Chapter 3: The New Birth: Changes and Challenges in the New German Environment for the Syrian Family

Introduction

"We have come to another world; there is a huge difference between our life in Syria and life in Germany or Europe. This will cause you a shock as if you were reborn in a new world [...] indeed you are reborn in a new world."[226] With these words, Muṣṭafā describes his feelings about the new environment - Germany - in which he sought refuge. This dichotomy between "here" and "there", the shock, and the new birth are scenes that most Syrians may have lived through. Since Syrian communities are not homogeneous, the forms and directions of these visions were various, each person or family seeing it from their own perspective.

Everyone was carrying his "luggage of dreams" together with his/her perceptions before arriving into Europe, as Sāmir mentioned,[227] but the reality came as a shock. In Germany, the journey was a road of torment that is full of challenges. "When we arrived, we thought that the journey of suffering was over. We did not know that by entering Germany the journey had just begun [...] the real journey had just started,"[228] adds Nadā, who I met along with her husband in their house. Syrians, as individuals in general and as families in particular, faced new aspects of life in this new environment. These include religious, moral, cultural, and legal norms, besides different standards in education and work as they began to compare two different societies and worlds.

The previous chapter reviewed the main reasons that prompted the Syrian families to migrate and the conditions of the families before this displacement in light of the war. This chapter will continue observing the conditions that accompanied the asylum process in the German context from several angles. These episodes are related to the conditions of Syrian families in the countries of asylum - whether they are related to them before, during, or after the war, they cannot be separated from each other in

226 Nuremberg, 26 October 2019.
227 Nuremberg, 19 January 2020.
228 Nuremberg, 12 December 2019.

order to understand any phenomenon related to these families. Therefore, this chapter will demonstrate how these changes and challenges that have occurred in the Syrian family will play a direct or indirect role in fueling family conflicts. It will also unveil the dynamics and mechanisms adopted by families to adapt to, or reject, the new environment. These dynamics and mechanisms, in turn, sometimes constituted a clash or internal challenge between the individual and his/her convictions, principles, and norms, on the one hand, or between the person and members of his/her family or his/her external social environment, on the other hand.

3.1 Theoretical Reflections on Adaptation to a New Life in Germany

The process of adaptation is one of the stages of the classical theory of assimilation whose concepts still dominate studies of immigrants, according to Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut.[229] The concept of assimilation views the situation of immigrants as "involving a clash of conflicting cultural values and norms"[230] between the indigenous majority, who are the "core", and immigrants referred to as "periphery". Thus, the process of "assimilation occurs by the diffusion of values and norms from core to periphery."[231] That is, by assimilation of new cultural forms immigrants become closer to the majority. This process is sometimes called acculturation. After this process of acculturation comes a stage of structural assimilation, which includes the participation of immigrants in the basic majority community. After that comes the stage of integration and then the stage of forming a common national identity on the basis of the basic majority.[232]

Despite its strong presence in academic studies and state policies, the concept of assimilation has been viewed negatively[233] since the 1960s on the grounds that the assimilation process is an ethnic imposition of the

229 Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut, *Legacies. The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 45.

230 Rubén G. Rumbaut, *Immigrant America. A Portrait* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), p. 71.

231 Ibid.

232 Ibid.

233 The concept of assimilation has wielded the support of politicians with extreme liberal political views who were concerned with the concept of racial justice, as it destroys legal and institutional barriers between races and promotes for an environment of equality free from racial discrimination. Alba and Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream*, p. 3.

majority on the minority, which may struggle to maintain its cultural or ethnic identity.[234] Hence, the theory faced many criticisms, with the result that Alba and Nee reformulated the concept of assimilation by rejecting the old concept "as a normative state-imposed program aimed at eradicating minority cultures"[235] and by redefining assimilation as "a social process that occurs spontaneously and often unintentionally in the context of interaction between the majority and minority groups."[236] Esser defines assimilation as "the 'alignment' of the actors or groups in certain characteristics to a 'standard'." He argues that understanding "alignment or approximation" as forced and imposed, which may involve abandoning the cultural, religious, and ethnic identities of minorities, is a naive understanding[237] and an "unrealistic idea."[238] It did not stop there, but attempts were made to develop this theory through this criticism. Portes and Zhuo note that the assimilation process does not proceed in a straight line and therefore does not lead to its expected results. "Instead of a relatively regular mainstream whose mores and prejudices dictate a common path to assimilation, we observe today several distinct forms of adaptation."[239] They, therefore, proposed the concept of "segmented assimilation" to describe "the diverse possible outcomes of this process of adaptation". They also introduced the concept of "modes of incorporation" to develop "a typology of vulnerability and resources affecting such outcomes."[240]

The theory of segmented assimilation purports that "it stands to reason that the adaptation of second-generation youth is conditioned by what happens to their parents."[241] Thus, the history of the first generation is a critical factor in the theory of segmented assimilation.[242] With this in mind, and given the observed intersections between some aspects of this theory and the data collected from Syrian families, some parts of this theory will be used to develop a deeper understanding of the dynamics of

234 Ibid., p. 1; Friedrich Heckmann, *Integration von Migranten. Einwanderung und neue Nationenbildung* (Wiesbaden: Springer-Verlag, 2015), p. 75.
235 Alba and Nee, 'Rethinking Assimilation Theory for a New Era of Immigration', p. 827.
236 Ibid.
237 Esser, 'Welche Alternativen zur ‚Assimilation' gibt es eigentlich?', p. 45.
238 Esser, *Integration und ethnische Schichtung*, p. 24.
239 Portes and Zhou, p. 82.
240 Ibid., p. 74.
241 Portes and Rumbaut, p. 46.
242 Ibid., p. 45.

these families' adaptations in the new society, moving away from the use of "assimilation" as a concept from any negative policymaking or its old classic understanding, in other words, to denote the concept of integration adopted by Germany as policies and laws.[243] "Some, probably for reasons of the political sensitivity of certain words and political correctness towards migrants, have replaced the terms cultural, structural, social, and emotional (or identificational)[244] assimilation with the term cultural, structural, social, and emotional (or identificational) integration, or have always used it that way. But this is just another word for the same facts. It is misleading in this respect because it does not explicitly express the special aspect of social integration. And it is also misleading because it distracts from the fact that social integration into the host society cannot be happen without some form of 'alignment or approximation'. For these reasons, we deliberately use the term 'assimilation' here, which word also denotes what is always meant"[245], as Esser wrote. "The story of how a foreign minority comes to terms with its new social surroundings and is eventually absorbed into the mainstream of the host society is the cloth from which numerous sociological and economic theories have been fashioned."[246] In a similar manner, it is the cloth that will form the features of this chapter.

The theory of modes of incorporation and segmented assimilation posits that the outcomes of first-generation integration depend largely on three things: 1) the individual characteristics of immigrants, 2) the social environ-

243 Esser argues that the concept of assimilation is closely related to the concept of integration and is somewhat equated with it, but to distinguish between the two concepts it can be said that the "'integration' of immigrants and ethnic minorities does not mean their 'assimilation' without a trace." Esser, *Integration und ethnische Schichtung*, pp. 18–19.

