

# Refugee Characteristics as a Game-Changer for Integration in Fortress Europe

*Emina Osmandzovic*, (MPhil)  
University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

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## Abstract

European security is an indispensable quality of its peace and democratic foundations. Failure to develop a coherent integration system has the potential to irreparably shake such foundations. This paper attempts to identify factors that influence integration and illuminate uncertainty around the refugee influx. Through a mixed-methods approach, I analyze secondary survey data of refugees across seven EU countries and conduct in-person interviews with key stakeholders. Survey analysis reveals that characteristics of being male and young positively shape refugees' integration, a profile that highly resembles that of economic migrants. Topic modelling of interviews shows the fragmented image of refugee integration. Economically well-off EU states focus on legal aspects, whereas those not well-off focus on social integration. None of the two extremes are conducive to optimal integration in Europe. Overall, this paper depicts the importance of a mixed-methods approach to understanding the factors that influence refugee integration. The results are highly relevant, especially in the aftermath of the refugee crisis as an indispensable step safeguarding European security.

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**Keywords:** Refugee, integration, European Union

## Introduction:

Integration policies pose as contentious issues involving uncertainty and unease within Europe. During the peak of the 2015 refugee crisis, the all-encompassing absence of a prepared response and the persistent lack of political will to tackle forced displacement has raised alarms in the international community. From 2015 onward, states have shifted across the liberal-conservative spectrum in the creation of new immigration laws against "bogus" refugees (Neumayer 2005; Sillensen 2016). By creating a "crisis mentality" (Esses, Medianu, and Lawson 2013), media portrayals suggest that refugees spread infectious diseases and that terrorists may gain entry to Europe disguised as refugees. The contemporary lens of Hannibal ante portas labels

refugees as enemies at the gate (Esses, Medianu, and Lawson 2013). The label of “economic immigrants” rather than refugees and the language that perpetuates the danger of the refugee flow into Europe (Travis 2015), all hint at the lack of understanding towards the core of the problem. The death of Alan Kurdi (Smith 2015), a three-year-old Syrian boy whose body was photographed washed up on a Turkish beach, became emblematic of the refugee crisis along with stories depicting refugee-related extremist violence (Esses, Medianu, and Lawson 2013). The terms "migrant", "refugee" and "asylum-seeker", are often interchangeably used by policy-makers and media, but each has a distinct meaning of different international obligations. If conflated, the distinction can mean the difference between life and death (Travis 2015). The dangerous consequences of poor integration have already been seen with extremist outbursts of violence of second-generation immigrants across Europe. According to the 2015 Brookings Institute report on violent extremism, “concerns are being expressed [in policy-making circles] that refugee camps may become fertile recruitment grounds for violent extremism (...) and, if the current Syrian crisis remains unresolved, there is the risk of a similar process unfolding [in Europe] too” (Koser 2015). Given that security remains at the forefront of EU concerns, finding solutions for displaced populations on its soil should be an urgent priority for both humanitarian and security reasons.

Integration is a complex concept, which is one reason why it has no single and universally applied definition. According to the Council of the European Union, “integration is a dynamic, two-way process” (Council of the European Union 2004, 19). On an immigrant-wide, rather than refugee level, there are three broad and partly overlapping spheres of integration in literature. They include social, political, and economic integration into host-societies (Carens 2005; Huddleston, Niessen, and Tjaden 2012; Dancygier and Laitin 2014; Castles et al. 2013; OECD 2012). Literature identifies a diapason of factors that are associated with integration. The individual-level factors include (i) gender (Tubergen, Mass, and Flap 2004; Keith and Holmes 2009; Rodda 2015; Osmandzikovic 2017), (ii) religious denomination (Tubergen, Mass, and Flap 2004; Rodda 2015; Keith and Holmes 2009; Osmandzikovic 2017; Strabac, Aalberg, and Valenta 2014), (iii) age (Rodda 2015; Osmandzikovic 2017; Bansak et al. 2018), (iv) previous work experience (Bansak et al. 2018), (v) educational level (Tubergen, Mass, and Flap 2004; Keith and Holmes 2009; Osmandzikovic 2017) and (vi) marital status (Keith and Holmes 2009). The origin-country factors include (i) the level of political freedom and civil rights (Tubergen, Mass, and Flap 2004), (ii) the existence of conflict (Keith and Holmes 2009), (iii) historical relationship with the destination country (Rodda 2015; Osmandzikovic 2017) and (iv) socio-economic development (R Rodda 2015; Tubergen, Mass, and Flap 2004; Keith

and Holmes 2009). Many of these precursors, however, have been applied to immigrant, rather than refugee integration.

This paper creates a comprehensive index of refugees' integration experience, encompassing: social integration, employment, citizenship, civil society participation and voting interest. I use cross-disciplinary theory to examine individual and origin-country factors that influence refugee integration in the EU, and the extent to which these factors influence refugees' integration experience.

### **Theoretical perspectives on migration:**

The scarcity of quantitative research on refugee integration speaks to the absence of data that can potentially underpin both literature and official EU policies (Osmandzovic2017). The largest number of quantitative studies focuses on determinants of asylum application decisions (Barthel and Neumayer 2015; Keith and Holmes 2009; Rodda 2015; Toshkov 2013), followed by a small number of studies that examine the relationship between the length of the asylum process and subsequent economic or citizenship integration (Zetter et al. 2003; Hainmueller, Hangartner, and Peitranuono 2015; Hainmueller, Hangartner, and Lawrence 2016; Marbach, Hainmueller, and Hangartner 2017). The most striking gap is the gap between theory and data. Refugee integration primarily remains at the focus of sociology and anthropology, especially regarding long-term and cross-generational patterns (Portes 2007; Portes and Rumbaut 2014).

The approach of political scientists predominantly utilizes case-studies and interviews that prefer engaging with officials (Gilbert and Koser 2006; Valenta and Thorshaug 2013; Mayblin 2017; Robinson and Segrott 2002), making any cross-country comparison impractical. Despite a shyly growing quantitative inquiry, data primarily comes from 1980s and early 2000s (Zetter et al. 2003; Tubergen, Mass, and Flap 2004; Keith and Holmes 2009; Barthel and Neumayer 2015), with only a few more recent studies (S. L. Schneider 2008; Rodda 2015; Valenta and Thorshaug 2013; Bansak et al. 2018; Beine et al. 2015). In Europe, primary data sources include Eurostat, the European Social Survey (ESS), and national censuses. The lack of accessible data sources, especially those that are publicly available and based on individual-level variables, poses as a partial explanation on the low number of studies engaging in quantitative analysis. The most problematic repercussion is that the literature that uses a mixed-methods approach to refugee integration is virtually non-existent.

Due to the fact that a single-sided perspective on refugee integration experience is not able to address this multifaceted phenomenon (La Barbera 2013; Fuller 1993; Geertz1983; Bordieu 1984), a cross-disciplinary approach is an appealing challenge that this paper undertakes. In order to develop the

theoretical backbone of my data analysis, I first tackle the social identity theory (Tajfel 1974), followed by an elaboration of the ethnic competition and intergroup contact theories (S. L. Schneider 2008). I then discuss the human capital theory that emphasizes the economic and sociological aspects of integration (Lincoln 1995; Portes 1995; Iredale 2008).

