscious that data includes what is missing from an article. Although religion was not explicit in some of the texts, religion was nevertheless implicitly referred to - for example, with the use of the word 'culture' or 'diversity' or 'social cohesion'. Looking for the absence of religion here was helpful and an over-reliance on keyword searches was avoided. From this wider reading of the text, I added or amended codes selected and created through the initial coding practice.

Interviews: Discourse Analysis

Similar to the analysis of newspaper and magazine articles, I also employed "open coding" (Strauss and Corbin 1990) with institutional interview transcripts. After a process of reading, note-taking, and highlighting of concepts, NVivo was again used to create codes, organise categories of themes, and identify recurring patterns. Where needed and available, verbatim quotations were identified and connected to a code in order to help illustrate the concepts.

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[38] I acknowledge that an article may not 'only' contain text but also include visual images. However, many of the articles from all three publications did *not* use images. Therefore, in order to maintain consistency of analyses across all articles, I did not incorporate images in my analyses of articles (Fairclough 2001).

Since all the interviewees spoke from an organisational or institutional capacity, there was the necessity to identify, and if necessary, distinguish between 'official' accounts and 'personal' accounts. This is a very difficult undertaking because doubting or questioning the authenticity or truthfulness of an interviewee places the integrity of the interview at risk. Instead of questioning whether or not what is being said is 'true', I would ask follow-up or clarifying questions where the answers given were incomplete, unclear, or require further explanation. In that way, I was able to gather more detail to answers given and in turn, understand the context, rationale, and perspective of what is being shared.

Coding of institutional interviews focused on identifying patterns of assumed knowledge about who "Syrian refugees" are - their identities, needs, and experiences. What language is used to describe them and what references and reactions are made in response to the question of religion and religious identity in relation to Syrian refugees. By attempting to make "sense of the ways in which, in particular cultures at particular times, people make sense of the world around them" (McKee 2003: 1), I was able to locate specific symbols and references used to refer to Syrian refugees in the interviews.

Whether the perspective on or about refugees are written in a newspaper/magazine or shared in an interview by an institutional actor, all that is communicated reveals the constructed nature of knowledge. No term related to refugees or the words used to describe them are ahistorical or without meaning. In certain spaces, particularly in 'official' accounts, different words are used in a variety of ways and some words are omitted entirely - for example, 'religion'. Taken together, specific discourses of and about Syrian refugees emerge in different fora and one of the purposes of this research is to engage with the limits, realities, and effects of such representations.

Finally, while the assumptions held about 'Syrian refugees' and in particular, their religious identities and the role of religion, among various actors in Germany can be restricted to their particular contexts, I also developed an understanding of how they applied to the theory and practice of refugee response and integration more broadly. This understanding helped me identify and collate categories and schemas more generally.

2. Experiences of Syrian 'Religious Minority' Refugees in Berlin, Germany

The second layer of the research design relates to the experiences of Syrian 'religious minority' refugees in Berlin, Germany both in relation to other refugees and to hosts. The question guiding this aspect of the research is: what are the experiences of Syrian 'religious minority' refugees in Berlin and how, and to what extent, does 'religious identity' matter for refugee experiences of integration in Berlin?

To answer this question, I undertook three methods of data collection. The first gathered perspectives and assumptions *about* Syrian refugee experiences and in particular, religious minorities among the Syrian refugee population, by individuals and organisations working with, or responding to, refugees in Germany through semi-structured interviews (referred to as 'etic' perspectives). The second method focused on understanding and gaining insights into the experiences of Syrian 'religious minority' refugees *from* refugees themselves through semi-structured interviews and focus groups (referred to as 'emic' perspectives). This attempt at gaining emic perspectives on refugee experiences in this case, whilst always incomplete, was imperative in order to give insight into more accurate reflections of experiences from people themselves, rather than snapshots of assumed experiences from third parties. The third method involved undertaking participant observation of Syrian 'religious minority' refugee experiences in different settings over the 11-month period of fieldwork. Observations included invitations to and participation

at dinners, events at refugee centres, visits to a refugee centre, and socialising at cafes and parks.

Etic Perspectives: Views *of* Syrian 'Religious Minority' Refugee Experiences

The first method, interviews with institutional actors, mirrored the process of data gathering and analysis as outlined above in relation to representations of Syrian refugees. Here, the specific questions related to experiences of refugees and subsequently, the analysis of the answers given formed the core of this data. This process of acquiring etic perspectives is also linked to understanding external conditions such as economic or political considerations, which may not be prominent for the participant or subject (Harris 1964).

Emic Perspectives: Experiences of and *from* Syrian 'Religious Minority' Refugees

The second method involved undertaking semi-structured interviews and focus groups with Syrian 'religious minority' refugees in Berlin. By engaging emic (inside) perspectives, I employed a process of seeking to understand an issue, process, or phenomenon from the point of view of the participants or subject (Pike 1967). This involved allowing refugees themselves to offer perspectives and answers to questions about their experiences in both a semi-structured and fluid manner. That is, whilst the questions were guided in order to cover key themes and provide consistency across interviews, they were also open to inputs from the participants who may wish to add more detail to an answer or go on a slight detour on a related topic or experience before returning to the general framework of questions.

Who is a 'Syrian Religious Minority' Refugee?

Before outlining how the interviews and focus groups took place, I will first explain how I identified and selected participants. Although I had a number of religious groups in mind that I wanted to reach out to for potential participants, I was conscious of the danger of predetermining my respondents and decided to deliberately keep my search wide and broad. In addition to reasons of conceptual coherence, deliberately keeping the sample broad was also a practical decision. While I had to be careful not to essentialise religious minorities, for the purposes of a clear sampling frame, I defined 'Syrian religious minority refugees' as any Syrian refugee who identified as a non-Sunni Muslim refugee, while acknowledging that the 'religious minority' label may not resonate or be accepted by all refugees who met/meet this sampling criteria. Therefore, I included anyone who accepted the label (by accepting to participate in the research) and allowed for their interpretations of the label to emerge - for instance, someone who was assumed to be an Ismaili but self-identified as a secular atheist.

From my experiences in Jordan and in Turkey,[39] I knew that accessing marginal and hidden populations is a difficult endeavour (also see Eghdamian 2016). In addition to smallness of numbers, geographical spread, and the tendency to conceal, downplay or avoid religious identity markers, Syrian 'religious minority' refugees can be hard to find. An exception to this has been some Syrian Christian communities, particularly Syriac Orthodox and Catholic communities, who are not only well-organised but have a stronger administrative or advocacy support system in place for which contact can be made easier (Ibid.).

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[39] In 2016, I worked as an advisor and consultant for a Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) research study on the vulnerabilities and protection needs of religious minorities in Syria and Iraq. The project, funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, involved fieldwork in Turkey. This included primary data collection to identify the protection needs of religious minorities among Syrian and Iraqi refugees over a two-week field visit in May-June 2016. The field visit resulted in 8 key informant interviews and 4 focus groups with members of refugee communities (32 individuals), separated by gender and religious affiliation. Key insights were gathered about the experiences and needs of Christian, Yazidi, and Alawite refugees from Syria and Iraq, including their humanitarian and protection needs in the host community of Turkey as well as prospects of return to Syria/Iraq and of resettlement (for the full report, see Norwegian Church Aid 2016).

There was a risk of keeping the sample size broad: of gaining a superficial reading of a broad range of minorities rather than a focused, or comparative, examination of one or few pre-selected groups. Nevertheless, I was conscious of not essentialising what a 'religious minority' would be and in order to avoid essentialisation, I needed to include, however small in number, the widest range of participants as possible - as they emerged and as they wished to be identified or understood. In doing so, it is hoped that I came to a greater, more nuanced, understanding of the diversity of refugee identities and experiences rather than a presumed idea of who they are. Nevertheless, there was a degree of essentialisation that was unavoidable. Primarily, by *excluding* 'Sunni Muslim' Syrian refugees, I made an assumption that Sunni Muslim religious identities were fixed, rather than fluid and thus, also of 'minority' positioning.[40] This understanding emerged and developed during and shortly after fieldwork and formed the basis for my critique of the 'minority' label in Chapter 5. I recognise the complex and subtle creation of identity categories and acknowledge that social research requires inferences about people to be made in reference to their membership to certain categories, while interrogating such membership and categorisation (McKinlay and McVittie 2011; Potter and Wetherell 1987).

For practical reasons, I used the label 'religious minority' in order to negotiate access to certain groups of Syrian refugees although I understood that pre-determining the use of the label meant that certain groups would be excluded and that some gatekeepers would resist assisting access to refugee communities. Thus, there was a trade-off between negotiating access to larger numbers of refugees that would then be excluded and ensuring that focus was given to specific numbers of refugees and using time in the field efficiently.

With acknowledging these limitations and conceptual challenges, there remained a need to identify and reach out to select populations whilst also being open to

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[40] Similarly, the person presumed to be an Ismaili in this study who self-identified as a secular atheist testifies to this fluidity of 'minority' and 'religious identity' labels. See also Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh (2010) and their research with 'Muslim' refugees and asylum-seekers from Middle East and North Africa. In that study, for instance, a Kurdish woman vocally self-identified as secular atheist, yet answered the invitation to be interviewed for a project on "Muslim" refugees.

potential participants that were not previously considered. Operationally, I began contacting refugee centres, organisations and individuals working with refugees (including civil society actors), and religious communities both via email and phone. I requested to meet with one of their representatives or to be put directly in touch with someone who could help connect me with refugees. I began with established networks already trusted or frequented by refugees, such as faith-based organisations or advocates for their religious community, including religious leaders and NGOs.

Drawing on both convenience and snowball sampling techniques (Daniel 2012), I asked these individuals to connect me with others who may work with or be in touch with refugee communities. I also asked the same of refugees - whether or not they agreed to be interviewed. Both convenience and snowball sampling techniques are established methods for identifying 'hidden' populations (Atkinson and Flint 2001). Like a multistage sampling technique, a small initial sample 'snowballs' to a larger sample (Hoyle, Harris, and Judd 2002: 188) when participants or gatekeepers offer names of other potential participants or point out locations, centres, or other organisations where possible participants may be situated. Part of this approach required that I develop strategies to access as many interviewees as possible by, for example, building rapport and negotiating with gatekeepers for access (Harrell-Bond and Voutira 2007). This included follow-up calls, regular requests for access or referrals, and asking clarifying questions where requests were denied or resisted. In order to reduce the bias of only accessing participants from select minority groups or those who have stronger social networks (Griffiths et al. 1993), I attempted to connect with a range of institutional gatekeepers. Nevertheless, Syrian Christians were more visible and better organised, resulting in smaller numbers of participants from non-Christian backgrounds. However, the very nature of a snowball sample means I cannot and do not make claims to generality (Atkinson and Flint 2001; Van Meter 1990) and complete representation of *any* group is not possible. Further research would do well to replicate or expand the results here to strengthen analyses (Atkinson and Flint 2001).

Syrian 'Religious Minority' Refugee Interviews and Focus Groups

A total of 39 refugees participated in this study. The process outlined above resulted in 30 semi-structured interviews and two focus groups (one with 4 men, another with 5 women) being conducted with refugees (between 20 and 65 years of age) belonging to, or identifying with, five religious minority groups, including Christian (Catholic, Orthodox, and Chaldean), Druze, Ismaili, Alawite, and Yazidi. I will first delineate the details of the individual interviews before outlining the nature of the two focus groups.

The majority of the interviews were with Syrian Christian refugees (N=13). The distribution of other interviewee backgrounds are as follows: 8 Druze, 5 Ismaili, 2 Alawite, and 2 Yazidi. Although efforts were made to identify and meet underrepresented groups (particularly Alawite and Yazidi), these remain the final number of interviews conducted. Of these 30 interviews, 20 were male and 10 were female. I endeavoured to reach a gender balance in my sample of refugee participants; however, it was a difficult task. By asking to meet with and speak to female refugees at refugee centres, by reaching out to NGOs serving refugee women directly, and attending wider refugee events (for example, the international dinner at an FBO) that I was able to meet and invite female participants to the study and ensure women participated in the research.

On average, interviews lasted 1.5 hours with the shortest interview lasting one hour and the longest interview lasting three hours. Interviews were conducted in both English and Arabic depending on the linguistic fluency and/or preference of the interviewee. Where Arabic was the preferred language of communication, an interpreter was used to provide simultaneous translation. Given the nature and challenges of accuracy in translation, the interpreter also took notes during the interviews and we had an immediate debrief after each interview to clarify any gaps. All interviews were conducted face-to-face in a location suggested by the participant. The locations varied and included coffee shops, church buildings, public parks, and

private homes. For the purposes of confidentiality and anonymity, all refugee participants were identified by a letter in all research notes and transcripts and are referred to generally throughout the study as 'Christian male', or 'Druze women', and so on.

Table 3: List of **Interviews** Undertaken with **Refugees**

Religious Affiliation	Gender	Language of Interview
5 x Christian	Male	Arabic
3 x Christian	Male	English
2 x Christian	Female	Arabic
3 x Christian	Female	English
5 x Druze	Male	Arabic
1 x Druze	Male	English
2 x Druze	Female	Arabic
2 x Ismaili	Male	Arabic
2 x Ismaili	Male	English
1 x Ismaili	Female	English
1 x Alawite	Male	English
1 x Alawite	Male	Arabic
2 x Yazidi	Male	Arabic

Before starting each interview, I briefed participants on the purpose of the research, ascertained their willingness to participate and explained that they can refuse to

answer any question, without any negative effect, and can stop the interview at any time. I then requested to audio record the interview and for those who did not consent to be recorded (N=11), myself and the interpreter (if present) hand-wrote notes throughout the interview with reflections recorded as soon as possible after the interview ended.

While the number of interviewees and participants per religious group is relatively consistent with their statistical representation in Syria (i.e. the largest 'minority' are Christians), it should be noted that individuals from all of these groups were exceptionally difficult to access. This challenge highlights the politically sensitive nature of religion, particularly in the context of Syria and Syrian religious identities, and illustrates the ways in which political differences can galvanise, shape, inform, and impact members of different groups. Beyond this political context, it also offers insights into how malleable these categories are in reality. As mentioned, for the purpose of sampling and analytical clarity, I presumed (or imposed) religious identity labels to prospective participants whereas the differences between them and say, Sunni Muslim Syrian refugees or religious refugees with secular orientations, is unclear but certainly an area for future research to explore. Furthermore, my selection of participants did not identify the extent to which they actively participate in religious activities or engage with religious communities or institutions, and yet my interlocutors were able to offer reflections on this in their answers during the interviews.

The two focus groups, held separately, were arranged through different means. The first was arranged after I met a Druze man at an international dinner hosted by a faith-based refugee agency and invited him to participate in the study as an interviewee. He agreed and asked that we meet the next day and offered to bring some friends. The next day, my interpreter and I met the man outside the refugee agency and walked a few metres to his home, which he shared with another of the focus group participants - a Yazidi man. The focus group consisted of two Christian men, one Druze man, and one Yazidi man and was held in the room of the Druze man in a shared house. All participants were middle-aged (over 50 years old) and

were friends who met at the faith-based refugee agency. The focus group lasted three hours and all men contributed to and participated in the conversation. The interview guide (see Appendix B) was also used to frame the order and nature of focus group questions.

The second focus group was held at the headquarters of a non-governmental organisation (NGO) dedicated to supporting and assisting refugee women in Berlin. The focus group was organised by the head of the NGO and consisted of three Druze women and two Ismaili women between the ages of 30-55 years. The head of the NGO offered to set up the focus group after she had tried to arrange a few individual interviews for me but some women expressed hesitancy to be interviewed alone. It was her suggestion that some women may feel more comfortable speaking in a group and at the NGO 'break room'. I agreed and she arranged the focus group. On the day, one of the Druze women asked if the head of the NGO, who is not a refugee, could stay with them and participate in the focus group. Although the other women all verbally agreed to this, at this stage I re-introduced the elements of confidentiality and anonymity in order to ensure participants of the safety of their participants as well as my ethical obligations as a researcher. They again expressed the desire to have the head of the NGO participate in the focus group. In the words of one of the middle-aged Ismaili women, the head of the NGO should stay because "she knows us, she is our supporter, and she knows what we've gone through". I consented to their wish while remaining sensitive to the power dynamics of having an institutional actor present in the group. I ensured that all participants were able to share their thoughts and experiences and reiterated at different points in the discussion that they should only continue in their participation if they are comfortable.

At the close of each focus group, I asked if any participant wishes to be interviewed separately, that they are welcome to let me know now if that is their wish or to contact me at a later date. All participants, from both focus groups, expressed either in the group or alone afterwards that they felt it was not necessary to do so as they expressed what they needed to say in the focus group setting.

Table 4: <u>List of **Focus Group** Participants</u>

Focus Group	Religious Affiliation	Gender	Language
1	2 x Christian	Male	English and Arabic
1	1 x Druze	Male	English
1	1 x Yazidi	Male	Arabic
2	2 x Druze	Female	English and Arabic
2	2 x Ismaili	Female	English

It is important to note at this juncture how the nature of a focus group differs from individual interviews and how I was cognisant of, and responded to, focus group dynamics throughout our discussions. These included, particularly in the case of the focus group at the NGO headquarters, being aware of participants' reluctance to give criticism or negative feedback in the presence of an 'authority' figure and the risk of being viewed as a political or religious dissenter among the other participants (Yahya et al. 2018). As the researcher, I assured individuals that there were no right or wrong answers and that they did not have to 'impress' me or others in the room with their responses. I also regularly reminded participants of the voluntary nature of the discussion and the aim of the group, which was to provide a safe space for participants to share diverse views and experiences.

Indeed, these two focus groups offered insights that would have otherwise been absent or lost in individual interviews. Focus groups can be an effective, *natural* means of obtaining perceptions on a specific topic - particularly if participants feel they are in a safe environment (Nevid and Maria 1999; Yahya et al. 2018). If the topic of discussion is considered sensitive, the number of participants is small, and they share similar characteristics such as gender and age, the environment is likely to be

conducive to greater group cohesion, which enables a diversity of viewpoints to be shared (Owen 2001; Morgan 1996; Watters 2001; Yahya et al. 2018).

Interviewing 'Syrian Religious Minority' Refugees

Interview questions, which formed the guide for both individual interviews and the focus group discussions, were first developed based on field insights from my MPhil research in Jordan and consultancy research in Turkey. Reflecting further on insights from Berlin and theoretical considerations related to the power dynamics when conducting refugee interviews and focus groups, the interview guide was adapted and redrafted.[41] That is, I had a list of questions I aimed to ask all refugee participants but remained flexible and open to the participants guiding the topics and allowing them to answer the questions as it suited them. Thus, the interviews and focus groups were approached in an interpretive manner, which involves follow up questions in order to invite the participants to explore concepts in greater detail (Rubin and Rubin 1995).

The primary purpose of these interviews and focus groups was to gain emic perspectives of refugee experiences: to allow Syrian refugees belonging to religious minority groups to articulate their experiences and views for themselves (Spradley 1980), where they may have otherwise not been heard. Additionally, drawing on other research methods with these refugees would have been difficult. For instance, the general lack of access to refugees' personal contact information made the distribution of a survey exceptionally difficult to pursue as an option. Further, interacting directly with refugees is vitally important in order to gain a nuanced understanding of their complex, perhaps sensitive, and potentially malleable identities, and the ways in which these identities are expressed, lived, and draw on. As such, interviews and focus groups are interactive and reflect a relationship between myself as an interviewer and them as interviewees/participants where attempts were made, on both sides, to understand each other's points of view.

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[41] The interview guide was semi-structured and can be found in Appendix B.

All interviews and focus groups began with an open-ended question, asking the interviewee or participants to tell me a little bit about themselves. Follow-up questions included asking about their experiences living in Syria before the conflict; what factors contributed to their decision to leave; the circumstances of their journey; their arrival to Europe and specifically, to Germany; their experiences living in a refugee centre (if applicable); and the nature of their experiences with other Syrian and non-Syrian refugees in Berlin and within the host community, including Syrians, Arabs, and Germans residing in Germany. Attempts were made not to lead interviewees/participants or to cause them undue distress or discomfort. In this respect, I did not pose questions about the conflict directly nor did I ask questions about the politics of the conflict. Naturally, some of these topics arose as and when the interviewees or participants presented them, but I did not emphasise them in the research questions.

After each interview or focus group, I revisited my interview and focus group notes and transcribed the audio recording (where permission was given)[42] for the English interviews on a password-protected computer and saved each document in a password-protected format. All Arabic interviews were first transcribed by the interpreter and then passed on to me as a password-protected document for review. I also concluded each day with writing a field journal of observations and initial insights. Beyond recording observations, the use of a field journal was useful for processing emotions and informing analysis based on 'transparent' data collection (Ortlipp 2008: 696). That is, by acknowledging my role as a researcher in the research process, there was a need to actively identify and process my thoughts, reactions, and opinions to what I had seen, heard, and experienced. Further, any analysis of the data from the interviews, focus groups, and participant observations were undertaken in an inductive manner, which I further discuss below. Examining and processing data, as fieldwork progressed, enabled me to rework any aspects of the research design as necessary and evaluate how I am progressing (Lynch 2005). For instance, I regularly asked myself, "why am I gathering this information? What is it

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[42] Participants of both focus groups consented to be recorded and all interviews, except for two, were also recorded after receiving consent from interviewees.

telling me that I didn't know before?", so I could digest data more readily.

On 'Refugee Voices'

I have consciously not referred to my interviews with refugees as an engagement with or representation of 'refugee voices'. I contest that another person can accurately or appropriately represent the voice of another, and it is not simply a challenge that can be overcome through an ethnographic endeavour. When anyone speaks, they are shaped by their present and historical circumstances and the social and political milieu of the time in which they speak as well as the identities of the audience and how they 'listen'. Therefore, the complexities around 'voice' cannot be overlooked (Harsch 2018; Malkki 1996; Sigona 2014; Spivak 1988) and thus, my use of 'emic' perspectives of refugee experiences is deliberate here. A perspective indicates a limited view, rather than a comprehensive one, while emic acknowledges that I allow that perspective to come from refugees *themselves*.

Just as religion is a flexible category (both historically and academically), refugee identities and experiences are also malleable. It is not my role as a researcher to predetermine or post-determine the truth or validity of what is said but to try and understand what is said, such as the context in which it is spoken. To illustrate, when many interviewees shared specific experiences of discrimination on the basis of religion, it was not possible - nor desirable - to validate whether these discriminations were perceived or real. While the purpose of this research is not to interrogate and challenge refugees' own accounts of their experiences, it is possible that representations were misused in order to advance particular narratives for specific (political) agendas - for example, solely emphasising discrimination against Syrian Christians in order to advance the advocacy agenda of prioritising asylum claims of Christian refugees in Europe.

Where possible, I tried to understand more by asking clarifying questions - for instance, to what extent their experience is the same for others they know, how, and why. Further, there were also instances where refugees concealed or tried to take on

a different identity, such as in the case of some Ismailis who self-identified as atheists but shared that in official government applications or interviews, they only wrote or answered that they were Ismaili. In this example, it is not that being an atheist and Ismaili are mutually exclusive categories but rather that 'religion' can also be viewed, interpreted or engaged with as a surrogate of ethnicity, culture, geography, or history. These complexities highlight how 'religion' and 'refugees' - as constructs - are not straightforward categories in this (or any other) context and there are certain nuances and sensitivities I needed to be conscious of throughout my fieldwork and during the analysis phases after data was collected. As Beth Roy (1994, cited in King (2014): 12) points out, "[what] sticks in people's memories, what they choose to say and when they choose to remain silent, how they distort what they know to be their experience, and overarching all, what I notice and what I overlook are all intensely informative."

By undertaking semi-structured interviews and focus groups, I aimed to "introduce the opportunity to collect rich data textured by the respondents' own interpretations of their experiences and the social circumstances in which their story has unfolded" (Sosulski et al. cited in Woodley and Lockard 2016: 324). In this way, I asked participants to share their views and experiences, and I listened. By listening, I was able to move away from the strictures of the interview guide when needed in order to ask clarifying questions or identify the next question that would be best suited to the momentum of the interview. Since the interviews and focus groups were conducted in an inductive manner, it meant that I would only ask them to explain or explore a concept as they presented them, allowing *them* to articulate their experiences for themselves (Spradley 1980). Thus, my analysis of how refugees negotiated, contested, and recast the 'minority' label or their 'religious identity', particularly in Chapter 5, and what it means to be a 'refugee', as explored in Chapters 7 and 8, are better understood as expressions of refugee agency. Following Zaman (2016: 2), this implies acknowledging that refugees, as social actors, are "continually interpreting, re-interpreting, and internalising their experiences while simultaneously acting upon them".

Participant Observation

In addition to the semi-structured interviews and focus groups, participant observation was used as an additional tool of data collection. This method was chosen in order to offer further insights into the social realities, relationships, interactions and experiences of refugees and different host members. Observations emerged organically through conversations and relationships that developed. Observations were limited to events and settings offered or permitted by refugees or hosts themselves. Events included a public gathering with refugees at the main office of an FBO, a Sunday church service, a Christmas celebration at another church, an international dinner hosted by an FBO, a refugee welcome and German language exchange evening at an NGO, and dinners at the private home of two refugee families - one Christian family and one Druze family. Aside from formal events, observations also included conversations outside of interviews and participation in consultations with refugees, activists and other researchers on refugee rights in Berlin.

Although participant observation is typically associated with in-depth, long periods of ethnographic research (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995), over the 11-month period of field research, I viewed my participation in any groups or activities as a way of contributing further insights to data collected through interviews and document analysis. Doing so added contextual analysis that would otherwise be lacking without this multi-layered approach.

By gathering and analysing accounts of refugee experiences, I make no claim or judgement about the truth of their accounts. My purpose was to gather, identify, document, record, and try to understand their experiences as they shared and represented them.

Data Analysis of Refugee Experiences

Analysis of refugee interviews and observations followed many similarities to institutional actor interviews. However, some key differences should be noted - namely, the direct consideration of context and noting similarities and comparisons with other refugee interviews and observations. Specifically, data analysis of refugee interviews and observations drew on a three-stage data analysis framework: description, analysis (coding), and interpretation of the culture-sharing group (see Wolcott 1994). This meant that I first described the setting and interview or event in a straightforward manner, chronologically noting what was said, where and by whom. I would then read all my field notes and interview transcripts several times to have an overview of the data, making additional notes or highlighting and marking key passages as I would review the data. Then, with the help of NVivo, I organised the data and identified patterns, akin to the process of analysis for institutional interviews.

Once all interview transcripts and written accounts of observations were compiled and coded into themes using NVivo, I would review the themes in conversation with the description of the settings as described above. Thus, new themes sometimes emerged, which I identified and recorded. Where appropriate, verbatim quotations that have been transcribed are used in the discussion of the themes in the following chapters to help highlight the importance of individual accounts but ensuring that such accounts are not presented as representative of all or other experiences.

The process of identifying patterns and themes reflected a tree node system with subcodes. That is, key themes (or codes) would be identified and subthemes (or subcodes) would be connected to them as they directly related to the main research questions. Using both inductive and deductive reasoning, I built themes from the data and turned or connected them into theory as and when necessary or possible.

Drawing on 'religious minority' refugee experiences in particular offered more nuanced accounts of what it means to be a refugee, the formation of the 'minority', and conceptualisations of power, place, and position in understandings of the 'refugee'. In this research study, the process of analysing refugee experiences does not insist on commonalities across and between groups of interviewees but begins from a position of recognising the plurality of refugee subjects and their experiences. It is from this standpoint that I read and re-read, coded and re-coded, each interview transcript and field note. A primary intention has been and continues to be to overcome the subjectification and reductiveness of 'refugees' by acknowledging and engaging with difference. In doing so, it is hoped that universalist conceptions of 'refugees' are challenged and reductionist narratives of refugee identities, needs, and experiences are rendered inadequate. Indeed, my framing of 'religious minority' refugees among 'Syrian refugees' is itself limited and can fall prey to the very reductionist and simplistic narratives about refugees that are inaccurate. More on this will be covered in forthcoming discussion chapters. In short, in coding these interview transcripts, I attempted to highlight different socio-historical realities, gender specificities, cultural variations, and other contexts from which these refugees spoke about and spoke from. My analysis problematised the globalised terminologies of 'refugee' as a category, and indeed, of 'minorities' as a category. There is no "universal refugee" or "global minority" and indeed, there is no single "Syrian refugee" or "Syrian minority". These terms are multiple, varied, and complicated.

Finally, although I have listed my research analysis process in a linear fashion, I was also flexible and open to "nuances, surprises and confusion" (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2006: 127). There was a systematic method of analysis but it was not a rigid process with preconceived codes. I would regularly revisit the data and apply and adapt codes as necessary. The process I used to collect the interviews involved engaging with the "original, complex, 'messy' reality of the social setting' (Holliday 2007), which was at times also reflected in the analysis process.

A Note on Coding 'Emic' and 'Etic' Perspectives

In the context of refugee and forced migration studies, drawing on both emic and etic perspectives to understand different dimensions of religion in displacement is an increasing but still nascent research endeavour. To date, researchers have often examined faith-based actors directly, primarily faith-based organisations and local faith communities and predominantly through etic perspectives (see Clarke 2006; De Cordier 2009; Ferris 2005; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Ager 2013; Marshall 2008; Thaut 2009; Wilson 2011). The etic approach aims to describe constructs applicable across cultures and often lends itself more for comparative analyses (Harris 1964). Scholars often posit that each of these approaches are not only distinct in terms of coding and analysis but also in the underlying assumptions held by a researcher about culture (Morris et al. 1999). There is also a tendency to distinguish the two approaches by positing that one either assumes culture is an interconnected whole (emic) or that it is made up of isolated components (etic) (Ibid.).

In this research study, however, such distinctions between the two approaches are not viewed in a rigid or dichotomous manner. Rather, the practice of analysing data via an emic or etic perspective can be fluid and better identified along a continuum. For instance, although emic approaches tend to be associated with long-term ethnographic observations of a single group (Geertz 1983), my research developed relationships with different actors and participants that included interviews and observations over a period of time. Yet, similar to an etic approach, my fieldwork was structured across different groups across different settings, albeit in one city. Furthermore, perspectives of minority refugees are used to describe their experiences based on *their* understanding (emic); for instance, in situations where I identified a refugee as being religious where they then self-identified in non-religious terms. However, while the assumptions held about 'religion' among various actors in Germany can be restricted to their particular contexts, they are also understood to apply to the theory and practice of refugee response and integration

more broadly (etic). The emic perspective allows for the identification of nuances and hidden meanings within refugee experiences, while the etic approach helps identify and collate categories and schemas beyond the specific refugee groups interviewed. Thus, my analysis of the data seeks to be both emic and etic, cross-cutting between and in conversation with each data set.

While I acknowledge the merits of a 'pure' emic approach, in the final analysis, no researcher can avoid their own "research lens in rendering reality" (Yin 2010: 12). Scholarly debates in refugee and forced migration studies have also noted complexities between drawing on emic or etic representations of *refugee* experiences specifically (Turton 2003; Godin and Doná 2016). While there has been a rise in research about and calls for engagement with and accounting for 'refugee voices', some post-structuralist and critical theorists have questioned the very existence of such voices - that is, the lack of space for *meaningful* reception of and engagement with these voices (see Itani 2019; Spivak 1988).[43] Acknowledging the limits of an emic approach requires locating and understanding the practices and spaces that can silence or marginalise refugee narratives and experiences (Sigona 2014: 369). Refugee narratives are "situated, positional, and relational" and thus, must be understood in the context of other discursive fields such as those produced by the refugee regime (Ibid.: 11).

By drawing on the perspectives of the refugees interviewed in this study directly, I aim to contribute to the understanding and appreciation of the *plurality* of refugee experiences. As Anthias (cited in Sigona 2014: 370) notes, narratives "are produced in relation to socially available and hegemonic discourses and practices" and as such, they cannot be separated from the context in which they are shared. Religion and religious identity, then, influences and adds to how refugees' share experiences and what they tell. Yet, often the diversity of views and experiences are not represented in social or political discourses on or about refugees. Rather, certain

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[43] Also see Saunders et al. (2016) on how religious viewpoints are often not 'heard' by secular academics in (forced and other) migration research, despite the extensive presence and use of religious theories, arguments, and experiences throughout the world. The presence and effects of this secular bias is further explored in Chapters 6 and 8.

dimensions of refugee identities, needs, and experiences are represented over others (see Malkki 1995, 1996). Thus, this research does not only focus on refugee experiences (emic) but also locates and highlights representations of refugees by other actors responding to or engaging with refugee needs and experiences (etic).

Furthermore, I used an interpretive and constructionist method of discourse analysis (Hardy et al. 2004; van Dijk 2008) when coding, interpreting, and analysing data. Such an approach seeks to examine the assumptions underlying language and structures as well as the ideas and objects that are produced as a result. As Crawford (2004: 22) explains, to understand discourses "is to understand the underlying logic of the social and political organisation of a particular arena and to recognise that this arrangement and the structures of power and meaning underpinning it are not natural, but socially constructed". In contrast to other qualitative methods that examine meanings of social reality as they are (see, for example, Geertz 1973), discourse analysis seeks to explore how social reality is produced (Hardy et al. 2004). An aspect of this examination, then, requires understanding the broader context of the discourse. That is, how the discourse is located historically and socially, including through interactions between social groups and where the discourse is embedded in societal structures (Hardy 2001; van Dijk 2008).

The validity of the research findings in this study are demonstrated by identifying patterns in the meaning of texts that are *constitutive* in some way (Hardy et al. 2004: 21). Identifying patterns here goes beyond noting the recurrence of certain words or themes. As Fierke (2004: 36) points out, emphasising quantification – often found in content analysis methodology – is a reflection of an assumption that "language mirrors objects in the world" rather than being constitutive of the world. Discourse analysis requires examining the conditions of power and politics in the production of meaning and the use of linguistic and non-linguistic practices and structures (van Dijk 2008). Indeed, as Laffey and Weldes (2004: 29) identify, "because discursive practices entail power relations, they become sites of contestation and struggle". Thus, these points of tension can reveal which kinds of representations and practices are made possible or acceptable in any given social reality, by whom, and with what

effect.

In this context, then, I tried to identify and locate the discourse on religion in the context of refugee response, interaction, and engagement in order to better understand contemporary representations and responses to refugee' religious identities and experiences in Germany. This included, for example, exploring when different actors refer to religion in relation to refugees, what language is used, and what kinds of non-linguistic practices they manifest. I sought to identify whether and how certain languages and practices recur in particular ways insofar as to construct a particular category for "religion" and "refugees" based on certain assumptions. In some instances, it is necessary to examine the relationship between discourses – for instance, between secular discourse and religious discourse – and how one may be privileged, legitimised, or delegitimised over another in different contexts. This process of legitimisation or delegitimisation helps identify how discourses set rules to enable certain practices, which are in turn reproduced (Laffey and Weldes 2004: 28). In order to best identify these 'rules', it is important to note the source and position of the authors of a discourse, highlighting and critically examining power relations. Power relations in this context are examined by identifying whether some voices or actors are privileged or marginalised over others (Ibid.; see also van Dijk 2008). Specifically, this involves asking where and how refugee minority voices are situated (or not) in humanitarian discourse on refugee assistance and protection. Exploring such questions may offer valuable insights into not only how religion in humanitarianism is understood but also the real consequences that this 'regime of truth'[44] (Foucault 1980) has on minority refugee experiences.

As Foucault (Ibid.: 131) argued:

> Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth; that is, the
> types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the

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[44] One of the major critiques of Foucault's idea of a 'regime of truth' is that it is strongly relativist (Hall 1997). This challenge can be explored through a (re)examination of "religion" and the contributions of perennial philosophers, in particular, to a rethinking of religion from extreme relativistic beliefs and practices to expressing an overarching commonality (Cameron and Schewel 2018).

mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned…the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.

Therefore, it has been imperative in this study to acknowledge the role of discourse in the creation and dissemination of knowledge *about* Syrian refugees and the extent to which such knowledge is 'true' for 'religious minority' Syrian refugees.

3. Exploring Constitutive Effects: Implications of Refugee Representations on 'Religious Minority' Refugee Experiences

The third layer of the research design examines the relationship between representations of refugees and 'religious minority' refugee experiences. By drawing on the interviews and observations with refugees and institutional actors, I sought to understand what the institutional responses to the presence of Syrian 'religious minority' refugees were, whether or not religion shaped these responses, and how these responses aligned or contrasted with Syrian 'religious minority' refugee views and experiences. Further, whether or how Syrian 'religious minority' refugees viewed their social belonging and identity in relation to other Syrian refugees and members of the host community in Germany.

By looking at the relationship between representations on the one hand and experiences of a subset of a refugee population on the other hand does not imply causation (i.e. that representations 'cause' specific experiences) but established connections and correlations. In order to establish that certain actors and modes of representing Syrian refugees in particular ways *causes* religious minorities to experience something is far too simplistic and reductive. Rather, my concern in this analysis relates to what connections can be identified between representations and the experiences of those being described and defined in particular ways. Since

representations are produced in specific historical, political and socio-cultural circumstances, one of its effects is the reifying of certain individuals and experiences while overlooking or marginalising others. Such representations, in turn, *constitute* refugees in particular ways. One of the processes of this research is to show the multi-faceted composition of 'Syrian refugees' in a specific geopolitical space, while identifying their diverse identities, needs, agendas, and experiences.

The multi-method approach in this research, therefore, makes it possible for me to identify, explore, and examine representations of Syrian refugees and the ways in which such representations reflect, describe, define, and constitute religious minority refugees in particular ways. The (real or imagined) experiences of religious minority refugees and the connection with these representations thus becomes a helpful analytical process that reveals limitations, misinformation, and gaps in these representations as well as any accuracies or commonalities between representations and the experiences of those claimed to be represented. Thus, in relation to the terms "refugee" and "minority", I am concerned with how these particular categories come to operate in specific instances in relation to religious identity and its intersection with other conceptions (such as with integration).

Taking the analysis of representation and experiences data together, I cross-read and connected themes where applicable - for instance, where an institutional actor speaks of the irrelevance of religion for their work with refugees and the ways in which refugees spoke of the importance of religion in their life in Berlin. This became a focused exercise with the codes and subcodes, a manual exercise at first, reading and coding and making connections, and then making requests of NVivo to identify patterns and connections. At times this risked doubling up on themes but the two-fold process (manual and then computer-assisted) ensured that I did not miss any key connections and helped confirm the connections I did find.

To conclude, a clarifying statement: an underlying premise of this research is that the ways in which refugees are thought of, written and spoken about - overall, how they are represented - matters for their experiences and the impacts of public discourse,

policy making and practice on or about them (Moore et al. 2012, 2018). However, the constitutive effects of discourse are complex. As Bourdieu (1991: 76) points out, language goes beyond communication; it is also an expression of power - for a discourse cannot exist if it is not "socially acceptable, i.e. heard, believed, and therefore effective within a given state of relations of production and circulation". Given the social reality of human life is also complex, understanding the significance of the discursive framings of a subject and its relation to other cultural, political, and social realities is apt. There is perception, or a way of knowing, about refugees that is often imposed or, at the very least, understood and accepted to be the common, status quo, meaning of the word and their world.[45] The symbolic power (ibid.: 106; van Dijk 2008) of discourse, then, is a focus of the forthcoming discussion chapters.

Challenges and Ethical Considerations of this Research

Access

As mentioned, identifying and accessing respondents, particularly refugee interviewees, was a key challenge of this research. The reasons for this varied - from unwillingness to participate once identified, to not being able to meet prospective respondents because of the closing down of refugee centres or refusal of access by gatekeepers. In order to persevere, I continued to contact the individuals, organisations, and agencies - sometimes offering extra information, asking to speak to someone else who may help, or simply raising questions to clarify why there was resistance to give access or be involved. These responses and interactions were noted in my field diary. Some of the reasons for refusal were time and resource constraints; stating there are no religious minority refugees that they know of; or a view that a focus on 'minorities' is a divisive framing to which they cannot contribute to. A review and analysis of these responses is provided in forthcoming chapters.