244 "Cultural assimilation means assimilation in knowledge and skills, especially in language; structural assimilation means the occupation of positions in the various functional systems, for example in education and especially in the labor market, as well as the enjoyment of certain rights; social assimilation means assimilation in social acceptance and in relationship patterns, for example in marriage behavior; and emotional (or 'identification') assimilation means assimilation in emotional identification with the host society. The latter would then also mean: If the natives show little emotion toward their 'society' and if their support is limited to neutral acceptance, then the emotional assimilation of the migrants would also consist (only) in developing this feeling in the group mean." Esser, *Integration und ethnische Schichtung*, p. 22.

245 Ibid., p. 22.

246 Esser, 'Welche Alternativen zur ‚Assimilation' gibt es eigentlich?', p. 44.

ment or conditions in the host country, and 3) their family structures.[247] With this in mind, this chapter will attempt to review two aspects:

- The first relates to the dynamics used by Syrian families through the lens of individual characteristics of family members to integrate and adapt into the new society.
- The second aspect relates to the challenges and difficulties faced by Syrian families in the context of their new receiving environment, here Germany. The aspects related to family structures will be delineated in separate places in this chapter and the following chapter.

By addressing these aspects, a link will be made between the family's position in the process of adaptation or integration as a practice and the dynamics that the family resorted to, on the one hand, and the effects that this had on the family, on the other. This is especially with regards to familial conflicts that are the focus and subject of the research.

3.2 Changes in Syrian Families – Choices and Factors

This section of the chapter will address two main issues. The first relates to the choices made by Syrian families in the new environment, while the second deals with the factors that played a role in adopting this or that option.

The Syrians, both within families and as individuals, found themselves in front of a new environment and a new society that they forcedly (by the war) had to seek refuge in. This was a society that does not resemble the communities in which they lived or are accustomed to; in other words, it was the transition from a relatively closed society to a relatively open society.[248] The prominent philosopher Karl Popper defines closed and open

247 Ibid., p. 46. See also, Esser, *Integration und ethnische Schichtung*, pp. 24–26; Maik Grote, *Integration von Zuwanderern. Die Assimilationstheorie von Hartmut Esser und die Multikulturalismustheorie von Seyla Benhabib im Vergleich*, *M*igremus Arbeitspapiere 2 (Bremen: Universität Bremen, 2011). pp. 22-23.

248 I described closeness and openness as "relative" because we will later see the diversity in terms of closeness and openness within Syrian societies, especially with regard to the relationship between the sexes, dressing up, and observance of religious and social values and standards. On the other hand, we will see that the openness of German society is also diverse. German society is closed with regards to some forms of religious expressions and closed with regards to foreigners. It might formally treat men and women equally, but it does not treat "Germans" and foreign-born

society as follows: "A magical, tribal, or collective society is also called a closed society, and a society in which individuals face personal decisions, an open society."[249] Thus, a closed society is dominated by a rigid attitude towards social customs and traditions. The institutions of society do not leave room for personal responsibility. In these types of societies, "family and tribal loyalty takes precedence at the expense of both the community and the individual."[250] In contrast, an open or modern society is dominated by abstract relationships such as exchange and cooperation. Intimate personal relationships or contacts are reduced, so its members live in somewhat secrecy and isolation.[251]

Faced with these differences between the two societies and based on my observation, Syrians in general and families in particular found themselves in front of three options:

- Rejecting this new reality and clashing with it, thus building their own reality in Germany, or deciding to return to Syria.
- Accept it and fully adapt to it.
- A special compromise process by which the two societies are harmonized, by maintaining or rebelling against what they have become familiar with their societies and accepting or, conversely, rejecting what they experience in the new society. This is the choice the majority of Syrians opted for.

As was mentioned previously in this chapter, the theory of modes of incorporation and segmented assimilation models links the integration of the first generation with the integration of the second generation. Thus, the theory pays attention to the relationship between the acculturation of these two generations. In light of this, a three-dimensional classification was developed that intersects with the classification of Syrian families adopted by this research:

1) Dissonant acculturation: It occurs when children learn the language and methods of the future society in spite of parents' refusal to do so.

persons/immigrants equally. The second section of this chapter will review some examples of this closure.

249 Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2020), p. 165.

250 Barakāt, *Al-Iġtirāb Fi Aṭ-Ṭaqāfa Al-ʿarabīya*, p. 115.

251 For more, see Popper, pp. 161–67.

2) Consonant acculturation: It occurs when parents and children assimilate at the same pace into the mainstream of the host society, gradually abandoning the language and culture of the country of origin.
3) Selective acculturation: It occurs when the acculturation process of both generations takes place in the new society, with partial preservation of the language and norms of the motherland.[252]

In a type close to these three divisions, Esser argues that immigrants and ethnic minorities are faced with four types of social integration: "First, multiple integration as the social integration of an actor into both types of societies or milieus; second, ethnic segmentation as social integration into a domestic-ethnic milieu and simultaneous exclusion from the spheres and milieus of the host society; and third, assimilation as social integration into the host society while abandoning social integration into the ethnic references. Finally, the fourth type is marginality, as the socially integrative exclusion from all spheres."[253]

The important question that arises in this context is: What are the factors that played a role in pushing families to adopt one of these options?

It is the contention of this research that the levels of dealing with the new society - clash, integration, or alignment - and the effects of this on the family were the results of many internal and external factors. In this section, factors relevant to the same study group will be listed successively, with examples of the previous three options adopted by families. The factors that challenge the family - the new environment contexts - are listed in the second section of this chapter.

Individual characteristics that are critical to the theory of segmented assimilation include age, education, professional skills, wealth, and host country language skills.[254] In this context, it is important to emphasize the interaction of these factors with the contexts of the receiving country, as these same individual characteristics become aiding factors in the acculturation process, or *vice versa*, depending on the policies, regulations, and ways of dealing with the host country. In light of data collected from the field, some of these factors that showed their impact on the dynamics adopted by the Syrian families will be addressed as individual-internal characteristics. Other factors will be dealt with as host society contexts when these contexts play a major role in influencing dynamics adopted by

252 Portes and Rumbaut, pp. 53–54.
253 Esser, *Integration und ethnische Schichtung*, p. 20.
254 Ibid., p. 46.

Syrian families, or to put it differently: when these contexts represented an external challenge to the family. In addition, new factors that played a major role in the process of acculturation and in the interactions of families with the new society will be addressed. These factors are the result of the specificity of the contexts of the original country from which the families came.

3.2.1 Social environment (conservative and extroverted families)

The social environment from which the families came played a major role in the process of adaptation, or *vice versa*, that is, the lack of adaptation of Syrian families in Germany – in other words, accepting or rejecting change. The process of adaptation, or the lack of it, is related to the awareness of the parents, which in turn is related to the environment to which they belong.[255] Is the environment conservative or open? The concept of "conservative families" among the cultures of Syrian societies is different from the Western understanding of it, and it is a problematic concept in three respects:

First it is problematical from the point of view of the source of this conservatism, because many religious, customary, and cultural norms govern Syrian societies. Social institutions, including the family, work to preserve and reproduce these norms.

Second it is problematical in terms of looking at it positively or negatively, as the social environment that surrounds these families condones and looks positively at families that adhere to the teachings of their religion and preserves the societal customs and traditions in the environment in which they live. On the other hand, families who rebel against these norms - in these conservative segments - are viewed in a negative gaze.