The social identity theory (SIT) attempts to explain the relationship between personal and social aspects of human identity. Developed by Henri Tajfel in a series of experiments after World War II, the theory states that a part of a person's concept of self comes from the group(s) to which that person belongs (Tajfel 1974). Tajfel defines social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of membership in social group(s) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel 1974: 69). Tajfel touches upon the distinctiveness of groups on the basis of race, socio-economic development, minority-majority dichotomies, class and status superiority, all of which are directly relevant to the group difference between refugees and domicile populations. The creation of an inter-group boundary may not intrinsically rank one over the other (Allport 1979); however, the differences that are used as markers of distinction are commonly used as precursors of a ranking system. Namely, the "in-group" sees itself as better than the "out-group" in a particular context, even if the two are almost identical (Sherif and Sherif 1965).

In the creation of European identity, the establishment of associational boundaries between "in-groups" and "out-groups" has been crucial in defining key determinants of selfhood that European citizens relate to. Due to a lack of understanding, refugees have been perceived as members of the "out-group" by the domicile populations; a notion that is depicted by numerous public opinion polls (Ray, Pugliese, and Esipova 2017; Poushter 2016). The negative media portrayal contributes to "de-individualization" of refugees and the perpetuation of uncertainty of their claim to remain within Europe. As one contemporary application of Tajfel's theory on refugee integration, Colic-Peisker and Walker analyze Bosnian diaspora in Australia and demonstrate that "the loss of identity experienced in forced migration, difficulties in acculturation (...) and collective and individual strategies in acculturation" (Colic-Peisker and Walker 2003) all influence integration. In other words, refugees' skills, English proficiency and rural/urban background determine the type and intensity of interaction with the new social context – the interaction through which the processes of acculturation and identity rebuilding unfold. Herein, refugees with their particular characteristics, cultural distance from the host-society, human and social capital — and the host-society with its specific treatment of refugees, through official policies and informal encounters, create a series of cumulative, compounded and mutually reinforcing actions and reactions that determine the shape and direction of

integration. The results are suggestive of the fact that social identity describes refugee integration as a two-way process (Colic-Peisker and Walker 2003).

In his research on the development of refugees' identity, Zetter states that refugees' (social) identity becomes particularly complicated for this group owing to imposed labels in the host society (Zetter 1991; Zetter 2007), which defines refugees without them playing the primary role as owners of these labels (Kebede 2010). Due to absence of a systematic study of labelling processes in the policy discourse associated with refugees (Zetter 1991), Zetter argues that alienating distinctions emerge by the creation of different categories of refuge deemed necessary to prioritize their neediness. Institutionalization of such labelling does further harm to refugees as a highly vulnerable group, as latent and manifest processes of institutional action and program delivery perpetuate differences that are backed by the system (Zetter 1991). According to Smeekes *et al.* who conduct survey research on 361 hard-to-reach Syrian refugees in Turkey, the concept of "in-group" belonging with its associated sense of social identity may function as a protective factor for refugees, constituting an important source of mental and physical health (Smeekes, Shelley, and Psaltis 2017). However, such a process, both examined by Zetter in Cyprus and by Smeekes *et al.* in Turkey, can directly clash with the host-society. The construction of social identity both from the side of the host-society and from the side of refugees has the potential to hinder integration. In congruence with the social identity theory, the ethnic competition theory (ECT) aims to explain a broad class of anti-immigrant attitudes including prejudice and ethnic exclusionism (Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Coenders 2002; Coenders, Lubbers, and Scheepers 2003).

Partially evolving from the social identity theory, it states that the degree of ethnic competition is conceptualized as a contextual characteristic comprising (i) the quantitative demographic relation between "in-group" and "out-group", and (ii) the amount of resources the groups compete for (Kunovich 2000; Semyonov, Rajzman, and Gorodzeisky 2006; Lincoln 1995; Blacklock 1967). The theory also relates to intergroup research in economics that focuses on resource availability and "in-group" favoritism (Lei and Vesely 2010). Thus, ECT contextualizes SIT in order to further encompass the localized context of the "in-group/out-group" schism. In regards to the "out-group" size in the host-society, conflict over status, material resources, cultural values and identity, are differentiated theoretically; however, these factors remain untested empirically. The intergroup contact theory (ICT), however, stipulates that, as the immigrant "out-group" grows, so do the opportunities for the host society to interact with immigrants. Some researchers have argued that intergroup contact is an efficient means to reduce prejudice (Allport 1979; M. Sherif and C. W. Sherif 1965). ICT, in further developing Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis, suggests that "constructive"

intergroup contact reduces negative intergroup attitudes, given a “friendship potential” rather than acquaintanceship (Pettigrew 1998).

Moreover, intergroup contact potentially alleviates the effects of cultural distance between the host-society and the immigrant “out-group” (Allport 1979). The theory stands in stark contrast to ECT and suggests that integration, as a depiction of an “in-group/out-group” dynamic is not a linear process and depends on context-specific factors. Both theories suggest a mixed picture that highlights the negative and positive aspects of integration.

In an attempt to examine both theories from the side of the host-society, Silke Schneider argues that constructive intergroup contact reduces negative intergroup attitudes, thus decreasing prejudice levels with the increase in “out-group” size (S. L. Schneider 2008). While ECT attempts to explain a range of anti-immigrant attitudes, including prejudice and discrimination, the ICT provides an explanation for the potentially positive relationship between more exposure to immigrants and more tolerance. Schneider’s observations suggest that “the higher the immigrant population with non-Western origin, the higher the average ethnic threat perceptions in a country” (Schneider 2008). She reaffirms that the effect is inconclusive and non-linear.

The third theory I draw from is the human capital theory, which comes from the sociological concepts of social and ethnic capital, and the economic basis of human capital within the production cycle. Just as physical capital is generated by changes in materials to tools that facilitate production, human capital is created by changes in persons that bring about skills of productivity (Coleman 1988). Pierre Bourdieu (1984) defines social capital as the aggregate of actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition. As Alejandro Portes puts it in his discussion of human capital of the Hispanic minority in the U.S., the simplest definition encompasses the skills acquired through formal education or on-the-job training (Portes 1995: 2). He measures human capital via (i) educational achievement, and (ii) host-country’s language proficiency. The quality of social resources that human capital of immigrants is based on is a variable composed of (i) contacts’ educational level, and (ii) contacts’ working status (Portes 1995: 6). Some aspects of racial inequality are seen to arise from the way social segregation makes an individual’s opportunities to acquire skills depend on contemporaneous skill attainments by others in the same social group. According to Portes’ argument, for minorities, inferior social capital is inherited from the previous generation, and thus is a product of “negative ethnic capital” (Portes 1995: 4). It affects the individuals’ acquisition of human capital. The economic aspect of the capital-based inequalities can be illustrated with comparative advantage of the host-society in the market over

immigrants. Similar to Schneider, the limitation of his argument is the focus on immigrants at large, rather than refugees.