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[45] As Bourdieu (1991: 106) explains, a discourse becomes effective when it is perceived (*percipi*) to come from authority. This perception (*percipere*) then becomes the common meaning imposed and understood about the social world.

Despite these challenges of accessing participants, my identity as a Middle Eastern female from a Western educational institution (regardless of my perceived or real religious or national identities) also *helped* facilitate my access to the field. There was a certain degree of trust, or at the very least, an intrigue, in my presence and interest in the subject matter. Indeed, being a student - and not an employee of a humanitarian agency or other organisation - helped lessen any suspicions of my identity or the purpose of my research. This was evident both on the part of organisations and institutional interviewees as well as refugee participants. Nevertheless, the saturation of researchers (whether independent, journalistic, or affiliated with an academic institution) in Germany over the years, particularly in 2016 and 2017, did mean there was a degree of lethargy in actively supporting my sampling objectives. The most successful introductions came from religious leaders or individuals associated with spaces where refugees regularly visited.

Ethical Considerations

The issue of ethics in this research was of significant importance. There are a number of complexities, sensitivities, and dynamics related to refugee-related research in general and in particular, the engagement of refugees in any study. While there is often a default framing of refugees as vulnerable persons, I view refugees as individuals with agency and capacity to speak, choose, and act. Of course, there are a number of issues around the positionality of myself as a research and the politics and power that comes with undertaking research with and about refugees that I am continually reflexive about and reflected regularly on throughout my field research, analysis, and in the process of writing up my findings.

Specifically, I am reflexive about the power dynamics between a Western 'researcher' and refugees who have witnessed violence, persecution and/or experienced trauma and the multiple and difficult realities of living in Germany. Many of the refugees in this study were dealing with complex matters related to their resettlement, including

employment, housing, or other social service related matters. In the field, I had to continually be clear that their participation in the research was not going to directly assist or impact those applications and processes. Therefore, it is not that refugees themselves are vulnerable persons but that each individual may be in a vulnerable situation in which certain aspects of their life may be manipulated, misused or misunderstood in the process of undertaking research.

For these reasons, informed consent formed a critical and central role in the research process. Conscious and deliberate effort was made to obtain informed consent from the refugees themselves by verbally explaining to them the focus and purpose of the research and asking for their participation. I stressed the voluntary nature of their involvement and clarified that I had no role or influence on asylum application processes in Germany or elsewhere and that their non-involvement would not have any consequences for them. I also regularly assured each participant throughout the interview that they can stop the interview at any stage or refuse to answer any question posed. Informed consent was an iterative process (asked before, during, and after the interviews). At the conclusion of each interview, I asked each participant if they still consented to me using the information gathered from the interview and whether they had any concerns about the use or dissemination of the research. By viewing the process in this way and relating to refugees in this way, I understand refugees as active agents. They are not passive individuals, victims, or dependents but conscious individuals who can give consent to share their experiences and perspectives once they are fully informed and aware of what it is they are consenting to, which is the responsibility of myself (as the researcher) to convey.

This research received ethical approval by the UCL Ethics Committee. Each institutional actor interviewee was provided with an information sheet outlining the purpose of the study, its procedure, any risks or benefits, and confidentiality options. This was either emailed to individuals or handed to them in person prior to the interview. For refugee interviews, an information sheet was read out to each participant in the language of their choice before consent was requested to continue.

Finally, at the time of writing, the Syrian conflict is ongoing and its dynamics are frequently changing. What may be applicable at present may have shifted since. Nevertheless, these findings and the data collected have significant implications for both theory and practice in relation to not only Syrian refugees but also other refugees in other contexts where religious and minority identities shape and inform experiences of displacement and resettlement. If these findings are to be used for any policy or practical implements, however, I recognise the need for the data to be re-evaluated carefully in light of the dynamic nature of the Syrian conflict and its consequences.

Use of Interpreters

For the majority of the refugee interviews and for a small number of institutional actor interviews, I had the support of an interpreter (fluent in English, Arabic, and German) - a female graduate student of Egyptian origin. Inevitably, the identity of this interpreter also impacted the ways in which refugees and institutional actors responded to my questions. In only one instance was the interpreter asked about her own religious affiliation and identity. The question was asked by a religious leader at a church in Berlin. After asking the question, the interpreter said she is Muslim and the religious leader showed some hesitancy to continue the interview but then relaxed as the questions continued and the focus of the research was made clear.

Indeed, the identity of the interpreter not only impacted how refugees responded to my questions but also whether they were willing to participate at all. For instance, a number of times I was asked by the refugees "are you Muslim?". On some occasions, it was necessary to deflect the question back to them and ask, "would it matter?" to which the answer was always affirmative. Other researchers have found that religious, ethnic, or political affiliations of interpreters impact what respondents are willing to share (see Itani 2019; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2006). Ignoring or downplaying the role of the interpreter in the interview process would be to place the "credibility,

comprehensibility and consistency" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2006: 311) of the research at risk. Therefore, it was important to select an interpreter who had sufficient training and experience in research contexts, who was willing to understand and be conscious of the nuances and sensitivities of this particular research project.

For that reason, my interpreter had previous experiences in refugee-related research, including with undertaking interviews, and had specific training in interpretation. She was briefed in advance of the research on the different sensitivities and complexities of the research subject and the ethical and confidentiality guidelines of the project. She was requested to read an information sheet and sign a pro forma acknowledging her agreement and willingness to comply. Having some basic knowledge of Arabic myself, at times I identified a few instances where information was passed on vaguely or when I needed clarification on the interpretation. While these moments of interruption are not preferred for a flow of conversation, and as such, I may have lost some data, I am confident that most of the interpretations were accurate and conveyed to me professionally. It also assisted that many of the interviewees had some working knowledge of English, especially conversational English, and were therefore also comfortable in listening to the accuracy of the interpretations given to me. Nevertheless, lacking fluency in Arabic may mean I missed specific cultural cues and linguistic nuances. In order to minimise this effect, my feedback and debriefing session with the interpreter after the interviews assisted in filling in any gaps. I also had each of the taped interviews transcribed *both* in Arabic (when Arabic was spoken) as well as the English interpretation. Any discrepancies between them were identified - either by the interpreter after reviewing the transcript or by myself, where my linguistic fluency allowed - and retranslated where needed. These instances were very few and only on minor matters. Therefore, the overall interviews and interpretations were largely accurate in conveying what was shared.

Conclusion

The category of 'refugee' as a subject of research has been, and continues to be a question of critical inquiry in refugee and forced migration studies, including the limits and dangers of viewing and/or referring to refugees in ahistorical or apolitical terms. This acknowledgement requires adopting an approach to understanding power relations both in the act of researching and writing about refugees. It also requires that, as a researcher, I try to uncover, identify, and give attention to strategies of resistance and struggle by refugees themselves and the ways in which their voices, experiences, identities, and needs are (mis)used, assumed and/or subsumed by others, including researchers. I engage with 'refugees' as a representational analytical category by moving beyond simplistic conceptualisations and paradigms of refugee identities and 'refugeedom' that restrict refugees in subject positions as oppressed, victimised, and helpless. Rather, I recognise the plurality of refugees' names, identities, needs, viewpoints and experiences in my research, which means emphasising heterogeneity in order to recognise the different agencies, accounts, and realities of what it means to be a 'refugee'. Nuance is necessary here, particularly when spaces referring to or speaking about refugees are often filled with generalisations and stereotyping, which Chapter 6 examines in detail. It is from this analytical standpoint that I am able to identify the different but also recurring methods and manners in which refugee identities, needs, and experiences are constructed by particular actors and to begin to understand the reasons for doing so.

By engaging with textual, linguistic and visual representations, I seek to juxtapose the representations of refugees on the one hand with conceptualisations of refugeedom, on the other hand, from the perspective of refugees themselves. As a result, I uncover multiple layers of representations and their implications with and from multiple creators, in particular contesting dehumanising notions of refugees being merely 'masses', framed as 'problems', or 'threats' (Bleiker et al. 2013).

Similarly, 'religion' as a category of inquiry requires critical reflection and a conscious undertaking not to impose conceptions of religion or religious identity titles and names on refugees. For instance, some refugee and institutional actor respondents resisted the label 'religious minority' in the context of Syria and for Syrian refugees by invoking the concept of sameness by virtue of nationality. They said, 'we are all Syrian' and therefore, differences can be ignored (see Chapters 5 and 7 in particular). Yet, I posit that equality is achieved *by* identifying, understanding, and engaging with difference. Demanding the same rights for all requires the recognition of the social, economic, political and historical variations and relations. Therefore, it became readily apparent that religion and religious identity are contested terms in this context - rejected by some, reused and redefined by others, lacking general consensus. However, the desire to avoid difference (religious or otherwise) was not conducive to the aims of this study.

It is not possible to erase transhistorical, cross-cultural and religious variations in refugee relations. For some commentators or observers, there may be no perceived - or desired - difference among the Syrian refugee population. For others, particularly for many refugees themselves, there are socio-historical realities for specific religious groups which cannot be overlooked. As de Lauretis (1988) pointed out, in relation to gender debates but which has equal consideration for other identity markers, one must consider how the 'rights' of an individual can vary with differing social relations that determine the existence of actual individuals. However, research undertakings such as mine also run the risk of locking individuals into subject positions related to religious oppression, victimisation, and marginalisation by using the same labels that created or reflect such conditions.

In subsequent chapters, I further examine these categories and interrogate how these labels can be useful, problematic, limited, or contradicted in different ways. As mentioned, I acknowledge that while religious labels are employed by some Syrian refugees, they are also entirely rejected by others.

Chapter 4: Context Matters

This chapter outlines important historical and contemporary features of the two countries with which this study is concerned; namely, Syria and Germany. While it is not intended to be exhaustive, it offers a cursory survey of the salient features of each context and offers reasons for why they are of significance for the purposes of this study.

Syria: A Sectarian Story?

Refugees are not a category of people without a history (Zaman 2016: 44). Thus, any engagement with refugee issues in this study requires an acknowledgement of their history in order to gain a glimpse into how historical memories travel with them. In this chapter, I provide a brief overview of Syria's history of religious diversity, focusing on changes in forms of governance and the ways in which the rhetoric of sectarianism in particular has predominated discourses on the Syrian conflict.

Debates on the causes of the present Syrian conflict, its major players, and the varied motivations for continuing it are multiple and contested. For the purposes of this study, the role of religion and sectarian politics are particularly contentious themes. Of particular interest to this study is whether using the term 'sectarianism' is helpful, accurate, or constructive in understanding Syrian refugees and their relations with other refugees and/or hosts (see Hurd 2015a).[46] I began researching the Syrian conflict and its consequences in 2013 and inevitably, the nature of it has changed over this time. Yet, a number of conditions remain the same and the historical foundations of the country can offer valuable insights for understanding the various

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[46] By primarily focusing on the history of Syria's religious realities, it will not be possible to exhaust an analysis of other features of the creation and dynamics of the Syrian state. For further, in-depth accounts of its history, particularly from the end of the Ottoman empire to the start of the 2011 conflict, see Chatty (2018), Lesch (2019), and van Dam (2017).

forces and outcomes of the conflict, such as the international displacement of Syrians.

Since 1963, and despite the past eight years of violence and conflict in Syria, the Syrian Ba'athist regime (also referred to as the 'Assad regime')[47] continues to rule the Syrian Arab Republic. Syria has since been described by many names - including as a police state (Kahf 2013); a *mukhabarat* (intelligence) state (Lesch, 2012; Rathmell 1996); or as a feared state (Ajami 2012).

Scholars on the history and politics of Syria often suggest that the Ba'athists have maintained over two generations of authoritarian control primarily on the basis of coercion and neopatrimonialism (see Hinnebusch 1990; Perthes 1995; van Dam 2017).[48] Indeed, over the decades, the Ba'athist party has consolidated and sustained its regime control through various internal conflicts and external threats. In particular, security force has been a common tool of the Ba'athist regime, used to justify stability and protection in the country. Whether the threats to its national security have been real or perceived (McHugo 2014), the narrative of force for protection has been a core rhetoric to justify extreme control. Indeed, descriptions on regime rule in Syria often focus on security, intelligence services, the military, control, or the presence (or perception of) internal and external threats (van Dam 2017). This emphasis on control in Syria's governance structure is largely justified - for example, according to Lesch (2012), by 2011 there was one intelligence office for approximately every 240 Syrians and over fifteen security branches across Syria. The use of security and military apparatuses has been core to Syrian governance for decades. Indeed, when uprisings started in Syria in March 2011, the government immediately reacted violently to peaceful protests, drawing on its military strength.

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[47] The 'Assad regime' is regularly referred to because the Ba'athist regime rule has been under Hafiz al-Assad from 1970 to 2000 and now his son, Bashar al-Assad is ruling Syria from 2000 to the present day.

[48] The term 'neopatrimonialism' refers to systems of political and social hierarchy where state resources are used to secure the loyalty of the general population, thereby entrenching corruption in the distribution of those resources (Beekers and van Gool 2012).

Yet, ideational mechanisms are also a key contributor to assisting the survival of the Assad regime (Cooke, 2007; Khatib, 2013; Magout 2012) and the subtlety and mundanity of state control must also be acknowledged if its effects are to be better understood. From authoritarian educational practices at schools to the dominance of national identity narratives in news reports, ideational control is insidiously powerful. Regime control in Syria is not always overt but also subtle and the ways in which fear and mistrust have been mobilised give insight into the ways in which national and religious identities became manipulated and contested as the Syrian conflict ensued.

Most pertinent to this study is the ways in which religious and sectarian identities (often used synonymously) shaped, influenced, and manipulated state support or dissension. Political scientists have long argued that dividing people on the basis of identity allows regimes to rise to and maintain power and offers justification for population control through fear (Josua and Edel 2015). Indeed, as the conflict in 2011 proliferated, particularist loyalties and group identities became increasingly prominent. From regional, sectarian and tribal affiliations to familial groups, division among the diversity of Syria played a central role in destabilising the country (Phillips 2015).

Identity Control as Population Control

As the peaceful protests in 2011 were met with violence to quell them, Syria soon descended into a brutal conflict and particularist loyalties and group attachments, especially sectarianism, came to play a central role. Any conception that there is - or has ever been - a single, unified Syrian identity since Syria's independence from France in 1946 has been tested. From regional to sectarian ties, divisions have abounded, and been mobilised and manipulated by both state and non-state actors. Its historical antecedents can be traced to the time of the French mandate, when Syrian land was divided into several states formed across group lines, producing a

fragmented Syrian society: Aleppo and Damascus as rival cities, a Druze state and Alawite state for 'religious minorities', and the autonomous areas of Jazira and Alexandretta mostly for ethnic Kurds and Turks (McHugo 2014; White 2011). Rather than aligning with a single 'Syrian' identity, then, Syrians' primary loyalty is arguably sub-national.[49]

In terms of religious groups, demographically, Sunni Muslims make up the majority of the Syrian population (approximately 75%) and Alawites account for the majority of the minority population (approximately 12-13%) (Phillips 2015). Alawites have retained influence in Syria through the regime, despite having been oppressed for centuries before the French mandate (Ibid.). As mentioned, other religious minorities include Druze, Ismailis, Yazidis, Zaydis, Twelvers, and Christians but there are no official statistics on other minorities, such as Jews, Bahá'ís, or non-religionists (Minority Rights Group International 2018). According to McHugo (2014), the majority of religious minorities live in the countryside and Sunnis live in cities such as Aleppo and Homs. However, during the Assad regime, the gradual migration of minorities to bigger cities became commonplace (Ibid.).

Historically, Bashar al-Assad has repressed any form of dissent in Syria, regardless of the ethnic, religious, or sectarian background of an individual, community, or group. Presumably, Assad has provided protection to minorities; however, it is important to compare language of minority rights in Syria from early in the conflict in 2011 (for example, Rafizadeh 2011) with more recent analyses (ie. Al-Haj Saleh 2019; Oueis 2019). In 2011, there was a common state rhetoric that while minorities may oppose Al-Assad's socio-political policies, under his rule they can freely live and practice their faith and that there is no guarantee that another ruler would protect religious minorities. Yet, since 2011, a number of critics and political analysts on Syria have argued that the narrative of tolerance and religious minority protection was and continues to be a political strategy. The aim of the narrative of

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[49] The ways in which a monolithic 'Syrian' identity are viewed, understood, negotiated, and recast are explored in detail in Chapter 5 on contesting the minority label.

'Assad being a protector of minorities' is to maintain power that has been carefully crafted since the 1970s, reinforcing colonial powers in Syria (Al-Haj Saleh 2019).

In Chapter 5, I outline how the realities of competing and multiple ethnic, national, and religious narratives in Syria lay the context for the challenges faced by Syrian 'religious minority' refugees in Germany. For example, none of the people I interviewed identified simply as "Syrian". One of the results of a conflict conflating religious terms in political, sectarian language has been a continuing differentiation of "Syrian" into multiple but *conflicting* identities.

This short account of Syrian history and its contemporary realities reflects the malleability of identity and communal memory over time. As this thesis shows, being a 'Syrian' has radically different meanings according to the political and social milieu. For some, being Syrian refers to a geographical location - the country of residence and/or birth. For others, it is a matter vigorously debated according to religious, political, or socio-historical considerations. Within these, there are class differences across all categories that can create hierarchies within and among different political, ethnic, and religious groups.

With this context in mind, it is possible to examine the particularities of Syrian religious identities in a forced migration setting. In particular, how religious and sectarian identities in the history and political practices of a country can help explain the myriad ways that diverse Syrians view themselves and others within and outside specific communities (see Chapters 5 and 7). And, as will be explored in Chapter 8, this includes how "Germanness" is viewed and its relation to Syrian refugees as they situate themselves within the spectrum of identities (including religions, ethnicities, and nationalities), particularly within a post-9/11 context. The next section further outlines and offers a justification for choosing Germany as the field site to undertake this study by examining its historical and contemporary engagement with and experiences of refugees.

"The Second Fall of the Wall"? Germany's Historical and Contemporary Refugee Policies, Practices, and Realities

What follows is a summary of Germany's responses to the arrival, reception, and 'integration' of (forced and other) migrants, including a contemporary review of Germany's political and social responses to Syrian refugees, particularly since 2015.

Across European states, refugee policies and the openness of borders have fluctuated (sometimes dramatically) since the beginning of the Syrian conflict. While some countries, such as Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary have regularly advanced exclusionary refugee and asylum policies, Germany has largely promoted open border policies since 2011 until increasing public and political pressures shifted to tighter policies in 2018. To date, Germany has hosted the largest number of Syrian refugees in Europe (UNHCR 2019), resulting in a number of complex issues related to social belonging, cultural and national identities, and border politics. These include how to view, respond to and engage with diverse religious identities, beliefs, experiences and practices of refugees in Germany. As a theme of heated political debate and dynamic policy responses, it requires specific and in-depth academic and scholarly attention (Eghdamian 2018).

A wide range of data sources have attempted to capture socio-demographic and economic details on asylum-seekers and refugees in Germany. However, as the situation in Germany continually changes, there has been an overall lack of systematic collection of data, with final numbers often being released after a long time lag (Juran and Broer 2017). As of July 2017, Germany is the eighth largest refugee hosting country in the world (UNHCR 2018)[50] as well as being the primary

[50] The top 7 countries include Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Jordan (UNHCR 2018).

country of destination in Europe for asylum-seekers (Juran and Broer 2017). This factor alone positions Germany as a site of complex challenges and nuanced issues as they relate to refugee-host relations as well as refugee-refugee dynamics.

It is estimated that between 2015 and 2016, Germany's refugee population doubled (Ibid.) to 1.3 million people by the end of 2016 (UNHCR 2018).[51] This increase resulted from a rise in the number of people crossing the Mediterranean Sea, many from Syria, risking their lives in search for safety and protection.[52] The number of refugees arriving in Europe overall reduced substantially in 2016 after the European Union made a controversial deal with Turkey (hereafter, 'the EU-Turkey deal'), which included detaining people arriving on Greek Islands and threatening their deportation.[53] For many individuals, crossing the Aegean Sea was the primary route to reach Germany. Although the numbers arriving into Europe reduced after the EU-Turkey deal, the number of people who died making the journey across the Mediterranean Sea was the highest in 2016, with more than 5,000 people having died by drowning, fuel inhalation or suffocation in overcrowded and unsafe boats (Dearden 2017).

In a report outlining the urban concentration of refugees in Germany, it is briefly noted that cities may be hubs where pre-existing networks of individuals with the same religious affiliation gather (see Katz 2016: 3). The report goes on to examine the

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[51] As of 2016, Germany has received the largest number of individual asylum applications in the world (722,400 claims), including the highest number of asylum applications by unaccompanied or separated children (35,900 most of whom were Afghans, and Syrians) (UNHCR 2018). The largest number of asylum claims were made by people from Syria (266, 300) - six times the number received in 2014 (Ibid.). Although Germany also made the largest number of substantive decisions of any country in 2016 (639,000), asylum claims in recent years outpaced the capacity to process decisions, leading to an increase in the asylum-seeker population (Ibid.: 45).

[52] At the end of 2015, there were 316,100 refugees in Germany and by 2016, the number rose to 669,500. In 2016, most refugees were from Syria (375,100), while other countries of origin included Iraq (86,000), Afghanistan (46,300), Eritrea (30,000), the Islamic Republic of Iran (22,900), and Turkey (19,100) (UNHCR 2018: 15).

[53] From 18 March 2016, the 28 EU heads of state made an agreement with Turkey to allow Greece to return to Turkey "all new irregular migrants" arriving after 20 March 2016 (Collett 2016). In exchange, EU member states will increase resettlement of Syrian refugees residing in Turkey. The deal initially included prioritising the acceleration of visa liberalisation for Turkish nationals and an increase in financial support to Turkey - initially €3 billion. The deal has been met with opposition and continues to be controversial and contested. Nevertheless, movements of people across the Aegean Sea continue and there has not been a stop in human-traffickers and smugglers, and people are continuing to die while making the journey (Dearden 2017).

long-term integration questions and challenges that arise as refugees are settled in large cities and raises the following question for further research: "how can cities and other municipalities avoid repeating patterns of segregation and the additional challenges that such patterns present?" (Katz 2016: 15). Segregated urban neighbourhoods (both spatially and in terms of opportunities) have long been sites of inequality and problems related to education, language, economic opportunities, and social capital (Ibid.: 16). Although the report does not focus on the question of religious identity, it does raise the question whether access to faith-based communities offers support for cultural and religious diversity in cities (Ibid.).

The realities of these findings and the implications of such segregation among and between refugees in urban centres in Germany is yet to be fully explored in relation to *religious identity*. Studies have been conducted on the role of economic status, educational backgrounds, and national and ethnic identities determining where migrants and refugees settle (see for example, Teltemann et al. 2015). The specific role of religion, religious identities, and religious experiences, including that of religious prejudices, however, have not been deeply examined.

Later in this chapter, I note the history of and experiences with Turkish immigrants in Germany, which offer insights into Germany's contemporary approach towards asylum seekers and refugees. Nevertheless, significant differences between the experiences of Turkish immigrants and contemporary responses to asylum seekers and refugees must be noted at the outset. Germany is a party to the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees and the 1967 Protocol,[54] and is within the jurisdiction of the Common European Asylum System - a system in place to assist the equal distribution of responsibility for and care of asylum-seekers in the EU. Additionally and significantly, Germany's asylum system is also enshrined in Article 16a of the Basic Law in the German constitution, which outlines the right to seek and enjoy asylum and assures the commitment of the German Republic to European Communities, the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and the

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[54] The 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol outline what constitutes a refugee and what rights states must provide to refugees.

Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Beyond simply ratifying or signing onto international conventions, Germany's constitutionalisation of the right to asylum is "uniquely generous" (Klusmeyer and Papademetriou 2009: 133).

In accordance with customary international law and the principle of non-refoulement, Germany must not return refugees to a territory where they would be at risk (UNHCR 1997). Further, it is obliged to facilitate the assimilation and naturalisation of refugees and to make every effort to expedite naturalisation proceedings. Thus, in addition to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, including provisions for the basic needs of employment, welfare, and education, it also can be understood to promote the civic inclusion of refugees through citizenship. Overriding the EU Dublin III Agreement requiring refugees to apply for asylum from the first EU country they entered,[55] in 2015, Germany decided to open its borders to refugees who wanted to enter the country alongside an integration policy for newcomers.

The Germany of 2015 with its apparent open doors policy announced by Chancellor Merkel has been in turmoil in subsequent years, shifting and changing. In 2017 and 2018 in particular, German politicians have been arguing for tougher border and migration control policies for Germany, resulting in a rise in deportations and stricter processing of asylum claims (Reuters 2018). For some German politicians, receiving credit for tougher borders has become a popularity contest. In July 2018, German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer claimed the increase in deportations of denied asylum-seekers was his doing and went on to state that 69 Afghans had been deported on his 69th birthday (Ibid.). This rhetoric remains in sharp contrast to Merkel's own position, continually reminding the public never to forget that this so-called 'refugee crisis' is not about faceless numbers but about people (Ibid.).

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[55] The Dublin Agreement stipulates which European State is responsible for an asylum claim and seeks to ensure that each application entered in the Dublin area is processed by one state only (Juran and Broer 2017). See Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council 2013. In 2015, the German Office for Migration and Refugees suspended the Dublin regulations for asylum-seekers from Syria, primarily to accelerate the asylum process based on humanitarian grounds (Juran and Broer 2017: 150).

The 1951 Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees explicitly compels states to facilitate the assimilation and naturalisation of refugees. The terms 'assimilation' and 'naturalisation' are related to access to citizenship, which impacts views on refugee 'integration' (Lewicki 2014). For many asylum seekers and refugees in Germany, citizenship is either impossible or a distant possibility. As argued, integration is better understood in more complex, multifaceted ways. As Funk (2016) explains, Germany's refugee policy adopted a simultaneous 'integration' and 'welcome' politics. That is, while refugees are welcomed to the country, they are expected to integrate into German culture, values, and way of life.[56] Shifts and tensions between welcome and rejection of asylum seekers and refugees increased as large numbers of asylum seekers arrived in Germany, particularly in 2015. Across Europe, state leaders began debating, pushing for and in many cases, shifting policies from legal protections to asylum seekers towards finding ways to prevent them from coming into their territories in the first place. Although it can be argued that it was the number of arrivals that placed this pressure and resulted in shifts in refugee policies, one cannot overlook or underestimate the qualitative features of these arrivals in shaping policy responses and in relation to their identities.

When responses to refugees become conflated with problems of controlling illegal migration (Klusmeyer and Papademetriou 2009), discourses on refugees and asylum seekers in Germany changed. Asylum seekers have been increasingly framed as parasites, cheaters; and refugees as illegitimate economic migrants or "pseudo-applicants" (Mushaben 2008 : 128). Whilst seeking to delimit the arrival of asylum-seekers and refugees, there have also been controversies in some European states, including Germany, about whether or how to prioritise refugees on the basis of religion. In 2008, Germany considered prioritising Iraqi refugees who suffered religious persecution with a specific focus on Christian Iraqis, emphasising their

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[56] The 'Integration Law' was passed in 2016. In addition to requiring refugees to learn the German language, it also permits refugees (including those living in collective housing) to work. Getting businesses to hire refugees, however, is a difficult task. While pleas can be made through moral persuasion, there is no legal obligation for employers or businesses to give work to refugees.

particular vulnerability (Perrin and McNamara 2013). However, it became increasingly clear that for some EU Member States, such as Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, the desire to choose Christians over - or instead of - Muslims was motivated by limiting "the reception of a culture deemed to be a threat to the main culture of the country" (Ibid.: 29). Countries soon began to discuss the "integration potential" in the selection process of refugees by virtue of whether their religious identity makes them potential threats to their societies. In addition to culture, integration potential has long been measured by different criteria, such as language qualifications, education and work experience, and age (Ager and Strang 2008, 2010, 2019). In some cases, integration potential criteria was explicit, such as in the case of a formal request made by the Dutch Minister for Immigration and Asylum to the UNHCR to "select higher profile refugees such as human rights activists and academics" (Perrin and McNamara 2013: 28). Rather than drawing on the language of humanitarianism, focus shifted to cultural compatibility and securitisation (Klusmeyer and Papademetriou 2009).

Overall, Germany's refugee policy fulfils a moral, humanitarian duty to permit refugees to enter the country followed by a positive duty to provide the conditions needed for refugees to live a dignified life (Funk 2016: 291). However, this welcome policy has not been unconditional. On 7 July 2016, a so-called 'integration law' was passed, outlining clear expectations of and obligations imposed on refugees to adhere to specific forms of integration. In other words, in order to be truly 'welcomed', refugees must satisfy certain conditions, including learning German, children attending German schools, and adopting "German values" in order to successfully orientate into their "new cultural environment" (see Council of Europe 2016: 5).[57] Some scholars argue that these integration policies prevent refugees from reclaiming self-sufficiency and dignity (see Gemähling 2016). Indeed, although Germany has been regularly hailed as a model of solidarity and humanity in its

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[57] For instance, the official "language and civic" programme offered by the German state includes 600 hours of German language training as well as 100 hours of instruction on "German values, German history and the constitution" (Djahangard et al. 2017: 1).

response to Syrian refugees, it can be argued that the realities of its laws, policies and practices on migration and asylum overlook daily experiences (Ibid.).

"Ja, Wir Schaffen Das!" (Yes, We Can!): Rising Social and Political Tensions in Germany

Germany's urban centres have long been considered to be open to foreigners but it is increasingly experiencing a significant rise in the number of xenophobic attacks targeting asylum seekers and refugee shelters (Brenner 2015). For instance, in 2014 there were 170 attacks damaging or destroying newly renovated shelters in Germany, but in the first six months of 2015 alone there were 150 arson or other attacks (Kirschbaum 2015). In 2016, a website called *Mut gegen rechte Gewalt* (Courage against Right-Wing Violence) reported 595 attacks on asylum seekers, 123 arson attacks on accommodation for asylum seekers and refugees, 3,056 further acts of violence, and the injury of 434 asylum seekers from arson or physical attacks. By 2017, another 1,938 attacks on asylum seeker or their accommodation occurred (see also Bock and Macdonald 2019: 7).

Concerns over competition for state resources, fears of falling property values, and a rise in crime including fears over terrorism further fuelled anti-immigrant views (Siegfried 2015; Dearden 2017). Indeed, the intermingling between (im)migration and security issues has been a central focus in many political and social debates in Germany. In turn, electoral support for the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD) party increased. After the sexual assaults against women on New Year's Eve in 2015, four violent attacks by refugees in 2016, and other non-terrorist acts, debates about refugees, integration, and threats to German society have continued to intensify. Concerns over and fears of Islam and Muslims, in particular, have resulted in targeted verbal and physical attacks towards (perceived) Muslim

asylum seekers, primarily in East Germany (Bock and Macdonald 2019).[58] As a result, some commentators argue that not only was Germany unprepared to accept so many new arrivals, but that such unpreparedness will have generational effects (Funk 2016).

While the rise of right-wing extremists and anti-immigrant sentiments continue,[59] many media commentators and scholars have noted the increase in expressions of compassion and hospitality for refugees in Germany (see Kirschbaum 2015). A number of initiatives, particularly at the grassroots and in urban centres (primarily, Berlin), have been initiated to welcome refugees to the city.[60] German civil society volunteered, organised, and created a number of efforts to assist refugees. These acts of solidarity have been undertaken in cities and towns, in urban and suburban areas, by young and old, and across religious affiliations (Funk 2016).

For the purpose of this research, the social and political response to refugee religious identities are of particular interest. In order to promote more hopsitable and welcoming responses to refugees, some commentators have mentioned the need to dispel myths and stereotypes about Muslims, Islam, and Muslim refugees in Germany (Funk 2016). However, the experiences of religious minorities (here, non-Muslim Syrian refugees) often fall outside this focus. Indeed, such views that Islam is a danger to Europe can result in thinking about integration in very specific (and false) terms, including disassociating other Syrian refugees from Muslim Syrian refugees. For instance, Syrian Christians and Europeans may be assembled into one

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[58] As Bock and Macdonald (2019: 7) point out, East Germany has only 16 million inhabitants and despite representing less than 20 per cent of the population, it witnessed 43 per cent of acts of anti-asylum seeker and xenophobic violence.

[59] For example, PEGIDA, which stands for Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the West, started in October 2014 in Dresden. It has claimed responsibility for numerous attacks on foreigners and refugee housing (see Siegfried 2015). Although some of its initial supporters identified as neo-Nazis, Germany's policy on welcoming refugees resulted in an increase in support from other members of the public (Ibid.). The AfD (Alternative for Deutschland) party too has witnessed a growth in support with almost 15% or more votes in some German states (Funk 2016).

[60] See for example, 'Refugees Welcome', which is an initiative started in 2014 to encourage Germans to offer rooms in shared flats to asylum seekers and refugees. See https://www.refugees-welcome.net. Last Accessed 2 August 2019. Another initiative, 'Sharehaus Refugio' started in 2015 and houses tens of refugees and migrants from various countries with Germans in one building. Together, they develop social enterprises and organise neighbourhood events. See https://refugio.berlin. Last Accessed 2 August 2019.

category (Schmoller 2016: 15) and assumed to be more 'us' than 'them'. This is problematic for a number of reasons, particularly as it suspects one group of people as being easier to integrate and therefore, more deserving of certain forms of assistance, protection, and 'welcome'. Such narratives, assumptions, and their implications are explored in this research - the ways in which groups of people are deemed 'acceptable' refugees based on their abilities to assimilate into specific European ways of life (Caldwell 2015).

Why Berlin?

Berlin, Germany's largest city, was chosen as the site of research due to both its historical and contemporary relations with (forced and voluntary) migration and its experiences with division, diversity, and social change. Since the end of the Second World War, Berlin has experienced a range of migration flows. These include the arrival of so-called 'guest workers' (*Gastarbeiter*) from Southern Europe and Turkey to West Berlin between 1955 and 1973; 'contract workers' (*Vertragsarbeiter*) from Vietnam and elsewhere[61] to East Berlin in the 1980s; the arrival of Jewish immigrants from the 1980s, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, particularly from Russia and the Ukraine; and the rise and fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 (Misra 2018).[62] There are accounts of how the everyday lives of East Germans were largely unaffected by many of labour migrants as they were secluded and isolated by the state, worked in shifts, and largely kept to themselves (Bock and Macdonald 2019). Due to German citizenship laws, these migrants struggled for political representation. As Bock and Macdonald (2019: 16, emphasis added) explain, by the late 1970s,

the growing association of immigrant presence with social challenges marked

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[61] In most cases, 'contract workers' were in self-contained accommodation and segregated from the general population. In addition to the Vietnamese, migrants from Poland, Mozambique, and the Soviet Union also arrived in 1989 (Bock and Macdonald 2019).

[62] As Bock and Macdonald (2019) further explain, regulations facilitating the arrival of guest workers for industry and agriculture were designed to treat them as temporary migrants, not settled migrants. Indeed, the term *Gastarbeiter* gives insight into political reasoning at the time that guest workers have limited identities and are not citizens with rights. This goes some way to explaining why they were also accommodated in appallingly filthy and confined conditions (see Herbert 2001).

a negative public discourse on *Überfremdung*, literally 'over-foreignisation' or 'over-alienisation' - a term suggesting that a large number of *foreigners could threaten social harmony and native identity*.

It was from this point that the concept of 'integration' became a focus of state concerns with (im)migration and marked a conscious change from migrants returning to migrants assimilating into German society. As Cochrane (2013: 214) describes, "Berlin was a divided city for more than 40 years after 1945, and has, if anything, become overfamiliar as an iconic representation of division—the paradigmatic divided city."

Of the 3.5 million inhabitants of Berlin, approximately 1 million have a migration background (Misra 2018). Since 2015, Berlin has been the receiver of the largest number of asylum-seekers in Germany (Katz et al. 2016). In November 2015 alone, for instance, Berlin received nearly 10,000 refugees, the peak month of that year, and the city hosts the largest number of refugees per square kilometre in Germany (Ibid.).

Indeed, by accepting large numbers of asylum-seekers in Berlin, the city has stepped up to the demands and requirements of hospitality and welcome (Steinmeier 2016) and, as well be explored further, the multiplicities and complexities of the terms 'welcome' and 'hospitality'. For instance, socially and politically, the large number of arrivals polarised the inhabitants of Berlin. On the one hand, Berlin witnessed the proliferation of local efforts to welcome and support new arrivals through the creation and implementation of civil society activities that included language classes, job skills training, and support with accommodation (Misra 2018). On the other hand, Berlin also witnessed a rise in support for right-wing, anti-immigration movements such as the Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the West (PEGIDA) and the growing establishment of the Alternative for Deutschland (AfD) political party (Ibid.). Thus, despite assumptions that Berlin is a city that best embodies liberal values and practices and would be the site of overt and sustained

hospitality for refugees (Czymara and Schmidt-Catran 2017), the realities of refugee 'integration' in Berlin is complex and contested.

Berlin is also a key political city. It is the site of the German Parliament (the *Reichstag*) and the Federal Council of Germany (the *Bundesrat*) - the main governing bodies for federal action in Germany. Therefore, in addition to a site of civil action, Berlin is a city of state-level engagement with the so-called "refugee crisis". Concerns around homelessness, poverty, and unemployment have helped fuel anti-immigrant narratives which saw AfD gain parts of East Germany in 2016 while the immigrant-friendly Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) or Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU) lost ground (Misra 2018). With these dynamics of Berlin taken together, I chose Berlin as the sole site for this study as it strongly reflects the nature and reality of (forced) migration debates and practices in Germany.

Religion in German Immigration Policies

Before proceeding to the analytical chapters of this study, it is apt to outline references to and engagements with 'religion' and 'religious identity' in German immigration and 'integration' policies. This includes the extent to which this nexus between religion and 'integration' of refugees has been a focus of policy and public research and public reporting in Germany.

Germany's policies and responses to the arrival of Syrian refugees have specifically avoided referring to religion or preferences of specific religious groups over others. In contrast, some European state actors such as in Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic, have used religion and religious identities to justify restrictive immigration policies and border controls (Morillas et al. 2015). More than ever before, Germany is experiencing the realities of diversity in public life, including religious diversity. Indeed, as some scholars have pointed out (see Chapter 2), immigration challenges

the privatisation of religion by bringing diversity into the public sphere (Benton and Nielson 2013; Bock and Macdonald 2019). In particular, how to respond to and engage with the collective exercise of religion is a key challenge for Germany. Muslim integration in particular "gets to the heart of public anxieties about immigration" (Benton and Nielson 2013.: 1). The notion that Muslims threaten Germany's *Leitkultur* (dominant culture)[63] has been a core critique of Germany's refugee policy by dissenters who either want to limit (or entirely halt) the number of refugees being accepted to the country or who advocate selectivity about the kinds of refugees entering the country (see Ott 2016: 43; Funk 2016). Concerns over social norms, particularly in relation to gender, reflect wider public fears, anxiety, and insecurity about what a cultural change would mean for German society (Funk 2016: 294).

In contrast to my research findings in the context of Jordan that there were no public reports on the religious diversity of Syrian refugees (see Eghdamian 2016), there have been some cursory references to 'religion' and 'religious identity' in public reports on Syrian refugees in Germany. Although these have been predominantly about or in reference to Muslim refugee identities, some mention of religious minorities has been made. For instance, on 20 July 2016, the Institute for Employment Research (Institut für Arbeitsmarkt - und Berufsforschung - IAB), which is the research department of the Federal Employment Agency, released a qualitative survey on 123 refugee experiences. Reference to "religious minorities" was made, albeit briefly, on page 28 as follows:

> Nobody feels limited or hindered in the way he practices his/her religion. In isolated cases the need for more information were expressed as to where (geographically) one could find a mosque or a church of the respective religious affiliation. On the other hand, many knew that and where a mosque or a specific church was but had no intention to visit any. Not much is really

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[63] Although this term is commonly referred to indicate dominant 'German' values, it was first introduced in 1996 by a Syrian-born German political scientist, Bassam Tibi, in order to provide a term in which "a shared set of values to provide cohesion in a diversifying society" can be understood (Bock and Macdonald 2019: 24). More recently, during the 2017 general elections in Germany, the term was frequently used to refer to and understand the support given to the anti-immigration party AfD (Ibid.).

necessary to exercise one's religion, it is mostly practiced alone (quoted in Open Doors Germany 2016: 11).