The third problem relates to the intensity and weakness of this conservatism or to its presence or absence in the first place: Maintaining these norms varies from one environment to another, depending on many factors, such as the presence of religion in the family's life, the level of adoption or the rejection of customs and traditions, and the subsequent factors that will be listed below, including age and gender. Considering this will help in exploring this difference in the environments within Syrian societies.

255 Alghoul, p. 104.

In contrast to these conservative families, there are families who came from open environments in Syria. Some of these open families, in the Syrian context, may maintain the minimum cultural, religious, and customary norms to preserve the family's position or reputation within the communities that surround them or to which they belong to. Meanwhile, some of them may abandon all these norms and make use of other pillars, such as money or power, to maintain this social status.

Data demonstrated that "conservative" families are more cautious in dealing with the openness of the German society and less flexible in adopting its culture or norms and values than the rest of the other segments of Syrian societies. They are also more isolated from the German majority than others.[256] It also showed that open families were more in contact with Germans and involved in the new norms of society.

In 2016, in one of the refugee housing complexes on the outskirts of Nuremberg where the majority of the residents were Syrians (only males), two married male residents - whose families are still in Syria and with whom I was in contact – were openly expressing their concerns about bringing their families into the German society which they claimed to be "too open". Especially with regard to sexual relations, dressing up, or raising children, one said, "I would not bring my family to live in such a society." Thus, they made the decision to return to Syria, and they actually did.

This example expresses the shock and internal conflict that some spouses felt after their arrival in Germany. What facilitated the decision to return for them was that their families were in Syria and did not accompany them on their trip to Germany. The social environment from which this couple came - one from the city of Hama and the other from al-Hasakah - is somewhat conservative, religiously and socially, and therefore their vision of the nature of family life in the German society was a shock to them, and this shock prompted them to decide to return and not bring their families to Germany.

Through my relations with Syrian families before and during the fieldwork, I noticed that many of the "conservative" families that I met did not have contact with German families, and their network of relations was limited to other families of their relatives or to some families that resembled

256 This isolation is the result of some factors that will be referred to in the second section of this chapter. What is referred to here is related to the family dynamics.

them in their characteristics; thus, they isolated themselves somewhat - or they were isolated because the majority of society rejected them, an issue which will be discussed below - within this circle they built for themselves.[257] Pastor Burhān, whom I met in the Evangelical Church, addressed during my interview with him in the church the issue of the difference between these social environments and the type of conflicts that Syrian families may face in the German context. He said:

> "If we talk about the Middle East or about families or people who come from the Middle East in general and if we talk about Syrians in particular, regardless of their racial or ethnic background, we are coming from societies that are closed, regardless of some places where there is more openness or other places where they are more closed, but in general the issue of freedom of thought, freedom of opinion, freedom of religion, criticism of religion, criticism of authority and the state, full equality between men and women, all this does not exist in the way that it is found in Europe."[258]

This process of transition between two societies - one closed and one open - will undoubtedly create some kind of clashes or changes inside and outside the family with the new environment. This social environment leads to the next point, as it will play a role in the strength or weakness of the social control that exists within Syrian communities.

3.2.2 Social control

The social environment in which the Syrian family has lived, imposes certain cultural, religious, and customary norms that the family adheres to and tries to preserve through the family's upbringing of its children. The concept of social control refers to "the control of norm violations, including informal norms in relatively small social settings, as well as more and more highly formalized norms in large-scale societies."[259] The term also refers "to any process by which people define and respond to deviant

257 Data will be further analysed and expanded in chapter 3.3.4.
258 Nuremberg, 20 January 2020.
259 Mathieu Deflem and Charles F. Wellford, *The Handbook of Social Control* (John Wiley & Sons, 2019), p. 1.

behavior."[260] Social control is often called "customary law" or "unwritten law".[261] The presence of customary laws within Syrian societies is strong, and in some places it is even more present than the official law of the state itself. Especially when we talk about some areas inhabited by prominent tribes. Pastor Burhān referred to this and said:

> "One of the things that any Syrian, or let's say any Middle Eastern, is exposed to is that before (his/her immigration) he was surrounded by barriers. In one way or another, they either controlled his thinking or prevented him from thinking outside the box. There is the influence of the clan, the influence of the family, the influence of religion or the religious center or the place where he is present in […]."

Families leaving these environments and arriving into new ones were left with two options:

1) The relative liberation from this societal censorship which resulted in changes in their behavior. In this context, we can refer to many examples that were observed before and during the fieldwork, for example: accepting the handshake between the opposite sexes, men and women, some women removing the veil "ḥiǧāb", some family members going to bars or discos, drinking beer and other alcoholic drinks, filing for divorce, especially women, staying out late at night, marriage to a non-Muslim or divorced woman, accepting the idea of a boyfriend or girlfriend. All of these things were either noted or pointed out, explicitly, by some of the interviewees. These are behaviors that were not acceptable in the context of the Syrian society for the majority of its segments. In this context the question arises: Was the adoption of this change in behavior made by choice or under the pressure of the new reality? Wā'il comments about his fiancée's struggle with the veil/head cover by saying:

> "She wore the veil under the pressure from the society in Syria. It was imposed on her, now, she removed it (the ḥiǧāb) under the pressure of society here in Germany. She faced problems in Syria because she was without a ḥiǧāb, so she put it on. Here (in Germany) she faced pressures because she was veiled, so she decided to take it off completely."[262]

260 Donald Black, 'Social Control as a Dependent Variable', in *Toward a General Theory of Social Control*, ed. by Donald Black (Orlando: Academic Press, 1984), p. 1.
261 Ibid., p. 2.
262 Nuremberg, 7 January 2020.

Maḥmūd, who is from a religiously observant Muslim family, mentions his mother's position on his marriage to a German girl, a committed Christian, as he refers: "For my mother, it was brow rising for her to attend my Islamic wedding ceremony since the bride was a Christian divorced German girl who is two years older than me; I mean, she was against all these things."[263] Some families may go even further. Aġyad believes that "the social structure outside your home [in Syria] compels you to take roles that you may not like, such as preventing your wife from wearing a certain dress which is a societal contradiction. Here I felt freer."[264] Thus, he does not mind that one day his daughter will have a boyfriend. This was not acceptable in his Syrian environment, even though he comes from a very open segment of Syrian society.

Despite this change in behavior, the liberation from the power of society was relative, as was described. Wā'il mentions that a young man lives with a German girl who, according to his description, "loves and adores him." However, he still finds the idea of getting married to a German girl who had sexual relations with other men than him highly problematic. This is despite the fact that this young man in question is not religiously practicing, as he drinks alcohol, eats pork, and is in a relationship without marriage. Wā'il believes that "not being emancipated from society is a catastrophic situation."

This duality experienced by some Syrians between "here" and "there" leads us to question the extent of the power of society's norms and customs to change or influence human behavior, on the one hand, and the family and its conflicts, on the other. Social facts have an authority external to individuals and, in Durkheim's words, constitute a "force majeure that is the reason why it can impose itself on the individual whether he wants it or not."[265] Freedom from the family's social control varies from one family to another, but the presence of societal control over the family becomes stronger whenever the nuclear family is surrounded by the extended family in the German context or by a network of relationships with other families from their environment. Consequently, the family becomes cautious not to deviate from the norms of the Syrian society, because this might lead the family to lose its good reputation.