### **The refugee claim**

There are several studies that use regression models to analyze the influencers of asylum-seekers' applications (Rodda 2015; Keith and Holmes 2009; Barthel and Neumayer 2015). Patricia Rodda uses gender, age, and characteristics of refugees' origin-and host-countries, the latter one including GDP per capita, unemployment rates, political freedom and previous applications. Rodda analyses country-level data from Eurostat in the 2008-2013 period; a rare study using recent empirical data. While neither being a female nor a minor have statistically significant effects on the asylum decision outcome, her results suggest that age, especially the 17-35 range, has a statistically significant (negative) effect on asylum recognition. This suggests a connection between false asylum claims and economic migration (Rodda 2015). In regards to country-level variables, higher unemployment rates in the destination country make positive asylum decisions less likely. The overall results are heterogeneous, as they illustrate a confluence of factors that are related with positive asylum decisions across the EU.

Keith and Holmes examine the extent to which individual and origin-country factors influence asylum application outcomes in the U.S. Their study is based on asylum decision data in Dallas (Texas) in the 1998-2005 period. Although the drawback is a small sample (n=81), which makes their results only suggestive, it is important to highlight that “many factors that are found to influence asylum decisions seem to have little to do with its legal basis” (Keith and Holmes 2009). Keith and Holmes put special emphasis on gender and marital status as individual-level characteristics, and the level of political freedom in origin-countries, as the strongest influencers of asylum application outcomes. While the findings on individual-level characteristics do not concur with Rodda's analysis, the influence of the origin-countries is similar to the one Rodda identified. The comparative difficulty between the two studies is the difference in analysis levels.

A number of approaches is based on the influence of employment rights and citizenship acquisition, as the two primary benchmarks of integration Mayblin 2017; Valenta and Thorshaug 2013; Marbach, Hainmueller, and Hangartner 2017; Tubergen, Mass, and Flap 2004; Keith and Holmes 2009). Given that quantitative studies on integration primarily see it as an end-goal, rather than a process, the impact of policies on refugee integration remains virtually unexplored. There is a small but growing body of quantitative research that examines the impact of asylum procedures on integration. As one example, Hainmueller, Hangartner and Lawrence examine the impact of lengthy asylum processes on employment among refugees in

Switzerland with a sample of more than 17000 individuals in the 1994-2004 period. Their results suggest that one additional waiting year leads to 23 percent drop compared to the average employment rate in Switzerland. The researchers suggest that “better integration of refugees will also likely help clam-per the increasing native backlash” (Hainmueller, Hangartner, and Lawrence 2016). The study does not examine individual characteristics and the data is fairly outdated. As the only dependent variable, employment status might be misleading as a single measure of integration. The suggestion that better economic integration might result in less native backlash is also problematic, given that more employment opportunities for refugees might result in more resentment by the locals who are frustrated with the opportunities that are perceived to be taken away from them.

Their more recent study examines the long-term impact of employment bans on economic integration of refugees in Germany (Marbach, Hainmueller, and Hangartner 2017). The authors state that the single most important issue in refugee integration is the access to the host-country’s economic market. Their analysis is based on the German mikrozensus. The data covers two cohorts: Yugoslavian refugees who arrived in 1999 and 2000, and suggests that 1999-cohort refugees experience much lower employment rates. The most striking remark is that “it took ten years for the 1999-cohort to catch up with the 2000-cohort” (Marbach, Hainmueller, and Hangartner 2017). The researchers, however, base their analysis solely on employment, failing to encompass more aspects of integration that depict it as a process, especially in relation to the welfare state (Koopmans 2010).

Most studies fail to analyze integration from the viewpoint of refugees. In the newly budding quantitative literature on refugee integration within Europe, refugees’ voices primarily emerge in studies on decision-making of the asylum host-country. Havinga and Bocker (1999) examine the extent to which refugees can choose a host-country. They conduct interviews with relevant informants in Belgium, Netherlands and the UK (Havinga and Bocker 1999). Refugees’ choice of the host-country, while not fully limited, is primarily influenced by available possibilities. Several studies confirm their findings (Gilbert and Koser 2006; Robinson and Segrott 2002). There are, however, several quantitative studies that focus on the host-society as an impacting factor on integration (S. L. Schneider 2008; Strabac, Aalberg, and Valenta 2014). Silke Schneider (2008) bases her argument on ECT and ICT to suggest that constructive intergroup contact reduces negative attitudes, which predicts decreasing prejudice levels with the increase in "out-group" size. While ECT attempts to explain a range of anti-immigrant attitudes, including prejudice and discrimination, ICT provides an explanation for the potentially positive relationship between more exposure to immigrants and more tolerance of them. Schneider’s most significant result suggests that “the

higher the immigrant population with non-Western origin, the higher the average ethnic threat perceptions”, which leans towards ECT. She, however, adds that the effect is not linear and more research is required.

Integration is a complex process that cannot be measured with a single parameter. A brief assessment of quantitative studies suggests that individual-level characteristics, origin-country factors and the host-country context, influence refugees’ integration experience. The contestation on the extent to which these factors overlap with one another remains. I contribute to the existing quantitative literature on refugee integration in four ways. Firstly, I assess the refugee integration experience, which provides literature with a novel approach. Secondly, I analyze a recent survey of refugees (1990-2011 period), which makes my analysis relevant for the purpose of informing the creation of a common EU integration system. Thirdly, I combine data analysis with topic modelling of semi-structured interviews in a mixed-methods approach. Fourthly, I measure integration as reported by refugees in an attempt to create a comprehensive index of their experience.

## **Hypotheses**

I pose that both origin-country and individual-level characteristics have an impact on refugees’ integration experience. My dataset includes seven host-countries; thus, I conduct analysis in clusters, opposed to controlling for host-country effects.

**H1: Young, male refugees (fit the profile of economic migrants) have a lower integration experience score than other refugee groups.**

H1 draws from Rodda’s research (2015) on individual-level factors that influence asylum rates. She finds that age has a negative influence on asylum applications. She also finds no positive influence of gender on the asylum recognition rate. According to Keith and Holmes (2009), the effect of gender on asylum recognition rates are inconclusive. Given that the most conclusive insight is provided by Holtzer et al. wherein they find that a young male is less likely to be granted asylum, presumably because he fits the profile of a perceived economic migrant (Holtzer, G. Schneider, and Widmer 2000), I attempt to extend the argument.

**H2: Refugee native speakers of the host-country’s language have a higher integration experience score than non-native-speaker refugees.**

There is virtually no empirical research on the effect of language on the integration experience. There is some empirical research on the effect of official language in origin-country on refugees’ employability in the host-country, which somewhat supports the idea that the knowledge of language provides some comparative advantage in the employment market (Tubergen, Mass, and Flap 2004). Given that host-countries emphasize the role of

language in integration, I argue that being a native speaker of the host-country's language is advantageous for refugees.

**H3: Refugees from Muslim-majority countries have a lower integration experience score than refugees from non-Muslim-majority countries.**

The research of Tubergen et al. on employability of immigrants from non-Christian countries provides evidence that such immigrants are more discriminated against in the labor market and are less likely to be employed. Their results support the idea of "social distance" (Tubergen et al. 2004: 719) that has a negative spill-over effect on immigrant employability. I attempt to extend this finding to refugees.