References to tensions, discrimination or conflicts of, between or among refugees are generally made with regards to the persecution of Christian refugees by Muslims in refugee centres, with a specific focus on converts (see Peters 2015). Reactions to reports of religious tensions and attacks among refugees often posit that the best solution is to separate Christian and Muslim refugees in terms of housing (Peters 2015; Open Doors Germany 2016). For instance, an Afghan man in a refugee centre in Germany tore pages from a Quran and threw them in a toilet and twenty people tried to lynch him. In response, authorities proposed a solution to separate refugees by ethnicity and religious identity (BBC 2015). Another report found that Salafists were entering refugee housing in attempts to recruit residents, which has been a problem that many refugees have been long aware of but that administrators, workers, and volunteers ignore (Funk 2016).

Finally, in October 2016, the results of a survey by Open Doors, a non-denominational Christian charity, was released, which looked specifically at religiously motivated attacks against and protection needs of religious minorities in Germany (Open Doors Germany 2016). The report revealed that discrimination against religious minority refugees and experiences of religious persecution exist in Germany, particularly but not exclusively in Berlin and Brandenburg. Refugees participating in the survey were mostly from Iran (304 individuals) and Syria (263 individuals). The survey was limited in that it only focused on the situation of Christian refugees in Germany refugee shelters, did not undertake interviews, and focused solely on religiously motivated attacks.[64] This thesis develops a more nuanced analysis of 'religious minority' refugee experiences by including Christian *and* non-Christian refugees in its framework and examines multiple ways in which 'religious identity' informs experiences of displacement, including but not limited to religiously motivated attacks and violence.

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[64] However, ten Yazidi refugees also participated in the survey and were evaluated separately. It was found that their experiences were similar to that of the Christian refugees (Open Doors Germany 2016: 5).

Concluding Remarks on Germany

Broadly speaking, Germany's response to refugees, its integration programmes, and the multiple ways in which refugees are portrayed, understood, and engaged with by the media, government, civil society organisations, and others are continually changing. Indeed, as the numbers of new arrivals decrease, there is a need to take into account different social and factors challenges in Germany. In particular, there is growing public discontent and social tensions with and against refugees with public hostility towards Syrian refugees in particular rising. The implications this has for multi-religious toleration, religious minority experiences, and engagements with religion more broadly needs to be further explored and understood. Understanding the ways in which Germany continues to encounter, respond to, understand, and engage with the religious heterogeneity of its refugee populations is required. Indeed, religious identities, values, experiences, and practices and their relationship to displacement are not static but relational.

Therefore, it is both timely and urgent to explore the relationship between 'religious identity' and experiences of and responses to Syrian refugees in Germany. This is particularly so since, as explained above, there are deepening anxieties about immigration across Europe and increasingly, in Germany (Eghdamian 2018). Realities of fear of 'the other' and the way(s) in which religion is (mis)understood in these contexts and the implications this has for diverse religious populations among refugees needs to be explored. Furthermore, understanding and recasting common misassumptions about religion and integration in the context of immigration is necessary in order to avoid further hostilities, tensions and persecutions against and among refugees. Indeed, how the debates on religion and refugees in Germany continue will greatly determine if belonging or non-belonging will shape future relations between diverse populations in that country. It is to these and other questions that the following four chapters examine in detail, in conversation with the broader debates outlined in Chapter 2.

Chapter 5: Constructing and Contesting the 'Minority' Label

Introduction

> I have been asked a lot of questions while in Berlin but no one has ever asked me about my religion. I am surprised you are asking these questions but it is good you are doing it. It matters to me. But even if no one talks about it, it matters. The fact that I am Christian is important to my way of my life. It is even why I am here.
>
> (An excerpt from the beginning of my interview with a Syrian Christian refugee male in a cafe in Berlin)

The diverse identities, needs, and experiences of religious minorities are largely neglected in refugee and forced migration studies. When and if referred to, the 'minority' label is primarily used to reference Muslim minorities in non-Muslim majority contexts (see Colic-Peisker 2005; Shoeb, Weinstein and Halpern 2007; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh 2010; Fábos 2011; Wright 2014b, cf. Saunders et al 2016). The term itself is rarely problematised, however, and when referenced in academic literature, is often assumed to be a fixed category reflecting a 'true' identity of a homogenous and bounded group (for an exception see Saunders et al 2016: 16-17).[65] One of the core contributions of this thesis is to question this and other assumptions attached to the 'minority' label by engaging with and incorporating non-Muslim minority identities and experiences into the framework and understanding of 'religious minority' refugees outside of, but also at times in relation to, Islam and Muslims. This entails including and exploring inter-group

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[65] A significant number of studies have also problematised the 'minority' label in relation to other, non-religious, identities, including gender (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014; Wright 2014), sexual orientation (Lee and Brotman 2011; Mole 2011, 2018), and ethnicity (Hein 1994).

minority identities, realities, and dynamics. Given that the presence and impacts of religious diversity is a sorely under-studied area of inquiry and largely absent from interrogations into religion and 'integration', it is necessary and urgent to undertake such examinations.

The aim of this chapter is to clarify and interrogate why a 'minority' frame is used in this research project and in turn why, I argue, it matters for academic engagement on refugee and forced migration issues more broadly. The following chapters will subsequently underscore how experiences of isolation, accounts of exclusion and prejudices among religious minorities manifest themselves in different - and at times, contradictory - ways throughout processes of 'integration'. However, at the outset, it is important to understand the history of relations between minority (at times, majority) religious groups in Syria, and gain insight from their memories and experiences, which have travelled with them throughout processes of displacement and 'integration'. That is why it is important to note that this 'travelling' also entails reconstruction, contestation, and reconfigurations, rather than a 'factual' and identical transmission across time and space (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, personal communication, 9 May 2019). Indeed, my interviews reveal how specific histories are continually (re)interpreted within a backdrop of renewed and evolving religious relations in different contexts. I argue therefore that failing to understand these histories risks misunderstanding present realities and ramifications, which are then applied in both policy and practice, with very real effects.

The structure of this chapter is at follows. I begin by identifying and tracing the importance and use of the 'minority' label for and by Syrian 'religious minority' refugees when recalling experiences of and life in pre-war Syria. I then highlight the ways in which the label is perceived and applied by Syrian 'religious minority' refugees in relation to contemporary Syria, particularly noting the introduction of narratives of sectarianism when describing post-2011 Syrian life and minority-majority or minority-minority relations. Throughout, I argue that the 'religious minority' label can be mobilised by different actors for quite diverse ends, including advancing notions of solidarity or difference, depending on the context it

is used. Indeed, it will be demonstrated that minority rights and issues in Syria and amongst Syrians are increasingly political. In that vein, the politics of sectarianism in particular has become central to understanding post-2011 Syria, not because the sectarian lens reflects 'true' realities and identities but because of how it is developed, reproduced, and perceived in political and social contexts. Rejecting the label of sectarianism, I rather suggest that the 'minority' label can reflect religious *non-religious* forces or factors. As such, sectarianism is not a priori a religious issue but may more accurately be understood as a political and/or social reality. I posit that the 'minority' label is not only a feature of conflict and for some, a cause of displacement, but that it is also a *response* to conflict and displacement and shapes experiences of resettlement and integration. These responses and experiences of resettlement and integration will be further explored in Chapters 7 (Refugee-Refugee Relations) and 8 (Refugee-Host Relations). In Chapter 8 specifically however, I also examine different ways the 'minority' label is or can be mobilised by and applied to asylum and resettlement processes.

Before proceeding to explore these arguments in detail, it should be noted that the ways in which refugee interviewees in this study narrated their experiences cannot be detached from my identity as a Western researcher. If, for example, I had been a UNHCR official or a political activist from Syria, the answers or specifics of the narratives offered may have shifted or be presented differently (if at all). In particular, I note that all interviewees openly shared both positive and negative experiences with other Syrians (in this chapter) as well as refugees (Chapter 7) and hosts (Chapter 8). It is of some reassurance to me that the interviewees understood that, as a researcher, I was not 'looking' for a particular answer in order to assess the validity of their asylum claims or to determine any of their practical issues for resettlement in Germany. That may go some way in explaining why refugee respondents were willing to share complex accounts of their experiences of majority-minority and minority-minority relations.

Pre-war Syrian Religious Minority-Majority and Minority-Minority Relations: Tales of Culture, History, and Geography

...It is like a theatre. And, as you know, the theatre consists of different parts. Five or six parts, the one theatre play. You, in the West, are looking at the play of the war in Syria from the third or fourth part. But it has a background. An old background...

(An excerpt from an interview with a Druze Syrian refugee male, in his home, during a focus group in Berlin with four other Syrian refugee men from Christian, Druze, and Yazidi backgrounds)

Since 2015, a number of scholars (for example, Schmoller 2016 and Tobin 2018) as well as political and social commentators on Syria (for example, Dajani 2015 and Sluglett 2016) have perpetuated the assumption that religion and 'religious identity' played a significant and *primary* role in group identifications and tensions in pre-war Syria. In contrast, my fieldwork showed that religious identification was less associated with sectarianism or conflict and rather evolved within a broader interplay between culture, history, and geography. This argument also departs from some of the framing of my earlier findings in relation to Syrian 'religious minority' refugee experiences in Jordan (see Eghdamian 2016) as well as other scholarly treatments of Syrian 'sectarian' identities in the context of Jordan (see Tobin 2018). As Zaman (2016: 80) describes, a merely "sectarian narrative is produced in the field of politics, whereas religiosity is located across a number of fields". Each and every context, then, reflects a unique political and social landscape. Sectarianism, then, is not simply a reflection of religion. At times, religion can and does exceed sectarian politics, including in its myriad transcendent and sacred manifestations.

Following Hurd (2015a), rather than using the term sectarianism to describe Syrian relations, I argue it is more apt to examine the complex interplay of social, historical, and political processes in majority-minority as well as minority-minority relations in pre-2011 Syria. Understanding these dynamics outside of sectarian language and framing helps reiterate and underscore the importance of examining specific contexts within which religion and minority-majority and minority-minority relations are evoked, contested, or variously applied. This does not undermine the use and interplay of sectarian language in post-2011 wartime Syria, which will be directly addressed in the next section. What is significant here is identifying how Syrian refugees *themselves* omitted the use of 'sect' or 'sectarian' language to describe pre-war Syria throughout our interviews and focus group discussions. Tales of culture, history, and geography were regularly offered to illustrate how minority-majority and minority-minority relations were experienced around the country. Whether or not these memories accurately reflect 'true' realities, it is clear that language and labels can be selectively and consciously used to describe or impact various social, political, and cultural processes (Wimmer 2008). Indeed, these accounts rupture the notion of a simplistic majority-minority binary in Syria, as inter-religious and multi-religious relations were also expressed to me in interviews in multiple ways, including between and among different minorities. That is why this chapter focuses on refugees' prior experiences and interactions. Their histories are important to trace and understand because, as Zaman (2016: 44) explains,

> ...such testimonies allow religion to be placed alongside other competing and complementary concerns over time. Testimonies are based on memories layered on top of older memories, latticed with collective memories recalled and performed at a point in the here and now.

Recollections of Religious Coexistence and Tolerance

In order to understand the role of 'religious identity' in testimonies of refugee experiences, I first asked refugee participants to recall their lives before the start of

the conflict in 2011. Almost all of the 39 refugees who participated in this study referred to pre-war Syria with great nostalgia. Avoiding subjects of conflict or violence, life as a 'minority' was described as largely "peaceful", "good", and even "heavenly". However, as interviews progressed, glimmerings of discrimination and accounts of religious prejudice were shared. For some, these experiences were "normal" or justified because they were not overtly violent. For others, they give an understanding of the foundation of what was to come when sectarian narratives were mobilised after 2011 to garner support for different sides of the conflict. That is, the diverse forms of structural and epistemic violence (Spivak 1988) which emerged and manifested in contexts of wartime Syria. In this context, such violence may not be overt. Rather, the ways in which frameworks of knowing about 'minorities' are created to legitimise practices of state domination is a form of violence through knowledge - for instance, that Assad is the protector of minorities. The ways in which such epistemic frameworks about what a 'minority' is or is not, particularly in relation to politics, appeared in refugee participants' narratives as explored in detail below.

For the three Druze and two Ismaili women who participated in a focus group, held at the office 'break room' of an NGO providing services and assistance to refugee women in Berlin, religion and minority-majority relations in Syria before 2011 were everyday realities and a largely unproblematic matter. Being a 'minority' meant you lived in a particular neighbourhood or spoke with a particular accent. It was "not a big deal, really" and "part of what makes Syria so beautiful - we are so diverse, people do not see it; our mosaic".

For others, such as a young Druze refugee man interviewed in a cafe in East Berlin, being a minority was a little more complicated.

> I don't remember any times where it would be violent, you know? No fighting because someone is Muslim or Christian, or whatever. But it's also not like we do not know who is who, where they live, what they do, what they can do or not do. Some of us are luckier than others. I come from a family that had land, had a good name, you know? So things were good. But

people still think we [Druze] have tails. Or we love goats. It's not like that makes it easy for me to go and get whatever job I want or live how I want.

This account of a good life playing out against a backdrop of religious prejudices were casually mentioned by others, irrespective of religious affiliation. The experiences of prejudice and discrimination, however subtle, on the basis of religion were readily recounted. For example, being a member of a minority played a significant role in which jobs one could get, the history of land ownership in a family, and the historical residence of a community and their perceived rights to a village or region. In this respect, 'religious minority' refugees experienced and recalled multiple marginalisations (Mole 2018) based on religious identity. As described below, for example, a 'religious minority' may lack or be denied an employment opportunity by virtue of where they were born, and "not for any other reason".

As a Syrian Christian male refugee further explained,

> Oh, we don't really meet with others [from other religions] unless we have to. We live together and it is okay but you can't like, I can't just go and get that job I want because my father doesn't know that man or I am not part of that group. And it's okay, we made it work that way and things were okay. But it's really because you were born here or there. Not for any other reason.

Indeed, most interviews reflected these two contesting and opposing realities about pre-2011 Syria. On the one hand, there was peaceful coexistence with little or no inter-religious conflict - Syria was a place of freedom that overlooked (not necessarily celebrated) its religious diversity. On the other hand, there were clear differences between individuals, families, and communities on the basis of (real or perceived) religious affiliation. Religious membership was often assumed by virtue of one's residence, surname, or accent. Religion and religious diversity was, therefore, a part of everyday life, including where it involved nepotism or experiences of religious discrimination. Yet, because the latter was not overtly violent, or not present in large numbers or regular in occurrence, they were explained as "normal" social relations.

To illustrate, a Syrian Druze refugee woman shared in an interview that before the war, people would not distinguish each other based on religion and they would support different religious practices:

> I grew up in Syria. You wouldn't recognise the Christian from the Alawite from the Sunni. I assure this. You wouldn't even realise the difference in accents. Same accent, same traditional clothes. Even in Homs, it's the same case. During Friday prayer, those who want to pray go to the mosque, and on Sundays those who want to pray, go to church - no one asks.

In the interview, she continually reiterated that Syria was a country that did not differentiate between people from different religions. "This is important for you to know," she reiterated, "that life was good in Syria before; for all people, really".

A common way that some respondents 'proved' the peaceful coexistence of pre-2011 Syrian was by way of giving examples of inter-religious marriages. For example, a middle-aged Syrian Druze refugee woman in the same focus group at the NGO supporting refugee women shared:

> Even in our weddings, we are the same. There are traditions, just like in the rural areas, like in Daraa...but people think in Daraa there are only Sunnis, but in fact Daraa is half Christians, right? [The other focus group participants nodded in agreement] So you see? We have marriages between all people. This is important, that we would marry each other.

Yet, for a young Syrian Druze refugee man, memories of growing up in Al-Suwayda (a predominantly Druze area) recalled very clear distinctions being made between religious groups. He recalls, for example, that differences were made between minorities as early as primary school, during religious instruction classes:

> ...you can see in the society, for example when you go to the school, mainly most of the students were Druze. You have like, let's say around 20 persons were Christian. And here also in the schools because of the religious, like course, because we have this religion course, where we were separated. For

example they say 'now today is the religion course for Christians'. They go to another class and we continue in the same class. So from this moment you can start to think about: okay, you have different groups in the society. At this point, for example, some of the Christian families - mmmm, maybe they were rich enough so they started also to enrol their children in private schools, because in private schools it's more, you know... also they have some private schools just for Christians, so they had their own world. So in order to let another child in the same atmosphere, in the same environment, they would be in the public school. Public school is kind of mixed. So, you see, it was from the beginning, you start to think about: okay, you have different people.

This account shows how the religious differences that were in Syrian society, while subtle, became increasingly overt and applied through different social spaces. Indeed, the mention of private/public education not only sheds light on underlying religious differences, but also how religious affiliation was used to distinguish people on the basis of culture or familial affiliation. It also expresses the ways in which religion and social status were intermingled and the accompanied opportunities (and thus, inequalities) proffered through such statuses.

A number of academic (sociological, historical and political) accounts on pre-2011 Syria, scholars (see Dajani 2015; Dekki 2012; Phillips 2015; Rodenbeck 2012; Schmoller 2016; van Dam 2017) have echoed nostalgic accounts of Syria, including arguing that religious minorities, particularly Syrian Christians, directly benefited under the Assad regime (also see Schmoller 2016). Specifically, there is an assumption that the Assad regime protected minorities from possible majority 'Islamist' attacks as well as being granted political powers, representation, and economic and social opportunities (van Dam 2017). In contrast, my interviewees did not speak about benefits, per se, but about basic comforts and daily coexistence without fear of violence. Indeed, for some, tensions and contentions over religious identity had been there before the war, albeit in more subtle forms. Thus, the notion that the Assad regime was a protector of minorities is arguably accurate at the level of state policy and practice; that is, there was a clear adoption of a policy of religious tolerance. However, for many of my interlocutors, particularly for the Druze and Ismaili refugees interviewed, this tolerance was for the benefit of the *regime*, not for

minorities. And while the threat of an extremist Islamist regime overtaking Assad did not bode well for religious freedom in the country, it was equally not assumed that all was amicable and unified between diverse religious groups beforehand. For example, contention between religious groups pre-war were present in diverse forms, including land grabbing and nepotism in employment, as well as other social and economic restrictions and discrimination that were shared by many respondents.

To illustrate, the same Druze man recalls how these and other inequalities manifested themselves later in life, such as in employment opportunities and political leadership:

> If you are not from this place or you didn't live in this place, maybe you don't know or wouldn't see the difference. But we can still see the same differences in society as you have elsewhere. So for example, my Druze friends were all the time talking about why a Christian would not get this position, for example, in the local community. There are politics too, you know, just the Druze who are controlling the main decisions in the local community like some social leaders. So some people say it's okay, the place certainly belongs to this minority so anyway they will not give it [the job] to somebody that is not from this place.

For this interviewee, the connections between religion and politics in Syria were not always obvious. The notion that "some social leaders" control "the main decisions", which in turn determine the "place" a person (a member of a minority) "belongs" reflects how religion and politics impact social mobility and opportunity. It is an example of epistemic, structural violence and oppression that can be experienced by 'minorities', precisely because it is not 'obvious'. In another account, a young male convert from Islam to Christianity, recalled how people knew what religion you were by virtue of which city you were from and which land your family owned:

> Of course, you have entire families that come from Druze or Christian or Alawite backgrounds and they own entire plots of land and they pass it down to others and it stays that way. Now that does not mean Sunnis do not have land or whatever. Of course they do. But everything before was like,

untouched. Everyone had their place, their protection. They were left to do that as long as they didn't bother anyone else.

This interview further illustrates how experiences of being a 'minority' in pre-war Syria was a personal reflection of intimate interactions and experiences while also always being in relation to others (majority and minority). This reflects a recognition of the institutionalisation of minorityhood - whether through social leadership, land ownership, religious education, or employment opportunities - as well as the mutuality of minority-minority relations through, for example, inter-religious marriages. Similar to the ways in which other identity markers, such as race, gender, or sexual orientation, are situationally defined and (re)produced, it can be seen how religious 'minority' identities too are given meaning through and therefore constructed by exchanges and encounters (with others).

Overall, throughout my interviews and focus group discussions, reflections from pre-war Syria were largely depoliticised. Consistent with the majority of scholarly treatment of religious minorities, refugee interviewees similarly treated 'minorities' as being internally homogenous and externally bounded actors. They 'exist' and are 'fixed' but relate to 'others' in different ways. It is apt to reflect, then, on whether and how these memories of 'being a minority' in Syria and minority-minority and minority-majority relations shifted and evolved after the war in 2011 began. I argue in the following section that the unitary nature of minority identities has been tested since 2011. Further, it is important to understand the way(s) in which 'minority' identities had been produced and reproduced over time, rather than to do away with diversity through another fictive unity: that of a common, Syrian national identity.

When 'Unity' in Theory isn't Enough: Wartime Narratives of Sectarianism and Public, Political Religion Evolving Minority-Majority and Minority-Minority Relations

In addition to scholarship and commentaries positioning sectarianism as a feature of life in pre-2011 Syria (Ismail 2011; Phillips 2015; Rafizadeh 2011), there has also been a commonly-held position that sectarianism has played a significant role in the *causes*, rather than as a *feature*, of the Syrian conflict (see Gause 2014; Ryan 2012; Tobin 2018). As the previous section indicated, I asked respondents whether people with different religious backgrounds lived peacefully *before* the war and the majority agreed that to be the case. However, another careful description of pre-war Syrian relations was offered by a young Syrian Druze man during an interview where he clearly distinguished between religious communities living in silos and a society that dynamically engages with diverse populations. He framed his reflection by contrasting how a number of 'communities' can live side by side but not be a 'society'. As he explained,

> We have communities but we are not a society. Before the war, they believe in the idea of being just neighbours. People have this idea that if you are living together, really you are living together. I mean in the same street you have families from different religions, and somehow you can see that in some places they respect each other, but it's not in the way that you can see it part of like believing in each other maybe…? Like believing in each other's rights to be and to believe, and all of that. I don't see that they believe in this.

I asked him to explain further, what he meant by communities existing alongside each other but there not being a society and asked what a 'society' may look like. He responded:

What I mean is, we can talk about this idea of neighbourhood - like being just a neighbour, because you accept and respect everything, including what this neighbour believes. But when you look at it as a society, like a social organisation - you can see that they are actually, really separated. If they intermarry with each other, if they do something together so something related to the need in this moment to do it. But not because of believing that they should do something together in the society. So you still having ideas of having communities, but you're not having a society. I can't put it like Syria as a society in the way that... people they have the same social contract, they believe in the same ideas. But there are different communities living with each other but they don't really interact.

I start this section with this interview extract because it challenges the notion that coexistence is 'enough' for a peaceful, prosperous society to actively embrace, honour, and engage with diversity. Indeed, the war in Syria tested such a notion. This extract reflects a lot of what the majority of refugees told me about the realities of a so-called peacefully coexisting pre-war Syria. Even if there were scattered examples of intermarriages, for example, there were clear distinctions and boundaries between groups. Encounters and interactions may have been non-violent, but they were part of a collective memory of difference. This memory of difference travelled through to wartime Syria and continues to manifest itself in experiences of displacement.

So how did the war influence relations and experiences of religious diversity? In contrast to pre-war Syria, responses to this theme were markedly different. In particular, responses to the war differed among religious minorities depending on their experiences as a minority before the war, as well as the perceived threat of minority life during or post-war. For some, particularly for the Christian and Druze refugees in this study, this meant remaining silent in political matters. Others, such as some Ismaili respondents, became vocal proponents of political reform. While the rhetoric that 'all religious minorities are supporters of Assad' lingered in the early days of the conflict, and is misrepresented by academic scholars such as Schmoller

(2016),[66] interviewees pointed out that splinters in loyalty for Assad began to emerge as complexities of the conflict became clearer.

As another young Druze man explained, the simplistic binary of minority-for-Assad and majority-against-Assad overlooks important complexities and subtle differences and boundaries between groups:

> You still see these differences dominating politics, sure, but also the social relationships, and… This is just one example: many people try to see Syria as a place where you have people who are for Assad or against Assad. People say that minorities are scared of losing Assad, right? We know we have people from different backgrounds living together, and yeah, they coexist together, but you still see a lot of boundaries between them. They have differences and you still see it and touch it everyday - if you live there. When you are talking about Syria, it's the place where different religions live together - it is not just one or two put into an Assad box or not. But this is just something that you see in, like media propaganda. In reality it is actually different, because it is everyone trying to have their, like to defend their identity and to say it is 'okay, this is our place, this is how we live and we don't need to have you or us to interact with each other.' Because we have boundaries.

The notion that plurality of religions also means diversity of political thought and participation was a unique contribution in a number of interviews, such as illustrated in the above extract. These insights only emerged in the interviewees when refugees spoke of the war. In another instance, the topic of the war evoked sentiments of 'doing away' with boundaries altogether. A Syrian Druze woman passionately expressed that the 'minority' label should be entirely removed when thinking about life after the war. She said,

> We shouldn't care about these things! It was the Muslim Brotherhood that differentiated. The true Syrian refused the idea from the start. I told you on the phone, I can bring you ten of my friends and they would all tell you: "I am

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[66] For example, Schmoller (2016: 422) argued that "there is no doubt that, as well as the Christians, other religious minorities such as the Alawites, Ismailis and Druze also generally aligned themselves with the regime in fear of sectarian violence".

Syrian". We refuse difference. When anyone asks me about my religion, I tell them: "I'm Syrian".

It soon became clear in this particular focus group (of Druze and Ismaili women) and in many of the interviews (including one with an Alawite man, two Christian men, a Christian woman, and in the focus group with Christian, Yazidi, and Druze men), that there is a strong distinction between how and why individuals refer to the 'minority' label in times of war. For some, as expressed by the extract above, the 'minority' term should be avoided entirely because it creates more divisions between people. Others, however, expressed the necessity of engaging with the realities and uses of the label, particularly in terms of historical accounts of Syria. For those who explicitly distanced themselves from the label, there was a regular reference to and reliance on a "Syrian" unity and umbrella terminology (for example, "we are all Syrian"). The notion of a 'single', 'true' Syrian identity evoked sentiments of pre-war Syria, as explored in the previous section. This reference to "we are all Syrian" was used in some of these interviews to explain the perspective that the minority label and framing of minority-majority relations was irrelevant to *present* Syrian social and political realities, irrespective of its historical antecedents. For some, the minority label was a contemporary propaganda tool to garner support for Assad (echoing the 'Assad is the protector of minorities' rhetoric), while others argued that the single "Syrian" identity rhetoric was state propaganda to *distract* people from the differences and inequalities in society and the religious dynamics of the war. As I explore in more detail below, these and other contradictions reflect tensions between a spectrum of difference and solidarity in the use of the 'minority' label, including how it can be limiting or a misrepresentation of other dynamics and realities, such as geopolitical agendas.

Throughout these interviews, the use or discarding of the 'minority' label was intimately associated with sentiments and desires for different forms of survival - political, physical, and existential. For those who asserted a single "Syrian" identity/unity, there was a desire to survive the onslaught of blame or political affiliation that comes with assumptions of religious affiliation. In turn, those who

emphasised membership to a religious minority community sought distance from politics or allegiance to the 'right' politics (depending on the audience they speak to) in order to be recognised as 'legitimate' bearers of Syrian history or 'genuine' claimants for asylum. This will be explored later in this chapter, particularly in relation to physical survival. In both instances, there were fears of what being Syrian and/or a minority meant for survival during and after the war.

I posit that claims of oneness or otherness, unity or difference, single or multiple identities, are often linked to a commonly-held perception by refugees that distance and distancing - from either a national, religious, or minority category - is necessary in order to survive, be accepted, or be heard. Wartime narratives, then, play a significant role in shaping which category or claim is employed and by whom. Such claims are illustrative of the evolving and shifting nature of majority-minority and minority-minority groups and their relations. Therefore, labels are significant, and whether or how individuals attempt to move beyond them reflect changing realities and evolution of group relations. Refusing, transcending, or reshaping labels is the prerogative of each individual, but without structural reflection (i.e. society similarly shifting use of the terms) the need to interrogate how they continue to be used is imperative.

Public Religion in Times of War: A Political Tool of Sectarianism

When recounting changes in Syria from 2011 onwards, a common theme that emerged from the interviews - irrespective of religious background - was the ways in which religion took more prominence in public life. Most refugee interviewees shared accounts of how the war increased the *nature* of and *responses* to public religion - from practices of religious worship to religious dress. The prominence of public religiosity, some recalled, was strongly connected to political discourses of

fear and insecurity, reconnecting how religion and politics inform the creation and use of sectarian discourse (Makdisi 2000; Kaplan 2010; Hurd 2015a).

This was illustrated effectively by a Druze woman recalling how the meaning of the *adhan* (the Islamic call to prayer and worship that is heard from mosques) shifted after the war began. The *adhan* used to be "like a song for people". It was "religion in front of you," she said, but "it was beautiful". Since the war, however, it carries connections with death and religious violence:

> You just listen to the words "Allah u Akbar" (Allah is the Greatest) and you are afraid. Because during the war in Syria, they would say those words before slaughtering people, before they slaughter any Syrian soldier or anyone from another sect. If I were Sunni, they would slaughter me because I'm not with them. They would slaughter Sunnis or Alawites. They just slaughter anyone who doesn't resemble them, even if he/she is Sunni like them. This is why these words for us in Syria are now linked with slaughter. We are afraid. The *adhan* for us was a song, we used to enjoy it, it was a beautiful voice. I believe that we will be able to survive this and the *adhan* will return to be a beautiful voice.

After this account, there was a notable shift in the room. Whereas pre-war Syria was comforting to them all, the effects of the war on how minorities viewed themselves, but also, importantly, how they viewed others became negative and overt. Survival, here, shifted from references to purely physical survival and now evoked symbolic and existential terminology. For one Ismaili woman, it was a matter of "being able to really live without all of this religion too; not just to try and be alive. I want to be able to question all of these things too".

In another interview, a Christian woman connected the public reaction to the adhan to the public symbols of religiosity in terms of the hijab/headscarf. She said:

> Yes, exactly - Muslims rarely used to wear headscarves, except in rural areas. And now, they want to, they do, they make a point of it. It could be your neighbour and I used to not know her sect but now I know. Do you know what I mean?

All the women nodded in agreement and in the course of the conversation, it became clear that this public manifestation of religion had shifted from a comfort with pre-war Syrian religious coexistence and tolerance, to discomfort with a public "Muslim Syria" (Syrian Druze woman in a focus group). Indeed, public religion was described as a problem by many refugees in this study. For many, religion's overt presence came with fear. It was not that religion, or Islam, itself was the 'problem', but what it connoted and how it was used (by different sides in the war), made religion, and the subject of religious persecution, a matter of concern. Again, themes and concerns over survival emerged, such as in another interview with a Christian man who said "we'll [Christians] be wiped out if we don't say anything".

For a young Alawite man, he said very clearly during our interview that "war has brought religion to our minds". This statement came after many minutes of him talking about his life in Syria *without* referring to religion at all. For him, religion was not a "problem" until the war. He continued,

> I did not have problems there. I really did not. But I saw more and more people around me, they started to have problems. People who were for the revolution[67] were mostly Islamists, from Al-Nusra Front. Mostly extreme Islamists, you know? And that is why people are afraid because before it did not really matter. And for me, it still does not matter. But now there is a focus on religion. People say it's a civil war between Muslims and others like the Druze or Christians may also say it. This is not true. But people are made to think about this now and in this way.

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[67] It is of note that he refers to the war as a 'revolution' here. Referring to the conflict in Syria as a war, revolution, or civil war, reflects differing political understanding of the cause of the war and the main proponents in it (van Dam 2017). Depending on the terms used, positions of power and responsibility shift, which impact policies and responses to the conflict and its consequences (see Ghaddar 2016). The use of the term 'civil war', for example, implies that Assad is a legitimate ruler which all the violence in the country is directed against. Such a framing arguably absolves the role and responsibility of the international community or specific states (primarily, Russia and Iran) in the internal affairs of the Syrian state. While it can be accurate to say that internal factions are fighting each other inside Syria, the regime and its allies are also fighting the war on/against Syrian people. The term 'revolution' in contrast refers to the role and influence of Syrian people themselves in strategising against both the state and Syrian loyalists.

While mentioning problems during the war and how it is connected to fear of survival, he further confirmed that the fear comes because of a focus on religion:

> I am afraid I would be forced to work for some organised army or force and target people. Like, they are known to target minorities - all of them. And I didn't want to be part of that. It's not that I was afraid of the anti-Assad groups or what people call terrorists - I don't call them that but people do - it's that I did not want to fight. They make it about religion but it's about politics. And oil. It has to do with oil and stupid people from all sides make it about religion. But it's more complicated than that.

Here, this Alawite refugee clearly distinguishes between what is "religion" and what is "politics". This reflection reiterates the commonly shared accounts that many interpretations of the war were framing it as a religious conflict, even though "it is not really the case" (Syrian Ismaili man, interview). Despite religion not being the cause or reason for the war, mixing religion and politics in public and political discourse had clear consequences for the ways in which Syrian refugees spoke of, recalled, and interpreted the war and of people. It also caused a number of interviewees to express concerns over how the war impacted the 'survival' of their religious communities, particularly in the case of most of the Christian interviews but also in some of the Druze interviews. Survival was sometimes referenced in terms of freedom to practice religion but also willingness or ability to reject or resist public forms of religion, such as the hijab. What was very clear from all interviews was how the intermingling of religion with politics brought sectarian narratives into judgements of (perceived or real) political agendas when discussing the war. In turn, the uses and appropriations of the 'minority' label shifted.

As a Syrian Christian man further explained, during an interview after a church service:

> Before the war, no one would ask anything. Now, I don't ask you "what is your religion". I don't care. I see you as a human being. But now because there is a war going on, they ask. I am afraid to talk about this but it is important. Before, we don't ask. Now, we do. Why? We want to know what

you believe. Who you fight for; what you stand for; and really, to be honest, whether we should be afraid of you.

This interview was at once filled with narratives of fear and anger. As mentioned above, he recalled how life in Syria brought certain aspects of religion into the public sphere. However, it was not the public nature of religion itself that concerned him. Rather, he expressed that it was how public discourses of religion impacted how others responded to the (perceived or real) religion of others. In particular, what religion meant for the (perceived or real) *politics* of an individual and their (assumed) political allegiances. Such a process of interpellation by others, about imputed opinion and belief, rather than 'real' belief is important here not only in relation to religious identity but also of politics. As he further explained,

> Divisions...these divisions are now in politics. They are from the political regime. Do you understand? So you see in society how people interact with each other and how later, unfortunately it's more now...not it depends on what you feel about the regime and what you think should happen next.

Mixing religion and politics was not a feature of this interview alone. Almost all respondents referred to the assumptions made by refugees, hosts, and Syrians more widely about people's politics based on their religion. This was in contrast to how 'religious identity' and the 'minority' label played a role in life before the war. As previously explained, while identity markers such as surnames, geographical residence, accent, and dress were used to assume religious affiliation, the war made assumptions based on politics too. This correlation (between religion and politics), many shared, was problematic because it did not matter if the judgements made about another person's politics were true or not. They were assumed, no matter the real beliefs or practices of the person. Even if one does not care about religion or politics, they are made to care about it.

As a young Ismaili man explained in a group interview with his wife and friend,

> People want to know, are you for or against? Sunni or Alawite? During the war, you have to either be opposed to it or for it. People ask, are you

opposing? Are you against or pro the war? And if you do not answer, they ask, what's your religion? Alawite? Sunni?

At this point, his wife, also an Ismaili refugee, continued,

You always have this tension or feeling of, okay, now I am going to meet a group, I should be careful about how to define myself here. Mmmm, now there are many people here that I cannot talk about Syria with. You need to check sometimes, like on political issues or religious issues, what to say or not. Sometimes from their region or not, you know their religion and think, okay you are maybe on this side or that side.

Their male friend, also an Ismaili, said,

Yeah, I used to not care about the politics and want to just live my life you know but now, sometimes you feel like people have started to...I mean, now you feel that people will be sceptical when they meet each other. First they ask about the political position - where you are from, why you are now here, and then they look at you and say, yes, that person is that or this.

These accounts demonstrate the connection between self-description, categorisations of religious belief, judgment, and insecurity. The 'minority' is no longer an association with history, land, or social status, but one that is intimately connected to the politics of war, whether or not it is desired and irrespective of the truth of the validity of its association. As mentioned earlier, the varied ways in which the term 'minority' was used in my interviews reflected different levels of and desires for survival. This included desires to be protected as a minority before and during the war as well as fears of what will come after the war. However, this manifestation of fear through language and emotive desire for survival was equally evident for those who wanted to eschew the notion of 'minority' altogether.

"We're all Syrian"? - Limits to a Fictive Unity in Times of War

The problem - and this is the Western way of thinking - is that they think all

Muslims are Sunni. They don't see the Muslim as Muslim, they have to categorise him. This is the Western categorising. In our country we don't categorise. This is new to us, this is new to our country - in Syria we don't know it. We're not like Lebanon who have 18 different recognised denominations. For us, Syrian is Syrian.

This perspective shared by a Syrian NGO worker (religion unknown) of an already united Syria was in stark contrast to all my interviews with refugees who self-identified as belonging to a religious minority. For some refugees, it was a desire that the 'we are all Syrian' rhetoric and 'religion does not matter' narrative should become a reality but there was a clear sense that it was simply a *desire*, not a reality. Doing away with the 'minority' label altogether, as this institutional actor suggests, would be a fictive account.

A middle-aged Druze refugee man described the notion of a united Syria as an attempt to go back to what Syria was - connecting the past with the future - "in my opinion, we have to talk about everything openly and get back to our 'Syrian identity'. This Syrian identity says that we are all the same."

This distinction between the Syria that was and the Syria that is perceived to be not only reflects politics, it expresses religion and religious identity as a social boundary with largely destructive or exclusionary effects. The realities of religion being used this way were not lost on some of the respondents. When asked if people from different religious backgrounds lived well together before or during the war, another young Druze man disagreed and explained how it is not "that simple":

This is, um, yeah, I disagree with this. I mean … it's very hard for me to say it in a way that maybe you can understand. But they describe this unity in society, like national unity in the whole society and how they lived with each other and they liked each other … but when I was in Syria I was critical with all this kind of...it was kind of propaganda starting from the regime, but also you have it in the society.

For him, and others who reject the 'Syrian unity' framing but also for those who promote the fictive unity - each show how difference becomes an ideological tool to justify entrenching social hierarchies and (re)enforcing prejudices. In both, there is a lack of consensus and in both, there is a need to recognise inequalities among and between both minority and majority groups.

Indeed, the rhetoric of "we are all Syrian" is as much of a discursive construction as is any simplistic framing of a minority group through ethnic, regional, or other associations. By insisting on the sameness of Syrians after the war, both intra and inter-group diversity and difference are derogated to a single category. Following Beltrán (2010), I argue that whether the label is 'minority' or 'Syrian', each term reflects power inequalities. Their use can be a recognition or rejection of the realities of marginalisation in Syrian society. Without acknowledging power and exclusion among and between minority and majority groups in Syria, there is little possibility for a united Syrian identity to be strengthened.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated the multiple, conflicting, overlapping ways in which the 'minority' label can be used or discarded by minorities themselves in understanding past and present realities, as well as their anticipation of the future. It argued that the 'minority' label is used in diverse ways in refugee narratives of life in Syria and life after Syria. There is very little by way of academic enquiry interrogating the application and implications of the 'minority' term, which is often taken for granted as a neutral human rights matter or a reflection of a fixed identity. A core purpose of this chapter was to highlight the complexities of the term itself and the necessity to take it seriously in both academic and policy engagements.