263 Nuremberg, 16 October 2019.
264 Nuremberg, 10 October 2019.
265 Emile Durkheim, *Qawā'd al-mnhaġ fi 'ilm al-iġtimā' (Les règles de la méthode sociologique)*, trans. by Maḥmūd Qāsim (Cairo: al-marqaz al-qawmī liltarğama, 2011), p. 50.

2) The feeling of cultural and identity threat. This feeling constituted for a segment of Syrians in general, and families in particular, a defense mechanism to preserve this identity against the threats of the new environment or against any new change. The insistence of a segment of Syrians' to observe the absence of even the smallest percentage of pork fat or alcohol in foods and drinks they consume is "an indicator of religiosity, interest, adherence, […] they show their commitment to religion through this thing"[266], as Imam ʿUmar explains. He also sees that, while societal control, which was referred to earlier, was weakened in the German context, a large segment of Syrians remained generally committed to their religion. What Imam ʿUmar points to might be true. However, there is also a possibility that this segment still fears the judgment of their extended families, even if these families are in Syria, or this might be a counter reaction to preserve their religious and cultural identity after they feel that this identity is under threat in the new environment. That is, the religious dimension is not an end in itself but one of several cultural and societal dimensions and norms.[267] Sāmir mentions that there is "a segment of people who became more radical or extremist after coming to Germany. In order to make sure their kids remain religious, they faked prayer and religiosity in front of their kids."

Extremism in this context is not used here in its negative political meaning, according to Aġyad, who used the same concept of "extremism تطـــرّف" to describe the situation of some Syrians. Rather, the concept here expresses "a mechanism for defending a society, its existence, and its home"[268], as Aġyad explained. For Sāmir and Aġyad, the sectarian backgrounds of "Ismaili and Alawis" allowed for a wider margin of freedom in the Syrian society compared to Sunni Muslims, especially with regard to relations between the sexes. This is in addition to their presence in the German society in which they live. All these backgrounds may have formed this characterization for them. Although the examples mentioned may be considered as daily or habitual practices for many families in the Syrian context, some families became keen to adhere to these religious norms in the German context as a defense mechanism, despite the absence of these norms in their everyday life in Syria.

266 Nuremberg, 14 January 2020.
267 An important qualitative report confirmed this; see Hindy, p. 25.
268 Nuremberg, 10 October 2019.

The position of the family, be it freedom from societal control or, on the contrary, the feeling of a threat to identity, will create a conflict in the attitudes of family members, where the attitudes of the spouses, on the one hand, or the parents and children, on the other hand, conflict with these changes. This will create disputes over the lines that can or cannot be crossed. This means that this conflict will be reflected on the family itself from within, a conflict in the exercise of the role of authority, especially by husbands or fathers, over the rest of the family, and this is the role that men used to play in Syrian societies. This brings us to the next point about gender.

3.2.3 Gender

As the process of change is linked to the social environment and societal control, it is also linked to the gender of the person, that is, between women and men, between husbands and wives, and between fathers and mothers.

Based on the data, I will show that some women are more flexible in accepting change than men. This flexibility was enhanced by their presence in a new environment that provides a wider margin of equality between men and women and a legal protection for them. Previously some examples were highlighted, such as women asking for separation from their husbands, accepting the idea of living alone, showing flexibility in dealing or mixing with the opposite sex - the male -, shaking hands, removing the veil for some, changing the dress pattern,[269] asking husbands for their share of the social aid provided by the state, attending social events with Germans and freedom to enter and leave the house, etc. Based on these new realities, it can be said that the change in the personality of women in general, and the wife-mother in particular, has taken on a somewhat rebellious character. The important question here is: Why did some women adopt this rebellious stance? To answer this question, it can be said that the process of changing or adapting to the new reality does not pose a great challenge for men. With his patriarchal authority within Syrian societies, he

269 The long dress (Manteau, "Mānṭū", or Jilbab, "Ǧilbāb") along with the headscarf (veil) is considered a common dress code for women in Syria. The majority of female interviewees used to wear this in Syria, and after their arrival in Germany they changed for a more modern look with Jeans or long skirts and long sleeves jumpers as well as a headscarf.

had much more freedom of action than any woman had. "There is nothing that the men would do that would bring shame on them"[270], according to the culture and traditions of the society in Syria.

Thus, "the world of a woman is narrow and besieged in comparison to the world of a man"[271] in most societies of the world. Women in the Arab world, in particular, "are subject to the authority of two contradictory laws: the first is a general law that does not differentiate between citizens on the basis of gender, religion, nationality, and class and gives them nearly equal rights, and the second is based on discrimination on the basis of sex/gender. The moment a woman crosses her doorstep, she shall be subject to the laws of custom and tradition and becomes another race that has no entitlement to claim its legitimate rights"[272], as the sociologist Ibrāhīm al-Ḥaidarī wrote. Rather, some Syrian legal rules - which al-Ḥaidarī referred to - differentiate between citizens in some aspects in Syria. For example, the citizenship law grants the Syrian citizenship to a child born to a Syrian father but not to a child born to a Syrian mother and a foreign father.[273] This unequal treatment could be seen in many articles of the Personal Status Law.

Pastor Burhān comments on the acceptance of family members of the new way of life of women in Germany:

> "As she is, in general, victimized in societies [he means the Arab society], she came to Germany with a need to breathe. If her family controls her, and his [the husband's] family controls her, he himself controls her, and her children control her. […] Where are you going? Why are you dressed like this? Society, religion, and the clergy are also controlling and affecting her daily life. Now she has reached a place where she wants to live normally, she is not doing anything wrong -we are talking in general […]. Usually when we talk about such matters, the family opens up the subject of women falling in love […]. I tell you, what is the problem with that? They answer back that, if she falls in love, she might commit a wrongdoing! But what if the young man makes this same wrongdoing? They are usually the same; they say: no, whatever the young man does,

270 It is one of the common proverbs in Syria "الرجال ما بيعيبو شي".

271 Ibrāhīm al-Ḥaidarī, *An-niẓām al-'abawī wa 'iškāliit al-ğins 'inda al-'arab (The Patriarchal System and the Problem of Gender among Arabs)*, E-Book (Dār al-Sāqī, 2011), pp. 4, 8.

272 Ibid.

273 § 3 of the Syrian Nationality Law states that "A Syrian Arab shall be considered legally: A. Whoever was born inside or outside the country to a Syrian Arab father."

his actions shall not bring shame to him or to the family. But again, why is that acceptable? […] because he is male."