**H4: The higher the development level of refugee's origin-country, the higher their integration experience score.**

Previous research shows that asylum applicants from wealthier countries are less likely to be perceived as economic opportunists, resulting in higher asylum acceptance rates (Keith and Holmes 2009). Given that no research directly tackles the effect of origin-country's development on the refugees' integration experience, I aim to tackle it.

## **Method**

I use mixed-methods to gain a broader understanding of the phenomenon. The perceived value of mixed-methods studies represents the methodology's ability to establish a better understanding of the problem, increase confidence in findings, and improve accuracy and completeness (McKim 2015). This approach adds value to research by increasing validity of findings, informing the collection of secondary data sources, and assisting with further knowledge creation (Hurmerinta-Peltomaki and Nummela 2006). In regards to the secondary survey data, the Migration Policy Group and the King Baudouin Foundation collected a survey and produced a subsequent report on ca. 7000 immigrants in the EU in 2011, published in 2012. Their focus was on immigrants' integration experience (Huddleston, Niessen, and Tjaden 2012). I use the survey as the basis of my dataset wherein I analyze refugees' responses to create the integration experience index as a dependent variable. The purpose of creating an index is establishing a better basis of evaluating integration in a quantitative way.

I do multivariate regressions to examine whether the relationship between refugees' individual-and origin-country characteristics with integration is valid beyond bivariate associations. On the basis of secondary data analysis, I conduct semi-structured interviews with NGOs and government bodies in select EU States. I select interviewees based on their direct involvement in the early phases of reception and integration of Syrian refugees. I use interviews in order to gain a better insight into the alignment

of policy and on-ground reality. Given that the survey data covers the 1990-2011 period with no data being available after 2011, the interviews serve as a link to the Syrian refugee crisis and further application to the post-crisis reality within Europe. Due to a lack of publicly available data on Syrian refugees and the operationalization of the burden-sharing agreement among EU Member States, I directly engage with NGOs and government offices that are in charge of refugee-specific integration via in-person interviews. The interviews provide an illustrative rather than a representative sample of organizations that engage with reception and integration of refugees because (i) they are highly diverse, and (ii) my time and budget were limited.

### **Measures**

I employ multiple regression analyses in order to examine whether the relationship between refugees' individual-level and origin-country characteristics with their integration experience is statistically significant and empirically relevant. The dependent variable – integration experience index – includes five components: naturalization, social integration, employment, civic society inclusion, and interest in voting. I model two sets of independent variables: (i) individual-level, and (ii) origin-country.

### **Refugees' Integration Experience**

I attempt to identify key parameters of positive integration experience for refugees in Europe. Given the lack of consensus, I choose to measure refugees' integration experience as primarily based on the 2004 EU official integration parameters. The interdisciplinary theoretical background of analysis highlights the significance of assessing refugees' integration experience congruently from multiple angles. The social identity theory, ethnic competition theory, intergroup contact theory and the human (social) capital theory, all underpin refugees' integration experience as a long-term, two-way process that is influenced by a multitude of factors. I create a dataset with 463 individual cases. I further construct refugees' origin-country parameters, as based on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development report from 2012. I base the integration experience index (DV) on five indicators: (i) citizenship, (ii) social integration, (iii) employment, (iv) civil society participation, and (v) interest in voting. The official EU integration parameters, as based on the concept of "civic integration" and "common basic principle of immigrant integration policy" (Joppke 2007:3), involve opportunities for immigrants' full economic, social, cultural, and political participation (Joppke 2007). A general feature of these policies is to be "broadly, if imperfectly, inclusive" (Freeman 2003:3). As Freeman highlights, this is counter-intuitive, especially if one considers that many of Europe's migrants arrived uninvited, and that national electorates are

generally hostile to large-scale immigration, especially of non-European origin. As the most concrete measure, the Council of the European Union identifies employment to be key in integration (Council of the European Union 2004: 20).

**Citizenship status.** This is a dichotomous variable which delineates between ac-quired citizenship (1) and any other legal status (0) in the host-country. According to Hainmueller et al. (2015), acquisition of citizenship is seen as an important catalyst that propels the integration process. The opposing paradigm, often advanced by parties on the right, which Hainmueller et al. acknowledge as well, holds that naturalization itself does little to improve integration. Within this logic, naturalization is not a catalyst but merely a reward. Concurring with literature, Hainmueller et al. acknowledge that the majority of studies of naturalization only examine its impact on economic outcomes, and the few existing studies that move beyond almost exclusively focus on political integration. In applying the logic of immigrant to refugee integration, naturalization constitutes a key component of positive integration, being even more relevant for refugees, given the absence of alternatives (Hainmueller, Hangartner, and Peirantuno 2015).

**Social integration.** This variable is an ordinal scale which ranges from a very poor integration experience (0) to a very high degree of social integration (10). In order to construct this variable, I use factor analysis (FA) to assess the strength and interactions of the following components of the refugees' integration experience: (i) satisfaction with life at the time of the survey, (ii) satisfaction with level of education, (iii) satisfaction with job, (iv) satisfaction with accommodation, (v) satisfaction with family life, (vi) satisfaction with health, and (vii) satisfaction with social life in the host-country (Huddleston, Niessen, and Tjaden 2012). Social integration of refugees, as such, has never been examined in literature. To an extent, Diane Sainsbury touches upon social integration of immigrants in Europe in her research on immigrants' social rights and the European welfare systems (2006). She, however, primarily approaches it from the perspective of state provision of social rights (Sainsbury 2006). To the same extent to which social rights of immigrants are a neglected topic in comparative welfare state research and in the literature on international migration and integration, the social inclusion aspect of integration has not been seriously scrutinized either.

**Employment.** This is a dichotomous variable which delineates between paid work (1) and otherwise (0). There are several studies that specifically focus on employment as a determinant of positive integration (Marbach, Hainmueller, and Hangartner 2017). According to Hainmueller et al. (2016), failure to obtain employment or deferment of employment due to a lengthy asylum process can lead to lower motivation, depreciation of human capital, and scarring, which might slow labor market integration for many

years after the waiting period is completed. This poses as costly for host societies, which face higher welfare expenditures for unemployed asylum seekers and refugees, and forgo the tax contributions they would have made if employed (Hainmueller, Hangartner, and Lawrence 2016).

**Civil society participation.** This variable examines refugees' knowledge of and membership in civil society organizations, including immigrant- and refugee-specific organizations, taking the value of (1) if the individual refugee is a member of a civil society organizations of any kind and (0) otherwise. Membership in civil society organizations, including refugee-specific ones, corresponds to an important aspect of the integration experience, in congruence with other aspects of the integration process. The knowledge of and membership in civil society organizations also tackles direct interactions with the host society, which underpins integration as two-way process. The aspect of civil society participation also ties into the intergroup contact theory and goes towards bettering the integration process by allowing for more interactions between refugees and the local populations (S. L. Schneider 2008).