I argue that rather than using the 'minority' label as a defining aspect of Syrian, or Syrian refugee, identity and experience, it is best to view it as *one* aspect, among

others in both historical and contemporary Syrian relations. The contention seems to lay within the over-emphasis of the term, in some cases, or the misuse of the term, in other cases. Additionally, due to ethnic markers, as a whole, Syrians may be viewed and assumed to hold the same religious identities, overlooking history, politics, geography, and autonomy. Although following chapters examine the effects of such homogenisation, it is important to emphasise that religiosity may not be real but presumed, and may not be recognisable but enforced. How individuals, families, communities, and institutions respond to such assumptions, marginalisation, or oppression, differs according to a number of factors. These include, internal religious politics and laws and socio-economic standing and resources as dictating abilities to speak and to be heard. One of the core arguments of this chapter, then, is the importance of using labels with critical awareness of their associations. This includes resisting the tendency to homogenise all minorities, on the one hand, and the impulse to separate a minority from others, on the other hand.

Having laid out the complex diversity of the Syrian refugee population and its realities of minority-majority memories and relations, it is apt to ask whether and if so, how a host country receiving them recognises and engages with such diversity. Therefore, the next chapter examines the ways in which Syrian refugees are described and referred to in Germany by different actors. Specifically, it explores the place - or absence of - religious plurality in such representations. Understanding the nature of discursive representations of Syrian refugees in relation to religious identity will lay an appropriate foundation for subsequent chapters. Specifically, the effects of these representations for religious minority refugees 'integrating' into German society, both in relation to other refugees and hosts, noting how "experiences are not extraneous to time but extend over time and space" (Zaman 2016: 44).

Chapter 6: (Mis)Representations of 'Syrian Refugees' in Germany — Homogenous, Orientalist, and Political

Introduction

In Chapter 5, I argued that the 'minority' label needs to be taken seriously and understood in multiple, and often conflicting, ways. Building on the importance of language and framing, this chapter examines whether or how religion and 'religious identity' is understood and represented. To do so, I draw on my analysis of three German publications (one newspaper, two magazines) and how they referred, described, or identified religion and religious identity dynamics in representations of refugees. Concurrently, I consider the accounts of institutional actors in a context 'receiving' Syrian refugees and their perspectives on refugee identities, the place or importance of 'religious identities' in assessing, understanding, or responding to refugees in Germany. This includes exploring the place (or absence) of the 'minority' label in these contexts and the hypervisibility or invisibility of certain identities, characteristics, and experiences over others (Mole 2017; Saunders et al. 2016). My research shows that, in the context of Germany, religion and 'religious identity' among and in relation to refugees, including 'religious minority' refugees are largely absent in media and institutional representations. In the few instances where these terms are referred to newspaper/magazine articles or by institutional actors, they are almost entirely directed to Muslim identities and the role of Islam, often in contexts evoking cultural tensions, security concerns, and foreign policy agendas.

As Malkki (1995) states, the refugee is an epistemic object in construction. As such, these representations of religion and 'religious identity' in relation to refugees, particularly in the framing of Muslim refugees, reflect, at best, a cursory understanding of refugee identities, needs and experiences, which are largely negative in character, intention, and implication. Whether in newspaper/magazine articles or through interviews with non-state and civil society actors, my research shows that (mis)assumptions of religion and 'religious identity' are strongly connected to (the threat or presence of) violence, often used as an illustrative example or cause of a lack of social cohesion in society. This chapter further outlines, examines and interrogates these representations of Syrian refugees and situates the importance of understanding the common ways in which they are presented and constituted (including by institutional actors), as a prologue to exploring their many effects in forthcoming chapters.

As Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2016) points out, up until the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks, Syrian refugees were largely represented in Europe as being 'ideal refugees'. Their claims for asylum were clear and to many, legitimate and credible. The hypervisibility of Syrian refugees, in contrast to other refugees, emphasised their vulnerability and in turn, their worthiness of protection (Ibid). Disparate representations of refugees in both media and political and public discourse have also been mirrored in refugee and forced migration studies' engagement with and reflections on representations, for instance through unequal attention being given to certain forms of visibility (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al. 2017; Saunders et al. 2016).

As explored earlier in the review of key debates in forced migration and refugee studies, to date, examining representations of refugees has been either a linguistic exercise (Boeva 2016; Gabrielatos and Baker 2008; Gruessing and Boomgaarden 2017; Moore et al. 2012, 2018), viewing the production of meaning through language (Hall 1997: 16) and framing (Ramasubramanian and Miles 2018); a political project (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014; Godin and Doná 2016; Holmes and Castañeda 2016; Sigona 2014), or understood as a performative act (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011, 2014; Häkli et al. 2017; Wagner 2018). Following Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2011, 2014, 2016), this chapter

examines representations of 'Syrian refugees' in German publications and by institutional actors as multidirectional creations, including how refugees observe and in turn recast or negotiate such representations.

The specific ways in which representations are negotiated and resisted by Syrian 'religious minority' refugees will be explored in forthcoming chapters. However, at this juncture, it is necessary to understand how Syrian refugees are (mis)represented in the context of Germany, particularly in relation to the presence and realities of minority populations among them. Like a cyclical process of (mis)interpretation, certain (mis)representations remain prominent, re-emerge, and are recreated in media, public, and political discourse on refugees. Therefore, there is a need for scholars of refugee representations to better understand how the effects of representations are understood by others and the ways in which the importance of a reflective, critical, meaningful understanding of representations can also assist in mitigating their negative effects. By arguing that representations are multidirectional acts, it can be understood how institutional actors, for example, are not mere observers of representations but also creators of these. Refugees also resist or develop alternative representations which are not necessarily present in the media or public sphere. Part of what this study does is position different modes of representations of 'Syrian refugees' into conversation, demonstrating how people from Syria engage with and respond to this discursive frame, including those presented by institutional actors as refugees' hosts. In doing so, I view and engage with refugee representations as a dynamic, yet contested, phenomena by many actors - observers, creators, and representers and their overlapping roles.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. First, I outline and examine three recurring themes in representations of Syrian refugees in German publications and by institutional actors, as homogenous, orientalist, and political representations. Second, I explore multiple ways that institutional actors describe representations of 'Syrian refugees' and their effects, particularly in relation to broader structures, policies, and responses to refugees. In doing so, I note how representations impact

audiences who are part of the process of representing - here, non-state and civil society actors (also see Höjer 2004; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011; Wright 2002).

Fundamentally, following Mayall and Silvestri (2015), Said (1978), Zetter (1991), and others, I argue that no refugee or specifically, religious refugee, individual or group is a priori problematic, violent, conflictual, or otherwise undesirable or threatening. Rather, it is the *labels* ascribed to them which (mis)represent them and perpetuate such (mis)assumptions.

Exploring (Mis)Representations of Syrian Refugees in Three Themes

While there are varied and competing terms and references to 'Syrian refugees' across different forms of media, reports, and articles, my research revealed a particular frequency of certain terms, concepts and representations of Syrian refugees. As such, these representations and their over-arching narratives require careful and critical examination. As outlined in my discussion of this study's research methods, my overview and examination of representations of Syrian refugees in Germany draws on two sets of data. First, articles from three publications across the political spectrum (left-liberal, moderate, and right-wing) from 2015-2017, [68] inclusive. Articles were identified and analysed if they met keyword searches related to this research project, namely 'Flüchtling' UND 'Religion' ('refugee' AND 'religion'); 'Flüchtling' UND 'Integration' ('refugee' AND 'integration'); and 'Flüchtling' UND 'Minderheit' ('refugee' AND 'minority'). Over 334 articles met these criteria. The second set of data is from 42 institutional interviews with individuals who represent NGOs, civil society groups, FBOs, and other institutions responding to or engaging with refugees in Germany. Taken together, the articles

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[68] This time frame was also chosen because representations are not static but responsive to social and political dynamics. Shifts occur after specific events or as opinions on political contexts change.

and interviews were analysed and revealed recurring and frequent representations of Syrian refugees.

My analysis identified that representations of Syrian refugees reflect three characteristics, which I explore in detail below: homogenous, Orientalist, and political. I find that underlying all three themes is an overarching narrative that after the so-called 2015 'refugee crisis', Syrian refugees are framed as 'unideal' and 'undesired' (following Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014; Eghdamian 2016). My findings are consistent with much of the refugee representations literature on stereotyping, especially in relation to the rise of Islamophobia and the correlations made between refugee and religious identities reflecting the securitisation of migration (Gale 2004; Vaughan-Williams 2015; Chouliaraki and Georgius 2017).

It is important to note that my findings also depart from representations literature by not taking religious labels or minority categories as fixed, static, or 'given'. Indeed, where Muslim 'minorities' are represented in media in particular ways, there is an overarching assumption of the homogeneity of a 'Muslim' (see also Mavelli and Wilson 2016; Saunders et al. 2016). Similarly, in relation to what it means to be a 'minority', there is an assumption that a refugee is a minority by virtue of being a Muslim in a non-Muslim majority context. Lack of understanding of diversity, including inter-group heterogeneity is often absent from representation analyses, particularly in relation to refugees. As Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2016) points out, the (over)emphasis on Muslim refugees in Western media is understandable on one level because of actual numbers of refugees from Muslim majority states entering European and North American states. However, their (hyper)visibility is politicised. Therefore, while I do not assess the hypervisibility of Syrian Muslim identities, it is important to note, however briefly, that these too have effects on Muslim refugees in ways that scholars such as Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2016), Saunders et al. (2016), and Shams (2017) have effectively pointed out.[69]

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[69] For more on the hypervisibility of Islam in media outlets more broadly, see Alsultany (2012); Kabir (2006); Kyriakides (2017); Nacos and Torres-Reyna (2003); Poole (2002); Rigoni (2005); Saeed (2007); and Said (1997).

Homogenous Treatments and Monolithic Representations: Superficial Understandings of Syria's Diversity

Of the 334 articles identified and analysed, there was limited reference to the inter- or intra-religious heterogeneity of Syrian refugees. Some references were made to both Syrian Christians and Syrian Muslim refugees in Germany; however, beyond these, there was a paucity of articles referring to any other religious diversity among Syrian refugees. While there was some acknowledgement of multi-Christian communities, Muslim refugees were specifically referred to homogeneously. This was the case irrespective of the political leaning of the publication. To illustrate an exception to the homogenous framing of all 'Syrian refugees' being 'Muslims', there were a few references in 2015, particularly in Spiegel Online, to the question of whether there should be separate accommodation centres for Christians and Muslims due to reports of increasing attacks on Christians in German refugee centres. At most, there has been a cursory presentation of two groups of Syrian refugees: being either Muslim or Christian. Following Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2014, 2016), this can be understood as a *repress*entation of minorities and an overall absence of an acknowledgement of difference and diversity in representations of Syrian refugees. This naturally implies a hypervisibility of certain identities and characteristics of Syrian refugees over others, namely, of Islam and Muslim religious identities and the recurring assumptions related to those labels and categories. As Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2016) explains, the concept of *repress*entation is helpful to understand:

> the extent to which certain groups of forced migrants and particular identity markers (real, imagined and imposed) on the one hand, and certain modes of 'humanitarian' response to forced migration on the other, are centralised and heralded while others are concealed from public view for diverse reasons and with different effects.

Refugee representations literature (see Saunders et al. 2016) has rightfully emphasised the invisibility of certain groups of refugees by virtue of or in contrast to the hypervisibility of other nationalities (for example, Syrian refugees) or of particular sub-groups (for example, Yazidi Iraqi refugees). This was also highlighted in a number of interviews, such as with a staff member from a refugee support agency:

> This support you see given to Syrians or maybe not always support but you know, the focus of it all. It was because there were lots of them but look, this has never happened before in all the years I have worked on refugee issues here and elsewhere. This did not happen for other refugees from other nationalities, because the media wasn't focusing on it. Even though it was the same for Iraqis! The war, the way the United States hurt them. For Iraqis, it was the same thing, but the media wasn't focusing on them. So what happened? No one opened their homes for Iraqis.

From the perspective of this staff member, the lack of equal representation of refugees reflects unfair and biased reporting on refugees. This bias brings attention to the need for significant reflection on inter-group diversity and heterogeneity within and among (hyper)visible groups too. Within the context of Syrian refugees and minorities, for example, some attention has been given to the effects of representations of a Muslim-majority Syrian refugee population on Syrian Christian refugees (Schmoller 2016). This literature has examined whether Christian refugees should be given priority in asylum cases or whether refugees should be separated in refugee centres on the basis of religion, ethnicity, language, or nationality (terms that are often used interchangeably) (see Eghdamian 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018; McConnell 2015; Schmoller 2016). Yet, while there are also non-Christian and non-Muslim Syrian refugee 'religious minorities', which require attention (Eghdamian 2017), there is also significant heterogeneity among Syrian Christians and Syrian Muslims (BarAbraham 2018).

For publications looking to capitalise and mobilise on the rhetoric of fear and insecurity, the tendency to generalise and homogenise Syrian refugee religious identities was evident. Between 2015-2017, for example, articles in Compact (a

far-right magazine) referred to Syrian refugees as Muslim 'terrorists', 'rapists', and 'hate-preachers'. In each of these articles, references were also made to Islamist terror, threats of cultural invasion, and a pending religious war on Germany, hearkening to Huntington-like assumptions of a clash of civilisations. These were not implicit but mostly explicit statements. For instance, an article on 5 August 2015 entitled "Offene Grenzen oder: Die Zweite Besetzung Deutschlands" (Open Borders or: The Second Occupation of Germany) referred to opening doors to refugees as the equivalent of inviting an Islamist invasion of Germany. Such framing may appear extreme and isolated to far-right political ideology. However, my analysis found that notions of fear, invasion, and lack of control were also present in both left-liberal and moderate publications. In all three publications, articles that referred to 'Syrian refugees', referenced religious identities of refugees as being synonymous to Muslim. Within the same articles that conflated "Syrian" with "Muslim", references were also made to militant Islamism and debates on cultural incompatibilities within a liberal Germany. For instance, references were made to activities and protests of far-right groups, such as AfD (Alternative for Germany), which is an anti-immigrant, anti-Islam political party, as a response to fears of what an "Islamisation of Germany" might look like and its potential effects. For instance, in 2015, a number of articles in the moderate (progressive liberal) Süddeutsche Zeitung newspaper referred to 'diffusing fears of Islam', 'answering to militant Islamists', 'debates on the headscarf', and 'religious violence in refugee housing' as headliner articles. In the liberal-left magazine, Spiegel Online, articles from 28 and 29 September 2015 referenced refugees, religion and the words 'attacks' and 'fear' within the same context. The main body of an article entitled "Wer auf andere losgeht, hat sein Asylrecht verwirkt" ("Those who attack others have forfeited their asylum rights") - included the question "what does this mean for Muslims and Islam in Germany after over thousands of Syrian refugees have now come to Germany"?

While representations literature on newspapers and media representation of refugees often emphasise the political leaning of publications (Berry et al. 2015; Holmes and Castañeda 2016), my research finds that irrespective of political standpoint, references to 'Syrian refugees as Muslim' was common to all

publications, suggesting a wider spread and use of such terms. The mutually constitutive nature of processes of homogenisation and interpellation reflects a broader lack of understanding, acknowledgement, or recognition of religious diversity among refugee populations. This is particularly relevant in respect to countries and/or regions equated with Islam, irrespective of the actual religious demography of the country/region. As a result, there is often an (over)emphasis on solely Islam and Muslim identities among 'Syrian refugees'. While the recognition of majority Muslim identities is not in itself problematic if it is accurate and balanced, the tendency to conflate Islam with violence, conflict, or cultural incompatibility to the West/liberal society is not only inaccurate but a form of epistemic violence.

As Butler (1992: 2) effectively points out, "being called a name is also one of the conditions by which a subject is constituted in language". This is another way of referring to the process of interpellation referred to earlier, whereby Syrian refugees can be labelled as "Muslim" and simultaneously positioned in relation to "terrorism", "violence", and "conflict". Given that these identity markers and descriptors have become synonyms, almost 'short-hand' for one another (i.e. Syrian is Muslim and therefore, a terrorist) when one speaks of a Syrian, other markers are assumed to be 'known' about them before they are spoken, written, read, or encountered. This is part of what this study understands by the assertion of meanings existing before language - that is, before the enunciation of the words 'Muslim terrorist', the linkage between Syrian and those 'meanings' is always already there in this particular geopolitical context (Mavelli and Wilson 2016). I assert that such processes of meaning interpellated through specific uses of language (re)enforces and advances an often negative, limited and indeed, inaccurate perspective on Syrian refugees, which impacts processes, policies, and practices of asylum, resettlement, and, as I explore in subsequent chapters, 'integration'.

Stereotypes of Syrian refugees as (a particular type of) Muslim have recurring features, evidenced in all three publications. By failing to recognise and refer to the diversity of refugees' religious identities, refugees are kept as an unknown mass, "impressive but impersonal" (Berman 2016: 102). In turn, such representations

dehumanise refugees (Malkki 1996), ignores their history (Nyers 1999) and the specificities of various forms of identity and their diversity are similarly undermined or overlooked.

Institutional actors' treatment and conflation of 'Syrian refugees as Muslim' was not dissimilar to the newspaper/magazine articles, despite the diversity and breadth of their political affiliations and practical work. In both the publications and interviews in this study, references to 'Syrian refugees' were linked simultaneously to "symbolic, social, political, and legal" categories, terms and references of inclusion and exclusion (Holmes and Castañeda 2016: 13; Trittler 2018). By making claims about perceived or assumed religion and religious identity, the presence or reality of a 'minority' (or what that means in any given context) was either lost, subsumed, or undermined in representations of who Syrian refugees 'are' and what they 'represent'. As subsequent chapters argue, these representations, while not new, continue to dehumanise diverse populations by linking a majority (assumed to be the whole) with suspicion (van Dijk 1991), fear, or insecurity. Indeed, while early stages of the so-called 'refugee crisis' framed responses to it in empathetic terms, from 2015 - particularly after the 13 November 2015 Paris attacks - hostility became normalised in reporting (Berry et al. 2015; Georgiou and Zaborowski 2016).

However, for the head of an NGO dedicated to refugee aid and assistance, this stereotyping had a longer history, dating before 2015. She overtly reflected that German ideas of diversity in the Arab world changed after September 11, 2009:

> You asked a question about whether Germans have an idea about the diversity of Syria, yes? Well, since 9/11 people became aware of a lot of things concerning the Arab world. It is like a joke, how being dark-skinned and with a beard is sometimes enough to recognise the person as Syrian or Arab. People in Germany are not aware that refugees can be well-educated and that a Christian family living in Munich could be as religious as a Muslim family from Damascus.

This reflection of the tendency to homogenise and conflate refugees with other markers was one of the only interviews which acknowledged that stereotyping of refugees occurs. Indeed, in this interview, there was an acknowledgement of how such stereotypes can be disrupted and contested through knowledge of the diversity of others. Here, she reflects on how the rhetoric of diversity in Germany shifted after the September 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, which included a caricature of the 'Arab' as being "dark-skinned and with a beard". She further notes the Orientalist nature of these assumptions that are also held about the education of Christians in contrast to Muslims, which will be further explored further in this Chapter.

On the subject of stereotyping, in all 42 interviews, I asked institutional actors whether they were aware of the breadth of diversity among Syrians and therefore, Syrian refugees, particularly as it pertains to their work. With only three exceptions (all three of these interviewees themselves were from the Middle East and in one case, a Sunni Muslim Syrian), all interviewees acknowledged that they assumed most refugees - if not all - were Muslim. As I had been explicit in the purpose of my research, which clearly framed Syrian 'religious minority' identities, these interviewees further stated that they thought that by 'religious minority', I "probably meant how the Christians are also doing here" (interview with a representative from a Christian advocacy group). When asked further, for instance, if they knew of Druze, Ismaili, or indeed, atheist Syrians and their needs and experiences, the majority of interviewees said no or said "of course, they are here, but we do not look at this much because we do not want to distinguish people by religion" (interview with the founder of an NGO working with refugee women). This perception of the irrelevance, or danger, of recognising 'religion' reflects how humanitarian principles of neutrality, universality, and objectivity are often viewed or understood to be in contrast to religious beliefs, values, or identities. In other words, by *not* looking at 'religion', this staff member posits values of universality, objectivity, and neutrality as being antithetical to religion. This secular bias and the way it impacts responses to refugee 'integration' will be further explored in detail in Chapter 8.

In many ways, categorising and describing 'Syrian refugees' in general terms helps avert attention from and ignores complex social realities (Wahlbeck 1998; Mole 2017). It became clear during many interviews that the tendency to homogenise Syrian refugees, despite realities of internal diversity, reflected the absence or marginalisation of direct engagement with diverse Syrians and their perspectives. For instance, in one interview, a representative from a Jewish NGO said "yes, we know there is some diversity, sure, but you know, we do not go to it and make it a big deal because that can make problems worse". In making these assertions, this interviewee also assumes that religion is inherently a conflictual matter. In this interview, and many others, there was no acknowledgement that the perspective of engaging with religion being problematic was an assumption made in isolation to the perspectives of refugees themselves. Who then is "rendered invisible or absent(ed)" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014: 221) reflects and reveals characteristics that Syrian refugees are assumed to embody and the degree to which these characteristics are ideal or not, desired or undesired (Ibid.), and indeed true or false.

The invisibility of minorities is not the only problem. Rather, it is how the visibility of refugees and certain identities are presented as essentialist elements of their identities, which reflects hegemonic assumptions about their passivity, which is contested. The treatment of religion and religious identity, then, is largely superficial. As one interviewee from another NGO, a refugee agency, related, "not everyone in Germany knows" about the "internal diversity of Syrians". This staff worker was one of the three interviewees who acknowledged the internal diversity of Syrian refugees immediately when asked. She remarked,

> Of course there are not only Muslim Syrians. I know many people who don't even know what their religion is or if they have one. But people do not ask them, you know? No one talks to them and they all just assume they know. Or they think, everyone's the same. Why wouldn't they think that if that's all they've seen and heard?

As this individual highlights, religious diversity includes religious identity confusion. She notes that (mis)understandings of the religiosity of 'Syrian refugees'

primarily comes down to not having asked refugees themselves of their religious or non-religious identities. Similarly, she relates the power of representations on audiences who believe to be what they see or hear to be 'truth'.

When asked to elaborate, she continued:

> The Germans are - like everyone else - influenced by media. And media manipulates. Germans say: oh, poor Syrians are all fleeing from a dictator. There are some Germans who know and are educated but they don't speak. There are Germans who know that people are different. And they are the ones that actually meet people, get in touch with people and create their own understanding. If they don't experience something first hand, they don't talk about it. How could you? People say all sorts of things but they are uninformed. They only say what they know in the media.

Here, she made a clear link between representations of refugees and the role of education and understanding. In particular, how ignorance and knowledge can be manipulated. That is, even those "Germans who know", "don't speak". As a result, what is represented becomes the norm when left unchallenged.

Barbaric or Agentic? Conflicting Orientalist Assumptions of the 'East' Perpetuated onto Syrian Refugees

Jiwani (2004) explains how monolithic representations, as explored above, are a discursive strategy of Orientalism. A recurring feature of my institutional actor interviews and newspaper article analyses is the homogenisation of 'Syrian refugee' identities and indeed, how they reflect Orientalist assumptions of what it means to be "Syrian" and to come from the "Eastern", "Arab world". In this section, I argue that tendencies to homogenise, particularly in relation to the 'religious identity' and character of Middle Eastern and Arab individuals and communities, cannot be understood without a reflection on and critical interrogation of Orientalist origins (Akram 2000) that inform recurring assumptions of the 'Syrian refugee'. I posit that

my analyses of German publications and my interviews with institutional actors not only reveal a homogenous Syrian 'refugee identity' in relation to religion and 'religious identity', but they also reflect a perspective of the Syrian and 'Syrian refugee' as being *sub-human*. This examination builds on refugee representations literature to date, such as Hyndman's (2000) analysis of "sub-citizens", Malkki's (1996) argument of the dehumanisation of the refugee that remains faceless, even as they are viewed as a threat (also see Banks 2011). In these analyses, there is an important critique of deeply-rooted Orientalist biases in images, referrents, descriptions, and understandings of refugees that fluctuate between the refugee in need - who is a speechless, agent-less victim - and the portrayal of the threatening, dangerous, terrorist refugee.

As Brown (2006) argued, and as reflected in the institutional actor interview highlighted above, after September 11, 2009, Islam was no longer exotic or fluid to Western observers. Rather, it was a fixed caricature or image. My analysis of newspaper/magazine articles similarly revealed a de-exotication of the East with a specific recurring rhetoric that Islam is now assumed to be 'known' - as potential terrorism, violence, and inequality (in regards to gender and women's rights in particular). Yet, what is 'known' (inaccurate or not) remains steeped in a backward, almost barbaric version of an Eastern 'Other', who is lesser-than, and deemed ignorant. For example, an article in Spiegel Online on 3 December 2016, entitled "Was mache ich, wenn ein Mann mit drei Frauen kommt?" ("What do I do when a man comes with three women?") is about a German Priest who is asked questions by his congregation, such as what to do when a Muslim family enters a Christian home with more than one wife. This is a reflection of a public discourse assuming that a Muslim family must be polygamous and in turn, antithetical to a "Christian" society. Recalling that Der Spiegel is a left-liberal newspaper, it is another reminder of the continuing Christian-Muslim binary underlying many assumptions of a Western-Eastern civilisational dichotomy.

Orientalist assumptions can also be understood through the ways specific groups in a host community, particularly those who assist refugees, are positioned in relation

to refugees. For instance, in an article in Süddeutsche Zeitung in 2017 entitled "Die Hoffnung liegt bei den Kirchen" ("Hope lies with the churches"), the Western/Christian actor is described and positioned as the saviour to the otherwise helpless Eastern/Muslim victim. A number of articles in all three publications referenced the role of churches in Germany offering to help with asylum cases, housing refugees, and indeed, undertaking baptism of refugees (the latter being posed as problematic by the far-right Compact newspaper). It is not problematic in itself to note who or what has responded or assisted with refugee arrival or resettlement, but the way in which the 'helper' is positioned in relation to the 'needy' is problematic. Further, that Muslim 'helpers' (organisations, groups or individuals) were largely absent from representations of refugee response and assistance further delineates forms of *repress*entation.

Following Said (1979: 103), these Western views of the 'Orient' are reflections of objects of power whereby the European watcher is also the producer of knowledge *about* the East. Indeed, in one of the interviews with a Syrian NGO worker, she describes how she cannot speak to the truth because she is not seen as intelligent or neutral as a Western observer:

> No matter how much I say that it's not a civil war, no one will believe me because the media is stronger than me. But I work on people's mentality, on their awareness. I'm sometimes annoyed at the "West". They think that because I come from Syria I don't understand. That we, the Middle East, the Third World, we don't understand. And they don't like anyone teaching them, or destroying the idea that's in their head. It's a big problem for me, that they don't believe.

Here, assumptions about the inferiority and ignorance of a "Syrian" was not limited to refugees but extended to Syrian immigrants in German society. As this interviewee describes, there is an "idea that's in their heads" of the Eastern/Arab/Syrian and as a result, she is silence or her opinions, when voiced, are ignored or undermined.

In another interview with a Syrian volunteer at an NGO, she lamented an experience recounted to her by one of the Syrian refugee families (religious identity unknown):

> They told me that when they arrived, one of the German workers at the [refugee] centre told them, oh my mother used to be worried about the work I do but then she read about this family - a White family, you know - taking in an Arab and they said he is okay and so now, they say some of them are okay! Can you believe this? But they still think there's always a risk [that there will be problems].

This Orientalist narrative of waiting for white 'saviours' (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014; Rajaram 2002) was also shared by another NGO staff worker, also from Syria, who described the portrayal of the 'White Helmets' in the media and her discomfort with it:

> In Europe, they talk about the massacres by the [Syrian] government. But they never talk about the massacres by the "white helmets", the revolutionaries. They turned them into heroes, gave them the Nobel Prize. Those "white helmets" are militants and fighters by day, and at night they are saviours. It's all a lie. These media people don't go there and see how the situation really is. They ask me: are universities open? I tell them that this year alone, 270,000 students got their baccalaureate. Everything is working, but here they imagine that war means nothing is working.

These discursive representations of *both* Western and non-Western bodies can be understood as Orientalist views, particularly in the ways in which groups are essentialised. The 'representers' here are the 'watchers' and the 'represented' are the 'watched' but the 'representers' are also the producers of knowledge about the East, even where it is not factually true (as lamented in the interview abstract above). Although the exotic nature of the 'East' has in many ways become diluted, the "infinite peculiarity" (Said 1979: 103) of the Orient/Easterner remains. And in the final analysis, "to have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it" (Ibid. 32). In the context of Syrian refugees, it is not that they are the "camel-riding" or "hook-nosed" Arab (Ibid. 108) but they remain "terroristic" (Ibid.) and continue to embody characteristics 'expected' of the Orient - dangerous,

yet helpless. Although these two characteristics (at once agentic and a victim) may seem contradictory, taken together they represent and constitute the refugee as unequal to the Western observer/creator of knowledge about the subject. Indeed, it is rare to see representations of refugees as being *both* agent and victim, for to do so is to humanise them (Esses et al. 2013).

Situational and Responsive Representations: The Role of Politics and the Politicisation of Refugeedom

In earlier sections, I argued that the homogenisation and 'de-exotification' of Syrians shifted after September 11, 2009, and the once 'ideal refugee' (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014, 2016) framing of Syrian refugees took a turn after the Paris terrorist attacks in November 2015. These two brief examples help illustrate the situational and responsive nature of representations and indeed, how malleable and changeable they can be. These shifts in representations are not always negative. Indeed, it can be argued that there has been a positive turn in public opinion and political discourse towards welcoming refugees after the death of the young boy, Aylan Kurdi, and the international media response to it. Yet, the spectator nature of some refugee deaths over others was contested by some of the refugee interviewees (see also Mortensen and Trenz 2016).

In an interview with a director of a refugee centre, she lamented how the death of the young boy galvanised temporary attention to the 'refugee crisis', despite the fact that many Syrians, including children, had died before this event. She refers to how the selective humanisation of a Syrian child demonstrates a dehumanisation of (other) Syrians:

> At the beginning, before 2015 and the large refugee wave and the media and so on, a lot of Syrians used to come, or try to come, and what happened to them? They would drown in the sea. No one ever heard of them - until the

child Aylan, yes? This is when people realised that refugees are coming. But before 2015, a lot of people drowned in the sea and no one knew about them.

Many interviewees shared examples of shifts in public and political rhetoric on and about refugees - both positive and negative - depending on events, whether or not they were perpetrated by or directly related to Syrian refugees. In addition to the death of the young child, Aylan, the most frequent reference made in this respect was the 2015/2016 sexual assaults on women on New Year's Eve across Germany but mostly in the city of Cologne. Despite the fact that the vast majority of perpetrators of the assaults were from Morocco and Algeria (Welt 2016), it was Syrian refugees that received the backlash of the attacks (Bender 2016).[70]

This disconnect between an event and the ways in which it was (falsely) ascribed to Syrian refugees was described by the head of an NGO offering refugee services and assistance during an interview in her office:

> Before what happened on New Year's - Germans, you know, are kind-hearted; they got excited about the refugees, they opened their homes, they donated their money. I never saw something like this before. Even though I work with refugees, this never happened for Lebanese refugees, or Iraqis, or Somalis or Yemenis. I have worked with all different refugees who came to Germany - nothing compared to what was done for the Syrians. And then, then the New Year's thing happened. There was a change. The language changed. Even though none of them were refugees from Syria! It turns out most were Moroccan!

In this extract, different identities are deemed to be synonymous. As this interviewee explains, before it was 'found' that the perpetrators were actually from different national backgrounds, the assumption that rapists and sexual assault perpetrators are Syrian and thus, refugees, remained prevalent.

A number of scholars have clearly highlighted how the increasing securitisation agenda on migration impacts representations of refugees and asylum seekers in

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[70] It is estimated that more than 2,000 men were allegedly involved in the attacks and only half were foreign nationals. Of the 120 suspects identified, most were from North Africa (Noack 2016).

different ways (see Banai and Kreide 2017; Falk 2017; Holmes and Castañeda 2016; Kallius 2016), including impacting how religion and religious identity is viewed and understood (see Mavelli and Wilson 2016).

Across all three publications, there were many examples of articles where refugees were framed as a threat in terms of the safety and security of Germany or in relation to tensions and challenges to dominant, core German culture (*Leitkultur*) and social cohesion. It was not 'just' the right-wing magazine that claimed a threat of "Islamification". All three publications reflected an anti-Islam sentiment, particularly after the November 2015 Paris attacks and also the July 2016 Würzburg train attack (when four people were attacked by a Afghan male asylum seeker with a hatchet). Notably, regardless of political leaning, all three publications overlooked reporting (or highlighting) attacks *on* refugees by *non*-refugees. There are a number of these events that were largely absent from or underreported in the newspapers/magazines. For instance, on 1 November 2015 a right-wing extremist group (Gruppe Freital) detonated an explosive in front of a refugee housing accommodation. Earlier in September 2015, a right-wing extremist made an assassination attempt on a politician, injuring four other people who tried to disarm him. A year later, in September 2016, a right-wing activist targeted two bombs in the city of Dresden - at a mosque and another at a congress centre. None of these attacks caused deaths, which may be one reason for their underreporting in these newspapers. However, solely focusing on attacks that are (assumed to be) perpetrated by refugees is not only inaccurate,[71] it has shown to invigorate a rise in populist far right political parties across Europe and intensified anti-Islamic sentiments (Berry et al. 2015).

The tendency for representations of Syrian refugees to be connected to and correlated with specific circumstances, even if there was no direct connection with

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[71] Indeed, the feminist critique of the hypervisibility on sexual and gender-based violence by 'refugees' and/or 'Muslims' is the extent to which it reproduces the invisibility of sexual and gender-based violence by citizens. The state and media do not give the same platform and representation to the safety and dignity of potential or actual victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence per se; they are rather interested in the racialisation of securitisation and control (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, personal communication, 6 May 2019).

Syrian refugees, was not confined to events within Germany. For a staff worker from another refugee agency (anonymous), references in media representations or public and political discourse on the Syrian conflict has effects on perceptions of Syrian refugees. For instance, whether the conflict in Syria is referred to as a 'civil war' or a 'revolution' also positions Syrian refugees in relation to political alliances and agendas that they may not agree with or are (or are not) aligned to:

> The biggest problem is that here it was called a civil war, but in Syria it's not considered at all a civil war. Here it was considered a civil war and people connect it with Muslims killing Druze or Christians, which is not true. There are a lot of Muslims who were killed because they were against the revolution. They didn't only kill minorities. They killed many people. 80% of the Syrian military are from all different Syrian sects.

The ways in which the representation of a conflict can correlate to assumptions made about refugees fleeing a conflict, with another staff member from a refugee agency (anonymous), sharing the following account:

> A journalist from "Der Spiegel" contacted me and asked me to put her in contact with people. I intentionally put him in contact with four Syrian Christians to make her realise that also people from minorities are not with the revolution. And they told her so themselves. They were witnesses. They said to him, 'I participated in the demonstrations because I wanted to change something, because people were victims, they thought it was for their freedom. At the end it turned out it has nothing to do with freedom and people were tricked.' They told the journalist that they saw with their own eyes people were put in the middle of the demonstrations to shoot. They told her what they witnessed and that this is the reason why they don't support the revolution anymore - and she didn't believe them.

Not only does this extract illustrate that 'refugee voices' are ignored or not taken seriously, it also highlights how seemingly subtle references to the war have insightful meanings, if taken seriously. Here, the term 'revolution' is contested because the experiences shared by the refugees was one of oppression and suppression, not freedom. In this respect, it is important to identify and understand the ways in which certain identities are linked to, made synonymous with, and

conflated with other interests, particularly political ones. This is a necessary process in order to be able to contest which identities are made to be more subordinate, hidden, or indeed, hypervisible than others (Kahani-Hopkins and Hopkins 2002; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016b). This includes reflecting on how "*repress*-entations purposefully centralise certain groups, identities, and dynamics, while simultaneously displacing and marginalising those that challenge official accounts" (Fiddian Qasmiyeh 2014: 7). In this context, the ways in which the Syrian conflict is framed as a civil war, for instance, positions a 'for' and 'against' categorisation of the general Syrian population and in turn, conflates those who leave the country as those who must be 'against' the government. This is not only factually inaccurate in some cases but it also problematic in the ways in which it impacts inter-group contact, which will be delineated and examined in Chapters 7 and 8.

Reasserting the Importance of Refugee Representations: The Role of Institutional Actors

Refugee representations matter (Burroughs 2015; Entman 1993; Fryberg et al. 2012; van Dijk 1991). Representations influence public opinion, which play a critical role in informing perceptions and practices of welcome or rejection of refugees based on whether newcomers are considered legitimate or deserving (Lawlor and Tolley 2017). These perceptions and practices also have direct effects on policies, including tighter asylum and immigration laws (Wallace 2018; Winter 2008). Indeed, as Höijer (2004: 517) points out, representations "frame the context within which government policy is formulated and humanitarian action is mounted". In refugee and forced migration studies, the subject of refugee representation is not new and continues to be of great interest particularly since 2015. Indeed, it can be argued that refugee representations have been hyper-analysed. However, a greater understanding is needed on how representations can be at once created and observed through such processes, reasserted or changed. In this study, institutional actors often framed

themselves as being 'neutral' observers. Yet, they too are producers of it. Therefore, this section specifies how in some ways, institutional actors become (re)producers of discourses while often assuming to be merely observers (Fiddian Qasmiyeh 2014: 5).

When asked about the role of religion in responding to refugee needs and experiences and the religious identities of their beneficiaries, the vast majority of interviewees were unable to answer. As mentioned earlier, some referred to religion and religious identity as being irrelevant to their work, in the interest of impartiality, universality, or objectivity. This assumption of religion being antithetical to so-called 'secular values' in refugee support and assistance has been critiqued by a number of scholars such as Ager and Ager (2015), among others, and its effects in this study will be further explored in Chapter 8. Other interviewees shared that religion and religious identity could potentially be important to refugees but they had little or no knowledge about it because they did not want to focus on it or they did not have administrative procedures to engage with the subject matter directly. These simplistic approaches to an otherwise complex social reality cannot be disconnected from the way(s) in which refugee identities and categorisations of religion play out in different ways in German popular and political discourse. Specifically, if there is the assumption, for example that 'all Syrian refugees are Muslim' and that 'Islam is a threat,' there is therefore a tension towards Muslims that may not be equally positioned against all religion. As Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2019: 198) clarifies in a review of mainstream media coverage of national and local faith-based actors' responses to refugees in Europe, not all religious actors and faith-based responses in all geopolitical spheres are viewed with equal suspicion.

Despite the fact that there is complexity within such assumptions between 'good' religion being aligned with 'secular values', my research interviews revealed that the *actual* beliefs of their beneficiaries were expressed as being irrelevant. In some cases, religious identity is imputed upon them and it this type of interpellation of refugee identities that creates a disconnect between refugees and hosts, as will be further explored in Chapter 8.

For instance, approximately 260 people are living in a faith-based refugee centre in the East of Berlin, which opened in December 2016. A social worker from the refugee centre agreed that there are people from religious minority backgrounds at the centre but "there were no problems whatsoever, so it is okay". When probed further, for instance, whether he knows which religious minority and whether or not that identity mattered or not for the individuals and their families, he responded "no, I don't think it matters. It shouldn't matter for the work we do."

Following Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2014), Malkki (1996), Rajaram (2002), and others, it can be seen here how refugee representations go beyond merely descriptive language and must instead be viewed and analysed as constitutive and reproductive. Representations of Syrian refugees not only reflect how they are spoken about but also how they are viewed and in turn, created and responded to. This is a constitutive process, rather than simply an act of description or observation. Subsequent chapters show how these representations play an important role in informing, shaping, and impacting Syrian refugee 'religious minority' experiences. That is, how representations inform the creation and application of refugee policies and practices.