The change of circumstances of the position of a woman in society that surrounds her will push her to rebel. However, her rebellion remains at bay, and the segment that can rebel is also limited, given the many norms that are still present among Syrian families and surrounding them in Germany. Rather, her departure from these norms will expose her to "social exclusion" by some segments of Syrian communities, as Imam ʿUmar and Imam Aḥmad point out. Therefore, adapting to the new reality means, and continues to represent, a more difficult challenge for women than for men.[274] This challenge will motivate her to "learn the language and integrate into society more than men", according to Imam Ḥālid. He believes that, given the challenges that women face in the new environment from going to the doctor with their children to following up on their school affairs, these roles, which are usually entrusted to them in Arab societies, push them to learn the language faster. In addition to these challenges, the different roles and tasks assigned to each of the spouses or the conflicts between the Syrian minority and the majority will sometimes constitute a source of conflict within the family itself, and not only outside it.[275]

3.2.4 Age group

All the factors mentioned above - social environment, social control, gender -, which influence the process of adaptation, change in behavior, or rejection of it, are also related to age. The reception of new styles, concepts, values, norms, and behaviors by individuals in different stages of their life - from childhood to adolescence to maturity - will not be equal. The process of socialization[276] contributes to the integration of the individual into society by adopting its culture, customs, traditions, and norms. It is true that all individuals of all ages are subject to this upbringing. However,

274 Nuremberg, 5 March 2020.

275 These effects will be discussed further in the second part of this chapter and will be further analysed in other parts of this research.

276 Socialization is defined as "the process by which the individual learns to be a member of a particular society and culture, and thus to be a genuinely social and cultural being." Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick, *Cultural Theory. The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 315.

the formation of the human personality as an integrated person in society crystallizes greatly in the early stages of life. Thus, those who came to Germany at the beginning of their social upbringing and were barely exposed to this upbringing in their old environment, that is, they grew up and formed their awareness in the new German society, will not be like the ones who completed this stage of upbringing and reached the stage of maturity and advanced stages of life in the old environment. The essence of this factor lies in the flexibility or adaptability of the human being, which is formed in the early stages of a child's life. As Durkheim pointed out, "we cannot adapt something according to what we want unless it is flexible enough to accept this adaptation."[277]

This factor stems from a hypothesis that was observed during fieldwork, which is that the exposure of young people to institutions responsible for socialization, such as schools, society, health system, and the media, is greater than that of the elderly, and the speed of their learning of the host country's language is faster. On the other hand, their exposure to other institutions that contribute to the formation of their personal characteristics, such as religious institutions and their norms that exist in the mosque, church, school, street, or society, will not be similar in the new society as it was "there" in the original society. In addition, the family itself is the most influential institution in the process of socialization. The role of parents in it differs in the process of bringing up their children or in their dealings with their adolescent children in the new environment, as was explicitly indicated by many of those who were interviewed. Thus, responses to adaptation and change between the early age group and the middle or later age group will be different.

Ma'mūn (22 years old), who arrived in Germany at the age of about seventeen, believes that great changes occurred in his life after coming to Germany, and it is important to convey his description of these changes in this context:

> "I arrived here, of course you know how Eastern culture is completely different from the Western or German culture. To be more accurate, there [he refers to Syria] this is forbidden and this is a taboo and this cannot be. This is not to say that there are no taboos or limitations in the German culture, but at least you have the right to express yourself and

277 Emile Durkheim, *At-tarbīa al-aḫlāqīą (L'éducation Morale)*, trans. by Muḥammad Badawī (Cairo: al-marqaz al-qawmī liltarğama, 2006), p. 129.

> develop your personality as long as you are not causing harm to others. Of course, there are many customs and traditions that I have abandoned […]. This is something they - my family - have begun to notice about me […] and even things related to religion, they also notice a lot that I have begun to divert from some of the usual customs and traditions. I started talking about it, it is not important to me. I am an Arab Muslim and still adhere to the good Arab morals such as generosity, and bravery […]."[278]

In a family interview in a refugee housing complex where Ma'mūn and his family live, Ma'mūn's mother, 'Ā'iša, points out that the children "have become very free, meaning that when they are eighteen years old they leave their parents to live alone […]."[279] It is a custom that was not prevalent in Syria. A young man does not go out to live away from his family except for study or work, that is, if the university or workplace is in another city, far from his family home, or when he gets married. During the interview with Ma'mūn's family, Munīr - 18 years old, her second son - comments on her words about the changes that have occurred in the young children. He says, "To be honest […] our awareness was constituted here in Germany […] we arrived in Germany at a young age, and we have seen things that we have never seen before." The two brothers feel the great cultural differences between the two societies. There is a society "there", where rigorous restrictions (on members of society in general and the young in particular) are numerous, and a society "here", which exalts the freedom of the individual, and children and young people are surrounded by many laws to protect them even from their families.

In contrast to the impact of the new environment in the process of adaptation or to the major changes on the young or middle age segments, there was a kind of preservation of the culture or customs and traditions of the Syrian society and of reservations towards any change. One of the attendees in a focus-group discussion,[280] a husband separated from his wife in Germany, indicated his absolute rejection, with great emotion, of the idea of change regarding the "patriarchal" role of men and women in the family. Many factors may have played a role in his adoption of this conviction, but his age, which has exceeded fifty years, may be a hugely influential factor in his rejection of any change. This was also noticed through the complaint of men of older age about women's rebellion against

278 Nuremberg, 26 October 2019.
279 Nuremberg, 9 December 2019.
280 Nuremberg, 20 February 2020.

them and their change after their arrival in Germany, which they frequently voiced in conversations with me.

3.3 Challenges Faced by Syrian Families

German citizenship was based on the concept of jus sanguinis, so for many years Germany was reluctant to be considered an immigration country until the late 1990s – "Wir sind kein Einwanderungsland".[281] This opposition did not express "a social or demographic fact but a political-cultural norm, an element of national self-understanding"[282], as Brubaker wrote. This had negative consequences, especially in the absence of a coherent integration policy and with Germany's unwillingness to deal with non-German settlers "guestworkers".[283] As a result, and given Germany's Nazi history, immigrants were not required to assimilate into the German culture or relinquish their cultural differentiation.[284] Under the change of government in 1998 and in the midst of the asylum campaigns to Germany, the political parties agreed to issue an asylum law based on the British Asylum and Immigration Act which recognizes Germany as a country of immigration. Subsequently, the government embarked on reforming immigration and integration laws, leading to the Citizenship Act of 2000, which decided to grant German citizenship on the principle of the right to land, that is, to grant it to the children of immigrants born in Germany under certain conditions.[285] Since that time and following a huge controversy, there has been

281 Liza Schuster, *The Use and Abuse of Political Asylum in Britain and Germany* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2005), p. 185–88; Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 174; Sabine Mannitz and Jens Schneider, 'Vom „Ausländer" zum „Migrationshintergrund": Die Modernisierung des deutschen Integrationsdiskurses und seine neuen Verwerfungen', in *Kultur, Gesellschaft, Migration. Die reflexive Wende in der Migrationsforschung*, ed. by Boris Nieswand and Heike Drotbohm (Springer-Verlag, 2014), p. 72.

282 Brubaker, p. 174.

283 Petra Bendel and Andrea Borkowski, 'Entwicklung der Integrationspolitik', in *Einwanderungsgesellschaft Deutschland*, ed. by Heinz Ulrich Brinkmann and Martina Sauer (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2016), p. 100; Mannitz and Schneider, p. 72; Anika Haverig, 'Managing Integration: German and British Policy Responses to the "Threat from within" Post-2001', *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 14.2 (2013), 345–362; Brubaker, p. 174.