**Interest in voting.** This variable is a dichotomous variable which delineates between having an interest in voting (1) and not having an interest in voting (0), and tackles political integration. Given that a number of refugees might not be eligible to vote, I assume interest in voting is more closely aligned with interest in the host-country's politics. The political inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in decision-making, or the normative framework that enables or inhibits such participation, is largely left to the individual discretion of host-countries. According to Bekaj and Antara in their report on refugees' political participation (2018), there are a number of differing norms and practices that enable or inhibit them from taking part in political life. Quite often, their opportunities for participation are limited, which in turn perpetuates their marginalized status in society (Antara and Bekaj 2018). Political participation directly addresses the notion of democracy and European identity as a unified system based on popular control and political equality, and as an ideal that seeks to empower ordinary people by guaranteeing equality and basic freedom (Antara and Bekaj 2018, 11). Refugees' interest in voting, as a proxy for political inclusion in the host-society, adds a vital layer to integration.

### **The integration experience index**

The dependent variable is based on the secondary survey data and EU-based directives on immigrant integration. I acknowledge that EU directives are equivocal. Due to a lack of consensus on what positive integration denotes (Dancygier and Laitin 2014), I choose the five indicators for two reasons: (i) EU directives pose as a link between objective integration outcomes and

immigrants’ integration experience. EU directives emphasize social inclusivity and employment simultaneously, and (ii) the five integration indicators delineate methodical proxies of what the legally binding EU directives define as principles of positive integration. I define refugees’ positive integration experience as: acquisition of citizenship, high level of social integration, employment, being a member of civil society organizations, and interest in voting. The index ranges from (-)1, a highly negative integration experience, to (+)1, a highly positive integration experience.

Based on principal component analysis (PCA), I combine all variables in one index. The PCA is a method that has been widely used, given that it allows for reduction of multiple variables into a comprehensive scale. PCA assumes that components can be collapsed into a single measure under a software-induced and standardized amalgamation. The difference between factor analysis (FA) and principal component analysis (PCA), as two commonly used methods in the field, is that, PCA is an exploratory method that is applied when an index is created for the first time, given that there is no such index in previous literature.

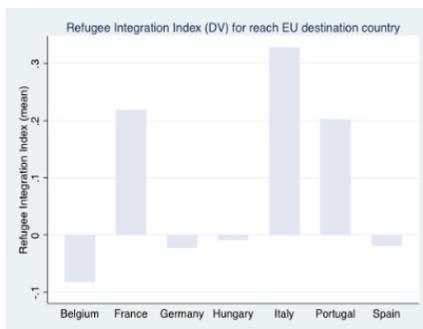


Figure 1: The Integration Experience Index for each destination country.

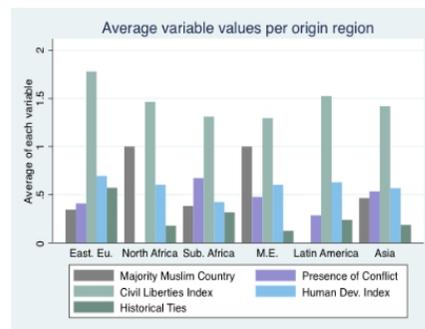


Figure 2: The average variable values per region of origin.

### Refugees’ origin-country characteristics

The 2012 survey I base my multivariate regression analysis on includes refugees from origin-countries. In their study on the origin-country effects on asylum recognition rates in the U.S., Rosenblum and Salehyan examine the success of asylum seekers by country of origin from 1983 to 1998, measured by the “proportion of asylum applicants approved, by nationality and year” (2004: 685). They test whether national interests or normative (legal) commitments matter most in aggregate U.S. asylum decisions and find that several origin-country attributes increase the odds of being granted asylum: poor human rights conditions, an authoritarian regime, sanctions against the regime, and communist regime. Other variables, such as being a democratic

regime, decrease the probability of receiving asylum. One major drawback of their inquiry is that their analysis does not include individual-level variables. They find that, despite the belated regulations in 1990 that explicitly prohibit foreign policy considerations from influencing asylum decisions, interests such as instrumental state security, diplomatic and economic concerns continue to influence asylum decisions (2004: 685, 693). Keith and Holmes further examine the presence of domestic protest, violent opposition, military regimes, political freedom, and the development level on a newer sample of asylum-seekers (Rosenblum and Salehyan 2004). Although mixed, their conclusion acknowledges the influence of these factors on asylum application decisions.

Stemming from previous work that acknowledges the importance of refugees' origin-country factors (Taylor and Dyer 2009), I include three origin-country characteristics as a set of IVs: (i) historic ties, (ii) human rights conditions, and (iii) socio-economic indicators.

**Muslim-majority country.** This is a dichotomous variable which gains the value of (1) for refugees from Muslim-majority countries, and zero otherwise. In the words of Strabac et al. (2014), there has been much negative focus on Muslims in public debates in the West. Immigrants tend to be exposed to prejudice, and practically all Muslims living in Western countries are immigrants or of immigrant origin, it is useful to analyze whether Muslims are viewed more negatively than immigrants in general. This variable encompasses regimes that have Islam as state religion and countries which are officially secular but have a majority Muslim population. **Active conflict zone.** This is a dichotomous variable which delineates between the presence of active conflict in the refugee's origin-country (1) and otherwise (0). It encompasses all violent types of conflict, including war, militant opposition attacks and violent protests. In his research on the asylum recognition rates, Neumayer (2005) finds that while the existence of conflict in the origin-country does not necessarily increase the asylum recognition rates in the host-country, it does not inhibit it either (Neumayer 2005). The only factors that influence the decrease in asylum acceptance rates are the economic situation in the host-country and the previous number of asylum applications from the same origin-country.

**Historical ties.** This dichotomous variable delineates between the presence of historical ties (1) and lack thereof (0) between refugees' origin- and host-country. For the purpose of data analysis, the existence of historical ties includes colonial, economic and trade legacies. Given that countries with colonial pasts have generally designed more open policies towards immigration and asylum (Osmandzicovic 2017) and that the shared language, as a consequence of such ties, improves integration prospects, I want to extend its impact to refugees' integration (Hix and Noury 2007).

**Human development.** I construct this variable on the basis of the 2012 UNDP global report on human development. Immigrants from more developed origin-countries are generally more integrated in host-societies, encounter less discrimination (Behtoui and Neergaard 2011), and predominantly occupy high-skilled, non-manual jobs (Münz 2007). All seven host-countries have a very high development level (Malik 2013). The proximity of development between immigrants' origin- and host-countries not only implies better chances of a more positive integration experience (Behtoui and Neergaard 2011), but also higher transferability of skills, especially in employment.

### **Refugees' individual-level characteristics**

I expect that refugees' individual-level characteristics will have an impact on their integration experience, which is an extension of previous work on the influence of individual-level characteristics on asylum applications (Keith and Holmes 2009; Taylor and Dyer 2009). The choice of individual-level characteristics has been based on previous literature (Keith and Holmes 2009; Osmandzиковic 2017; Taylor and Dyer 2009) and data availability (Huddleston, Niessen, and Tjaden 2012).

**Gender.** This variable is dichotomous and operationalizes gender as (1) for females and (0) for males. Keith and Holmes (2009) find that asylum applications of female asylum-seekers are less successful than male applicants. Rodda, however, finds that being a female asylum-seeker does not have any statistically significant influence on the asylum application decision (2015).

**Education.** This variable encompasses the total number of years of education. Keith and Holmes (2009) argue that higher educational attainment predicts a higher likelihood of a positive asylum decision, when compared with minimal educational attainment. There is not much research done on the relationship between educational attainment and integration.