This interview, among many others, signalled a recognition of religious diversity (normally after being explicitly asked to consider its reality) without giving examples of why it was being downplayed and considered unimportant. In a separate interview with a staff member of another refugee centre, it was acknowledged that "there are different nationalities and different languages of people here" but "everybody can communicate without religion. We don't need to know the religion of people to do our work and for them to be okay here".

Dismissing the importance of acknowledging and understanding religious diversity among Syrian refugees was also expressed by a staff member at a refugee services agency. When asked if she knows the religious identity of those who visit the organisation, she replied "we don't ask, we don't ask". When asked whether she thinks there is an understanding among her staff and other refugee service

organisations of religious diversity among Syrian refugees, she responded "no, very likely not, especially among Germans. We don't know, for example, if in the building there is a Christian or Muslim or Kurd. They are all the same to us." This emphasis on blindness to religious identity being a mark of impartiality continued to be expressed throughout the interview, as was the case in many other institutional actor interviews and in my previous field research in Jordan (see Chapter 8; Eghdamian 2015a, 2016). It is also noteworthy that religious and ethnic terms and labels are conflated and mobilised as equivalents in this description, with her use of the "Kurd" identity.

However, when I asked whether newspapers and the media reflect Syrian refugees in the same way, the response shifted. On the one hand, this individual recognised that "Germans will not know that there is so much diversity in Syria" while on the other hand, dismissing the importance of emphasising or highlighting difference:

> Look, we should not heighten these religious differences between people. The war in Syria did that. The true Syrian refused the idea [of difference] from the start. Not all of them think the same as me though. Media has messed up a lot of things.

In referencing "the true Syrian", here, an institutional actor is reinforcing an umbrella term that is, as explored in Chapter 5, contested by some Syrian 'religious minority' refugees. The notion of a "true" Syrian is a form of discursive creation of Syrian identity, irrespective of the presence and realities of diversity.

When asked to explain what she meant when stating that the 'media has messed up a lot of things', she said:

> Since the beginning of the war in Syria, I do not read any German newspapers or look at German media because I know what direction they go. The goal is to overthrow Syria. It is directed media.

While some institutional actors, like this individual, explicitly noted the importance of representations, when it comes to *accurate* representations of refugees and their role in the construction or dissemination of such representations, there was a general perspective among most institutional actor interviewees that religion or 'religious identity' do not matter. Indeed, in the interview quoted above, this institutional actor said that her beliefs and perspectives may be in contradiction to or in contrast with Syrian refugees themselves but did not go further than that to explore what the identities of a 'true' Syrian refugee may be.

Here, I am not suggesting that institutional actors can represent the 'true' identities of refugees they serve or engage with. However, the overall lack of acknowledgement of how perspectives of identities can inform attitudes and practices is problematic. This includes a lack of understanding of how politics and power matter for how identity is viewed and the meaning(s) given to some identities over others. Processes of 'representing' are dynamic and multidirectional, relational and not static. This shifts attention from *what* or *who* is represented, which dominates much of refugee representation literature, and moves towards understanding *how* it is represented - a shift from focusing on the form of representations to the process(es) of representing. In doing so, the situated nature of knowledge and power can be better understood. Indeed, in different scenarios, refugees can reverse the gaze and observe the observers in everyday life, institutional encounters, and in how they develop and implement diverse weapons of the weak (Scott 2000) to respond to such representations (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, personal communication, 6 May 2019; see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2010, 2011, 2014).

When I asked institutional actors if these perspectives - that religion is irrelevant and that there is no need to know the specific religious identities of refugees - are also how refugees themselves describe themselves and how they view the importance or irrelevance of religious identity, there was either silence or a clear rejection of the importance of the question itself. For some, clarity was requested on how they could 'know' what refugees themselves think is important. One institutional actor (a refugee centre manager) said, if refugees do not mention religion in verbal

communication (in conversations or in formal interviews) or note them in official documentation, it is not "my fault for not knowing it is important to them". Four institutional actors also mentioned that 'religious affiliation' is a feature on organisational documents but they cannot 'know' if the answers that refugees give on the documents related to the question of religion are accurate or not. Indeed, there were very few organisations that asked for the information in the first place and others suggested that doing so would be discriminatory.

Yet, this was not what the question was asking institutional actors to reflect on, as religion and religious identity is not a tick-boxing exercise - to see it as such is to view it as a bounded, fixed reality. Rather, the question asks institutional actors to reflect on who gets to speak and who gets to be heard on the subject of 'religious identity'. This includes whether or not identity is of importance to refugees. Indeed, different spaces and audiences allow for or encourage different portrayals of identities. As Brubaker (2004: 17) argues, representations "are not things in the world, but perspectives on the world". The perspective that religion and religious identity are unimportant for Syrian refugees, aside from its factual inaccuracy, has significant consequences which the following chapters will explore. This section provides further insights as to different modes of representation that are engaged with and responded to in diverse ways by Syrian 'religious minority' refugees, which needs to be better understood. As an example, the notion that 'religion' or 'religious identity' are sensitive or irrelevant subjects for Syrian refugees was responded to or raised directly by Syrian refugees in interviewees.

On 'Sensitive' and 'Silenced' Topics

In contrast to the perspectives made by most institutional actors in this study, refugee interviewees challenged the notion that the subject of 'religion' or 'religious identity' was always problematic, irrelevant, or undesired.

As one Syrian Druze refugee man explained during a focus group,

> There are sensitive relationships between us [Syrians]. This we cannot deny but you know, we talk about it as a problem that can never be better. This is not true, I think. Because you see here, I am friends with other people - here {*pointing to the other focus group members*} he is a Christian and he is a Yazidi. And in other places too, I also have other friends. But you see what the problem is that this is not normal. It should be normal but it is not. I see it too much that sometimes people would not give me a job or not know how to talk to me because of being a Druze. This is silly. It is ignorance.

At this point, the Christian focus group member agreed,

> He is right. There is too much of this [ignorance]. We don't take the time to really know and we just agree with what we are told or what we hear. The media and propaganda does not help with this - it can make it worse. We have become even more divided because of it.

During one of the international dinners that I attended at a refugee agency supported by a network of churches in Germany, I introduced my research subject to a group of Syrian refugees. The dinner was not only attended by Syrians; at times, Iranians and Iraqis would also join our conversations. Of note was a reaction from one of the Syrian refugees (religious affiliation unknown) to my research subject at the close of the dinner, where he pulled me aside to talk. He said it was "very interesting" that I was looking for 'religious minorities' and asked for clarification if this meant "only Christians". When I said that it can be Christians but also anyone else - including anyone who may have no religion or is not sure of their religious faith. At this point, he stopped me and asked "even people with no religion? Really?" I said, "yes, sure, why not?" And he smiled and said,

> This is a first for me. The first time I heard of such a thing. You know, there are a lot of people talking about Muslims and then Christians and then they make it like there are only these two groups of people. Of course Syrians, we know better. Even if we don't say it. We know it is not that simple. The problem is, I think, we don't talk about it openly. A lot of the time we are scared.

This notion of the subject of my research being sensitive or avoided was noted by a number of other interviewees but despite this, no individual who was approached rejected participating in the study and giving informed consent to be interviewed. While there was some hesitation from some participants at the outset of being approached or at the beginning of interviews, they all assured me that they were willing to talk about the subject. For a young Ismaili man I interviewed in a park, it was a relief that someone was talking about it openly:

> This is very interesting that finally someone is talking about it. We don't talk about it a lot because people are scared it will cause more problems. But not talking about it also causes problems, you know? Why do we not just say it? I am an Ismaili, right? But I am not a believer of God. I don't believe anymore. But I am still an Ismaili. It does not make a lot of sense maybe to you but it is part of what happens here - we have these labels and we are stuck to them.

For some interviewees, religious identity was not a reflection of theological belief or practice but was associated with a cultural lineage or a historical past that is reflected in social factors such as family ties or geographical upbringing. Nevertheless, it mattered in ways that are not commonly understood by scholars, practitioners, or policy makers particularly because religion is so often (mis)associated with politics, nationality, or race.

Conclusion

This chapter identified three common representations of Syrian refugees in German publications across the political spectrum and among interviewees from a range of organisations: a homogenous, orientalist, and political (politicised) view of Syrian refugee identities, needs, and experiences. The existence and place of 'minority' refugee identities in particular were largely absent both from articles and accounts of and about Syrian refugees. Where mentioned, they were limited to a

Muslim-Christian binary and in many cases, presented Christians as the saviours of the otherwise problematic Muslim 'other'. These simplistic, factually inaccurate and constitutive representations of Syrian refugees are expressed and (re)produced within the context of an increasing securitisation of both religion and (im)migration in Germany. The ways that political concerns around terrorism, for example, shape and inform representations of refugees cannot be underestimated. In addition to the securitisation agenda, the *repress*entation (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016b) of Syrian refugee identities in both newspapers analysed and institutional actor interviews undertaken overlook diversity, including inter-group heterogeneity among and between Syrians. In turn, there is a hypervisibility of some Syrian identities while others are invisible or undermined.

Partial and inaccurate representations matter, yet their effects can be undermined when refugees are strategically framed in ways that institutional actors believe will serve or uphold 'secular values' of impartiality, neutrality, and universality. Indeed, how institutional actors view and perceive refugees is significant and informs how they serve or engage with refugees, as will be explored in Chapter 8. In this context, most institutional actors in this study failed to give adequate consideration as to whether or how their (mis)representations of Syrian refugees were important or significant, let alone accurate or inaccurate. By the ways they described 'religion' and 'religious identity' in relation to refugees, it was more urgent and described as being important to them to emphasise other identities of refugees. As will be further demonstrated in Chapter 8, a strong secular bias is one way that the 'failure' to consider 'religion' and 'religious identity' is justified. However, at this juncture, it is important to emphasise how many actors create and disseminate (mis)representations of 'Syrian refugees'. Even if the spheres of visibility and vision of representations are unequally positioned, they are nevertheless all important. This is particularly poignant when engaging with refugees' own representations and their responses to how they are represented by others. In Chapter 5, for example, I identified the ways in which refugees interrogate and critically engage with the 'minority' label and present alternatives to understanding it. Similarly, it is therefore apt for researchers to better understand and explore the internal heterogeneity of

refugees and religious identities, in contrast to perspectives that they are externally bounded, unitary collective actors. This includes questioning whether refugee and religious boundaries are as fixed as they are presented to be (and how they are presented to be as such), or whether and how they are produced and reproduced over time. These challenges bring attention to the construction of identities, on the one hand, and the specific role of politics in their creation, on the other hand.

The next two chapters build on this chapter by interrogating two forms of the 'effects' of representations - first, between refugees and refugees (Chapter 7) and second, between refugees and hosts (Chapter 8). Each chapter will explore the multiple ways in which representations and the 'minority label' play out in real and perceived ways for refugees - whether in relation to other refugees or to institutional actors and hosts.

Chapter 7: "They Think We Have Tails" — An Examination of 'Religious Identity' Dynamics Among and Between Refugees

Introduction

In Chapter 5, I critiqued the fictive notion of a united, single 'Syrian' identity and contested the bounded use of the 'minority' label in relation to Syrian 'religious minority' refugees as expressed by refugees themselves. In Chapter 6, I identified and interrogated homogenous, Orientalist, and political representations of Syrian refugees in the context of Germany. These two chapters outlined how and why 'Syrian refugees' and 'religious minority' refugees are represented in different ways, including how and why religious and in particular, 'religious minority' identities are marginalised or absent from representations. Building on this foundation of the nature of representations of Syrian refugees in Germany, this chapter explores how 'Syrian refugees' also represent and/or are represented by other/same/different refugees. Chapter 8 further explores and interrogates the effects and implications of these representations for 'religious minority' refugees from Syria. The first of these two chapters contributes to a significant gap in refugee and forced migration literature: examining refugee experiences through the lens of refugee-refugee relationality and identifies religious prejudice as a key theme that emerged in this study as part of a broader range of perceptions among and between refugees.

As Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2016) points out in her work on what she refers to as "refugee-refugee relationality", refugeedom is relational – not only experienced by refugees in relation to hosts (both 'everyday hosts' and institutional actors) but also through and among new and established refugees. As she notes, to date, most forced migration and refugee studies scholarship has focused predominantly on refugee-host relations without noting how and why refugees relate to other refugees and thus, how and why they are also 'hosts', even while waiting for their asylum claims to be determined. Recognising this gap in scholarly engagement, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (Ibid.: 4, own emphasis added) calls for "researchers, policy-makers and practitioners to actively explore the potential to support the development, and maintenance, of welcoming communities and communities of welcome, *whether these communities are composed of citizens, new refugees, or established refugees.*"

Within this context, this chapter identifies both the challenges to and potential for expressions and practices of welcome and hostility (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Berg 2018) among and between Syrian refugees with different religious (and non-religious) backgrounds, affiliations, and practices. Indeed, my research repeatedly identified significant accounts of religious prejudices among and between Syrian refugees, which impact and inform experiences of welcome but more directly, that of hostility. Recognising that scenes of welcome and hostility are primarily considered to be the purview of refugees and *hosts* (Ibid.), this chapter draws on the complexity of realities of refugee-refugee relationality. In particular, it identifies 'religious prejudice' as a key illustrative outcome of, but not an inevitable reality for, Syrian refugee-refugee relationality (Eghdamian 2018). In doing so, this chapter also contributes to the paucity of qualitative research in migration studies more broadly that analyses intergroup relations, identified by Trittler (2018: 17) as being sorely needed, particularly in relation to "underlying mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion".

The structure of this chapter is as follows. First, I identify how refugees (mis)represent other/same/different refugees and note the ways in which refugees

can undermine or resist the internal heterogeneity of refugee identities. I then identify religious prejudice as an expression or consequence of such (mis)representations by refugees of other refugees. Following Trittler (2018: 5), "religion provides for a specific symbolic boundary", in which processes of stereotyping (identified in Chapter 6) work within intergroup relations too and create prejudices that reinforces mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Specifically, religious prejudice emerged as a key theme within the broader range of perceptions that exist among and between refugees, which is understudied and undervalued in studies on refugee-refugee relationality. I argue that religious prejudice is often overlooked as a recurring feature of and challenge for refugee-refugee encounters. I posit that religious prejudice, left unchecked, will continue to significantly impact experiences of inclusion, exclusion, marginalisation, discrimination, and stigmatisation for both individuals and diverse groups among and between refugees. This challenge must be better understood if it is to be overcome and responded to in meaningful and appropriate ways.

In this vein, the final part of the chapter offers two lenses by which responses to religious prejudice among and between refugees may be most effective. The two approaches which are explored are 1) creating spaces for and encouraging greater social encounters between and among diverse groups and 2) the importance of recognising the multiplicity of identities, even where the identities may appear to contradictory and not falling into the trap of over-stating religious identity. These approaches have been identified both from the refugee interviews undertaken in this study and as a reflection of the vast efforts made in the social sciences exploring approaches for mitigating prejudices. I conclude by noting the nascent nature of this specific field of enquiry - that of religious prejudice among and between refugees and therefore, the need for further research into this dynamic. This includes highlighting the multiple opportunities for and urgent need to undertake further and deeper analyses of other forms of refugee-refugee relationality, in addition to or outside of religious prejudice, in different spaces.

Refugee-Refugee Relationality

This thesis has explored how refugees are represented in newspapers/magazines and by institutional actors, including through largely negative (including political and Orientalist) frames. By now focusing on how refugees represent and view other refugees it will be demonstrated how they echo and yet also go beyond the themes arising in the newspaper and institutional actor representations. By tracing commonalities it is possible, to an extent, to note how Orientalist dimensions of refugee-refugee observations persist in spaces and encounters that one can assume to be 'free' from such assumptions/framing.

To begin this review of refugee-refugee relationality, I will start with a very brief, positive note. A number of interviewees in my study overtly mentioned they have amicable relations with other Syrian refugees in Berlin. However, the majority noted that encounters with Syrian refugees outside of their religious denominations or affiliations were either entirely absent or avoided. Of course, this does not exclude the many 'regular' encounters of living in the same refugee centres or processing asylum claims in the same offices, and other everyday encounters, that are largely unproblematic. As one Ismaili refugee interviewee mentioned, "you cannot avoid them" and due to the public nature of those spaces "it is not an issue". However, when asked if there is friendship between them or if they participate in social gatherings with Syrian refugees from different backgrounds, the response was largely negative or acknowledged as only occasional or at times conditional on refugees' specific performances of their religiosity.

As explained by a male Alawite refugee during an interview also in a cafe,

> I am friends with Syrians from different backgrounds, sure. But if they do not drink [alcohol] or do not want to go out [to clubs], then it can be difficult, you know? Otherwise, we have no problem talking to each other.

This emphasis on specific social aspects, such as drinking alcohol, being related to perceptions of the degree of religiosity of others (see also Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2010), was also shared by an Ismaili refugee man during an interview:

> In Berlin, there are clusters. Clusters of people who get together and spend time and do things together because of their adopted liberal lifestyle. People from minorities, say Christians, Alawites, Druze, sometimes tend to stay with each other because they have no problems with drinking or going to a bar. That's why they can be friends with each other because they have similar habits. But if a person is not okay with drinking? This can be a problem. They want to have fun! They don't like a person around with this attitude.

Here, religion in the context of refugee-refugee relationality is socially constructed and performed (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014, 2016). The complexity of religion and religious identity in these social encounters reveal how religion is not only what it 'truly' is but what it is *assumed* to be. Indeed, it is not that there are religious refugees that "preexist the deed" of religiosity (Butler 1999: 33). Therefore, in these contexts where Syrian refugees present themselves as 'less religious' (for example, by drinking alcohol or going to bars) or make judgements of others based on the presumed 'religiosity' of another individual by virtue of social practices, we can better understand how representations of religion and religious identity are performative in nature. As an internally heterogeneous group, refugees represent other refugees in different ways, which subsequently inform and create the *relations* among and between refugees.

While some of these aspects of social life may be accurate - that some individuals do not drink alcohol because of their religious belief and practice - they are often assumed or perceived to be barriers to social engagement. My research findings indicated a tendency for individuals to assume the beliefs and practices of another by virtue of a religious affiliation. This was acknowledged throughout refugee interviews, with many sharing that they "don't know much about the religion of other people" (female Ismaili refugee, interview) and that "you can't know about the

religion of another person until you actually talk to them" (male Druze refugee, interview), yet nevertheless made certain judgments about others based on religion.

In another interview, a female Christian refugee affirmed,

> Everyone says Christians are only together but why are we only together? Because people say, 'you are Christian so you must be with Assad'. Or they think, and this is real you know, they think because I am a Christian woman that I am easy [with men] and I am not modest. I hate these things, I tell you. I really hate them. So I want to be with those people who know who I am. And that means most of them are Christians. So that is how it is.

This view of Syrian Christians, in particular, was a regular reference in refugee interviews. Indeed, these and other assumptions made about others based on religious identity was a strong and recurring feature in refugee interviews. As explored in Chapter 5, the 'minority' label can be (mis)used and appropriated by different groups to achieve certain ends. Understanding the 'minority' label, then, as a political and social *tool* can offer deeper insights into how and why certain populations are mobilised to be recognised in particular ways. The next section examines how the minority label can be used in processes of asylum and resettlement, which can inform refugee-refugee relationality including deepening discord between and among refugees.

A Politicised and Unequal Narrative: The Christian "Agenda"?

In a book on Syrian history and contemporary relations, Chatty (2018: 8) argues that Syrian Christian minorities are not leaving Syria at the same rates as Sunni Muslim groups and notes that it is unusual that there is a discrepancy in numbers between Muslim and Christian Syrians fleeing the country. Yet, in the interviews in this study, irrespective of factual (in)accuracies, the perspective or position shared in

Syrian Christian interviewee narratives was strongly the opposite. For almost all of the Syrian Christian interviewees, there was (as explored in Chapter 5) a fear of Christian physical and existential survival in Syria. Significantly, there was a strong distinction among interviewees on Christian or 'minority' survival in Syria. For all Syrian Christians who participated in this research, there was a strong premise that not only were there little or no problems for them and their communities before the war but that they had lived in the "only safe haven left" (Christian convert refugee interview) for Christians in the Middle East. Indeed, most Christian respondents sought to distinguish themselves from other Syrian minorities by way of a historical claim to the land as a haven for Christianity - that Syria was, indeed, a "cradle for Christianity" (Syrian Christian refugee woman, interview).

As another Syrian Christian woman explained, "Europeans forget that Jesus Christ came from our part of the world, not theirs. We are special. There is a goal to divide us, so that they can rule us. But they will not succeed." She continued,

> Historically, Syria's population is Christian. The first church in the world was in Syria. And the idea is to divide Syria, to divide Syria into three parts, the target is to divide the Syrian component, which is like the mosaic. Because Syria has always been targeted from the West. I don't know how to say this, no one believes us, but this is the truth. And the churches, especially the evangelical churches worked on sending invitations to Christians - like what they did in Iraq - to get them to come out.

When making a clear point to distinguish themselves (and to be viewed as distinct) from other religious minorities in and from Syria, there were strong references to targeted religious persecution after the war. For all of the Syrian Christian respondents in this research study, Syrian Christians were perceived to be at a higher risk of - or experienced greater - religious persecution than any other religious minority in Syria, particularly since 2011. For that reason alone, many argued, they required specific attention and targeted recognition. As Taylor's (2002) theory of recognition posits, what rights a community possesses or the esteem it enjoys is closely linked to what recognition it receives. Indeed, all of the Syrian

Christian participants raised the "Christian issue in Syria" (Syrian Christian male interviewee), in contrast to the experiences of other Syrians, and drew on the "Christian issue" to call for a specific recognition of Syrian rights to asylum and resettlement.

While it is not inaccurate to argue that Christians in Syria have been the subject of - and continue to experience - religious persecution since 2011, it was strongly resisted by other respondents that they were the *only* target of persecution. As one Ismaili man mentioned in an interview, after being asked if he felt that any religious minorities in Syria were at particular risk of insecurity or death:

> Can you tell me if you can be in Syria - no matter who you are - and guarantee you are safe? I don't mean anywhere in Syria, sure, but there are parts that don't have Christians, let's say, and so, what? All those people are safe?

Despite the lack of agreement among non-Christian respondents of a specific and isolated threat to Christians in Syria, there has been a clear vocalisation and mobilisation of the Christian agenda, particularly by Christian advocacy groups. One of the Syrian Druze refugee women in the focus group said her friend was being encouraged to come to Europe and linked this to a broader campaign:

> There is a goal to bring Christians here and this is why the German foreign minister suggested bringing 5000 Syrians from Beirut because he though 5000 Syrian Christians would come. But it turns out that those who came were not Christians. Syrian Christians either stay in their own area in Syria or if they have money, they go to Beirut and live there. They don't register as refugees. So now people are surprised that there are no Christians registered as refugees?

Another woman in the group, also identifies as Druze, agreed and said:

> Yes, I would remember they would send invitations to Christians to tell them to register as refugees so they could come to Germany. Only half are Christian. And anyone who says something else, is lying. They worked on

emptying Syria from its Christians. But now, there are many Christians in Syria and they are holding on.

Without questioning the validity and accuracy of the proposition that Christians are specifically targeted to be *granted* asylum and resettlement, the dynamics and rhetoric of what it means to be a certain minority in Syria has now taken on new meaning. Indeed, the minority agenda is increasingly politicised in such contexts when viewed in relation to both global shifts against and in relation to Islam, and its 'threat' to Christianity after 2011 and the rise of allegedly 'Islamist' terrorist attacks across Europe since 2015.

This shift in what it means to be a minority in Syria today is not only reflective of contemporary geopolitics but is also made possible through the vast organisational support and global social networks for Christians and Christian 'minorities' around the world. The ability to be heard and seen is not a single act of individual agency in this case but one that reflects broader systemic support for and the presence of Christian resources, support, and assistance.

The presence and promotion of a 'Christian agenda' reveals another tension in positing a universalised discourse of 'minorityhood'. The tendency to compartmentalise 'minority' groups and their associations with majority and other 'minority' groups fails to recognise the evolving nature of relations, histories, and indeed, politics of labelling. Indeed, structural changes also shift and mobilise labels in different ways.

Evoking the 'Minority' Label for Recognition, Acceptance, and Resources

The association between 'minority' and 'vulnerability' here is important to unpack further. I asked all participants the question of whether religious minorities from

Syria are more 'vulnerable' than other Syrians, and if they require (or should be given) priority in asylum applications and resettlement support. All non-Christian respondents said that this correlation between being a minority and being more vulnerable was either an exaggeration or a dangerous conflation. For Syrian Christians, however, it was important to make a statement against Islamisation and to highlight the attacks that have been made on their religious communities. Others, particularly Druze and Ismaili respondents, either failed to mention the presence of such a threat or presented it in wider terms - for example, that the presence of Daesh/Islamic State and their role in the war increased the danger for many people. For them, there was a sense that atrocities committed by Daesh/Islamic State were indiscriminate.

As a Druze Syrian refugee man explained during an interview,

> This is a kind of exaggeration, I think, and it sometimes makes more division in society by saying 'you need more protection'. I can understand it - the kind of fears among some groups more than others but not in this way to mix it with being a refugee or not. To support one group more than another group because of only religion? It is not a good idea.

The idea that only Christians are targeted in the war was also rejected in another interview with a Syrian Ismaili woman who said,

> Your religion does play a role but look, only really depending on where you are. Like, if you are in a militant area it does - like where Daesh is - it can play a role for sure. But if you, for example, I don't know, have it always in Aleppo or wherever, then no.

Her husband, also Ismaili, interrupted and, affirming his wife's remarks, continued:

> The thing is, what is happening in Syria now is a war where people accuse each other of being disbelievers, regardless if they are of some other religion or whatever. They are fighting Syrians who are open-minded - not because they are Christian or any other sect. This is the war. If you go to Damascus or

Latakia, you would wonder, wow, there are Christians, Sunni, Alawites, whatever, all living together. And Ismailis. And Druze.

In these accounts, the 'minority' label is one of political categorisations which is used to exclude people on the basis of politics, rather than on religious difference. For Christian respondents, the uniqueness of their accounts and the (real or perceived) experience of being 'targeted' was, in contrast, central to their accounts of displacement. This was similar to the dialogue and narrative presented to me by a Christian organisation, including an advocacy group, that Christian Syrians are targeted and thus, at more risk of persecution or death than other religious minority or religious majority Syrians. For them, it is religion that matters the most, which is why the sectarian narrative is useful to emphasise here.

Schmoller (2016: 420) was correct to point out that "sectarianisation is relevant in Syrian Christian identity or 'translocational positionality' in the context of both seeking refuge and integration in Europe". My findings affirm this and demonstrate that sectarianism indeed becomes relevant depending on the speaker and the audience. Indeed (Ibid. 421),

sectarianism is a discursive construct remodelled and readopted in narratives about war, refuge, integration and belonging, and thus is part of a positioning dictated by a given situation and a given location.

In Chapter 8, I further argue that these narratives are not static either and shift depending on the experiences of the host society, prospects of future 'integration', and the dynamics of sectarianism in the origin country. In contrast to the normative use of sectarianism by Schmoller (2016) and others, I posit that the term itself must be isolated from religion and religious identity, particularly in the context of this research project. Without clarity on the definitions and uses of the term, there are crossovers and misunderstandings of experiences and accounts of those experiences. In the context of this study, where there were different religious minorities participating (not only Syrian Christians), the vast heterogeneity of understanding the sensitivities of the application of the terms 'minority' and 'sectarianism' call for a

separation of the terms in very clear ways. Indeed, this requires greater specificity on how religion and sectarianism correlate in relation to 'minority' realties, and where they are entirely distinct.

Rupturing the assumption that a 'minority' group is a priori *always* more vulnerable than others challenges the notion that minority identities are objective categories. It is pertinent to note that some of the above accounts homogeneously frame minorities in social and political ways. However, for refugees who wished to emphasise the 'minorityness' of their identities, they did so in contrast to others, particularly when asking for more 'refugee rights'. For instance, in addition to illustrating their specific vulnerabilities in Syria, seven Christian interviewees used the 'minority' label to argue that, as a 'religious minority', they had a right to asylum and resettlement. Additionally, they conveyed a perception in their interviews that if they presented their minority status to the government or support staff from NGOs, it would help them better access some resources (such as accommodation) or gain recognition as 'genuine' asylum applicants. Here, it can be seen how adopting or advancing the 'minority' label can be a conscious, strategic decision that reflects (real or perceived) inequalities of opportunity and treatment. Additionally, that in order for the 'minority' label to be successful, minority groups need to be united to protect their identity and right to existence.

In the following account, a young Christian Syrian refugee man felt compelled to highlight his 'minorityness' over other aspects of his identity in order to feel accepted in Germany. When asked what he meant by 'acceptance', he explained that he felt that Christianity better reflects 'Western', liberal values that Germans and German society desires. Here, the 'minority' label was not used for legal recognition or resources:

> I always try to find an opportunity to tell a German that I am Christian. For sure. Because that way he knows, ok, so this person is like us. I can drink with him. I can...you know, you are more like what they want you to be and so why not? I tell them.

This and other accounts of presenting, performing, and asserting a desired and desirable religious identity will be further explored in Chapter 8 (Refugee-Host Relations) but suffice to emphasise at this juncture the malleability and power of perceptions of the minority label.

Therefore, highlighting a minority status can accurately be viewed as a human rights priority in terms of religious persecution, in some cases; however, it can *also* be a political or social tool for advancing geopolitical or religiously motivated agendas. Further, it can be used as a tool to gain social acceptance and carries with it a powerful symbol or 'proof' of values, culture, and associated beliefs and behaviours. Understanding the inconsistencies between these responses further reflects differences and contradictions in uses of the 'minority' label and narratives, as illustrated above, including the ways in which universalised discourses on 'minorityhood' are constructed.

'Religious Prejudice' in Refugee-Refugee Relationality

As explored earlier, I identified 'religious prejudice' as a recurring and key theme of refugee-refugee relationality, and examined its role in how refugees represent other refugees. Many of these assumptions were negative in character and included perceptions of the degree of another person's level of education or intelligence. For instance, there was a regular assumption made in interviews that the more religious someone is, the less educated they are assumed to be. This comment was made largely in reference to Syrian Muslims but also to other Syrians who practiced their religion "too much" (Syrian Ismaili female refugee, interview). Such perspectives related to the Muslim 'Other' are often framed as a Western/European Orientalist

bias. Indeed, as other scholars have pointed out (see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014),[72] refugees can and do reproduce Orientalist perspectives on other (Muslim/Middle Eastern) people(s). Yet, these were comments made by Syrians in relation to other Syrians and may be understood as a continuation of or change from accounts of life in Syria before the war. As outlined in Chapter 5, 'life before the war' in Syria was expressed in largely amicable ways, while also featuring subtle experiences of dissension and inequality. In Germany, the same interviewees shared assumptions of the 'religious identity' of other refugees, informed by their experiences in Syria. Understanding this (contradictory) dynamic, I argue, can be understood as a pattern and influence of prejudices that are informed and influenced by Orientalist views and representations by refugees themselves.

Can Arabs Perpetuate Orientalism?

"They think we have tails…", a young Syrian Druze man told me in a cafe during our three hour long interview. He mentioned this when asked if he associates with other Syrian refugees in Berlin. At this stage of the interview, I asked for clarification: "I'm sorry, what do you mean by 'tails'?". He explained as follows,

> You see, many people don't know what the Druze are. To be fair, many of us don't either! [*laughs*] So you see, this is where we start having different kinds of prejudice of each other. The most famous prejudice [against the Druze] is that they worship goats and that sometimes they have a tail in the night. That, you know, they become animals at night.

Throughout this interview and many others - not only with Druze refugees but also with Christians, Ismailis, Yazidi and Alawite Syrian refugees – my interlocutors shared numerous accounts of religious prejudices among and between Syrian refugees. These experiences were often shared towards the end of interviews, once greater familiarity and comfort was formed and the interview questions shifted to

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[72] Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's (2014) research demonstrates how Sahrawi refugees represent 'Other' Arabs/Muslims as oppressed and characterised by violence against women.

understanding experiences in Berlin during periods of transition and resettlement. Some of these accounts reveal uncomfortable experiences, perceptions, and assumptions of and between others. Despite the discomfort of these accounts, it is imperative to recognise their significance, rather than to overlook them. As Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2016: 3) points out, it is important not to idealise encounters between refugees since "they are also framed by power imbalances and processes of exclusion and overt hostility by the refugee Self...towards the refugee Other".[73] In an interview with a male Syrian Christian refugee, for instance, he referred to Syrian Muslims as "less educated" and said that they tend to be "blind followers of their religion". Throughout this interview, which was not distinct from many other of my refugee interviews, it became clear that there were tensions between different Syrian refugees based on (perceived) hierarchies of class and social status. These hierarchies and tensions were predominantly associated with the (assumed) religion or religious identity of an 'other', even where the association may not be true or accurate.

During a focus group at a refugee agency for women, a Syrian Druze woman remarked, "educated people don't ask [about religion]". When asked to clarify what she meant by this statement, she said:

> There is a certain class [in Syria] that talk about religion. They tend to be the fanatical or the simple. This is a kind of ignorance they have and shows they are uneducated. Intellectual families are more developed. That is why I say, you don't ask [about religion] if you are educated. It's normally the religious who ask. To be honest, they tend to be the Muslims that are influenced by the mosques.

In this statement, this woman notes how conceptualisations of religiosity are assumed to be reflections of (a lack of) intelligence and education, which are being made by individuals who (by and large) identify as being 'religious' in some form. This is an important contradiction to explore and better understand - refugees

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[73] This specific reflection by Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2016) was made in the context of refugees hosting other refugees but can be equally applied to refugee-refugee relationality more broadly (see also Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014).

observe other refugees and evaluate, judge, and frame other refugees in this process. Following Wright (2014: 734), here refugees "seek to subvert, challenge, and resist" representations in strategies of self-determination, thereby asserting agency (Zaman 2016) and "occupying multiple, conflicting spaces at the same time" (Wright 2014: 734). The assumptions here of particular forms of 'religion' and 'religiosity' being acceptable, while others are considered unacceptable or undesired, ruptures any notion that religious refugees (including religious minority refugees) are a homogenous or unitary set of actors that can be collectively 'studied'. Doing so risks essentialising identities and assumes that individual and group needs and experiences are transparent and readily identifiable. Rather, these interviews reveal the need to understand the constitutive nature of representations, including how Syrian 'religious minority' refugees also represent others, not only in relation to themselves but also in relation to other refugees. Acknowledging the creative, relational character of religion and religious identity representations among and between refugees therefore helps resist such essentialist traps.

The notion that refugees can also essentialise other refugees has been largely unexplored in scholarly engagement (an exception being the work of Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014, 2016a, 2017). In Chapter 6, I noted that representations of Syrian refugees by the media and NGOs often reflect Orientalist assumptions of religious identities. Positing that Syrian 'religious minority' refugees can also reflect and perpetuate Orientalist views can be understood as an extension of the racialisation of religion, which is not the sole purview of Westerners/Europeans. As Joshi (2016) points out, it is not uncommon for people to assume that they 'know' the religion of another person through their observation of "phenotypical features", such as skin tone. Additionally, a person's dress, geographical origins, family name, and accent (see also Saunders et al. 2016) are also ways of interpellating 'identities'. Indeed, refugee interviewees regularly mentioned the religious identity of 'other' refugees and many of these features and assumed identity markers were used in refugee interviews to describe difference and distance between and among Syrian refugees.

The most frequently used marker was the veil, where specifically *unveiling* - or the absence of a veil - was strongly emphasised. During a focus group at a refugee agency, for example, three Ismaili and Druze participants explicitly mentioned their rejection of the veil. This is an apt illustration of the performativity of 'religious identity'. For one of these women, it was "important to disassociate with the negative images of Islam", even where there is no expectation for or requirements of veiling within their respective religious traditions. This response resists and contests any assumption that all Syrian refugee women are veiled (see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014; Wright 2014).

For these women, while the veil was the clearest public symbol of being 'Muslim', they shared that its removal or absence is no longer a clear sign (or reassurance) of the non-Islamic nature or adherence of individuals. As such, the rejection of the veil must also be made verbally explicit and performed publicly (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014). In addition to rejecting the veil, they emphasised their non-adherence to the religion (Islam) that symbolises the act of veiling. Thus, the decision to not veil was also a normative judgment of what is a 'good' or 'acceptable' religion or refugee (Akram 2000).

Attention has been given to the heterogeneity of interpretation of the veil and (un)veiling of Muslim women, including in relation to refugees in and from the Middle East (see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014; Siraj 2011). Yet, the rejection or negotiation of the desirability of (un)veiling among *non-Muslim* women in both Muslim and non-Muslim majority refugee populations is underexplored to date. Future research exploring why and to what effect members of *non-Muslim* communities express and politicise unveiling in different ways can contribute to this understanding. Indeed, this study identifies a clear link between *rejecting* the veil and rejecting that which Islam 'represents', as explored in Chapter 6. The 'Muslim refugee' is (mis)represented as uneducated, a violent threat, and primitive Other throughout Orientalist frameworks that have relevance here in contexts of refugee-refugee relationality. The 'Middle Eastern', 'Arab', 'Syrian', 'refugee', are similarly reflected in Western/European imaginations.

Disassociations with the veil can also be linked to the ways in which religiosity was expressed by interviewees in relation to educational status, perceptions of ignorance, or a lack of intelligence. In one interview with a Christian Syrian male refugee, the interviewee expressed that "we don't like to say it, but Christians are more educated than most Muslim Syrians". During a focus group with Druze, Yazidi, and Christian men, a similar comment was shared by another Christian male refugee (and not overtly resisted or verbally rejected by the group):

> There are Arabs and Syrians that make less problems than others. It is not a nice thing to say, maybe, but we have to say it so you understand. Some Syrians, they cause problems. Look, we are not - none of us here - we are not Muslim. Okay? We do not cause these problems you see.

When asked which 'problems' he was referring to, he continued:

> The problems with the women, the problems with the children, the way they are educated. You see the violence, you see it is like animals sometimes. I know it is not all Muslims, yes. But it is many and we cannot be with them because of this. It is hard to live together.

In this extract, it is not only physical features, such as the veil, that highlight the religiosity (or absence of) among and between refugees but also aspects of socioeconomic differentiation, and broader judgements that reflect Orientalist views of the 'Muslim Other' as primitive and dangerous. It is also important to note how these extracts, relating to it being "hard to live together", contrast with relationships before the war between different groups, as explored in Chapter 5. Indeed, perceptions and thus, representations of 'other' Syrians reflect a different set of relations in different contexts.

As another interviewee, a middle-aged Syrian Druze refugee woman, further shares in the following account, being uneducated is taken to imply that one is more susceptible to religious indoctrination and manipulation. For her, the poor and the

uneducated were also the most religious who were more susceptible to fanatical religious ideas which she and others wanted to distance themselves from.

> There are many uneducated people. And here is where I see the problem of Assad and all the things you see here now with people coming from Syria here and not being to be accepted properly. If you don't fight poverty, the poor people will fight you. If you don't fight the lack of education, uneducated people will fight you. The outlying areas are where the poor and the uneducated are from. They are impressed by Saudi Arabia and all the fanatic ideas from there. They have this dream that if they can create a new world, then they will be able to build a Muslim empire. This is ignorance of the poor. This is the uneducated, you see?

As will be shown in the next chapter, the Syrian 'religious minority' refugees in this study knew that other refugees and hosts held the same (or similar) views of Islam and the 'Muslim refugee'. Indeed, many shared that Syrian Muslims were the refugees most often perceived as failing to 'integrate' into German society. Due to the increasing influence of the racialisation of religion, this often meant that all Syrian refugees were assumed to be Muslims (as I argued in Chapter 6). In that respect, 'religious minority' refugees decided to conceal or distance themselves from certain aspects of their religious identities in order to be treated with less suspicion (these and other experiences will be explored further in Chapter 8). As argued in Chapter 6, and following Saunders et al. (2016), people's 'actual' religious identity and beliefs are irrelevant to external observers who assume, for example, that Syrians are all Muslims and therefore, threats to Western, liberal societies. In light of such processes of interpellation, some refugees distance themselves, or present themselves as being distant from undesired religiosity. As one Ismaili refugee male mentioned, "I'm religious but not *that* religious".