284 Haverig.

285 Mannitz and Schneider, p. 73; LaPoint, p. 3; Haverig.

a consensus to improve the integration of immigrants. The Immigration Act of 2005 was passed, which included provisions related to integration policies.[286] This controversy over the issue of immigration and refugees has returned with fervor after the recent arrival of large waves of asylum seekers into Germany, especially in 2015–16. This has resulted in a return to discussions about concepts such as the "Leitkultur" ("guiding culture") and the "Parallelgesellschaft" ("parallel society"), an increase of Islamophobia at the political and academic level, and responses to amendments regarding refugee residency and their acquisition of German citizenship at the legal level.

In the previous chapter we saw how people's motives for emigration are different. People's social, educational, religious, and professional backgrounds and their relations with the country of origin are also heterogeneous, meaning that ethnic groups different from the host society are part of this multidimensional diversity.[287] So, all of this poses great challenges. A challenge to the German government was the integration of refugees in general into the German society. In addition to the concept of segmented inclusion mentioned in the theoretical section of this chapter, many concepts such as "integration, belonging, diversity, and inclusion" have emerged as alternative frameworks for the study of immigrants. Among all these concepts, in Germany the concept of integration has been emphasized in most discourses. This is because it is linked to certain legal demands through which political, social, and economic benefits are granted, or denied, to those who engage or, *vice versa*, to those who do not engage in the integration process regulated by Chapter 3 of the German Residence Act.[288]

From the German laws that have been established for refugees to obtain permanent residence or German citizenship, four necessary criteria can be deduced to consider refugees as integrated:[289] 1) knowledge of German language, 2) economic self-sufficiency, 3) adequate housing, and 4) integra-

286 Dietrich Thränhardt, 'Integrationsrealität und Integrationsdiskurs', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 46–47 (2010), 16–21.

287 Viola B. Georgi, 'Integration, Diversity, Inklusion', *Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung*, 2015 <https://www.die-bonn.de/zeitschrift/22015/einwanderung-01.pdf>.

288 Chapter 3 § 43–45a of the Residence Act (Aufenthaltsgesetz – AufenthG).

289 See, § 8, 10 of the Nationality Act. (Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz).

tion into the German living conditions.[290] This section of the chapter does not treat the issue of integration through government policies that measure their success or failure; rather it will attempt to reveal these criteria as external challenges - in addition to other challenges - that Syrian families faced in the new environment, besides the interactions and dynamics that the family used to deal with these challenges. Most importantly, it will examine the repercussions of these challenges on the family from the inside, that is, observe their effects on the stability or, conversely, the instability of families through the lens of conflicts that are the subject of this research.

3.3.1 Language

> "Human beings are social beings, and in a large group of Syrians or Middle Eastern asylum seekers there are educated, well-cultured, clever, and experienced individuals. They came to this country wanting to grow and benefit others. But in order to transfer this storage of cultural, scientific knowledge, to a German or a European person, you need to be well versed in the German language. The language barrier is a big issue, many people find it painful that they can offer a lot: I have a store of culture, knowledge, and science, but I sit with people and the level of conversation is very simple and general, without being able to express the knowledge that I have, and exchange benefit; language is a big problem […]."

With these words, Pastor Burhān expresses what foreigners in general and Syrians in particular face: the problem of transferring knowledge due to the language barrier, which prevents it, and the pain accompanied by frustration due to the inability to do so.[291]

Syrians are generally aware of the importance of language in their new society; in Janā's words, "If you do not know how to speak the language of the country, you are mute, blind, and deaf." Most of them also agree

290 On 09.08.2019, the fourth paragraph of Article 8 was amended as follows: from: "4. sich und seine Angehörigen zu ernähren imstande ist", to: "4. sich und seine Angehörigen zu ernähren imstande ist und seine Einordnung in die deutschen Lebensverhältnisse gewährleistet ist". See Buzer, 'Fassung § 8 StAG a.F. bis 09.08.2019 (geändert durch Artikel 1 G. v. 04.08.2019 BGBl. I S. 1124)' <https://www.buzer.de/gesetz/4560/al74696-0.htm> [accessed 30 December 2020].

291 Nuremberg, 26 October 2019.

that the German government has provided great facilities for them to learn the language through integration courses. On the other hand, most of the Syrians interviewed, even those who were fluent in German, agreed on the difficulty of the German language. Not only did they describe the difficulty, they also described it as "torment" or "anxiety" and considered it a "pressure factor". This difficulty increases with those who are advanced in age and those who are illiterate or who have only received a simple education, as demonstrated by a project to assess integration courses.[292] In addition to these two factors, Hartmut Esser notes that language acquisition is influenced by the conditions of the immigrants' country of origin – which were reviewed in the previous chapter – and the living conditions of the individual and that of his/her family. In addition, the "presumably strong socio-cultural distances (xenophobia) between the immigrant group and the majority society can inhibit the second language acquisition by immigrants."[293] It is a real problem faced by many of those I interviewed that they had few opportunities to communicate with Germans, and the restriction of practicing the language in classes is not sufficient to acquire and master the language.

On the other hand, returning to study benches in classes and starting to learn the language as if adults became children again constituted an excessive pressure factor on families, prompting some of them to return to Syria. Ṭāriq states that one of the reasons for his wife's separation from him was the decision of his wife's family to return to Syria, adding that this decision was motivated by their unwillingness to study or sit in the classes of language schools again.[294] Esser has pointed out the negative impact of the linguistic assimilation process of a second language on family cohesion.[295] In this context, language pressures on families can be observed in two ways:

292 Anna Tissot et al., *Zwischenbericht I zum Forschungsprojekt „Evaluation der Integrationskurse (EvIk)"* (Nürnberg: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2019), pp. 115–16.

293 Hartmut Esser, *Migration, Language and Integration* (Berlin: AKI & WZB Social Science Research Center, 2006), p. ii.

294 Nuremberg, 13 October 2019.

295 Esser, *Migration, Language and Integration*, p. 56.

3.3.1.1 On the relationship between spouses

Rāma, whom I met in a café, told me that she has health problems that prevent her from getting pregnant and that she was trying to get treatment for that. This required going to the doctor's office for numerous periodic reviews. The big problem in communicating with the doctor and in everything related to this health condition is language. Rāma said:

> "The issue is putting pressure on me that I am sick, and every time I go to a doctor, clinic or appointment I have to have someone to translate for me. This brings a lot of pressure on me […]. I get embarrassed when he [her husband] is talking to other people trying to find someone who speaks the language and can go with me to medical appointments. Most of my problems with him [her husband] have to do with urging him to study the language […]."[296]

In contrast to Rāma's account, her husband, Aġyad, blames her, saying that he has a health condition that prevents him from concentrating or being in closed rooms such as classrooms because of his arrest and torture - as I mentioned this earlier -, while she has no reason that prevents her from learning the language.[297] The nature of this type of conflict between spouses can be portrayed as a disagreement over new responsibilities, *in casu*, language, that have arisen in the German context.