**Work experience.** This variable represents the number of years an individual had been employed in the host-country. Keith and Holmes (2009) argue that more skilled and educated asylum-applicants are less likely to be viewed as future recipients of welfare aid. Both work experience and educational attainment also align with host-countries' demand for high-skilled labor that might serve to better the integration experience of refugees with high educational attainment and previous work experience.

**Language.** This variable is a dichotomous measure which delineates between individuals who speak the language of the host-country as native speakers (1) and those who do not speak the language of the host-country as native speakers (0). Keith and Holmes argue that the former are perceived as being less of a potential burden on society in terms of obtaining employment

(2009). This result is particularly interesting, given that the knowledge of the host-country's language does not have any influence on the asylum application outcome.

**Age on arrival.** This variable represents refugees' age on arrival to the host-country, measured in years. The average age on arrival is 27.5. The average age of male refugees is 28.3 and the average age for female refugees is 26.4. Previous literature on integration has virtually not examined the effect of age on arrival on the integration experience. Given the lack of thorough examination of this variable, I attempt to interrogate its effect.

### **Host-country clusters**

The secondary survey data analysis encompasses seven EU Member States. For control purposes, I construct clusters of analysis as based on the country-level data from Eurostat and national censuses for the seven countries in the 2012 Immigrant Citizens survey. Previous research identifies political and economic dimensions as key in the success rate of asylum applications in Europe (Bansak et al. 2018). I conduct regression analyses as based on the economic dimension, which considers GDP per capita and the unemployment rate. I divide countries between those above the EU-wide average and below the EU-wide average for both indicators in 2012.

### **Results**

A plethora of factors, both individual-level and origin-country, influence refugees' integration experience in the EU. However, the relationship is neither simple nor linear. Regression results suggest that being male and young (age 26-46) have a positive impact on integration experience (Model 1a) with the coefficient not diminishing in strength even when the control variable of time spent in host-country is introduced (Model 1b). However, the effect diminishes in statistical significance for older male refugees when we control for educational attainment, time spent in host-country, and origin region. Being a native speaker of the host-country's language shows a statistically significant relationship with integration experience ( $p > 0.1$ ) for those aged 26-45 even with control variables (Models 2c, 2d and 2e).

The results also show a negative relationship for female refugees who are not native speakers of the host-country's language, suggesting that being a female native-speaker refugee may not have an impact on the integration experience; however, the lack thereof has a statistically significant, negative impact. It is important to mention that refugees in the 26-56 age range score higher on the index, even if they are non-native speakers.

The results suggest that there is no statistical significance in the relationship with refugees' origin-country being majority Muslim. However,

it is important to note that refugees in the 26-46 age range, males, and those with higher educational attainment, all score significantly higher in the integration index (Models 3d, 3e and 2f), regardless of whether their origin-country is majority-Muslim or not. There is also no statistical significance in the relationship of development of refugees' origin-country level with their integration experience. The 26-36 age range gives a statistically significant, positive coefficient of 0.35 (p<0.05), whereas this set of models also gives a statistically significant, negative coefficient for refugees above the age of 66 (Model 4f).

DV: Refugee Integration Experience Index				
Individual-level refugee variables	(1) Model 1a	(2) Model 1b	(3) Model 1c	(4) Model 1d
Female (15-25 years)	0.00222 (0.211)	-0.169 (0.195)	-0.196 (0.194)	-0.178 (0.200)
Male (26-35 years)	0.364** (0.173)	0.331** (0.159)	0.299* (0.159)	0.340** (0.165)
Female (26-35 years)	0.114 (0.193)	0.0451 (0.178)	0.0254 (0.177)	0.0425 (0.185)
Male (36-45 years)	0.570*** (0.171)	0.406** (0.159)	0.365** (0.159)	0.412** (0.165)
Female (36-45 years)	0.367* (0.193)	0.0457 (0.181)	0.0139 (0.180)	0.0105 (0.187)
Male (46-55 years)	0.481** (0.204)	0.222 (0.191)	0.174 (0.190)	0.205 (0.196)
Female (46-55 years)	0.380* (0.224)	0.0257 (0.211)	-0.0358 (0.212)	0.00761 (0.217)
Male (56-65 years)	0.280 (0.336)	-0.128 (0.314)	-0.171 (0.312)	-0.138 (0.316)
Female (56-65 years)	0.346 (0.356)	-0.104 (0.332)	-0.0863 (0.329)	-0.0547 (0.333)
Male (66+ years)	-0.651 (0.411)	-1.320*** (0.387)	-1.329*** (0.384)	-1.313*** (0.389)
Female (66+ years)	-0.584 (0.356)	-1.043*** (0.332)	-1.096*** (0.330)	-1.054*** (0.334)
Years since arrival		0.0605*** (0.00714)	0.0600*** (0.00711)	0.0584*** (0.00720)
Years of education			0.0216** (0.00927)	0.0216** (0.00927)
Native speaker				0.0689 (0.106)
Constant	-0.303** (0.143)	-0.735*** (0.142)	-0.933*** (0.164)	-0.961*** (0.169)
Observations	407	407	406	396
R-squared	0.080	0.222	0.235	0.234

Standard errors in parentheses  
\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Refugee Integration Experience Index						
Individual-level Variables	(1) Model 3a	(2) Model 3b	(3) Model 3c	(4) Model 3d	(5) Model 3e	(6) Model 3f
Majority Muslim	-0.138 (0.0880)	-0.115 (0.0859)	-0.150* (0.0873)	-0.124 (0.0872)	-0.139 (0.0900)	-0.0595 (0.0839)
Age 26-35		0.263** (0.131)	0.247* (0.131)	0.229* (0.130)	0.253* (0.134)	0.267** (0.124)
Age 36-45		0.492*** (0.129)	0.469*** (0.129)	0.440*** (0.129)	0.447*** (0.133)	0.310** (0.124)
Age 46-55		0.414*** (0.153)	0.404*** (0.153)	0.364** (0.153)	0.376** (0.155)	0.155 (0.146)
Age 56-65		0.381 (0.252)	0.389 (0.251)	0.379 (0.249)	0.392 (0.250)	0.0743 (0.235)
Age 66+		-0.617** (0.269)	-0.597** (0.268)	-0.627** (0.266)	-0.614** (0.268)	-1.046*** (0.253)
Female			-0.181** (0.0896)	-0.173* (0.0892)	-0.189** (0.0907)	-0.269*** (0.0845)
Education (years)				0.0250** (0.00996)	0.0244** (0.0101)	0.0210** (0.00936)
Native speaker					0.0122 (0.117)	-0.0104 (0.108)
Years from arrival						0.0583*** (0.00721)
Constant	0.0674 (0.0633)	0.240** (0.115)	0.138 (0.125)	-0.404** (0.163)	-0.398** (0.171)	-0.855*** (0.168)
Observations	404	403	403	402	392	392
R-squared	0.006	0.075	0.084	0.099	0.103	0.234

Standard errors in parentheses  
\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