While Orientalist critiques of perceptions and treatment of Arab populations have emphasised both the inaccuracies and biases of negative representations of 'the Orient' (Said 1979), there is also the risk and tendency of Arabs, and in this case, Syrians themselves to adopt and perpetuate Orientalist attitudes and behaviours. It can be imagined, then, how these views existed in Syria but may also be reasserted

in Europe, for reasons outlined above. The religious dynamics of Orientalism - what is considered 'traditional Arab-ness' and the incompatible differences between the West and the East/Arab world - remains a feature of Arab-Arab relations as much as between Arab-Western relations. Indeed, the prescribed scripts of what it means to be 'Arab' are contested or 're-created' (Butler 2011) by the above-cited Syrian refugee women in this study. Here, by *not* wearing the veil, they were performing a script of their (presumed) religion.

Understandings of 'Religion' in Cultural and/or Moral Terms

Indeed, what 'religion' is or is not and how 'religious identity' manifests itself can differ markedly for Syrian refugee individuals among and between a variety of 'religious' groups. As argued in Chapter 5, and further explored in the previous section of this chapter on perceptions of Syrian Christian refugees, the 'minority' label too can be highly contested, as it reflects itself in multiple and often contradictory ways.

The following excerpts illustrate how for many of the Syrian 'religious minority' refugees who participated in this study, particularly for Ismaili and Druze refugees, 'religion' was not something they identified with as a matter of ideology, faith, or theology but as a habitual cultural practice. This tendency (to have a religion but not 'practice' it) has been described by Demerath (2000: 127) as "cultural religion". Here, religion (similar to 'minority' status, as discussed in Chapter 5) can be more accurately linked to a reflection of an individual's family identity or assertion of belonging based on a geographical historical connection. As mentioned, these associations may also be identified through features such as a family surname or accent (see also Saunders et al. 2016), which are a common way to discern or make assumptions about people's identities in many parts of the Middle East (Wright 2014).

As a young Druze woman during a focus group explained:

> People say that Deir ez-Zor [the largest city in eastern Syria] is half Christian, right? The population is half Christian. But no one knows that in Deir ez-Zor, so many families - like, half of them - are called Abdallah! But that doesn't mean they are Muslim.

Another woman in the same focus group (religion unknown) continued with the link of family name with (presumed) religious identity saying, "my grandfather's name is Eissa (Jesus), but he's not Christian!" Another women (also identified as Druze) responded, "Yes, and I have two friends, Abdallah and Al-Sheikh, from Homs, and can you believe they aren't Muslim either!"

This reflection that phenotypical features and other physical or identifying markers are not a guarantee of the 'true' religiosity of another individual was nevertheless overlooked in other discussions of religion and religious identity where interviewees, when asked how they 'know' of someone's religious affiliation, mention "sometimes by their accent, or by how they dress, or if you can find out where they come from, the city they live in, or what their surname is" (a Druze male refugee interviewee).

In other cases, religion was also used in interviews as a synonym for morality or (Western/liberal) values. This was a particularly frequent reference among Syrian Christian refugees. Religion was referred to as a symbol of "goodness" and "purity" - words used in two separate interviews with female Christian refugees. These perceptions of religiosity can form the basis for the judgements of the goodness/badness or purity/impurity of others by virtue of the (perceived or real) religious identity. In the Syrian Christian refugee interviews where these normative references to religion were employed, they were often made in contrast to or in opposition with Syrian Muslims. Indeed, scholars of in-group/out-group dynamics have indicated how Christians have often contrasted themselves with (and in turn, distanced themselves from) Muslims in largely negative ways (see Strabac and Listhaug 2008).

These accounts of 'cultural religion' and forms of 'moral religion' (judgements of the purity or truth of religion) are further examples of how inclusion/exclusion perspectives of religion (as a symbolic boundary; see Trittler 2018) influence discrimination, stigimatisation, (overt or subtle) hostility, and prejudice among and between refugees based on (perceived or real) religious identity. To illustrate how these reflections of the 'other' based on religious identity can manifest in acts of exclusion, one Druze woman in a focus group discussion shared her perspective that:

> ...Syrians can be simple people. I find that Christians can be this way even though they think they are better, more European than us, or they see themselves as more educated because their family built a library instead of a mosque in the city. And even here in Berlin, they will take their children to some places where others do not go. I even know they take their children on class trips so they don't go with the non-believers. They don't want their children to be with others.

These extracts further show how (perceived or real) religion and 'religious identity' can be divisive for and among refugees and manifest themselves in attitudes and practices of religious prejudice. However, a cautionary note is needed here. Religion itself is not a priori the cause of dissension. It is how it is viewed, used and manipulated to be a source of division among people. The notion that religion can be a symbol of diversity, instead of division, was shared in one particularly poignant interview with a Syrian Christian man. In his interview, he reflects on how difference can be rethought of as diversity and highlights the significance of language and how it can shape cohesive or disunited social relations:

> For us [Syrians], diversity enriches us. We are proud of this diversity. In the past, we would show it without having to talk about it. We would go and eat Armenian sandwiches, and Syrian dessert from Homs… this diversity, we are proud of it. This is what we say to Germans when they say that the root of our problem is diversity - no it's not. This is not the case. It is how we talk about diversity. That is what matters. It is how we misuse diversity. We ruin it for ourselves and for others. We have done this. We have seen how it has been.

We now say our diversity is our problem because it is what makes us different. It was not our problem before but now it is? Why? We have to think about this! Because we have made it a problem.

In addition to highlighting how religion and 'religious identity' can be a source of division or diversity among and between refugees, interviewees also share ways that religious prejudices among and between refugees can be countered.

Building on the insights of Chapter 5 specifically, the next section examines refugee-refugee relationality through through a focus on how 'religious minority' refugees perceive each other and the dynamics of minority politics in refugee resettlement. The role that Syrian Christian persecution in particular plays into perspectives of minorities is critically interrogated. Having examined perceptions and applications of the term in understanding pre-war and post-2011 Syria in Chapter 5, it is necessary to understand its uses and implications in processes of asylum and resettlement - as explored here, in the context of refugee-refugee relationality and how Syrian 'religious minority' refugees can present the degree of other Syrian refugees' "minorityness". The next section further illustrates the inconsistencies and contradictions of the 'minority' label as both a political and social tool for recognition, reaction, and at times, access to resources. It does so by identifying how interviewees responded to religious prejudice among and between refugees, for instance by 'mixing' and sharing powerful examples of support to one another.

Responding to 'Religious Prejudice' Among and Between Refugees

> When you grow up, sometimes you don't know if you can build your identity without prejudice against other people. So this is part of the whole process of trying to build your own identity; or, at least, how people let you build your identity.
>
> (Young male Syrian Druze refugee, interview)

While this study did not set out to test methods and approaches to overcoming religious prejudices among refugees, a number of references on how to do so nevertheless emerged in my refugee interviews. Predominantly, participants spoke of the importance of social contact, while also mentioning that inter-group mixing *alone* does not 'solve' the issue of religious prejudices they have experienced.[74] As a young Ismaili woman mentioned,

> I assure you, from the beginning, that in Syria people live with each other. But they don't know a lot about each other. So at the end, I mean...how can you counter this kind of prejudice without knowledge? Without real knowledge, I mean. Letting people have the right information. I see some of it now that some young people are trying to learn, the younger generation. It is not easy but for many of these young people, they are now questioning their belonging or, you know, how they should identify themselves.

As this interview reflects, it is not enough to encounter 'the other' but it is imperative to have *meaningful* encounters with each other. As Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh (2018) discuss the etymology of 'neighbour' in Arabic, invoking Jean-Luc Nancy's 'Being With' and 'Being Together', having spatial proximity does not itself imply or

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[74] There are a number of social science studies that also posit the importance of inter-group mixing in order to challenge prejudicial attitudes, assumptions and practices (see Burch-Brown and Baker 2016; Couzin-Frankel 2017; González and Brown 2016; Hässler et al. 2018; Laurence et al. 2019; Paluck 2009, 2016; Wagner et al. 2008). One of these studies focuses on immigrants and immigrant-host relations (Couzin-Frankel 2017) but does not examine specific forms of prejudices - for example, religious prejudices as distinct from, or in relation to, racial, ethnic, or other prejudices.

ensure meaningful social encounters free from underlying or overt antagonism. A neighbour can be at once "a stranger, friend, supporter, ally, or hypocrite" (Ibid.). Bearing this in mind, in light of Derrida's conceptualisation of 'hostipitality', it can be understood how encounters can be mundane and every day, not necessarily 'meaningful', peaceful, or welcoming, and that there is more required in order to be 'neighbourly' (Ibid.). Indeed, to be 'welcome' or 'unwelcome' in a host society and in refugee relations too, there is a need to also understand the "new hierarchy of refugee-ness" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016a: 9), whereby (quoting Nancy 2000: 60), "togetherness and being together are not equivalent".

For almost all of the refugees in this study, except for two Christian interviewees, 'religious identity' was not described as being the *sole* contributor to either cohesion or disunity among and between individuals and groups. For some of the refugees in this study, it mattered at times in urgent ways; for others, it did not matter at all. Indeed, it is important to recognise that some spaces, contexts, and experiences over-emphasise or exaggerate religion's role in refugee experiences where it may be mitigated or viewed alongside other factors. An intersectionalist analysis is helpful here to show how specific 'religious identity' markers intersect with and are situated within specific contexts. Specifically, how numerous other identity markers frame and constitute "experiences and representations of, and responses to, refugees" (Saunders et al. 2016: 16). Other identity markers include but are not limited to class, sexual orientation, gender, and age, as well as "by corresponding power structures such as xenophobia, classism, Islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia, and ageism" (Ibid.).

As a Syrian Druze woman recalled, while sharing about an international dinner we both attended at an FBO, there are times when religion takes a back-seat or is viewed positively in a context fuelled by dissension and differences and sectarian rhetoric:

> In that room [during the dinner], we had Alawites, Sunnis, Christians, and Druze. We ate and drank together. I remember when my mother passed away two months ago. My family called me and told me that our neighbours, an Alawite family, opened up their garden to host the people that were coming

to pay their condolences because our house wouldn't fit anyone. Is that not something? That is something.

A young Christian male Syrian refugee shared an encounter of his father being treated by a doctor in Berlin:

> When we arrived at the hospital, for some reason, and I still do not know why, the doctor asked my father of his religion. I think this caused flashbacks or something for him because my father was afraid to say he is Christian. Interesting, isn't it? But he did and then the doctor just said he wanted to make him comfortable and asked if there is anything else he wanted to tell him. Sometimes you feel you can't trust people because of religion and all these things. Then sometimes you realise, you are wrong. And it doesn't matter that much.

This reflection, in which a powerful example of support is shared, is a reminder of the imperative to acknowledge the myriad ways in which multiple identities can overlap and how, at different points of time, or in certain circumstances, specific identities may take precedence over others (Garnett and Harris 2013; Grosfoguel et al. 2015; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014; Saunders et al. 2016). However, it is similarly important to recognise that despite the presence and realities of multiple identities, social perceptions of identities remain largely fixed on categorising groups of people, rather than looking at specific individuals. Scholars such as Posner (2005: 4) argue that in these situations, individuals often 'choose' an identity they feel is most strategically 'appropriate' in any given moment among the repertoire of identities available to them. Rather than thinking of this identity choice as a rational process, however, I argue that it can be more accurately understood as a way of 'performance', whereby identities are creatively reconstructed as they are selectively applied (Goffman 1959). This is perhaps most effectively demonstrated by discussions on the veil and selected social practices of, for example, drinking alcohol. This complexity will be further explored in the next chapter, examining how Syrian 'religious minority' refugees may emphasise or downplay some identities over others in accordance to what they perceive an audience in the host society expects or desires, and indeed, in relation to how hosts react or respond to certain identities.

Conclusion

The role and influence of refugee-refugee relationality, and the specific dynamics of religious prejudice in particular among refugees, is an underdeveloped area of scholarship. To date, the subject of religious prejudice for refugees has often been limited to identifying, highlighting and engaging with the challenges of Islamophobia between and against refugees (see for example Golebiowska 2018; Cowling and Anderson 2019; cf Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014), overlooking other religious groups and forms of refugee-refugee prejudices. Indeed, refugee-host encounters are largely assumed to be the site of prejudice and even within this framework, the 'host' is considered as being exclusively non-refugees.

Nuances and intricacies require sustained focus and deeper understanding. I argue that, going beyond reductive and simplistic in-group and out-group narratives, it is imperative to understand the heterogeneity of refugees, rather than viewing and studying 'them' as a unitary group. I reiterate that there are many refugee "selves" and refugee "others" and highlight that their interactions require further in-depth exploration to be understood in all their complexity. In other words, there is a need to identify and understand refugee *inter-group* and *intra-group* heterogeneity. Throughout my interviews, refugees referred to different categories of 'selves' and 'others' and were conscious of when they were misrepresented or misunderstood, particularly in the media. In turn, what refugees themselves consider to be the most significant and defining feature(s) of their identities and social relations can be lost or ignored in the media (and as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, by institutional actors), with consequences. Indeed, seeking 'real' knowledge does not purport to qualify or finalise the 'truth' of the 'other' but to explore multiple notions of identity and their myriad, even conflicting, relations to belonging and society building.

The Syrian 'religious minority' refugees who participated in this study recalled and shared experiences and views that risk perpetuating the stigmatisation, discrimination, and exclusion of Syrian refugees on the basis of (real or presumed) religion and 'religious identity'. That is, relationships between Syrian refugees from diverse backgrounds and affiliations can be fractured when their 'religious identities' are misunderstood, misappropriated, or inaccurately assigned - including by refugees themselves. I posit that religion, as a symbolic boundary, lays the foundation for underlying mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion to be formed and perpetuated. Here, religious prejudice is a manifestation of this inclusion/exclusion dynamic, which in this context is formed through and perpetuated by misinformation, a lack of meaningful social encounters, and a misunderstanding of the multiplicity and intersectionality of identities.

As identified and explored earlier in Chapter 5, such misinformation is not 'new' but also existed in pre-war Syrian relations and have travelled with Syrians across borders, albeit reinterpreted, rescripted, and re-cited in different ways. Similarly, it can be seen how Orientalist assumptions identified in Chapter 6 *about* Syrian refugees can be further reflected between and in relation to other refugees *by* refugees, sometimes contesting the very notions of Orientalism while at other times, reinforcing them. In some ways, these Orientalist assertions are specifically accentuated in the context of Europe, as demonstrated above.

Therefore, appropriate responses to religious prejudices among and between refugees require a resistance to essentialist traps in group representations. This involves understanding the performativity of 'religious identity' as both a creative and relational process. Indeed, there is a need for researchers and scholars to further explore the dynamics of refugee-refugee relationality in diverse settings, particularly within the same city or spaces - including but not exclusive to refugee camps, refugee centres, and refugee accommodations. In the context of Berlin, Syrian

'religious minority' refugees apply and respond to specific discourses[75] of 'religion' and 'religious identity' when deciding to interact with, or in the process of interacting with, 'other' Syrian refugees. These readings of presumed or real religious identities inform experiences and encounters, which have been largely described to me in negative terms. Such negativity and hostility is not inevitable however (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016b), and any presumption that dissension among Syrian refugees is unavoidable should be contested (Eghdamian 2018).

The overall findings of this chapter indicate that there is an urgent need to rethink the portrayal and representations of 'Syrian refugees' - not only by 'others' but also by Syrians and Syrian refugees themselves. As noted by my interviewees, an open discussion among and between Syrian refugees can assist in this process. In particular, exploring how labels and categories are used in particular ways to connote what may be more accurately understood as a cultural habit or a moral claim, for example, can help to demystify, de-Orientalise, and (re)correct misunderstandings of specific 'religions' or 'religious identities'. This includes, in the context of Syria, interrogating the single notion that 'only' Christians are persecuted. There is also a Christian experience and fear of persecution, irrespective of factual (in)accuracy. These are not mutually exclusive understandings but the conflation of them can be both simplistic and inaccurate. Reconceptualisation is no easy task; but research to date, which explores the mitigation of prejudices in other contexts, has demonstrated that it is possible.

The importance of understanding the realities of religious prejudices in refugee-refugee relationality is important in relation to Syrian 'religious minority' refugees' 'integration' in Germany. Prejudice, at its core, disrupts social cohesion, and is thus antithetical to any process or outcome of 'integration,' for refugees are not only welcomed or rejected in any given space, they also exist and live and move alongside and with 'others' like and unlike themselves. As Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2016)

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[75] To reiterate, in this study, following Foucault (1980), 'discourse' is referred to as a system of thought that is composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs, and practices that people use to systematically construct the objects and worlds of which they speak and in which they act.

points out, drawing on Jean-Luc Nancy's (2000) theoretical lens of "being together" or "being with" (see also Berg and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2018: 4), refugee-refugee relationality does not have to be exceptional. Rather, it can be characterised and understood ordinarily, through everyday encounters and processes of belonging. While this includes sites of contention and tension when external and internal categorisations of 'refugeeness' and (perceived or real) 'religious identity' negatively affect individuals or groups within each and both categories, it also includes opportunities and realities of welcome, care, and solidarity. Greater understanding of diverse relations and how they are framed, responded to, and (re)constructed helps highlight how different opportunities and constraints can lead to various degrees of solidarity and 'integration', or division and conflict.

The following chapter builds on these insights by examining structural and organisational contexts of divisions *within* groups of both refugees and hosts, including the multiplicities and complexities of their relations to each other in processes of 'integration'. As noted in this chapter *between* refugees, religious prejudices and divisions are also often hidden or undermined by institutional actors. I explore how this can be understood as a result of a dominant institutional focus on the 'refugeeness' of individuals as a homogenous group, while also reflecting a secular bias that rejects or undermines the importance and dynamism of religion's role in diverse refugee identities, experiences, and needs. Indeed, like religion, a secular bias can also be a symbolic boundary (here, of national belonging) in which religious majorities and minorities can be symbolically excluded from being full members of a society (Trittler 2018). This is particularly pertinent in the context of Germany where the national community is strongly defined in secular terms.

Chapter 8: Refugee-Host Relations in Processes of So-Called 'Integration' — Does 'Religious Identity' Matter?

Introduction

An overarching premise of this study is that (mis)representations of 'refugees' and their (presumed or real) 'religious identities' have very real effects for 'religious minority' refugees. As identified in earlier chapters, multiple and at times overlapping or contradictory forms and modes of 'religious identity' are experienced and narrated in different ways by diverse actors, including refugees. This means that each 'representation' is not a reflection of an 'authentic' identity or a presentation of the 'essence' of any person. Rather, each 'religious identity' is narrated and experienced, represented and performed, adopted and/or rejected, by and through different contexts. Religious identity is thus, malleable and contextual, rather than fixed or static.

Building further on this foundational premise, this chapter examines how 'religious minority' identities among Syrian refugees shift and alter according to different *refugee-host* audiences, settings, and relations. It does so in two parts.

Recognising the plurality of 'hosts',[76] I first examine refugees' encounters with hosts through the lens of 'everyday hosts,' which includes established migrant communities in Berlin. It does so by examining the ways that encounters with 'everyday hosts' have been presented and narrated in my interviews with Syrian 'religious minority' refugees. In turn, the chapter turns to a focus on refugee-host relationality within the context of institutions, in which 'institutional actors' are also framed as hosts. Insights are presented primarily through an analysis of my interviews with institutional actors who respond to refugee needs and experiences in Berlin, including staff from faith-based organisations, religious advocacy groups, refugee centres, and NGOs providing services to refugees. In line with other scholars who have critiqued the secular gaze of humanitarianism and development, particularly in regards to refugee populations (see for example, Ager and Ager 2015, 2017; Eghdamian 2016; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011, 2015; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Ager 2013; Kidwai 2017; Mavelli and Wilson 2016), I argue that the assumptions of and commitments to strictly secular identities (of refugees) and spaces (for refugees) continue to inform and shape responses to refugees. This includes how secular identities and spaces inform how and why some refugee programmes and activities are created, applied, and sustained. These, I argue, in turn impact how the experiences of refugees are viewed, understood, and responded to.

Indeed, building on the insights gained on (mis)representations of 'Syrian refugees' in Chapter 6, this chapter further counterposes how refugees are 'represented' by different actors with how refugees themselves understand how they are represented by hosts, including 'other' Arabs. Specifically, it contributes to the paucity of

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[76] I chose not to use the highly contested term 'citizen' here. For the purposes of this study, 'citizenship' does not encapsulate the varied legal, political, cultural, and social categories of 'non-citizens' who nevertheless encounter refugees in Germany (see Brubaker 1992 and Mandel 2008). While the term 'citizen' may simply be used to refer to any individual not legally considered to be an asylum-seeker or refugee, nevertheless, there are individuals who socially, linguistically, or conceptually can be considered 'legal' citizens but adopt or consider themselves as holding refugee identity, such as in established refugee/migrant communities. As Barret and Sigona (2014: 286) argue, "migration muddles the distinction between insider and outsider and unsettles consolidated categories of analysis of citizenship and alienage". Therefore, the use of the term 'hosts' here seeks to overcome such exclusions and permits hybridities or multiplicities of identities. 'Hosts' is employed in this study as an umbrella concept referring to any individual, group, or institution in Germany whom refugees meet, engage with, or otherwise encounter in processes of 'integration'.

qualitative research on the meaning of 'religious identities' as "symbolic boundaries" (following Trittler 2018) for intergroup relations and processes of inclusion and exclusion. By "symbolic boundaries" I refer to how an individual is seen as a "legitimate member" of a national community and the extent to which "religion is used to define these boundaries" (Trittler 2018: 2; see also Lamont 2000; Lamont and Molnár 2002; Wimmer 2008). Most research to date on religious boundaries in relation to 'integration' (or national belonging) are either quantitative (see Jones and Smith 2001) and/or focus primarily on Muslim minority experiences in Christian majority host populations in Europe or North America (Adida, Laitin, and Valfort 2013; Brüß 2008; Carol 2016; Carol et al. 2015; Foner and Alba 2008; Koenig 2005, 2007; Kunovich 2006; Phalet et al. 2015; Trittler 2017, 2018). Examinations of how symbolic boundaries inform processes of 'integration' for non-Muslim religious minority refugees, therefore, is lacking.

As mentioned, each part of this chapter examines refugee-host relationality within a broader context of so-called 'integration'. The focus on 'integration' here is both timely and urgent in light of contemporary policy, political, and public debates surrounding 'integration' across Europe.[77] In particular, how such debates inform the creation and sustainability of refugee programmes and where the onus of responsibility is placed for achieving 'integration' outcomes. The latter part of this chapter builds on critiques and limitations of 'integration' as a model of responding to arrivals. However, given the dominance of 'integration' in (im)migration debates, the concept is first focused on and empirically explored. As outlined in the key debates chapter earlier in this study (Chapter 2), 'integration' is viewed in different ways depending on political and social agendas and allegiances (Ager and Strang 2010; Ndofor-Tah et al. 2019). In that review of key debates, I noted the complex and

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[77] For instance, former UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair, argued in an interview in April 2019 that when migrants fail to 'integrate', it is a failure of 'multiculturalism' (Savage 2019). Blair argues it is the responsibility of migrants to integrate and they need to be compelled to do more to integrate because it is not a choice but a responsibility to do so (Ibid.). In Germany, the Christian Democratic Union party politician Norbert Lammert argued in 2017 that arrivals should also adapt to the German *Leitkultur* (the presumed dominant 'German culture') and not simply learn the language or other 'markers' of integration (Mende 2017). Such statements are indicative of a wider burden of responsibility placed on (forced and other) migrants to 'integrate' rather than a critique of the meanings and usefulness of the term itself. This includes when 'successful integration' stories are shared, which reinforces the notion of it being a desirable or attainable goal (see Reuters 2018).

contentious nature of the term and yet, its centrality to "debates over the rights, settlement, and adjustment of refugees" (Ager and Strang 2010: 590).

In Germany, there is a state-mandated 'integration' course for migrants and asylum-seekers/refugees by which 'successful integration' is measured. If an individual participates in and completes a 600-hour language course and a 60-hour orientation course, they are deemed by the authorities to have 'integrated' into German society. The orientation course consists of a number of lessons on "German society", which includes its legal system, history and culture; rights and obligations in Germany; ways of co-existing in society; and values of German society (Bathke 2019). It is the responsibility of migrants and refugees to attend the courses. Despite this being the primary measure of 'integration' in Germany, throughout my interviews with both refugees and institutional actors, neither of these integration courses were mentioned. It became clear that, in their view, 'integration' was not a tick-box exercise - it is not 'simply' a process of (or towards) 'assimilation' (Silj 2010). Rather, my interlocutors conceptualised integration as consisting of a wider dynamic, including subjective perceptions and experiences of social, economic, and political realities.

Here, it is helpful to distinguish between top-down, state-centric 'integration' (as exemplified by these courses) and bottom-up, civil society driven 'integration'. For example, some refugees felt that even after they learnt conversational German, they nevertheless felt estranged from the host community. This tension and contradiction reflects scholarly, political, and public debates and interrogations of the meaning and usefulness of the term 'integration' and its narrow applications (Mestheneos et al. 1999; Phillimore and Goodson 2008; Hovil 2014; Funk 2016; Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore 2018; Lenner and Turner 2018). As a highly contested concept (Ager and Strang 2008, 2010; Ndofar-Tah et al. 2019), this chapter builds on scholarship to date critiquing narrow 'integration' indicators and measures. Drawing on the insights offered in interviews, it further highlights the ways in which refugee 'integration' in Germany goes beyond these two courses and requires a deeper understanding of the multiplicities of refugee-host encounters and the

(re)constructions of identities and spaces for both refugees and hosts. As mentioned, the final section interrogates the conception that 'integration' is the most desirable or only model of responding to and engaging with the arrival of diverse populations in pluralistic societies. It draws on initial insights in contributions to understanding multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism and superdiversity as ways of engaging with refugee-host relationality that rethink 'identity' and the place of bounded notions of nationhood and belonging (Baban and Rygiel 2017; Bock and Macdonald 2019).

Refugee-Host Relationality: 'Everyday Hosts' and Limits to Germany's 'Welcoming Culture'

When Germany's Chancellor, Angela Merkel, announced in early September 2015 that Germany would accept over 1 million Syrian refugees, there was a national and global outbreak of both praise and outcry (Amann et al. 2015). On the side of praise, there was a perception that Germany was - in contrast to other nations in Europe and the 'West' - a welcoming country, reflecting a 'welcoming culture' (*Willkommenskultur*) (Funk 2016). Relative to other European states' rejection of and reaction to the arrival, processing, and acceptance of asylum-seekers at their borders, this may be viewed as an apt characterisation. Nevertheless, notions that Germany has a 'welcoming culture' has also been strongly critiqued and interrogated (Czymara and Schmidt-Catran 2017; Funk 2016; Jäckle and König 2017; Liebe and Glenk 2018) as the realities of refugee experiences of arrival and resettlement in Germany became clearer. Indeed, the extent to which 'welcome' policies and practices were politicised, politically driven, and in turn, politically manipulated are important issues to examine (Funk 2016). Once the realities of arrival and 'welcome' of Syrian refugees became better known, criticisms of the acceptance of a million refugees became subsumed in resistances to and attacks on migration and asylum-seekers altogether. 'Welcome' soon became conditional (Czymara and Schmidt-Catran 2017). In order to maintain the 'welcome' of Germany, refugees need

to meet certain criteria; and throughout this process, they need to be (unconditionally) grateful (Ibid.). As one institutional actor, a staff member from an NGO offering services to refugees, shared in an interview: "they [refugees] complain too much. They are given things; we help them but then, instead of being grateful, they ask for more."

This notion that refugees are 'welcomed' but must be grateful and benevolent has been examined by other scholars, for example through the Derridean lens of 'hospitality,' 'hostility' and 'hostipitality' (Berg and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2018; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016a; Saunders et al. 2016; Zaman 2016, 2017). Chapter 7 examined this dynamic within the context of refugee-refugee relationality. In this section, I explore how refugees view and experience Germany's so-called 'welcoming culture' in relation to hosts that are not 'obligated' to serve them but amongst and with whom they live. I interrogate how the conditions of 'welcome' operate in refugee-host encounters and through different (overlapping, contradictory) versions of 'others' and 'selves.' Throughout, this section critiques the notion that 'integration' occurs in a series of state-mandated courses. Rather, 'integration' happens, or does not happen, in and through everyday encounters (and the resistance to them), including perceptions of and within these encounters. At its heart, the question of hospitality is an ethical question (Zaman 2017) and therefore, it is not a merely quantifiable notion. While this process is by now widely recognised in social science and humanities research into refugee's experiences in European countries, for instance, the key contribution made by this chapter is to focus on the roles that religious identity does, or does not play in these processes. Following Trittler (2018), the following sections illustrate how symbolic boundaries can impact intergroup (refugee and hosts) relations in both subtle and overt forms - from hostility and discrimination to everyday encounters of welcome or rejection.

The next section begins by identifying perceptions of prejudice by "German" hosts. In doing so, it demonstrates how demarcations by 'religious identity' can inform conversations, relations, and a sense of belonging between hosts, including Arab and non-Arab migrant populations, and refugees. It is important to bear in mind that

interviews with institutional actors occur within a context in which questions of national belonging and its relationship with religious identity is particularly complex, sensitive, and indeed political. The histories of the Nazi dictatorship and its treatment of minorities, and the subsequent impacts of the Berlin wall and its fall, as well as the situation of 'guestworkers' (*Gastarbeiter*) in Germany all coalesce into a complicated relationship of 'Germans' with what it means to be "German". Although no institutional actor interviewee in this study expressed unease with the interviews or the interview questions, I am cognisant that what some individuals shared with me could have been self-censored. Nevertheless, what follows reflects some of the difficulties and complexities of the 'integration' question, which can also be understood in relation to Germany's history of (forced and other) migration.

Social Encounters in 'Integration'

'Integration' is not possible without engaging with the host population (Ager and Strang 2010). The desire to avoid the creation and maintenance of isolated communities on the basis of certain identity markers is a notable priority for state actors, insofar as isolation can further entrench social inequalities - particularly among refugee populations (Katz et al. 2016). Engagement therefore involves encounters, and encounters have dynamics and complexities of priorities, opportunities, and indeed, prejudices (Berg and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2018). While refugee-host prejudices are often the assumed sites of prejudice *against* refugees, within this framework, 'hosts' are often considered homogeneously. What will be demonstrated in the following extracts is that prejudice is relational for a range of different actors. While the emblematic model of prejudice may be that "the white Germans do not like Arabs" (Syrian Druze refugee interview), my research shows that the encounter is not 'just' between white Europeans and Arab 'others' but also between established migrants who come to be or are seen as European hosts and who also reproduce or embody systems of prejudice and rejection (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, personal communication, 6 June 2019).

As one Syrian refugee from an Ismaili background but who identifies as an atheist shared, "they say, it's our problem if we don't meet any Germans. But trust me, I have tried. They don't want to be my friend." Here, "Germans" is a label used to connote difference - Germans as an 'other'. It is necessary to unpack further this label as used by other refugees and the ways that refugees also imagine and represent others, which can be understood as a *response* or *in conversation with* the ways refugees are 'represented' in publications or by institutional actors (as discussed in Chapter 6). Indeed, many of my refugee interviewees described themselves as being different to Germans (the 'other'). For instance, during a focus group with four men (1 Druze, 2 Christian, and 1 Yazidi), all of them mentioned they do not have friendships with any 'Germans'. When I asked what they meant by "Germans", the Druze man responded:

> It is not only the white Germans, if you know what I am saying. The ones you can look at and say, yes they are the Germans. I mean also the Germans who have *become* German. The ones who have been here for a long time, but *they used to be like us*. You know? (emphasis added)

This reflection is relevant and important as it highlights how nationality is more than ethnicity, race, or regional origin. One can 'become' German irrespective of this 'origin', even though many of these 'new Germans' will have difficult experiences of racialisation, racism, violence or different forms of discrimination or prejudices because they are not 'white' "Germans". Indeed, in contrast to the "right of blood" conception of German nationhood, here Syrian refugees describe "Germanness" in ways that go beyond being simply 'born' a German, and rather describe a conception of 'becoming' German.

The Yazidi man in the focus group continued,

> ...also the other Arabs. The ones that are here for a long time but even if the Germans don't accept them, they think they are Germans and so they don't accept us.

Here, "Germans" are framed not 'only' as 'white' people that 'look' "German" but also include established migrant 'Arab' communities that consider themselves, and are viewed by refugees as being, "German". A key defining feature of Germanness expressed in many interviews was how it is linked to whether or not a refugee is accepted by 'them'. Indeed, rejection of refugees became embedded in the notion of a German identity throughout interviews. That is, a "German" is someone who does *not* accept the refugee, which is antithetical to the 'welcoming culture' it was purported and presented to be.

The notion of acceptance was a recurring feature of refugee interviews but also in institutional actor interviews. "There are people who don't like Arabs", said an institutional actor interviewee from an NGO supporting refugees in Berlin. It is noteworthy that distinctions between 'everyday hosts' groups (i.e. Arab and non-Arab 'Germans') was clearly and readily made by refugee interviewees as individuals they "meet or speak to as we live our lives outside of the centres or when we don't need the direct help" (Syrian Christian refugee interview). On the one hand, refugee interviews indicated that the 'white Germans' almost entirely did not accept them - with a few exceptions of interviewees saying they made one or two friends with 'white Germans' who worked at refugee centres or as volunteers. This was particularly the case with refugees who attended events at an NGO that offers bi-weekly language classes where members of the public would come and have conversations with refugees in a social atmosphere. On the other hand, the 'Arab Germans' who many Syrian refugees assumed would accept them on their arrival, also did not do so.

As one Syrian Ismaili man explained in an interview at a cafe,

> Even though some people think that it is only the 'white' Germans who see us differently, actually.. sometimes I feel it is the other Arabs who see us even worse. They think they are better than us. They think we are ignorant and they are smarter. One said to me, I swear he said - 'you (Syrians) came and make it bad for the rest of us'.

In this extract, the interviewee notes that being rejected by other Arabs was more hurtful than the 'expected' rejection of a 'white German'. Yet, as explored in Chapter 7 on refugee-refugee relationality and dynamics of refugee prejudice among and between refugees, it is also clear that Syrian 'religious minority' refugees also reject other Arab and/or Muslim refugees or migrant communities. Building further on the insights of Chapter 6, it can be understood how distancing between groups identified as a stereotypical, homogenised "Arab" or "Muslim" is an attempt to also resist or avoid the discrimination that can come with such stereotyping and interpellation (Lukasik 2019).

Rejection was not a singular experience and was viewed and explained with reference to both direct (such as by assaults or attacks) and indirect (for example, the absence of any encounter or the isolation of encounters) processes. A number of interview extracts help illustrate these forms of rejection more clearly. In one instance, a refugee shared that he was physically attacked on a train by a 'white German' who punched him and said he did not like refugees. In another instance, similar to the account shared above, one interviewee described the experience of refugees passing by shops in predominantly 'Arab' neighbourhoods as "feeling scorned". As one Syrian Druze interviewee said,

> I feel like they [Arabs] see us refugees as a 'burden' and they tell us we are a 'problem' because we [Syrian refugees] have changed perceptions of *Arabs* more generally.

Here, exclusion and rejection included subtle forms of disrespect, an unfriendly look, or the avoidance of social encounters (see also Brüß 2008). In trying to understand *why* rejections happen, it was important to recall how Syrian refugees are viewed and (mis)represented by both media and institutional actors, as outlined in Chapter 6 and how these perceptions inform the 'welcoming' or hostile atmosphere in contexts of receptivity. Perceptions of Syrian refugees were strongly impacted by political events on both national and international levels and as representations of

their identities became further homogenised in the media and through political discourse; this was also reflected in how they were rejected and their own awareness of the environment perceiving them as threats, even if 'only' symbolically. To illustrate, a refugee student was denied accommodation by a landlord after the New Year's Eve sexual assaults in Cologne simply because he was a Syrian refugee. An institutional actor who works with Syrian refugees at an NGO recalled the incident:

> A friend of mine had a room in her home and wanted to rent it out for a refugee, and so she called me and asked, "Do you have any refugees who need a room?" I said, I don't have refugees right now, but I have a student, a university student who needs a room. She was like, "no I want to rent it out for a refugee". And then after 3 or 4 months, after the [New Year's Eve] incident, I called her up and told her I have a refugee looking for a room… And what was her response? "I'll take the student"[*laughing*]. And this is the answer to your question about how Germans actually see Syrian refugees here.

This account shows the ways that representations of Syrian refugees impact whether or how they can encounter hosts and in turn, whether or how they can 'integrate' in society as well as how symbolic boundaries can be directed against religious minorities irrespective of the factual (in)accuracy of such perceptions. If - as the example shows - there is a resistance to meet Syrian refugees by virtue of a perceived threat to safety, for instance, then it is not possible for 'integration' to occur practically or meaningfully. This is relevant for understanding how 'religious identity' is used in such a situation and its intersectionality with other forms of identity, such as gender (Wright 2014). Male refugees, for example, are perceived as threats on international, national and personal levels; and refugees from the Middle East assumed to be Muslim in a context of increasing securitisation (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016b; Mavelli and Wilson 2016) are also assumed to be men. The gender-religion-asylum nexus, then, can multiply or increase perceptions of threat and hostility, even if individuals are not Muslim or are not hetero/sexual predators (see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016b).

The influence of the media in shaping refugee-host encounters and relations was further explained in a focus group with Syrian Druze and Syrian Ismaili refugee women. Understanding that rejection or estrangement comes from not knowing about others, one woman shared:

> The Germans who knew Syrians before the war, know that the Syrians are educated and good people, different people, people coming from an important country and civilisation - this is before the war. After the war, because of the media, the image of Syria is distorted and Syria became Assad. Syria was so many beautiful things before, now Syrians are oppressed by Assad. Germans are unfortunately following the media. The "normal" German person - who is not necessarily educated - listens to what the media is saying. He thinks that Syrians are the ones who came with the boat as refugees. Other than that, they don't know much about Syrians. That is why life can be hard here. You can't just become friends with a German if they think you are dumb just because you are from Syria! Can you believe it!

In this account, there is again the notion of a "German" and how media can impact the way that 'everyday hosts' can see Syria, Syrians, and therefore, Syrian refugees. The assumption that Syrians are ignorant and helpless has transformed into a lack of desire, or active resistance, to meeting Syrian refugees altogether. As Trittler (2018: 7) explains, as religious minorities are confronted with these "prevalent symbolic boundaries in their immediate surroundings and everyday encounters" with the host society, "they also become aware of and experience the exclusionary attitudes and behaviour of the majority population".

In another interview, the identity of "Germans" is again explained in relation to media influences:

> We are talking about the average German. But the one who read a bit, read what the newspapers say about us. For example, I was asked by a German woman if I can dress like this in Syria. She's a German lawyer. She doesn't care who I am. She cares about what she read in the newspapers, about Muslims etc. My answer is always that in Syria, women had the right to vote before women in Switzerland. You can divide Germany into ignorant Germans and Germans who do know…. Germans who used to go to Syria

before, who visited Syria and love Syria, I think these people do know a lot about Syria. And until now, they are waiting for Syria to return so that they can go visit again. This is why I differentiate between Germans before and after the war.

Here, the average "German" is also viewed in relation to different degrees of knowledge or ignorance of Syrians. Understanding these premises gives insights into how and why refugee-host relations can be absent, limited, or even hostile. These are examples of how Syrian refugees and hosts view *each other* and the generalisations made about each 'group' by the other. Almost all of the Syrian refugees interviewed in this study shared examples of feeling rejected by "Germans" - both 'white' and 'Arab' "Germans".