Each party in the relationship expects the other to take responsibility and help him/her in it. This happens in parallel with the existence of a large language gap that prevents these families from forming a link with state institutions in general and other parties refugees have to deal with on a daily basis - educational, medical, etc. - in particular.[298] At the beginning of the arrival of these families, translators were hired, whose wages were borne by the refugees. However, finding them was not easy for them, and civil institutions were unable, despite their great efforts, to bridge this gap, which put enormous pressure on these families. This leads us to the next point, which is the effect of this gap on the relationship between parents and adult children.

296 Nuremberg, 13 October 2019.
297 Nuremberg,10 October 2019.
298 Baobaid et al., pp. 38–39.

3.3.1.2 On the relationship between parents and adult children

I mentioned earlier that the age group played a major role in acquiring language skills. Children and young children were much faster than their parents in learning the language; this creates two issues within the family:

1) The first relates to the parents' need for language assistance in all matters related to their daily lives and their resort to their adult children in this regard. This heavy dependence constituted an additional burden on the underage or adult children, which sometimes led to disputes with their parents. Sārah - 20 years old -, whom I met in the cafe with her little sister, compares her situation in Syria and Germany and says: "There I did not have a job [...]. But here I had to translate the mail for them and all that was related to them and to follow up on all their matters and to make sure to make right all matters related to them [...] so the pressure on me was excessive."[299] Sārah undergoes a professional training ("Ausbildung"), in addition to which she takes on a large part of the housework, for it is one of the common customs in Syria that the housework is the responsibility of the wife and adult daughters, meaning the females. In addition, her parents' need for language assistance added additional work:

> "When I come home, I like to rest. Unfortunately, my family does not appreciate the situation. On the contrary, they start their requests: translate this document for us and fill in this application form, etc., then the matter develops into shouting and squabbling and saying that they are quarreling with each other because of these matters [...]. Then I start crying and ask them to leave me alone. [...] My family has a habit of saying bad supplications, and if I do not do what they want, they do it with me, and they say, for example, 'May God never help you', and this bothers me a lot and makes me cry while I shout at them to leave me alone."

This is similar to Mamoun's case in his disputes with his family because of his neglect to follow up on the post with them. It is also similar to the relationship of Ranā - 20 years old - with her family in their dependence on her in the subject of language, which referred to her father's repeated anger at home at the large number of "posts" and letters they receive and need to respond to because of the bureaucracy in Germany.[300]

299 Nuremberg, 7 December 2019.
300 Nuremberg, 29 November 2019.

2) The second issue is related to the parents' loss of self-confidence due to their inability to follow up on their kids' studies in German, which they have not yet mastered. In my meeting with Fāṭima and her husband and their three adult children in their house, Fāṭima described this problem and said:

> "For me, I was responsible for my child's education [...]. So I was a follower of mathematics, physics, chemistry, Arabic [...]. When I came here to Germany, the story changed. [...] Honestly, this thing was putting pressure on my nerves, because I no longer knew anything about my children, I did not know anything about their studies, I do not know anything about their school environment."[301]

To alleviate this issue and to bridge this gap between parents and educational institutions to follow up on their children, the city of Nuremberg implemented the NEST program, which was the most successful project of 2012. The idea of the project, as explained by Sulaimān, one of its employees, is "to create a link between refugee families and foreigners ['Ausländer' in general] and schools in practice", and the project's mission is to provide information to parents about their children in schools and establishing a partnership between home and school in a multicultural context.[302] Through a cultural mediator, "Kulturmittler", who is from the parents' country of origin, many outstanding problems between the two parties are resolved, as Sulaimān mentions. It does not stop at the language gap but also includes the cultural gap related to the education and upbringing of children.[303]

3.3.2 Work[304]

One of the most important challenges that the Syrian family members face is "proving oneself in society: to become a productive person, relying on yourself, getting out of the circle of pressure, pressure of the Job Center,

301 Nuremberg, 27 October 2019.
302 Nuremberg, 27 January 2020.
303 NEST, 'NEST – Nürnberger Elternbüro Schulerfolg und Teilhabe', Institut für Pädagogik und Schulpsychologie Nürnberg – IPSN <https://www.nuernberg.de/internet/paedagogisches_institut/nest.html> [accessed 8 December 2020].
304 The issue of employment is related to this research in many facets. Some will be tackled in this chapter while some other aspects will be dealt with in the next chapter dedicated to familial conflicts.

pressure of searching for work", as Imam 'Umar points out. Through the interviews it is possible to extract the problems of seeking for a job as seen by the Syrians in four aspects:

3.3.2.1 The difficulty of language which is key to the job market

The pressures exerted on the family from the language side were discussed from several aspects. Fāṭima believes that the interruption between one language course and another often leads to forgetting the language, and this does not help them integrate into the labor market. Fāṭima criticizes the language teaching policies aimed at integrating them into the labor market. She says:

> "Should I work after the B1, say in a kindergarten, for example? I shall focus on the subject of kindergarten. If they enrolled me in a year-long course in a specific subject, for example, kindergarten, then after the course I could work in a kindergarten. In this way, they will be able to identify the largest possible number of people who come to this country and direct them to work in the fastest possible way. As for the B1 and B2 method, it failed […]. It is a failed plan, and it makes people say: Let them spend money on us, we no longer want to go to work. Okay, why B2, what is it? Originally, what we took in the level B2 will not help me with the professional training (Ausbildung) in anything […]. I mean, they are pushing people to fail, by the way. They are pushing people to leave the field of study and stay at home; the language must be learned in the field."

Her husband, 'Adnān, adds that in language teaching policies a distinction should be made between young people who want to complete their university studies and the elderly, who are professionals, which is something that was not taken into account, as they say. Many of those interviewed shared Fāṭima's opinion that there is a gap between the language they learn in language schools and the language of the street or work,[305] a problem that may be overcome by some professions that do not require many language,

305 LaPoint explores some of the interviewees' opinions about language courses. Many described them as boring difficult and useless. They also mentioned the lack of training for language courses instructors. As a result, refugees find themselves relying on their social network with Germans in order to learn the language. See LaPoint, pp. 64–65.

but it is difficult to overcome in light of the bureaucracy of many German work institutions.

3.3.2.2 Age

Employers prefer young people over older ones. Therefore, elderly spouses or fathers face refusal to accept them in vocational training programs or work when the competition with them is young persons. This is the second issue that ʿAdnān and his wife Fāṭima suffer from in order to get a job.

3.3.2.3 Finding an appropriate job

Many Syrians hold university qualifications in various disciplines, and many of them were professionals in jobs similar to those they follow the vocational training for in Germany, called "Ausbildung". However, they do not hold certificates for these professions. The first group of Syrians faced the obstacle of finding a job that suited their university major, and the second group faced the challenge of finding a job without a German vocational training certificate. These two obstacles frustrated many of them, and this frustration formed a pressure factor on this segment of Syrians.

Sāmir, who was working as a photographer in Syria, thought that it would be easy to return to his work as a photographer. However,

> "we were shocked by a very ugly reality, I thought it was easy to open a photography studio due to my experience in this profession, which exceeded 20 to 25 years, but it turned out that you are required to do what is asked of you. I have no problem working [...], I made DHL delivery, I worked in warehouse 'Lager' [...]. But with all due respect to all work, this is not my profession."