DV: Refugee Integration Experience Index					
Individual-level Variables	(1) Model 2a	(2) Model 2b	(3) Model 2c	(4) Model 2d	(5) Model 2e
Native speaker	0.00296 (0.115)	0.0318 (0.115)	0.102 (0.113)	0.0884 (0.113)	0.0496 (0.104)
Female		-0.201** (0.0914)	-0.162* (0.0895)	-0.163* (0.0889)	-0.257*** (0.0832)
Age 26-35			0.302** (0.134)	0.275** (0.133)	0.284** (0.124)
Age 36-45				0.506*** (0.132)	0.467*** (0.132)
Age 46-55				0.459*** (0.154)	0.410*** (0.154)
Age 56-65				0.330 (0.246)	0.318 (0.244)
Age 66+				-0.581** (0.270)	-0.616** (0.268)
Education (years)					0.0260** (0.0101)
Years from arrival					0.0577*** (0.00714)
Constant	0.000224 (0.0492)	0.0732 (0.0592)	-0.274** (0.119)	-0.524*** (0.154)	-0.914*** (0.151)
Observations	398	398	397	396	396
R-squared	0.000	0.012	0.082	0.097	0.227

Standard errors in parentheses  
\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

DV: Refugee Integration Experience Index						
Individual-level Variables	(1) Model 4a	(2) Model 4b	(3) Model 4c	(4) Model 4d	(5) Model 4e	(6) Model 4f
HDI	-0.242 (0.361)	-0.116 (0.362)	-0.0904 (0.363)	-0.183 (0.366)	-0.0497 (0.378)	-0.291 (0.347)
Age 26-35		0.202 (0.140)	0.189 (0.140)	0.177 (0.139)	0.209 (0.144)	0.256* (0.132)
Age 36-45		0.398*** (0.138)	0.384*** (0.138)	0.362*** (0.138)	0.371*** (0.138)	0.240* (0.131)
Age 46-55		0.362** (0.169)	0.362** (0.168)	0.319* (0.169)	0.336* (0.171)	0.115 (0.159)
Age 56-65		0.0890 (0.311)	0.0871 (0.311)	0.0924 (0.310)	0.0907 (0.311)	-0.125 (0.286)
Age 66+		-0.635* (0.330)	-0.603* (0.331)	-0.627* (0.330)	-0.621* (0.331)	-0.980*** (0.306)
Female						-0.140 (0.0923)
Education (years)						0.0177* (0.00996)
Native speaker						0.0762 (0.123)
Years from arrival						0.0623*** (0.00784)
Constant	0.129 (0.210)	-0.177 (0.227)	-0.139 (0.229)	-0.297 (0.241)	-0.383 (0.253)	-0.689*** (0.235)
Observations	347	346	346	345	335	335
R-squared	0.001	0.051	0.055	0.066	0.068	0.220

Standard errors in parentheses  
\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

In host-countries with the above average GDP per capita, the narrative circles around the legal and government-led side of the integration process, whereas the destination-countries with the below average level of GDP per capita tended to focus on the social and civic aspect of refugee integration. The differences in the two narratives show that the focus on particular aspects of refugee integration is also context-dependent on the host-country and highly localized, in addition to the diapason of individual-level and origin-country characteristics that affect integration.

## Interviews

I use textual analysis based on word co-occurrences and topic modelling in R. The analysis of interview themes is based on an innovative approach to qualitative data analysis (Welbers, Van Atteveldt, and Benoit 2017). Given that I had no preconceived tokens that I wanted to center my analysis on, I conduct unsupervised machine learning. I generate a code for recognizing the most commonly occurring patterns of words and cluster them around software-identified themes. The topic modelling results suggest several themes that support my choice of DVs for the index. Namely, the themes that come up during the interviews correspond to social integration (topics 1 and 4), naturalization (topic 5, 6 and 8), civic participation (topics 3, 6 and 10) and employment (topics 2 and 9). The narrative around refugee integration in host-countries with above average GDP per capita focuses on more structural aspects of integration. Many topics highlight the words *system*, *program*, *state*, *government* and *legal* (topics 1, 4, 8 and 9).

Table 1: Topic modeling for all destination countries

Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3	Topic 4	Topic 5	Topic 6	Topic 7	Topic 8	Topic 9	Topic 10
refuge	people	govern	program	german	germany	change	german	hire	portuguese
number	work	refuge	spain	house	social	support	state	job	institution
country	refuge	program	social	people	live	public	family	center	network
asylum	year	swedish	barcelona	camp	caritas	NGOs	language	residence	part
large	time	sweden	problem	status	foreign	begin	germany	permit	start
assistance	accommodation	integrate	data	find	migrant	migrate	consult	company	support
society	govern	application	municipality	munich	system	speak	back	person	entity
course	integrate	type	month	translate	worker	question	law	program	raise
start	job	law	local	lot	return	show	munich	market	campaign
education	service	public	lot	shift	approach	focus	develop	benefit	refuge

The focus lies in the provision of particular services, which are primarily government-led and tangible, including language courses, employment assistance and housing, provision of legal help and government-led integration effort, as confirmed by local NGOs. My interview with the Director of Program for Refugees and Asylum at the Munich Protestant Church Diocese addresses the focus on refugee programming, official integration initiatives and legal aspect of integration, as opposed to the social

aspect of refugee integration. The Director stated the following when comparing Syrian refugees to Nigerian refugees in the municipality:

*“The laws are very hard now. In terms of everything which is combined with asylum. It is very hard now because the public opinion changed very much. It is more negative. The parties decided to make up some new laws. And that means, in reality, when you come from Nigeria, you will not get a work permission. But when you come from Syria, after three months, you get a work permission. Even without knowing the language. As a Syrian, you can go to professional German classes. You cannot do this if you are Nigerian. So, the situation is already divided according to specific classes of people on whether they have a residence perspective or not.”*

Despite the difficult situation, the overwhelming theme of refugee integration is guidance from the government. The language of refugee integration focuses on the official and tangible aspects of integration, which somewhat overlooks the social and civic aspect of the integration process, as can be seen from the above identified themes. The results of topic modelling for the destination country-based cluster for countries with the GDP per capita below the EU-wide average are in the below table.

Table 2: Topic modeling for destination countries with above average GDP per capita

Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3	Topic 4	Topic 5	Topic 6	Topic 7	Topic 8	Topic 9	Topic 10
politics	lot	world	refuge	people	asylum	people	job	state	today
home	percent	fifty	govern	donate	number	refuge	program	language	school
house	make	large	integrate	camp	assistance	germany	hire	public	integrate
system	mean	practice	large	house	social	work	work	develop	center
mandatory	apart	accept	program	city	start	german	center	day	country
basic	situation	newcomer	swedish	government	foreign	year	permit	mission	germany
right	time	make	sweden	status	syria	munich	companies	come	set
social	difficult	open	specific	caritas	language	family	residence	consult	radical
crisis	offer	legal	society	translate	reception	service	education	church	work
person	orient	network	accommodation	area	term	problem	person	matter	discuss

The focus primarily lies within the social aspect of the refugee integration experience, which can be seen with the frequent use of words: *support, activism, social, people, service, local, situation* and *problem* (topics 2, 4, 6 and 10). This theme goes in parallel with concerns over the number of refugees. This two-fold trend that depicts the focus on the social aspect of integration and the concern over the overwhelmingly high number of refugees might be explained by the lack of financial support to fund integration. Even though interviews show evidence of coordination among local government offices and civil society organizations, there is a notable shift of focus to social and civic aspect of integration, rather than its legal dimension. The interview with representatives of the Municipal Office for Refugees and Integration in Barcelona, Spain, speaks to the complexity behind refugee integration that ought to encompass both official, objectively measured elements, such as

citizenship acquisition, and social, subjectively measured elements, such as civic participation.