For many interviewees, being rejected by Germans was another example of the geopolitical effects of the Iraq and Syria conflicts. Like a form of collateral damage, most interviewees shared that assumptions about Syrian refugees, such as there may be potential terrorists among them, influenced whether or how Germans would become friends with them. My interview questions did not ask about friendship directly, but rather whether interviewees met, had conversations with, or otherwise regularly encountered 'Germans' (leaving the definition of 'Germans' open). While everyday encounters were mentioned - at shops, on the pavement, in public transport, and so on - there were only two refugee interviewees who said they had a friendship, or regular encounters, with 'Germans'.

These encounters - or the absence thereof - once again reflect the racialisation of religion and rise of Islamophobia at a time when migration is increasingly securitised and shaped by anti-terrorism agendas. Indeed, since undertaking fieldwork for this study and throughout the process of my analyses and writing, there has been a further rise in popular support for AfD, the right-wing political party in Germany. For instance, over a period of five years, the AfD moved from a position of "advocating for an open and foreigner-friendly Germany" in 2014, to stating that "migration policy is an existential threat to European civilisation" in 2019. Right-wing populism is a telling measure of these forces in practice.

Therefore, while one Syrian refugee interviewed said "I am friends with my landlady who is a German", in the same interview, he shared that "on the street, some Germans told me to go home and that I am not wanted here." In both accounts shared by this individual, experiences of and with "Germans" are not singular, and who constitutes as being "German" is not monolithic. These encounters further highlight the importance of avoiding binaries when trying to understand refugee-host relations and the prejudices that exist and change within them. In-group and out-group narratives and typologies are not reflective of social realities where many 'selves' and many 'others' interact. Similarly, this account highlights how prejudices change over time and space - from 2011 to 2019, for instance, and space in terms of private encounters in the home (such as with the landlady) or in the public (for example, on the street).

Indeed, while social science researchers, particularly in social psychology, have long identified that people may prefer their own in-group over any out-group (Hagendoorn 1995: 202), there should also be a recognition that not all out-groups are equal. As Hagendoorn (1995) argued, there is a phenomenon of 'ethnic hierarchies', which I suggest can be used here to understand perceived 'religious hierarchies' of refugees, particularly in relation to symbolic boundaries. The phenomenon is such that depending on different factors, such as education, economic levels, and social status, out-groups are evaluated and then ranked by people. This ranking then forms the complex of stereotyping assigned to individuals as well as material and symbolic resources (Lamont and Molnár 2002; Trittler 2018; Wimmer 2008). That is, even if individuals within an out-group do not fit all the stereotypes of the evaluation made, they will still be characterised as members of that out-group. This is a bias that helps to explain why experiences of prejudice formed from stereotyping can differ greatly, and yet be treated the same.

Within this context, applying the notion of 'religious hierarchies' can be understood through the ways in which Muslims in Europe are stereotyped as potential terrorists and violent fanatics (as explained in Chapter 6). This is a perception that "Muslims"

are ethnically and religiously different from all non-Muslims. Therefore, fears of *any* Muslim becomes a fear of *all* Muslims (Sides and Citrin 2007). It is from this bias that a generic anti-immigration, anti-refugee rhetoric and agenda can permeate into and further reinforce wider social anti-Muslim attitudes which are then assigned to people who 'look' like "Muslims", even where the assignment may be factually inaccurate. For example, a person can be rejected, hurt, or attacked for simply 'looking' Arab/Muslim/dangerous. As Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2016b) explains (cited in Saunders et al. 2016: 17),

> ...whether refugees self-identify with racial and ethnic identities, or whether these are ascribed by others, is in many regards inconsequential in situations where observers 'read' and impose religious identity onto migrants. Indeed, while 'thinking through the skin' has been presented as means of developing critical, postcolonial feminist engagement with the politics of 'lived and imagined embodiment' (Ahmed and Stacey 2001) it is clearly the case that skins and bodies are often read and 'mis-read' in ways that often have discriminatory and even deadly consequences. The latter is exemplified particularly poignantly through the shooting Jean Charles de Menezes by the British police in London, when this young Brazilian man's 'dangerously coded body' meant that he was '(mis)recognised' as a Muslim suicide bomber (Abbas 2013: 12).

Amongst other things, for the 'religious minority' Syrian refugees who participated in this research, this racialised form of 'religious hierarchisation' is expressed as being problematic and dangerous for two reasons. First, it has resulted in undue prejudices and acts of hostility towards *non-Muslim* refugees. Second, and perhaps more subtle and insidious, it has created or heightened prejudices or stereotype-generating processes of non-Muslim refugees *towards Muslims*. Chapter 7 highlighted this prejudice within the context of refugee-refugee relations and here, it can also be applied in refugee-host relations. As Trittler (2018: 7) further explains, "the processes of cognitive categorisation and stereotyping may thus be accompanied by prejudicial, stigmatisation, and exclusionary behaviour" - both subtle and overt, physical or verbal, direct or indirect.

For example, an interviewee shared that they experienced a passerby calling him a terrorist and that he should "make his bombs somewhere else". When I asked how he felt about the situation, he shared:

> I don't know why he said that to me but probably because I look Arab and that's it. Without even one conversation with me. In one conversation I could tell him I'm Christian but I don't know why people don't ask.

This extract emphasises the importance and urgency of recognising the impact of Islamophobia beyond, as well as including for, Muslims in religious boundaries of national belonging or 'integration'. In order to engage with any subject of 'religious minorities' among refugee populations in Germany specifically or Europe more broadly, the subject of Islamophobia must be interrogated. In doing so, the perceived risks, fears, and concerns over Islam and Muslims have the possibility of being overcome. The interview extract above is important not because it reveals the refugee to be Christian but because assumptions of what it means to be 'Muslim' are considered dangerous enough that it impacts whether or how people encounter one another. Indeed, rather than challenging Islamophobia, the strategy on an individual and collective level may be declaring themselves as 'not' being 'Muslim'. To resist the notion that Europe has a (sub)conscious dissonance with Islam which is presented publicly in different ways (through media, policy, politics, and practice) is to overlook a historical and contemporary reality.

Indeed, a number of refugee interviews highlight that it is also public expressions or perceptions of high religiosity (ascribed to Muslims) that are contested. This source of demarcation is similarly viewed as a threat to liberal, secular values. In negotiating this tension, my interviewees gave accounts of highlighting their "distinction" to the public, highly 'religious' Muslim. For instance, in another interview, a Syrian Ismaili male refugee shared that because Ismailis drink alcohol, they feel safer going out to clubs and bars and that he feels it makes it easier to meet 'Germans':

> I'm not Muslim and so it's good. It makes it easier to go out. I can drink, I can try and meet girls, I can have fun. I think for me, it's easier than the Syrians who are Muslim.

The ways that Islam and Muslims in Europe are resisted, denied, or disliked by both non-Muslim refugees and non-Muslim hosts alike is illustrated in that quote. It is, not solely because of a fear of radical Islam and the image of the Muslim terrorist, but rather, because Islam and Muslims are constituted as a (moral) attack on permissive and secular Western society (Werbner 2005: 8). This understanding of Islamophobia includes the premise that knowing how public religion and religiosity are viewed is central to recognising how anti-Muslim sentiments are created, reinforced, and legitimised in secular (German/European) societies. This relationship between Islamophobia and perceptions of religion more broadly will be explored further in the next section on the secular bias of institutional actors responding to refugee populations. At this juncture it suffices to mention that how the religiosity of Muslims and the religion of Islam are viewed by both non-Muslim refugees and hosts also reflects other attitudes towards and associations made with 'religion' in the context of the so-called refugee crisis and the (presumed) levels of religiosity of refugees. That is, by drawing symbolic boundaries of national belonging that reflect secular values and norms, both Muslim and non-Muslim minorities can be symbolically excluded if they do not physically conform - or are perceived to have met the ideals of freedom or liberty as expressed in Western terms.

Finally, as referenced in Chapter 6 in relation to (mis)representations of 'Syrian refugees' and the place of religion and religious identity in such representations, there is an assumption that Syrian refugees do not want to talk about religion or religious identity. However, as explored in Chapter 7, many of my refugee interviewees indicated that they *do* want to talk about religion and indeed, it is important to do so. To reiterate this point, I refer to another extract from a Syrian Ismaili refugee:

> Maybe you will have some groups who will, like stuck in their own groups and try to just find people who are like them. But I think that what's good and

> what is important is that you start to see how, especially here, people meet other people and they talk about these things. It can be hard but discussions about and reflections on identity issues is good and that means you have to talk about religion.

It is important to note how all the Syrian participants in this study were open to talk about religion and their 'religious identity', irrespective of their experiences, including whether or not they converted or gave up religion altogether. This comfort with religiosity, in a German context where secularism or Christianity are the two most 'desired' options, was in stark difference to the nature of discussions throughout my interviews with institutional actors. Whilst the role of 'religious identity' in refugee-host relations with regards to 'everyday hosts' include hiding certain aspects of overt religiosity, institutional actors in this study largely rejected religion in relation to refugees. This dynamic and the tensions, contradictions and challenges it poses for so-called 'integration' processes in refugee-host relations is explored in the next section.

Refugee-Host Relationality: 'Institutional Actors' as Hosts and the Constraints of Secularity

In addition to identifying measures and indicators of successful 'integration', there is increasing debate and focus on *who or what* is responsible for so-called 'integration' processes, policies, and practices (Alba and Foner 2017; Castles et al. 2003; Foner and Alba 2008; Ndofor-Tah et al. 2019; Spencer and Cooper 2006). The previous section explored 'integration' more informally, tracing the ways that individuals (refugees and hosts) organically or consciously encounter (or avoid) one another and the nature of those encounters. In this section, I examine how individuals who represent institutions that serve or engage with refugee populations view and respond to the relationship between 'religious identity' and 'integration'. My research findings show that the most frequent and recurring statements made by institutional actors in

this regard reflect a strong allegiance to secular understandings of refugee identities and refugee spaces. Anything 'religious', many of them posited, was the purview and remit of 'religious actors', whom they equated with religious leaders (primarily, clergy such as priests or Imams) or religious communities (referenced in terms of churches and mosques).[78] This section critically interrogates this institutional secular bias and explores how secularity shapes and impacts perceptions of and responses to 'religious minority' Syrian refugees. In turn, I argue that secular views and assumptions held by some institutional actors can impact whether or how refugees 'integrate' into German society.

Before proceeding, it is important to note how institutional actors in this study understand 'integration'. For most institutional actor interviewees, 'integration' was referred to in relation to primary (physical, material, and social) needs such as having accommodation, learning the language, having children in school, and finding employment. The importance of how these measures were related to each other was noted in the following interview with a Syrian NGO worker:

> Integration here in Germany is not only learning the language, it is also work. Integration means understanding the system, understanding life here. Germany is now facing that Syrians are very active people, they can't sit still. Every time someone tells me: Syrians are educated, Syrians are smart. I tell them, see what the so-called dictator made out of us [*laughing*].

This Syrian interviewee thus notes the importance of language, on the one hand, but also the need for Syrians to feel purposeful, 'active', and not being idle. This affirms other findings in this study that a "specific boundary configuration" in the German contexts is that religion is not related to an ethnic marker but rather correlates with respect to institutions, laws, and language skills (Trittler 2018: 6). The connection between language and other forms of 'integration' was noted in another interview, where a staff member from a refugee centre referred to language as a "passport" for navigating life in Germany:

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[78] Religious actors were regularly homogenised by interviewees as being Christian or Muslim only.

It's very good that they forced them to learn the language, because the language is the passport to the society here. The problem with the German system and bureaucracy is that they don't give them time to understand the system. As soon as they get a residency permit, they directly go to language classes - they would follow them until they do. But those people who lived in a refugee centre, live under the circumstances of a refugee centre and would like to find an apartment first. They put him under a lot of pressure. On the other hand - it has two sides - there are some people who would stay three years without learning anything. They should differentiate a bit.

Despite a recognition of 'integration' processes operating outside of the language and orientation courses, no institutional actor referenced everyday forms of 'integration' that did not match these measures. Indeed, the term 'integration' can often assume an existing majority-minority dynamic, overlooking many heterogeneous majorities and minorities. Despite 'integration' efforts, the 'minority' may never become either a part of, or accepted by, the 'majority', as illustrated by these accounts on language. This affirms research particularly in diaspora studies, such as Canan and Foroutan (2016a), which have identified that despite the passage of time and migrants successfully meeting certain 'integration' measures and outcomes, (im)migrants nevertheless remain foreigners/outsiders because it is perceived that they do not do 'enough'. A person can learn a language, for example, and yet have an accent (Canan and Foroutan 2016a), or be educated but still be viewed as lesser-than because of the colour of their skin (Saunders et al. 2016).

As demonstrated in the following sections, my research findings also show that 'integration' opportunities and challenges are not simply the purview of state-mandated courses. They also occur *with* hosts in different spaces, such as through 'integration' refugee programmes and activities that may not be formally labelled as 'integration' activities but may be perceived as having 'integration' elements or outcomes. All of these practices and experiences of a broader 'integration' process were impacted by secular assumptions and perceptions of 'religion' and the 'religious identity' of refugees. Referring back to notions of hospitality, it can be understood how any host, including the state, "has ownership and mastery over resources which she is prepared to share with the guest" (Zaman

2017: 181). 'Integration', therefore, if viewed within the framework of hospitality, can be conditioned and limited. Refugees must negotiate these limitations and conditions of 'integration' in order to receive hospitality.

Secular Identities

During our interviews, after institutional actors introduced themselves and their role at their respective organisation, I asked what s/he understands as being the relationship between religion, 'religious identity', and responses to refugee populations. This question was not surprising for the interviewees as it was clear to them, when I introduced the project and gained their informed consent to participate, that my research project was interested in the 'religious identity' of refugee populations, in particular 'religious minority' Syrian refugees in Berlin. In response to this question, all 42 interviewees, with the exception of two interviewees from two separate faith-based organisations, said that religion and 'religious identity' do not factor into how they do their work and how they view refugees. In one institutional actors' words: "religion is of no concern to me and I don't care about it". In this extract and similar statements, many interviewees followed their rejection of religion with rapid justification for why 'religious identity' was overlooked or ignored. Almost all of them referred to the necessity to be impartial, neutral, and objective in their work - typically framed as being 'secular' values. The aim of this section is to explore how these secular boundaries of 'integration' impact religious minorities as these symbolic boundaries of secularism are considered to best reflect the needs of intergroup contact, relations, and outcomes.

The following extract from an interview with the head of an NGO offering support and services to refugees is illustrative of many of the interviewee responses:

> Religion is not that important, for any kind of official at our organisation or for any of our work - whether it be refugee centre manager or an organisation providing any kind of support to refugees. It's irrelevant what the person's

religion is, and that's how it should be, yes. I mean, I don't believe that religion should be, um...that it should play any role in this issue, this humanitarian issue, regardless of any kind of religion. But unfortunately it's there, so because it's there so you should at least, not support it in the way that because we have more Christian refugees then I should have more support. It should be at least for all people. This is in theory, though, so I don't know.

Religion, as shown in this extract, is discarded and seen as not being an important issue when working with refugees. Another interviewee (a refugee centre manager) responded to the question of religiosity by saying "we stay away from that and we don't do anything about religion" (staff from a refugee centre). Yet, despite its so-called "irrelevance", the extract above also shows that the institutional actor understands that religion nevertheless *does* play a role, even if it is not desired. In this interview, preferential treatment among refugees because of 'religious identity' was mentioned three times. Yet, the importance of religion for refugees was not explicitly noted in relation to any other factors. By excluding religion as a feature of refugee identities, needs, and experiences, specific consequences ensued. For instance, discrimination on the basis of religion was overlooked in a few instances.

For example, in another part of the same interview with the refugee centre manager, it was shared that sometimes Muslim and Christian refugees would be selected by staff separately and provided with forms of assistance on the basis of their religious identity because "that's how the world functions":

> Unfortunately, you know sometimes they ask how many Christians are there, and really it's especially Christians, but also Muslim. And then those humanitarian organisations are selective in the way they provide assistance and I don't think that this is how the humanitarian sector should do it but I guess that's how the world functions.

It was not clear in this interview precisely *who* was asking about the 'religious identity' of refugees and what assistance was selectively provided to some over others. Whilst I asked for clarification, I did not receive an answer but was, instead,

told that it meant that some people were prioritised: "you know, just they may get things quicker or go up the list" (same interviewee). What is important to note here is the contradiction between the interviewee's account stating that religion is *viewed* as irrelevant and yet emerging in the interview as in fact playing a significant role in responses to refugee identities and needs. Here, by excluding religion from conceptions of 'refugeeness', direct implications of such symbolic boundaries can be identified, such as discrimination.

Despite the assumption that secular approaches uphold principles of neutrality and impartiality, distinctions remain in the treatment of refugees because of religion, as another interviewee from another NGO also offering refugee support stated:

> Syrians from minorities come to the office. Once, a Christian Syrian came to me complaining that he doesn't receive as much aid as his Muslim counterparts. The Kurds help the Kurds like themselves, and Muslims help Muslims and he is left in limbo. He was frustrated and wanted to go back to Syria. I tried to sway him by offering to help as to learning the language, perhaps finding a place to stay, but he was angry and never showed up again.

As this interviewee explains, a Syrian refugee approached an agency worker and told her that religion matters to him and how he understands the way refugees are being treated. Yet, the response to his point of view was to ignore it and then to offer services that were available to him more generally. It is not clear why he did not return to the agency but nevertheless, the account demonstrates how his concern over religious discrimination was disregarded. This account also notes how refugees 'encounter' and are supported by everyday hosts and how that encounter plays a role in encounters with institutional actors. It provides a counterpoint to the reflections noted above about Arabs who have 'become' German rejecting refugees from Syria.

The impact of a secular bias specifically for *'religious minority'* refugees then needs further exploration here. As the above extracts illustrate, despite this umbrella of secularity, some forms of religiosity and 'religious identity' are nevertheless

recognised over others. Many institutional actors in this study chose to ignore religion. Here, secular symbolic boundaries of belonging (Trittler 2018) are clearly reflected. Yet, most institutional actors would still refer to *majority* religious identities and groups - namely, Muslims and Christians. This included, in three interviews in particular, sharing instances where Muslim and Christian 'religious identities' were explicitly prioritised in terms of refugee services and assistance, such as finding accommodation, which runs counter to the secular values purported to be upheld. Despite desires and commitments not to do so, many institutional actors referred to religion while simultaneously referring to religion as an irrelevant issue. In addition to the bias of secularity, the homogeneity of refugee 'religious identities' identified in Chapter 6 finds further manifestation here.

In response to a question of whether they know the religious affiliations of refugees at the centre, a staff member from a refugee centre said that he does not know but that "there's little difference between them." I asked for clarification on this statement and he replied,

> Yes, there are, you know, people from different religions here, sure. But we don't look at that and we shouldn't look at that because if they come from Syria or Iraq or you know these Arab countries, they are all the same. They should be treated the same.

The conflation of all refugees 'being' viewed the 'same' and therefore being 'treated' as the 'same' is significant here. It further reflects how and when diversity is put aside in the perceived interest of impartial treatment. Once again, diversity is viewed as difference and thus, can lead to discrimination. This extract also illustrates the assumption of Arab homogeneity overlooking various forms of heterogeneity, as also expressed by another interviewee (from an NGO supporting refugees): "I don't know if they are Christian or Muslim; I only know them as Syrian".

It is not clear whether undermining religious plurality and diversity is a deliberate or strategic act by institutional actors and it is not an aim (or possibility) of this study to identify or examine such intentions. Rather, noting that heterogeneity *is* often

overlooked by the institutional actors who participated in this study, it is possible to extrapolate insights into how 'religion' is viewed more broadly in the public sphere, including how 'minority' issues are understood. Since these institutional actors are themselves members of the 'host' communities, 'everyday hosts' with whom refugees may interact on the street includes these individuals, and not just the institutions they represent.

How *non-religious* 'minority' identities are viewed, responded to, and prioritised - for example, the visibility and framing of women and children in policy and practice documents and programmes - is significant in this respect. Yet, when 'religious minority' identities *were* presented in my interview questions, they were either discarded or subsumed as irrelevant because of how *religion* is viewed. Once again, the symbolic boundaries of institutional hosts have an impact on how exclusion or discrimination among 'religious minority' refugees are perceived or experienced.

To help illustrate this point, the following extract shows how religion is viewed as an individual, private matter, which means that religious diversities are also viewed as being irrelevant to the public sphere:

> Religion is part of the lives of refugees, but it is not everything in my opinion and it also depends on the family education. The more educated they are, then maybe religion won't be so much of an issue for them. Or they will know that ok, they have this religion in the family but it shouldn't impact their life elsewhere.

Here, religion is described as a measure of judging others. Depending on the (perceived or real) degree of religiosity of a refugee, ignorance or lower levels of knowledge/education can be assumed. The perspective of religion being a private and individual matter also reflects how Germany (as a 'nation') is viewed. As one interviewee – a social worker at a refugee centre - explained: "religion does not matter because Germany itself is secular."

These extracts further illustrate how secular views that religion should be restricted to the private sphere are expressed specifically by *ignoring* 'religious minority' language and framing when speaking about refugee identities, needs, or experiences. Subsequently, how religion is viewed by institutional actors can be a source of difference or diversity within the context of 'integration' processes. Religion is therefore either inclusionary or exclusionary depending on who is accepted or rejected within its remit and framing. It is for that reason, one interviewee shared, that there is no box for 'religion' in their official documentation and never features in their reports.

However, as another interviewee from a refugee agency shared, "sometimes we have to give this data to our donors because we have to meet their rules". Unclear of how this data is gathered if not explicitly asked of from refugees themselves, the interviewee shared "only when they first arrive do we ask and then that is it, then we ignore it". It is interesting to note in this example how categories can be contested but the need to categorise is not (Taussig 2009).

This imperative to categorise 'religious identity' while denying the religiosity of refugees can be better understood within a border framework of the political, economic, and social realities and challenges of 'integration' politics and policies. Indeed, whether or not refugees successfully 'integrate' is often a reflection of wider inequalities rather than individual's inability to 'integrate'. Thus, it is important to scrutinise the symbolic boundaries of refugees' and religious identity in order to better understand the social realities of 'integration'.

While urgent and important attention has been given to the rise and impact of Islamophobia in Germany specifically (see Canan and Foroutan 2016b), it is again relevant to note at this juncture how and when Islamophobia is expressed within secular biases regarding religion more broadly. To speak of religion is to risk speaking of Islam and the 'challenges' of its existence. For instance, since 2011 there have been a number of attacks between refugees of different religious backgrounds at refugee centres. A report by Open Doors Germany, for instance, was published in

2016 highlighting these attacks and calling on changes at the level of both policy and practice.

Yet, despite this report, institutional actors interviewed in this study did not view conflicts in camps through the lens of religion. To do so, one interviewee responded, is to "make it about religion", even though it was clear from the report that those who perpetrated the attacks or participated in them did indeed say that it was because of religion (Open Doors Germany 2016). In effect, in addition to the 2016 study, seven institutional actor interviewees also shared that there was conflict in refugee centres because of religion, further contradicting the notion that religion is irrelevant to refugee experiences.

To illustrate, a director of a refugee agency shared the following account:

> I had contact with one Syrian, ehm, a Muslim, and he was in a camp where a lot of Muslims were - oh, actually he was Druze, sorry - and he called me and told me, like, everyone here is Muslim and I'm afraid, can you call anyone for me to change my room?

Thus, although most institutional actor interviewees, including this individual, spoke of the irrelevance of religion to refugees, they nevertheless were able to point to instances where religion directly factored into some refugees' sense of security, as described by the institutional actor himself. Other institutional actors responded to the conflict in refugee centres as being more about nationality than religion:

> As far as I know it was more about nationalities, not religions. Because I mean, when I worked in the centre we heard many stories about how a Syrian group had fights with an Afghani group. But it was not a religious one, it was different cultures. Also, with most of the stories, it was more about these different cultures. It was not related to religion. Maybe it was related to religion combined with their nationality but not like 'because we are Christians now we are going to attack them'.

Although this institutional actor initially sought to distance any conflict as being related to religion, this extract highlights how views of culture similarly play a significant role in determining how 'religion' is understood. By referring to "different cultures", on the one hand, this institutional actor is renaming religion as a feature of culture. On the other hand, by drawing on 'nationality' as the primary marker of 'religious identity', religion is then also understood as being the 'same' as nationality.

In another interview, a director of a refugee centre acknowledged that there may be problems such as "sectarian tensions" in the camp because "people come with racism from home". By conflating sectarianism with racism, the director of the centre did not reflect on the distinctions between religion and racism, but it shows how the two terms can overlap or be conflated. As the interview continued, the refugee centre director referred to the ways that conflicts between refugees have occurred over accommodation conditions, noting that it would be "natural" to fight in such conditions. The director said that anyone living in undesirable living conditions may be susceptible to conflict but then goes on to essentialise refugees as being a priori violent by virtue of where they 'come from':

> Housing conditions in camps can be a source of fights that might seem sectarian at first glance. But I would fight in a camp if I lived in similar conditions. But, they [refugees] are also coming with conflict and racism. So it can be expected.

Here, it is assumed that (some) refugees are a priori violent or have a propensity for violence because of their origins that are then made synonymous with religious connotations. Despite the factual inaccuracy of this statement, it shows how some institutional actors can hold certain assumptions about refugees' national origins and what the nationality of refugees can imply about refugees' religion and how it is assumed to be linked to violence. By saying refugees 'come with' conflict and racism, they are seen to embody conflict and racism, rather than simply fleeing from it.

I asked how conflicts in camps that may be linked to religion should be responded to. A unanimous opinion was shared across all institutional actors interviewed for this project that refugees should not be separated on the basis of religion:

> I am against separating people based on religion in camps. It is the root of racism and sectarianism that people do not know each other, so separation here is a wrong decision because it reinforces racism. Separation is stupid.

This notion that separating refugees solely on the basis of religion, aside from immediate protection concerns, would only exacerbate tensions was affirmed by a number of interviewees, as illustrated by the following extract:

> Separating people based on religion in camps? No, never. Religion is part of the lives of refugees, but it is not everything.

When I shared with interviewees that the 2016 Open Doors Germany study suggested that separation is necessary in order for religious conflicts in camps to be mitigated, one institutional actor referred to this as a form of religious propaganda:

> Mistake. A big mistake. Because this helps the Wahabi, fundamentalist way of thinking, the way of thinking of the Islamic Brotherhood to be widespread in Europe. And this will not help the integration process. It will only divide people more.

Despite the fact that the Open Doors Germany report was commissioned and undertaken by a Christian advocacy organisation, this institutional actor linked separating refugees on the basis of religion to a wider form of religious propaganda seeking to divide refugees by religion. In this interview, she further reflects on how separating refugees on the basis of religion is as dangerous as separating refugees on the basis of other identity markers, such as gender or sexual orientation:

> The mistake that happened here in Berlin is - they separated women. Ok, sometimes I think this is not a bad idea, for women to be in a centre alone. It can be important but has its problems too. But you know, they also separated homosexuals! And, unfortunately, they put an article in the newspapers about

it. They were proud of it. And so what happened? This centre for homosexual refugees was attacked.

In this extract, the interviewee notes that separation solely on the basis of any single identity marker, religious or otherwise, can be a source of conflict, which has implications for 'integration' processes. Nevertheless, while there are forms of 'ideal' religiosity (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2009) which institutional actors can and do recognise and value, most institutional actors expressed a desire to erase public religiosity often by ignoring it altogether. Despite the fact that doing so ignores the reality of religiosity among and between refugees, it also overlooks how the presence and importance of religiosity emerges or shifts over time, which impact how arrivals are 'integrated' into society.

For instance, throughout institutional actor interviews, emphasis was placed on the basic material and physical needs of refugees such as shelter (accommodation), access to education or employment, and legal matters around asylum applications. 'Religious identity', many posited, does not determine or impact those basic needs. Yet, as a number of refugee interviewees shared, not only does 'religious identity' impact their access to or experiences of those basic needs, but religion became more prevalent in their 'refugee lives' once the immediacy of those needs were met or being processed.

As one staff member from a refugee agency that primarily helps refugees with the legal documentation they need to claim asylum, she explained:

> People start to think about other issues over time. After all the big stuff is out of the way at the beginning, it can get very hard. Because before, during the last four or five years, it was really like moving from one place to another just to hide or to have your basic needs met. And in order to start to think about other issues, you need a kind of stability. You can see that once people started to be more stable, regardless of whether they want to go back [to Syria] or not, you can see that people start to think about other issues - especially the young generation. Thinks like, 'can I live here, who are my friends, what will I do here, and do people accept me'? I have more contact with the young

generation. The old people somehow, sometimes they feel like, okay I don't need any contact with other people because they bring me back to old issues. But young people can't choose that. They have their whole life ahead of them.

By sharing the multi-faceted nature of refugee experiences, this interviewee highlights how priorities and needs change over time for refugees and how different issues can arise and subsequently shift the urgency of certain needs. Many interviewees in this study also shared experiences and accounts that indicate there is a need to take religion and 'religious identity' seriously but not in a singular way. Taking religion seriously looks different according to the individual, the timing, and the context in which the individual finds him/herself in. As one refugee interview shared, this means "seeing that I may not think religion is important to me right now, but when I arrived, it was important because I wanted to feel safe." In other words, religious identities, needs, and experiences are diverse and context-specific. Indeed, Ndofor-Tah et al. (2019) recognise the importance of context in 'integration' processes and such insights further illustrate this to be the case.

Many refugee interviewees indicated that 'taking religion seriously' can be achieved by identifying, listening to, accepting, and appropriately responding to diversities and complexities *as shared and expressed by refugees themselves*. As a Syrian Christian refugee woman shared, "I don't think people listen to us. I have said a number of times, I left Syria because I am Christian! Not because I am Syrian! But they don't hear it". In trying to understand the ways in which 'religious identity' matter, this must also include how religion can be a source of inequality whereby refugees may censor themselves according to how they are viewed and related to, as well as what they believe (real or not) that others want them to be. This notion of selective religiosity in order to access specific services or support (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014) is a recurring feature of this study. Following Trittler (2018), it does not matter whether religious discrimination or inequality is intended or not, the very awareness that a refugee has of being excluded or discriminated is real for her/him and in turn, determines further behaviour or reactions. In the context of refugee-host relations, it was clear throughout institutional interviews, for instance, that the less 'religious'

that refugees are in public (by virtue of their dress, behaviour, or language, for example), then the more desirable they are for hosts and therefore, the more likely they are to be perceived by non-refugees as being 'successful' in integrating into German society. To assume such perceptions have no effects on refugees' perceptions and experiences of exclusion is to overlook the prevalence, influences, and very real effects of both religious and secular symbolic boundaries.

To illustrate this point further, a staff member from an NGO shared that there was a moment where one of the refugees they were supporting wanted to get a flat but the individual could not find one because all the landlords they contacted said they did not want to give their places to Syrian refugees. Yet, when I asked if this meant 'religious identity' *does* matter for refugee experiences of so-called 'integration', her response was "no, it does not. This is the point here. It is because they [refugees] think it matters". Therefore, from the perspective of this staff member, the rejection of Syrian refugee tenants by landlords had nothing to do with religion, even though refugees may think that it does. Yet, later on in the interview, in contrast to her earlier statement she shared:

> You have to recognise the importance and existence of religion. The integration course and the section about the freedom of belief is good. It is about merely explaining how it works here and so the integration course is important as far it sets these things clear. It tells the refugees that it is different here from back home. But this is something they will learn as they go about their lives here. You cannot just write it down that you have to live together and that will be that.

Here, in one interview, religion went from being irrelevant to being fundamental to processes of 'integration'. In this context, religion was viewed as important when 'teaching' refugees about 'appropriate' behaviour and values, thereby positioning 'good/desirable' religion in relation to such behaviour or values. In some ways, the state-mandated German 'integration' courses refer to this need for refugees to 'learn' how to 'appropriately' engage with others. According to a number of refugee interviews and institutional interviews, the matter of good/bad religion in

'integration' was expressed as part of the courses. To illustrate, one institutional actor from a Christian faith-based organisation, said

> Religion is covered in the [integration] course because it talks about what you can and can't do. So like, it says, for example, how in Germany, we have to respect people and women can wear what they like. So you can't make them wear the veil, I mean.

It is illustrative of many institutional interviewees who struggled with reconciling the desire for religion to be irrelevant and the relevance of religion in social reality. Most institutional interviewees, however, did not reference or give examples of refugees themselves when they shared these assumptions of the place of religion in refugee needs and experiences.

As mentioned above, there are limits to the so-called secular humanitarian values of neutrality, impartiality, and objectivity in contexts of non-secular identities. Secular terms are not value-free concepts but are also at risk of bias and discrimination, just as religious terms can be. As one interviewee, a director of a refugee services NGO, stated:

> Religion is a problem because of the religious traditions. Traditions make it more difficult. For example, there are different concepts of power, or patriarchy more specifically and the power of Muslim men. But again, it has nothing to do with religion because German women also get abused by German men. For me, I have to take my time and learn about different cultures.

This extract helpfully brings together a number of assumptions and contradictions examined in this section that were evidenced throughout many of the institutional actor interviews. It reflects how secular assumptions of identities and the role of religion in society can inform perceptions of and responses to refugee populations. In this extract, the director says religion is important but *in her opinion*, it is not everything. It is *her* opinion, not that she is forming this belief in relation to the refugees she has met or who engage with the services and resources of the agency.

Further, referring to education again as a measure of religiosity, there is an assumption that if someone is 'educated', they are less 'religious'.

As a further example, in one interview, a director of an NGO working with refugees said:

> If families are not educated, it is worse. They are more religious and their traditions make life difficult. There is power, like power of Muslim men, that means they need to learn about different cultures to overcome it. Sure, German men also abuse their wives but is it as much?

Degrees of religiosity here are measured by practices of traditions and then, negatively, related to gender-based violence - in this case, violence against women. Yet, it then does not become about 'religion' but about 'culture' and a culture of patriarchy that is also acknowledged as a feature of *Leitkultur* (a term used to describe dominant, core German culture). These contradictions and overlapping uses of terms reflect how malleable, contested, and uncertain conceptions of religion are and how institutional actors presume the primacy of secular identities. The next section explores how presumptions of secular identities and secular values inform the secular nature of these spaces for refugees.

Secular Spaces

(Mis)perceptions of who a refugee is and assumptions about what matters to them have informed and shaped which programmes and activities have been created and, in turn, who is considered responsible for these. In this section, I outline which spaces are considered to be *for* refugees, including which spaces are absent, according to how 'religious identity' is - or more accurately, is not - considered to be important for refugee experiences of so-called 'integration'. I show that for diverse Syrian refugee populations, spaces for integration can be at once complex, changing, connective, and fragmented (Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore 2018).

As noted above, in my interviews and observations, the types of activities and programmes available to refugees primarily centred around learning the German language, finding accommodation, and attending the 'integration course'. In the words of one volunteer at an NGO for refugees, this is enough:

> In terms of activities, there is the *sprachcafe* (talking cafe), you know where they speak German or practice German. Almost all the residents here, like the majority of people, go to language courses and take language courses. Some of them do professional training, like internships. So that means that a lot of them are already going out and integrating into society. A year ago, things were not like this but now it is getting better and there are a lot of changes in this respect in terms of integration and communication with Germans.

For this interviewee, and indicative of many other institutional actors, once the refugees were learning the language, that meant they were able to go out into public spaces. It did not matter so much what those spaces are and how they are received in the spaces. Rather, the fact that they can go into the spaces at all, means they are successfully integrating into German society. Yet, 'successful integration' is not simply understood by policymakers, politicians, and public as participation in society but is rather judged by how refugees participate in society and who accepts the form of that participation. As Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore (2018) point out, this is by no means an easy or straightforward process in increasingly diverse societies.

To help further illustrate such complexity, many institutional actors in this study referred both subtly and overtly to how certain cultural values translate into which spaces refugees are 'welcomed' into in German society. One institutional actor framed it in the language of 'rights': if refugees "understand that there are rights here - that you have some rights and other people have the same rights, then things will be okay and you can go anywhere and do anything here". However, if a refugee "does not adapt to these rights", then "they will have difficulty going to places".

Once again, the ability or effectiveness of 'integrating' successfully in Germany requires adaptation. As this institutional actor notes, challenges arise when refugees do not understand, accept, or adequately adjust to what is prescribed to them, whether directly in the integration courses or through experiences of being in German society and its assumed *Leitkultur* (dominant, core culture). This is despite recognising the inconsistency of such an argument - that there is a coherent majority culture - in a diverse population such as in Berlin. Indeed, spaces of urban diversity are specifically challenging to ideals of a static wholeness (Berg and Sigona 2013).

This notion that cultural perspectives on values or rights impact where refugees feel they can go and the things they can do was reiterated in another institutional actor interview. Here, a staff member from a refugee centre said:

> Some people [refugees] can do volunteer work with Germans by like, helping out at kindergartens. But to a large extent, people start to integrate in a good way in society if the cultural part is sorted out and they are willing to change. Things are getting better and things have changed and this has helped people to live a normal life and do normal things. Without it, they cannot have a sense of normal life here. They will be isolated. There will be a lot of things they cannot understand. There will be places that they cannot go or they will not get a feeling of stability or security there. But once they decide that they will lead a normal life, even though they come from war, then things can change. They can have goals.

This extract highlights how normality is linked to conformity to cultural values and that successful 'integration' implies assimilation in practice (Phillimore 2012), even if it is not presented that way in theory - for example, by framing integration as a two-way process (Ndofor-Tah et al. 2019; Zetter and Pearl 2000). The idea that refugees "will be isolated" if they do not conform culturally reaffirms many of the refugee interviews (as mentioned earlier). Here, an institutional actor refers to places that refugees cannot go even though access to those spaces would provide recourse to stability and security. Indeed, this affirms ethnographic studies noting that people from different backgrounds meet and interact in specific localities (Neal et al. 2015; Wessendorf 2017; Wise 2010).

On the subject of culture – in relation to his words, "if the cultural part is sorted out and they are willing to change" - I asked this staff member if he meant 'religion' and his response was "yes, of course". It is important to ask, then, whether religion is freely allowed to be mitigated, controlled, or subsumed in order to "live a normal life" in Germany.

To understand this, I asked institutional actors what spaces, if any, were made available to refugees to practice or express their religiosity freely or openly. In one interview with a staff worker from a refugee centre, he replied:

> Well, nothing. We do not provide for that because it is not the place for it. They can go to a mosque or a church that is in the city. We do not look at it here. Berlin is a big and multicultural city, they have access to a lot of things.

When I asked what the spaces can be used for, he said "anything to do with birthdays, or other parties, or dinners. Those sorts of things." I then asked, what if someone does not pray in a church or mosque, where would they be able to do so. He said, "not here. In their rooms, okay. But there is no prayer room or anything because how can we have one for every religion?"

This assumption that prayer, worship, reflection, or meditation rooms must be separated by religious denomination is understandable, recognising that many places of religious worship are separate and distinct. When exploring this question with many institutional actors about the presence of spaces specifically dedicated to religiosity, it was not that spaces were not available but that they were not desired - by the institutions or institutional actors themselves. Religious worship, many said, should be done only in *private* spaces.

A manager from a refugee centre said that they "make activities open to all" but that "it never has happened that someone has come and said 'I want to hold a prayer service here'." When I asked if that means people cannot use a room for prayer services, he replied:

It is not a question of banning these activities. The idea is just not on the table. If someone wants to pray, they can do that in their own room. There are lots of people who already go to mosques. Mosques are for Muslims and Christians have the same - they can go to churches. So there is no need to have a place made for that at the [refugee] centre.

This interview once again shows how religion is viewed as a private matter, and therefore not of direct concern for the refugee centre. As far as religious diversity is concerned, there are only two religious groups that are mentioned in all institutional actor interviews: Muslims and Christians, not only overlooking other religious groups but inter-group heterogeneity among Muslims and Christians.