*“Syrian refugees... It’s very difficult for refugees from non-Roman speaking countries. But here I have to explain the two parallel processes that*

Table 3: Topic modeling for destination countries with below average GDP per capita

Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3	Topic 4	Topic 5	Topic 6	Topic 7	Topic 8	Topic 9	Topic 10
main	support	language	portuguese	donate	refuge	people	program	education	problem
month	activism	social	year	market	spain	city	work	time	asylum
accommodation	organise	start	society	entity	social	govern	refuge	number	people
exact	institution	aim	easy	employ	country	central	year	course	volunteer
process	house	problem	civil	state	barcelona	spanish	month	people	lot
inform	today	find	begin	happen	people	service	kid	influx	situation
data	model	integrate	problem	quota	municipality	barcelona	job	local	number
number	family	parallel	school	lot	data	NGOs	campaign	benefit	integrate
place	accomplish	migrant	offer	high	south	legal	entity	thing	labor
year	large	system	govern	right	benefit	catalan	coordinate	metropolitan	wait

*take place for them in Spain. It’s the legal and the social process. The legal process is on one side and the social one is on the other side. They might cross paths, but they are mostly running in parallel. As an asylum-seeker, you file in your asylum application and wait for the decision. You have roughly two years for the social process. The first phase is six months; the second phase is another six months. And the last phase is the rest. And you will finish your social benefits without knowing what is happening to your application and whether you have been granted asylum under international protection.”*

The refugee integration process cannot correspond to any specific aspect without taking into consideration the holistic convergence of factors that are refugee-specific, context dependent and influenced by both origin and destination countries. Overall interview analysis contextualizes survey data and provides an insight into refugee integration as a two-way process, wherein the role of the host-community is as important as that of refugees. The frequency of words society, community, and social speak to the importance of initial stages of refugee reception into the host-community. Furthermore, aspects of refugee integration, such as employment, residence status and social integration, are three other key topics that dominate the interview themes. The complexity of the integration process is directly related to the variety of themes that the unsupervised machine learning process, or topic modelling, has identified to be key in the interviews with stakeholders across EU Member States. These themes provide evidence for the argument that integration is a complex process that cannot solely be measured and operationalized by naturalization or employment. The over-emphasized focus on particular aspects of integration in EU States, depending on their economic context, has resulted in poor overall integration, having deleterious effects on refugees. The results suggest that factors, such as age, gender, educational level, and years since arrival to host-country, all influence refugees’ integration experience.

Most importantly, the results extend the applicability of previous research to the integration process from the viewpoint of refugees.

### **Discussion and conclusion**

The solution to the refugee crisis is not simple. As a precursor in the establishment of a common integration system, given the paucity of research and high-quality insight into precursors of integration as a two-way process, it is an imperative to inquire into local-level operations of NGOs and government offices that directly engage with refugees. In regards to the extent to which my results concur with the interdisciplinary theoretical debates, there are several key observations. Firstly, the results suggest that the de-individualization of refugees under SIT is, at best, limited. The analysis results and the interview insight both suggest that refugee-specific characteristics make a difference within their integration experience. The lack of evidence for H3 on the advantage that knowledge of the host-country's native language might bring to one's integration experience directly speaks against SIT, wherein it is suggested that the knowledge of the local language perpetuates certain advantages towards the native in-group.

Secondly, there is no evidence to support ECT. The results show no impact of particular cultural, ethnic or religious backgrounds on the integration experience score. The perception of ethnic threat would negatively influence the integration experience scale, which does not occur in the analysis. Lastly, ICT is partially confirmed. Similar to Schneider's assumption (2008), if we take that the passage of time is a good proxy for the amount of interaction between the "in-group" native populations and the "out-group" refugees, the results suggest that the more time passes since arrival the better the integration experience. More concretely, the results concur with previous literature in stating that the diapason of factors that influence refugees' integration experience, as a highly complex process, is intricate and Daedalian. Policy-makers and political scientists need to combine their methods and policies in order to create a common system of integration across the EU. The deal ought to address the relationship between individual-level characteristics of refugees, their origin-country factors and the destination-country context, all having a deep relationship with the integration experience as a two-way process between the refugees and the local communities (Council of the European Union 2004).

Therefore, the next steps for Europe are two-fold. Firstly, policy-makers and politicians need to acknowledge the limits to their powers in managing the crisis in an autarky-induced way. Europe's political leaders cannot promise to do more than manage the refugee crisis, as there is no one isolated solution (Thielemann 2004). In the long run and on the societal level, Europe's population will become more mixed, and European societies will be

forced to adjust their mindsets and embrace the widened diversity. In other words, Europe will be forced to live up to its foundations of diversity, peace, and democratic tolerance. While the EU makes the difficult transition to accepting this new reality, it is urgent to prevent internal divisions from destroying the fabric of the union. Secondly, academic research and scientific inquiry on forced displacement and refugee integration within European societies will have to seek more data availability and transparency. This will galvanize more triangulation efforts into localized factors that share the integration experience as a long-term and context-specific process, rather than a binary end-goal.

There is an urgent and clear need for more data with a more diverse variety of compiled factors. The subsequent analysis needs to be situated within a cross-section of methodologies, both the qualitative and the quantitative ones, in addition to drawing from a variety of theories across multiple fields within social sciences. Overall, European initiatives have been heavily focusing on the integration of deterrence measures across the EU, as Eiko Thielemann writes in his research on the refugee asylum process (Thielemann 2004, 48). Without engaging in a meaningful discussion on the factors that better the integration process of refugees, these measures have had the tendency to consolidate the imbalance of asylum burden created by deeply structural migration pull factors. The harmonization of restrictive policy measures alone must therefore be regarded as being counterproductive to the aim of more equitable asylum burden-sharing. This trend has been supported by the electoral success of far-right, anti-immigrant parties in recent years in countries such as Belgium (Vlaams Blok), Austria (Freedom Party), Netherlands (Pim Fortuyn) or Italy (Northern League) even in the early 2000s, as Thielemann concludes (2004).

While politicians from different political persuasions have sometimes fueled xenophobic feelings among parts of the general public, these sentiments are at least in part seen as a reaction to the increased absolute numbers of asylum seekers arriving in Europe since the late 1980s. A focus on the absolute number of asylum applications received by individual countries tends to be misleading, given the different reception capacities of European countries. National policy makers and the public at large have been concerned about the increase in asylum burdens without clearly defining and understanding the body of complexity and the plethora of factors that better or worsen the integration process on European soil. The mixed-methods approach of this paper does not only provide an innovative and a powerful insight into the data behind refugee integration but it also further contextualizes the integration process via semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. It is imperative to apply such an approach in future attempts at devising comprehensive policies on refugee integration, given the complexity behind the body of

factors that influence integration. Opposite to my expectations, the overall assessment of the refugee integration status quo is fairly positive, which creates a hopeful image in regards to the integration project.

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