In another extract from an interview with a staff worker from a different refugee centre, both the 'religion as private' narrative and 'religion as Muslim or Christian' assumption emerged again. I asked what happens if a refugee asks for something 'religious', such as prayer room. The response was: "it is a private matter. I do not go to a person and say, hey you're a Muslim or Christian so ok, you can go to that mosque or church." I asked, "has anyone come to you with any requests?" and he said "it has happened but not a lot of times." And when I asked what those requests were he said:

I don't remember because the answer is usually very easy - if you want to be connected to your religious group, you can find it. Berlin is a big city. There is a lot of associations for everyone and different kinds of groups.

According to this interviewee, refugees themselves were presented as being responsible for finding access to spaces related to religious practices *outside* of the institutions that serve them, such as refugee centres or refugee agencies. Such assumptions overlook the complexity of refugees living in spaces that are at once diverse and open, yet restrictive or prescribed. The impacts of a dominant secular bias (Ager and Ager 2015) was continually reaffirmed throughout institutional actor interviews but perhaps most strongly on their perceptions on appropriate or available spaces for refugees to practice or express their religiosity.

Finally, and building on this secular bias and its influence in creating and reinforcing symbolic boundaries (Trittler 2018), many institutional actors presented their programmes and services as being "open to all"; yet, by ignoring religion, religious refugees can at once experience inclusivity and exclusivity. These effects need to be better understood and informed by engaging with and listening to refugees. Of all the examples given of programmes and activities provided by their organisations, many were top-down and did not include the refugees in them. Excluding individuals from taking ownership of programmes had an impact on how refugees viewed them and whether or not they would participate in them. Further, whether the views of 'religious' refugees are heard or engaged over others.

As one young Druze man explained during an interview, after I asked about his experiences at the refugee centre and what he does there, he said:

> If they don't ask me what I want or what we need, then I don't need to go to their things. I mean, ok, I am thankful for the things they help me with, yes, of course. Sure. I need help with papers, I need help with finding somewhere to live and to learn the language here. It is hard. If this didn't happen, I wouldn't know what to do. But ok, that is one thing. But that is not everything, you know? But they don't ask and so I can't say. And so if they have a... I don't know... like, they had this event and I thought, why do I need to go to that?

Although it was unclear what the "event" was that this individual chose not to participate, this extract illustrates how 'events' can be welcoming or exclusionary depending on whether or how organisers engage refugees.

A notable exception emerged from interviews with institutional actors from a faith-based organisation as well as six refugees who had been supported by the organisation in one form or another. None of these interviews took place together, but they all individually highlighted how the FBO directly engaged refugees in the organisation of some activities and how they recognised the 'religious identity' of refugees as playing a role in activities. This stood out as being the only example

emerging in my research where refugee services directly provided or referred to religiosity: in addition to providing language classes, social international dinners, legal support, and other 'secular' services, they also offer non-compulsory chaplaincy services and a "spiritual brunch".

These two direct 'religious' services (chaplaincy services and "spiritual brunch") were described by the director as follows:

> Sometimes people come here and their problem is that they just have nothing going forward and they are depressed or they have bad answers to their process and they don't know where to go with it. So we offer a place where they can just...or we can just share their grief or they can go to the church, light a candle, or talk...or don't talk or just be there. It is kind of a special offer and there is a pastor there, she knows about the things that are going on. That is not in every church; where you go and light a candle. People might not be prepared for stories like this but here we are really prepared that people will come and they have stories to tell or they don't even want to tell, so we don't ask. We never ask.

This chaplaincy service was offered by the FBO because it recognised that people have needs outside of primary material and physical needs. When asked if the services are for Christians only, she said it is open to all and that they "invite everybody" but recognised that not everyone will immediately feel comfortable to come and they try to accommodate for any sense of insecurity:

> People who are not Christians also come here but we ask ourselves, how do Muslims feel about it when they enter and there is a big cross? I can only talk about the people who come here. They are mixed, they are from everywhere and every religion, lots of different beliefs. But I cannot talk about the people who don't come. So it might be that some people don't come because this is a Christian church but the people who come have a variety of beliefs might have a strange feeling at the beginning but when they come to the dinner or spiritual brunch once or twice, they see that nobody wants to convert them or to put Christian beliefs in them.

In this interview, it was clear that this director of the FBO knew of the sensitivities of

conversion and how some people may not feel welcome in a church. Without speaking as to why some people do not go to the church for chaplaincy services, she says that it is through "more religious understanding and communication" that you can "find what people [refugees] really need and try to meet that need."

An example of where this religious understanding and communication was applied in practice pertains to a discussion of the ways that international dinners accommodate for religious needs, such as during the Muslim period of fasting (Ramadan). She noted that,

> We were on a long, round table and eating, and we were discussing that tomorrow Ramadan is starting. So we asked, how should we do it [the dinner] next week. So sure, we decided to do it later and then talked about how to do it. It was such a great talk and discussion about this and very open. It was like half were Muslims and half were not Muslims, or people that said they will do Ramadan and the other not. There were people from so many different countries and it's so nice because it is so open, so you really learn how to live together and also that the Protestant church has nothing against Muslims.

Although it was clear that this FBO was conscious of accommodating for and listening to refugees' religious needs, there was no mention of non-Muslim refugee needs or experiences. Once again, there was a reflection of a majority-minority binary embodied by Christians and Muslims. Nevertheless, the institutional actors from this organisation, which included the director, the chaplain, a language teacher, and a volunteer coordinator, all expressed comfort with religiosity.

This was not a common feature of the members of other faith-based organisations or other institutions who participated in this study, who often 'hide' their religiosity in order to prove their professionalism to outsiders and to be taken more seriously (Ager and Ager 2015). Although this FBO did not overtly impose its religiosity and does not require religiosity of its staff, volunteers, or beneficiaries, it recognised that religion plays a role for many of their refugee beneficiaries.

In trying to understand why this was the case for them and not for the other institutional actors I interviewed, once again it became clear that this FBO spoke regularly to the refugees they worked with and took their opinions and feedback into account. I am not suggesting here that the other institutions do not take refugees seriously. Rather, I would argue that in avoiding the subject of religion specifically and, indeed, never raising it themselves, they may have risked overlooking a range of needs and experiences of refugees (see also Eghdamian 2016).

This method of consulting with refugee beneficiaries was illustrated effectively during an interview where the example of international dinners was given as a space where refugees come and meet hosts ('everyday citizens' as well as 'institutional actors'). For instance, when organising international dinners, the FBO asks its beneficiaries what type of food they want, who will provide it, what events can be shared at the same time (such as musical or other performances) and as such, what would make people comfortable and willing to attend. This requires sometimes explicitly referring to or consulting on religious matters. As the volunteer coordinator shared in an interview, "this was not only the case for the month of Ramadan but also when Christian refugees fasted or have other dietary restrictions due to their religious beliefs".

In this example, 'religious identity' is not subsumed under other identity markers such as race or nationality. It was given its own space. In contrast, a number of institutional interviewees indicated that they do not need to think about religion because they have "already provided for differences" (interview with a staff member from a refugee centre), which they referred to in ethnic and national terms such as "Arabs and Africans" (same interview). As one staff worker from another refugee centre (anonymous) shared, "when we have our social party at the end of the month, we make sure we have music from different countries - Iraqi, Kurdish, and that sort of thing so that everyone has their turn".

Rather than addressing matters of 'religious identity' themselves, a number of interviewees suggested that "we do not need to think about these things because it is

religious groups and people that should take care of the religious matters"
(interview with a refugee centre director). This was a commonly held assumption
among the institutional actors in this study, that providing and sharing information
about spaces for religiosity are the responsibility of either refugees or religious
actors. As a social worker from a refugee centre stated: "If it is Christian person, this
means he has a small community to lean on. But there are many churches here that
we can show him around."

Institutional actor interviewees equally recognised that physical space also matters -
but there were varying interpretations of privacy among refugees based on different
identity markers such as gender, but, notably, not in regards to religion. For
example, a refugee agency staff worker shared that at one time, "staff tried to secure
safe areas for women, in addition to providing other means of support." When I
asked if the same had been done for any other group, religious or otherwise, the
answer was "no, there is no need".

Yet, in another interview, a staff member from a refugee agency said that
'integration' programmes are hindered by a lack of understanding the importance of
people feeling safe in physical spaces. In the context of learning German, there are
people who "can't learn German because the environment isn't suitable in centres".
When I asked for clarification on why the environment is not suitable, she said there
is a "lack of privacy".

Despite earlier discussions on spaces for religious practices such as prayer or the
accounts of attacks based on religion, no institutional actors noted how religion may
shape these spaces or whether questions of privacy, for example, have religious
characteristics. Furthermore, none of the interviewees referred to the religiosity of
refugees in terms of plurality. In light of such insights, it is apt and necessary to
examine how 'integration' is understood in a context of religious, ethnic, and other
forms of diversity and plurality. In this next section, I explore how 'integration'
relates to understandings of "Germanness' and 'religious identity' and what Jazeel
(2019: 149) describes as "the challenge of living together".

'The Challenge of Living Together': Multiculturalism, Cosmopolitanism, or Superdiversity?

Thus far, I have shown how my research findings demonstrate that religion and 'religious identity' are relevant to refugee and 'integration' debates and realities. An important aspect of this nexus is understanding how 'religious identity' informs responses to, enthusiasm for, and support of plurality and diversity (often coined in terms of 'multiculturalism', 'cosmopolitanism', and more recently, 'superdiversity') - in other words, what does it mean to live with and through diversity? Here, I posit that 'integration' is not the only model of responding to and engaging with plurality and diversity. Indeed, it may not be the most appropriate or effective model. In some critical ways, challenges and problems have arisen according to how 'integration' has been linked with and related to concerns of security and geopolitics around security concerns. In addition to the clash of civilisations rhetoric (Huntington 2002), there is also an increase in very specific forms of racism and religious prejudices within it. Islam, for instance, is commonly viewed as a problem in many Western contexts, particularly because it is perceived to threaten the assumed social and cultural cohesion of Western societies. This perception and assumption, outlined in Chapter 6 and its effects as explored in Chapters 7 and 8, has in turn shifted and informed the nature and content of both public and policy debates on (im)migration and refugees in relation to *diversity* and therefore, 'integration'. The nature of this religious prejudice, particularly against and of Islam, is important to understand so that responses to and engagements with refugee populations from diverse religious backgrounds and practices are appropriate and humane.

Studies on European opinions of immigration before the so-called 'refugee crisis', found that national identity and cultural values were considered the most salient issues that informed attitudes, more than economic matters such as employment (Sides and Citrin 2007). Notably, studies after 2011 found the same (Czymara and Schmidt-Catran 2017; Flynn et al. 2017), with the additional factor of religion and security being conflated with culture and national identity, including how 'values' were determined and perceived. For minority religious groups, this has become an increasingly pertinent area of inquiry not because of the growth in the number of 'religious minorities' per se but because of how *majority* religions (i.e. Islam and Christianity) are viewed and how minorities are subsumed within them.

Throughout both refugee and institutional actor interviews, a number of interviewees offered suggestions to the "challenge of living together" (Jazeel 2019: 149) and how they understood diversity in this context. Taken together, a blueprint for practical steps, contrary to normative, state-centric 'integration' processes, reflect notions of 'multiculturalism', 'cosmopolitanism', and 'superdiversity' but also go beyond them. Indeed, they offer a critique of the notion of 'integration' altogether.

A Syrian Christian refugee argued that 'integration' is not a helpful term for bringing people together: when 'integration' is used, it is a way of dividing refugees as 'good' integrators or 'bad' integrators, echoing scholarly critiques of the good/bad refugee dichotomy (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014; Höijer 2004). The refugee interviewee stated:

> There are a lot of Syrians who people say are not exactly good. So it's not even possible for them to be a part of this society. Like, they say we need to integrate but what does that mean? They say that too many refugees came here to Germany and there are those who are bad and that those who are bad are more than those who are good. This for sure reflects a bad image about Syrians. For example, they think they are not well-educated and they come from more or less an inferior background and have a different lifestyle which does not correspond with the society here. So this is reflecting a bad image about them.

Here, integration can constitute refugees as good/bad based on whether they are good/bad at 'integrating' into German society, reflected in perceived levels of education and measure of lifestyle. All of these, it can be seen, are forms of viewing people prejudicially. People with an "inferior background" are "bad" at integrating.

In a context where there is heightened religious prejudice about and against Muslims/Islam, the ways that this prejudice is superimposed on non-Muslims who 'look' (or are perceived to be) Muslims is often referenced in relation to radicalisation and the security threats that come with that, such as participation in acts of terrorism. As one Syrian NGO worker from a refugee agency explains, 'integration' is not possible or successful when fanaticism and radicalisation are viewed as being *only* a "Muslim" problem:

> On the internet you have more than 900 religious channels and there are all the religions on there, even Christian. Sometimes, I look at the channels of the Copts, for example, and let me tell you: I am afraid of them and how fanatical they are about their beliefs. This is the fear I have but everyone is only worried about the Muslims. We should be raising awareness among people that this is everywhere. So that is what I try to do too. I work on raising awareness, on asking questions. I let people ask questions. I work with women. When a woman tells me: take these prayer beads and pray 100 times and say "Allah u Akbar" (God is the Greatest), I question her. I ask her, what use is this? Where is this written? I challenge her to think, because this is just the way she was taught. This is what she was taught by her religion teacher, at university, from the Sheikh - we have to fear the Sheikh, you know? I try to make her doubt. I work a bit on the doubting.

Although this extract speaks to perceptions of radicalisation and dogma in religious beliefs, it also challenges a broader perception that radicalisation or extremism is only the purview of Muslims. The interviewee is suggesting that Muslim women do not, or choose not to, ask questions about religion and associates religious leaders with fear. While the emphasis on asking questions, recognising sources of influence, and challenging radicalisation are necessary

Similarly, many refugee and institutional actor interviewees spoke of the importance

of people learning about others (formally or informally) in order for encounters between refugees and hosts to happen and for those encounters to be meaningful. Encountering and educating were mutually reinforcing, as one Syrian Ismaili refugee said:

> As well as education, one of the solutions to all of this mess of people not knowing each other, not wanting to know each other, and all the difficulties we can face here, honestly? It's for people is to meet each other. To meet people from other religious groups. We used to meet each other as Syrians more too. Of course one of the solutions is to communicate with each other very clearly. The solution is that I admit my mistake. The solution is that if I'm mistaken, I fix it. In my opinion, we have to talk about everything openly and get back to our Syrian identity. This Syrian identity says that we are all one. And then the Germans, they can see it too. But why should they see it if we don't see it?

These suggestions of encounter and education came at the end of this interview, after asking the interviewee about whether they have met Germans and how they feel about living in Berlin. I then asked if there is anything he thinks could help with making life in Germany easier and his suggestion not only focuses on Germans but how the encounters *between* Syrians (including Syrian refugees) are needed in order for life in Germany to be easier. Such reflections further rupture any notion of a *Leitkultur* in Germany and highlights the multiplicities of German cultures, as well as the realities of superdiversity (Bock and Macdonald 2019; Meissner 2017; Vertovec 2007, 2011).

As another interviewee, a Syrian Christian woman, posited, in order for encounters been diverse groups of individuals, including among refugees, to be meaningful, religion needs to be distinguished from culture and nationality:

> It's more the culture and political aspects that are more dominating between Syrians. And this is something good. It's about politics, not religion. You will find it in the whole world that you have different divisions, you have differences. And the religious question is maybe there but not that dominating.

Almost all refugee interviewees mentioned the importance of encountering each other (other refugees, as well as other Syrians) and meeting Germans in order for people to understand the differences between religion, politics, culture, and nationality. This further highlights the importance of engaging with diversity, rather than subsuming it within a border categorisation and goal of 'integration' (Meissner 2017). In another interview, reaffirming findings discussed in Chapter 6, an institutional actor who works at a refugee centre acknowledged that many Germans homogenise Syrian identities and "think they're all Muslim". She expressed that homogenising is a result of Germans not being asked to know or not being challenged to think about how Syrian refugees are represented and thus, "who they really are". She continued,

> Sometimes I see Syrians saying that they couldn't imagine how the Germans don't know more and how they are stupid that they don't know that there is, there are Christians in Syria, for example. And sometimes we think that the whole world should know about us. But I don't know, maybe if I ask many Syrians about…, I don't know, Papua New Guinea (laughing), would they know about it? Why not? So, you see, sometimes we need time in order to understand. This is a process. You also need to at least let both groups to be interested to know more about each other and not expect that both groups - refugees and Germans - should just know about each other. Sure, they have stereotypes about each other. But they can overcome them when they talk to each other.

As this interviewee shared, not all people know about or understand all the diversity and multiplicities of many countries and nationalities. Rather than assuming that everyone knows about the diversity of a place they are unfamiliar with, they can begin by saying they do not know and then meet each other to know more.

Talking to each other and then learning about the 'other', as another institutional actor from an FBO suggested, requires asking *refugees* what they believe, rather than assuming it:

> I think it is important to speak to people and to hear from their experiences and their understanding. They may have the same understanding as you, or

me, or as somebody else. Or they may have also different, or certain experiences that would be helpful to share.

Indeed, as explained earlier, many of the refugees who participated in this study told me that it is not always taboo to ask about religion. Like any subject with potential sensitivities, as this Syrian Christian man explains, if someone gives you permission to talk about religion, then you can. In the following extract, he shares an experience where he was being treated for a medical ailment and when asked about where he was from in Syria, he knew it implied what his religion was and once he opened up, so did the nurse. In this account, religious difference brought them together:

> I had a nurse, a Syrian man from the opposition, come to help me once when I wasn't well. Then the guy asked me: Where are you from? And this is actually a normal question, as I told you before, because behind the question is a way to put you in a box, like how to deal with you. And he was fishing to know what my religion is by knowing where I am from. And you know what, I was okay with it. But that was me - I was okay with it, I can't say everyone would be okay with it. But he just waited to see if I would answer. I answered. And then when he knew, like, he was like, 'we are all brothers'. And he hugged me. So you see, this is also another thing to remember that differences are not always a bad thing. Even for us Syrians! [*laughing*]

By ensuring that refugees *themselves* are able to decide whether or not they want to talk about religion, many refugee interviewees also suggested that it was similarly important to let refugees decide how and where religion is positioned in refugee programmes and policies. To do this, one refugee suggested the importance of refugees being able to "self-organise where possible". Examples of refugees self-organising were most evident in the FBO that asked refugees to decide the form and content of international dinners and how to include religious needs, for instance. This perspective goes beyond the bureaucracy of the state and its determination of refugee-host relations through compulsory integration programmes. In another example, the director of the FBO posited that it was essential for *refugees* to decide what projects they wanted to start and to give them the room and support to do so:

> Like there is a sewing project, for example, where people approached me and

said okay we want to do this. And so they just got the key to the breakroom and they have it every Saturday afternoon. And then I had people from Syria, they are also from a faith called Druze, so they just founded an association for themselves to help the people in their hometown and also to help homeless people in Berlin. So that was their idea! So they set up their own organisation and we helped them to do this and give them space to meet. So they basically do their own thing and we are associated with all this because of them. This is what I hope happens more, but it takes more time.

In order for refugees to feel enabled and supported to self-organise, many refugees said they needed to be safe and encouraged to celebrate and practice their religion or belief: "They should be free regarding their religion and there should be no problem," one Syrian Druze refugee woman explained during a focus group. This comment was followed by another focus group member, a Syrian refugee (religion unknown), who said "yes, exactly; the more open we feel about our religion and other people let it happen, then there is more possibility to do things that we need to do here."

In many interviews, seeing diversity as a strength rather than a burden was regularly mentioned towards the end of the interviews when I would ask for open comments or whether participants had anything they wanted to share about living in Germany. As one Syrian Druze refugee stated, "Germans have all these different people living together and they are proud of it" and asked, "why not for us too?"

He continued,

> For them, Berlin is an example of cohabitation and integration and that there is diversity. For us [Syrians], this diversity enriches us. Berlin is special and different than other German cities because it has this diversity, it has a different culture. Syria is the same thing. So we are proud of this diversity. In the past we would show it without having to talk about it. We would show foreigners this diversity when they visited Syria, we would show them the churches, mosques, this diversity and that diversity. If Germans say that the root of our problem is diversity - no, it's not. On the contrary.

By saying that diversity is a strength and not a problem, this interview extract

expresses a perspective on how religion can be viewed in the context of refugee 'integration'. Taking the views of refugees seriously, including how they see and interact with multiple identities, including religious ones, is an important endeavour - not so that 'integration' happens, but so that 'integration' can be recast altogether.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the refugee and institutional actor interviews demonstrate the many ways that 'religious identity' is dynamic, not fixed, tracing the ways that 'religious identity' is produced and reproduced, performed and acted upon, in different ways by refugees. Recognising the fluidity of 'religious identity' in processes of so-called 'integration' is not to undermine it but to "destabilise the certainties of 'identity'" (Jazeel 2019: 143). This includes rupturing the notion that there is a dominant culture (*Leitkultur*) which refugees either move towards or achieve in adopting successfully. In doing so, certainties of 'integration' as a goal of refugee-host relations are similarly interrogated. 'Religion' and 'religious identity' are not simply aspects of 'integration': they are realities of social life for refugees and for that reason alone, should be taken seriously.

In each part of this chapter, 'religious identity' has "no easily discernible historical root, no readily identifiable biological seed" (Jazeel 2019: 144). Syrian refugees are not a priori members of a religious group nor do they practice a specific religiosity according to any ethnic, regional, or other marker. Rather, there is a performance of and adaptation to 'religious identity' that informs and impacts the many ways in which Syrian refugees interact, adopt, or contest various processes of so-called 'integration'. The accounts shared by refugees in this study illustrate how stigmatisation and stereotyping of Muslim refugees relate to non-Muslim experiences or perceptions of exclusion and rejection. The ways in which religious symbolic boundaries impact relations in 'integration' processes therefore are not

confined to direct social interactions but also inform how social encounters may be demarcated.

My research findings affirm that there is a need to critically interrogate what is meant by 'integration', where responsibility lies for ensuring that 'integration' outcomes are achieved, and understanding the multiple players and factors that contribute to 'integration' processes in terms of both challenges and opportunities. It should not be assumed that 'integration' is a desirable process and outcome (Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore 2018). Further, it cannot be simply presupposed that religion and 'religious identity' either 'fit' into the framework of successful integration or not. There is a need to interrogate the usefulness and effectiveness of the term 'integration' itself, and not simply insert religion and 'religious identity' into it. This is particularly pertinent in contexts of superdiversity, of which the term integration contrasts in its normative assumptions (Meissner 2017).

Indeed, rather than examining refugee-host relations as either meeting 'integration' processes or not, it may be more useful to explore the many complexities and nuances within "the challenge of living together" (Jazeel 2019: 149). Thus, my research interrogates assumptions about what 'integration' is and is not, and argues it is a fundamentally flawed concept. A rigid and narrow definition of integration loses meaning and usefulness when we acknowledge the continuous construction, shaping, making and building of relationships and the interactions between arrivals and differently positioned host communities, including members who have themselves 'become' German. Often, definitions of integration as a concept, policy, and practice assumes and implies that there is a status quo - a fixed relation upon which processes of joining can be created, accelerated, or hindered. Reality is more complex.

Finally, by drawing on the notion of symbolic boundaries (following Trittler 2018), it can be understood how - despite 'integration' processes - 'religious minorities' can be symbolically excluded from being complete, desired, and legitimate members of a

nation or society. In this way, the representations and stereotyping of 'Syrian refugees' outlined in Chapter 6 and the ways in which religious prejudices manifest themselves between refugees (Chapter 7) can be better understood. There are not only 'outward' examples of inclusion/exclusion but also symbolic ones whereby people can be judged, differentiated and in turn, excluded or met with hostility when 'religious identities' are used as a boundary maker (Trittler 2018). This includes the ways in which secular or Christian norms and values such as freedom, tolerance, neutrality, and so on, are seen to be threatened by the 'other' non-secular or non-Christian (and indeed, non-Muslim), 'other'.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

"This has been a question for me for years," a young Syrian Druze man shared during our interview, "how to live with all of this diversity but not see it as a problem." Indeed, the 'challenge of living together' (Jazeel 2019) is an enduring matter - across contexts, among diverse groups, and within and between different societies. This thesis has explored one dimension of this 'challenge' - that of religious diversity among Syrian refugees in Germany, after the height of the so-called 'refugee crisis' of 2015. Indeed, all participants in this study shared accounts and presented insights on the relationship between 'refugee' and 'religious minority' experiences in ways that reflect and are connected to wider histories and contexts. This is an important dimension to this study. I did not view or examine experiences in isolated ways, but as part of a wider and changing set of contexts and understandings. As such, terms such as 'Syrian refugee', 'religious identity', 'minority', and 'integration' have been interrogated and contested throughout this thesis. By tracing connections, overlaps, and contradictions between these terms, as shared through the memories and accounts of my research participants, it has been argued that - far from being fixed and static terms - such concepts are fluid, shifting, and relational. Rather than attempting to explore and identify conclusive definitions of each term as the 'goal' of this study, my interest has been to examine their interrelations, constructions, and uses - by whom and to what effect. In doing so, my efforts throughout the previous chapters can also be viewed as a political project: interrogating the meaning and implications of concepts and the broader processes of their creation and use is imperative to any effort to contribute constructively to debates about the type of societies that can be created, what they 'look' like, and how they can be achieved.

Yet, although this thesis has been guided by a critical deconstructivist framework, in many ways, it does not reject the 'real' (Jazeel 2019: 228). By tracing how Syrian refugees *themselves* view, express, and delineate the contours of 'religious identity'

and being a 'minority' (Chapter 5), for example, is to reveal the 'real' - multiple, contradictory, and complex. Further, by identifying the recurring ways 'Syrian refugees' are represented by *others*, I have delineated dominant motifs about the Eastern 'Other'. These motifs, problematic and often dangerous in scope and effect, find expression in the textual and oral descriptions, labels, categorisations, and interpretations of German news publications and by institutional actors responding to or engaging with Syrian refugees in Germany. These representations have not 'only' revealed (mis)assumptions about refugee identities broadly, but *specifically*, about 'Syrian refugee' identities that fall outside of a homogenous, political, and Orientalist framing (Chapter 6). Such (mis)assumptions are not apolitical creations but constitutive ones, which inform and shape relations among and between refugees (Chapter 7) as well as between refugees and 'hosts' (Chapter 8).

In addition to contributing important insights to underexplored areas of research related to refugee and religious (specifically, 'minority') representations and experiences, this study has made a valuable contribution to understanding the *multiplicities* and *complexities* of 'religious' refugee identities, needs, and experiences. By filling a significant gap in extant research by specifically focusing on '*religious minority*' refugees among the Syrian refugee population, my research findings have centred the importance and realities of inter- and intra- group heterogeneity in any exploration in refugee and forced migration studies. Such heterogeneity is not limited to understanding the 'refugee' identities of the Syrian refugees in this study but also 'other', intersecting identities. In Chapter 5, for instance, I argue that the notion of there being a single, united 'Syrian' identity is a fictive conception. Given the realities of religious minority-majority and minority-minority relations in Syria (both pre- and post-2011), to examine Syrian 'minority' refugee identities in static or homogenous ways would be to generalise an otherwise complex reality. This understanding was fundamental to ensuring that this study draws on analytical, and conceptual frameworks of Syrian refugee 'issues' that include a wide range of religious refugee issues, concerns, needs, and experiences.

Avoiding simplistic conceptualisations allows for understanding multiple ways in which the 'minority' label itself is constructed, interpreted, and represented differently - both in relation to 'Syrian refugees' and their memories and experiences of discrimination, in some instances, and in terms of amicable interreligious relations, in other cases. Indeed, as Chapter 5 further identified, religious complexities have been largely ignored or oversimplified in political commentaries and academic research on the Syrian conflict itself. Generalised notions of the 'sectarian' nature of the Syrian conflict, for instance, have in turn 'spilled into' references to and framings of displaced populations from Syria, including their assumed political affiliations. Significantly, as Chapter 7 explored, such simplifications and uses of terms in relation to the conflict (for example, that specific 'sectarian identities' are synonymous with pre-determined 'religious identities') have constitutive effects for Syrian 'religious minority' refugee experiences with *other* Syrian refugees.

Taking representations seriously, this thesis juxtaposed notions of 'Syrian' and 'Syrian religious minority' identities from Syria, and how they are understood by refugees themselves, to the ways in which 'Syrian refugees' are (mis)represented in the context of Germany. As the largest refugee population in Germany (UNHCR 2018), it is apt to interrogate whether and how 'Syrian refugees' are framed, referred to, and subsequently constituted in the country they now live in. Through an analysis of three German news publications and 42 institutional actor interviews from a range of organisations working with refugee populations in Germany, my findings were that there are homogenous, Orientalist, and political representations of 'Syrian refugees'. Significantly, 'religious minority' identities and experiences are either underreported or entirely absent (Chapter 6). With the exception of references to Muslim and Christian refugee identities, religious heterogeneity was either misunderstood, or in most cases, entirely overlooked in references to 'Syrian refugees' in Germany. Such stereotyping of Syrian *Muslim* refugees is particularly prevalent in a context of, and in conversation with, research to date highlighting the increasing securitisation of migration and racialisation of religion. Nevertheless, the simplistic nature of such representations is *not* only problematic because it omits or

underreports a diversity of 'religious minority' Syrian refugees. It is also the ways in which geopolitical narratives of national security and concerns over terrorism in relation to Muslim refugees (identities that are either real or imputed) are then subsumed with or conflated to reflect or represent *all* 'Syrian refugee' identities and thus impact both *Muslim and non-Muslim* Syrian refugees.

The constitutive effects of such representations were specifically identified by listening to and seeking to understand the myriad perspectives and experiences from refugees themselves. That is, individuals who fall outside of the dominant, homogenous framing of 'Syrian refugees', as presented above. From both non-Muslim and non-Christian backgrounds and affiliations, Syrian refugees who self-identified as Druze, Ismaili, Alawite, Christian, Yazidi, and atheist shared important accounts of their experiences of being a 'Syrian refugee' in relation to 'others' - refugees and 'hosts' alike. Taking relationality and intersectionality as two important conceptual frameworks for examining these experiences, I was able to explore more holistically what and who a 'Syrian refugee' is in relation to diverse others and in connection to multiple and overlapping identities. Policy makers and practitioners too would do well to rethink the portrayal and representations of 'Syrian refugees' and in doing so, demystify, de-Orientalise, and (re)correct misunderstandings of refugees' 'religious identities' in their own work. Further research examining the structural mechanisms of refugee representations and their effects can further help identify systems of discrimination and prejudice that perpetuate stereotypes and assumptions of refugee identities. A systemic, structural perspective and approach on refugee representations can critically interrogate and recast (mis)representations by also understanding the forces creating them. In this respect, how non-Arab refugees in Germany (or elsewhere) are referred to, related to, and subsequently constituted would offer unique insights into the complexity of social relations and the structures underlying them.

Chapter 7 built on the importance of relationality as being pertinent to understanding refugee experiences by identifying accounts of refugee-refugee relationality (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016c). Significantly, both the 'minority' label

(Chapter 5) and representations of the 'Syrian refugee' (Chapter 6) impacted and informed experiences of welcome and hostility among and between refugees. By using the lens of relationality, I identified and examined religious prejudices as a feature of refugee-refugee experiences in Germany, and its adverse, insidious, effects and influences. This finding is a significant contribution to the paucity of research on refugee-refugee relationality (cf Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016c) and further ruptures any notion in refugee representations literature that representations 'only' matter for refugees and *non-refugee* hosts. Such insights also add multiplicity to the often collective, unitary framing of 'refugees' and repositions the importance of recognising heterogeneity *within*, but also *among* refugee populations. Furthermore, this thesis has contributed valuable insights into the complexity of social relations, including among refugees, as they pertain to diverse and intersectional identities. As such, I encourage academics and policy/practitioners to explore the dynamics of refugee-refugee relationality in diverse settings, particularly within the same city or urban spaces. Further research can expand and build on refugee-refugee relations from both non-Muslim and non-Christian backgrounds, as well as from different countries of origin. Indeed, the ways in which Syrian refugees view and relate to religion (particularly post-2011) may be significantly different from other Arab or Middle Eastern refugees; for example, from Iran or Iraq, insofar as the very power structures of religion are distinct in each country and specific contexts. Indeed, further research would do well to distinguish, compare, and relate religious and other identities for diverse refugee communities within the same contexts. This may include research on the religious identities of Syrian (and other) *internally* displaced populations, which is a significant gap in research to date. These individuals and families who do not have the resources to travel any further, or "whose ties to community and kin networks remained sufficiently intact" (Zaman 2016: 167), and their experiences, can shift and expand notions of relationality and intersectionality in such contexts.

A focus of this thesis has also been on how representations of 'Syrian refugees' characterise and inform different relations, reactions, and experiences in a 'host' society. To that end, Chapter 8 examined broader processes of refugee representations with refugee and 'hosts' experiences under the umbrella concept of 'integration'. I use the term 'integration' throughout the thesis in order to speak to its common usage in policy and practitioner spaces, while simultaneously contesting and interrogating the term itself. While recent research on 'integration' has accounted for the importance of multiple *social* factors in processes of 'integration' (Ndofar-Tah et al. 2019), this chapter's examination of varied scenes and sites of hostility and welcome between refugees and 'hosts' questions the value of using 'integration' as a term to encapsulate or reflect such realities. In contexts of increasing diversity across and between many religious and non-religious identities, the term 'integration' presupposes a dominant culture to which the actions of 'refugees' and 'hosts' support or hinder.

In relation to religious identities specifically, the influence and impact of a secular bias among some institutional actors cannot be overlooked. As my findings show and contribute to the literature on the sociology of religion responding to the so-called 'secularisation thesis', 'religion' is not the purview of the private selves of refugees and has many public manifestations, contestations, and relations. Depending on how (specifically, Muslim) religious identities of refugees are viewed and responded to by 'hosts', Syrian refugee experiences shift and alter. Indeed, responses to the 'refugee crisis' in Germany, from a 'culture of welcome' to the rise of rightwing support and increasing anti-immigration movements, reveal the complex interconnections between representations of refugees (and refugee religious identities) and the experiences of refugees in host societies.

The broader implications of interrogating 'integration' as a process worth pursuing and supporting in policy and practitioner circles can also be further explored in contexts outside of Germany. Across Europe, in particular, but also pertinent to some Western states such as Australia and the United States, broader historical and

contemporary debates on religion and responses to diverse refugee populations are timely and urgent concerns. Indeed, had this thesis examined another group of refugees in the same or another country, my research insights would reflect such specificities. I undertook my research two years after the height of the 2015 'refugee crisis', when responses to the arrival of Syrian and other asylum-seekers and refugees into Germany had shifted from questions of 'whether or who' should be 'welcomed' to the country towards 'what do we do with those who are here now'. Inevitably, such a context informed how certain factors, such as sites and scenes of hostility and welcome or those of religious prejudices among refugees, took precedence over other factors in both refugee and institutional actor interviews. The subject of religion and 'religious identity', then, and its implications for 'integration' was of great interest to many interviewees, which may not have been the case a few years prior. To help illustrate this point further, when I approached a refugee centre manager to participate in the study, her immediate answer was no, until she heard me explain the 'religious identity' aspect of the research scope. She then asked for more information and took steps to connect me with both refugees from the centre and her colleagues as, in her words, "religion matters for how people get along here and what they can do in Germany".

Indeed, adding diverse perspectives to the ongoing conversation on religion and (forced) migration circles has been an important - and perhaps the most significant - undertaking in this study. By opening up academic discourse, going beyond monolithic or simplistic Christian-Muslim relations, and interrogating notions of refugee and/or religious homogeneity, this thesis has asserted the importance of taking the inter- and intra- religious heterogeneity of refugee populations seriously. More broadly, the relevance of 'religion' for refugee 'integration' debates challenges broader themes of the purview and scope of national identities and where 'diversity' "fits" in this dialogue. Religious prejudices, for example, are also concerns for refugee-host relations and reflect wider assumptions about specific religious groups (i.e. Muslims), on the one hand, and about 'religion' and its (in)compatibility or place in Western, liberal societies, on the other. As such, further research - and indeed, policy makers and practitioners alike - should reflect critically about the construction

and role of secularism in response to increasingly diverse religious refugee populations. Beyond the 'West', there is also a need to explore dynamics and realities for non-Muslim and non-Christian refugee populations in non-Christian host populations, such as in the case of Tibetan Buddhist refugees in India.

It is from the standpoint of seeking to understand diversity that this research project began and now ends. The growing reality of individuals, families, groups, and communities from a range of backgrounds, affiliations, practices, and viewpoints 'living together' requires that scholars, practitioners, and policymakers alike actively engage with complex social realities. In this context, this meant undertaking inclusive research with/on/about diverse Syrian refugees in a way that acknowledges overlapping, contradictory, and intersecting identities, including interrogating spaces where such realities are not acknowledged or responded to appropriately or meaningfully. It is hoped that the contributions in this thesis, however limited in scope and execution, help to better understand and respond to one of the world's most significant challenges - that of 'living together'.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Interview Guide for Institutional Actor Interviews

Structure:

- Thank the participant for agreeing to the interview.

- Reintroduce self and the project.

- Explain the purpose of this interview as being two-fold:

1. To hear any insights you have on the relationship between religion and responses to refugee needs and experiences.

2. Any particular experiences your organisation has had in relation to Syrian refugees, specifically in relation to 'religious identity' and the way in which ''religion is used or not by institutions and why.

- Ask for consent to proceed: assure confidentiality and anonymity, if requested.

- Ask if willing to record conversation.

Interview Questions:

1. Please introduce yourself and tell me a little bit about your role at [name of organisation], specifically in relation to refugees.

2. How do you see the relationship between religion and responses to refugee needs and experiences, including integration in Germany?

3. What has been the response of your organisation to the arrival of Syrian refugees?

4. In your experience and opinion, what are the core needs of Syrian refugees?

5. What experiences has [name of organisation] had with working alongside of or assisting other, perhaps minority, religious communities?

6. What are the most important factors in understanding the role of religion in experiences of or responses to refugees?

7. Is there anyone else you recommend I speak to?

8. Will you be happy for me to follow up with you in the future, if required?

Appendix B - Interview Guide for Syrian Refugee Interviews and Focus Groups

Structure:

- Introduce myself as the researcher

- Introduce the interpreter and explain his/her role

- Offer background to the research

- Ask if they have any questions or concerns

- Ask for their consent to participate in the interviews and let them know they can stop the interview at any point if they wish

- Ask for permission to audio-record the conversation

Interview Questions:

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
2. Are you happy to tell me whether or what religion you identify with?
3. Do you identify as a 'minority'?
4. What was life like in Syria before the conflict?
    a. Any specific experiences of life in Syria as a 'minority'?
5. Why did you leave Syria?
6. What was your experience of leaving Syria? Can you tell me about your journey?
7. What was your arrival to Europe like?
8. How did you come to Germany?
9. Did you spend any time at a refugee centre in Berlin?
    a. If so, what was your experience like there?
    b. If not, why not?
10. Can you tell me about your experiences living in Germany?
    a. Experiences with other Syrian refugees

    b. Experiences with non-Syrian refugees

    c. With Germans, including established Arab or other migrant communities.

11. What are your experiences with any refugee organisation(s) and the services it/they provide?

12. What services have you received so far?

    a. From the state?

    b. Material (i.e. housing, food, water)?

    c. Immaterial (i.e. support services – counselling, women's groups)?

    d. Are there other things you need other than what you received?

13. What is a 'normal' day like for you and your family here in Germany?

14. What are the similarities and differences between your daily life in Germany compared to your life in Syria?

15. Does any refugee agency/organisation(s) know about your religious affiliation?

    a. If so, how do they know?

    b. If not/unsure, do you want them to know? Do you think it is important for them to know?

Depending on the nature of the interview and comfort of the participant:

16. What have been your experiences in Germany of being (Christian/Druze/Ismaili/Alawite, etc)?

17. How do you practice and express your religion in Germany?

18. Do you have particular ways of worshiping, praying, eating, dressing?

19. Can you give me any examples of positive experiences you have had here?

20. Have there been any examples of negative experiences?

    a. If so, can you give me an example?

21. Is there anything else you want to share about your experiences living in Germany?