Suzān describes her husband's suffering:

> "My husband is a dentist. We thought that in Germany the fields would be open to those who learned and studied and had certificates and experience [...]. But it turned out that it is not the case [...]. It is terrible and fatal, because you come to this country and know that you have a certificate and that people know you as a doctor, as well as your community from which you came, everybody knew you as a doctor, and you think that you come to Germany as a doctor [...]. The first time my

husband came, he was very optimistic, then he began to feel shocked. His certificate was not recognized, and he had to undergo exams in order to be able to obtain a license to practice the profession."

Not only did the husband suffer, but this suffering was exacerbated by the negative experience in dealing with the employees of the Job Center, which is what will be addressed in the next point. Thränhardt refers to a new pessimistic surge towards the process of integration; he mentions that the lack of recognition of qualifications for immigrants from outside the European Union is one of the reasons for this economic erosion. "Phenomena such as a highly qualified mathematics teacher from Russia who goes to clean, or a microbiologist who drives a taxi."[306] This issue was and still is the biggest problem which Syrian academics face. It is true that many of them have managed to overcome the legal restrictions imposed to amend their diplomas, However, many of them are still caught in the whirlpool of bureaucracy and severe restrictions.

3.3.2.4 Job Center

People's experiences with Job Center employees vary sharply, from maximum satisfaction to extreme discontent. Suzān points out that her husband struggled to get approval to complete German courses at B2 and C1 levels, although others got this directly from other employees. She wonders: Is it because of age? Is it because he is a dentist and they realize that his degree is not recognized? The matter did not stop at this point, as the employee of the Job Center used to send him job offers that did not suit his profession at all. Suzān narrates the effects of this on her husband, saying:

"I meant a feeling of humiliation, a feeling of degradation […]. That is getting on his nerves, not to mention other physical problem such as his backache […] they send job offers for cleaning, 'Reinigung' […], but my husband has a very high self-esteem. If it was me, I would have worked […]. It will not make any difference […]. Even if it is cleaning toilets or whatever. But a dentist to work like this […]. Do you imagine the insult!"

The result is that "the employee could either open the world to the client ['Kunde'] or push the client to curse the hour in which he came to Germany." With these words, Fāṭima describes her experience and the experi-

306 Thränhardt, p. 20.

ences of others she knows with Job Centers' employees. 'Adnān, Fāṭima's husband, recounts how the employee responsible for his file had delayed his application for a bus driver course for more than one year, while another man of his age and circumstances obtained a certificate without any hitches. Fāṭima also complained about the mistreatment she faced from the employee, while her friend, a university graduate like her, had many things facilitated for her by the Job Center employee responsible for her, so she could get a job in a kindergarten.

Through such experiences, Syrians seeking employment feel that they are not recognized as social beings or individual human beings but rather treated as a number. Being described as a customer of the job center and being treated like a number is experienced as a dehumanizing relationship. It begins with the description of the relationship between a "Kunde", a customer, and a responsible employee, and it can go much further – a dehumanizing relationship. Sāmir refers to his negative experience with one of the employees. The employee told him: "Do not dream that you could work in a studio - as a photographer - here." When I asked him about the reason for his negative opinion, Sāmir answered, "Because they are dealing with you as a number, the 'Kunde', customer; when you call them and give your number, you became just a number […] as long as you are in the Job Center you are just a number."

While talking with 'Adnān about his suffering with the Job Center, he appeared agitated and said: "The Job Center used to pressure us in a way that you must do so, 'muss, muss', and they made us feel as if we were their slaves or servants. They made us feel as if we were putting a numerical pressure on them […] and that we have to do any work to get out of the total control that we feel […]. This is in the early years, they make us feel that we are nothing, of course, all of this is wrong." Just numbers, slaves or servants, with a feeling that they are "nothing", that they have no existential value in this country.

The experiences of these people with the Job Center employees indicate that miscommunication exists between the Job Centers' employees and these newcomers. On the other hand, it indicates the existence of a large gap in German policies between the recognition of these people's qualifications - university and professional - and their integration into the labor market as ordinary people and not as mere numbers to be dealt with.[307]

307 Hindy.

What matters in this context is the impact of these pressures on the family's relationships from within. Sāmir's wife, Dāna, describes the change in her husband's handling of her in a negative way. In the same manner, Suzān adds: "Conflicts? I am in a conflict. I am suffocating, upset, but I return to the fact that I should understand that he [her husband] is experiencing a crisis." Suzān referred to the many quarrels that occur within the family between her and her husband, on the one hand, and between her husband and their adult children, on the other hand, as a result of these pressures.[308]

3.3.3 Place of residence

"I did not know anything about Germany […]. It was surprising that there was something called 'Heim' (a refugee housing) that you go to live in it with other people […]. So it was surprising that we were sitting in an old school, and I had twelve people in the room, half of them Albanians and the other half from Kosovo, twelve people in a room! It was the first shock of asylum." In these terms, Maḥmūd talks about his first shock after his arrival in Germany.

When Germany opened its doors to refugees in 2015, it was not prepared to receive the large numbers that were recorded that year and the following year, i.e. 2016. As a result, it faced a great challenge in finding suitable housing for these large numbers of people, as the housing complexes for refugees were no longer able to absorb these large numbers. Because of this, the state rented many hotels, opened gyms and schools, and set up tents to contain this crisis. In addition, it stacked a large number of individuals and families. Others were placed in uninhabitable places. This was a huge shock for Syrians, especially families. The rosy dreams they had about the "Paradise of Europe" before their journey were a mirage. This overcrowding, or the inappropriate place of residence at the beginning of the arrival of the Syrians, had negative consequences, especially on families. The consequences that emerged in this aspect can be summarized in two points:

308 It is worth mentioning that those who were frustrated resorted to other alternatives, whether governmental or non-governmental or through their social network with Germans. Samar points that a German lady helped her find a job as an engineer while another German family helped her husband participate in specialized courses in dentistry. Something that requires research.

3.3.3.1 Loss of privacy

Most Syrian communities are social, but in return they value privacy, especially when it comes to women. Thus, putting several families in one house or in a gym without any barriers between the people occurred as a shock to many of them.[309] "The first difficulties in Germany was when one is with his wife and is asked to live in an 'Asylheim' or a 'Camp' or in a room with many people in the same space; that was really difficult because we came from an oriental society, meaning that you would feel jealous and uncomfortable even if you are an open-minded person. The most irritating thing was my feeling that my wife is sharing the same room with strangers", adds Ṭāriq. Ṭāriq also indicated that this may be one of the reasons that prompted his in-laws to return to Syria, as they came from a well-off family and it did not suit them to reside in such places.

It does not stop at the loss of privacy but was also the negative atmosphere that prevailed in the place, especially since different linguistic and cultural groups were placed in the same place, as Rāma indicates. The packing of large numbers for a small place, in addition to the heterogeneity of the residents, constituted great pressures that led to many conflicts at the beginning of the arrival of the Syrians.

Imam Aḥmad comments on the housing situation: "There are many stories that I was witness to. Divorce cases occurred in the camp, because there are a large number of families in one place, and there are a lot of familial conflicts."[310] This was confirmed by Imam 'Umar, pastor Burhān, and many families who were interviewed. Muṣṭafā and his wife, Ǧanā, mentioned their suffering in moving between the refugee housing centers, the "Heime", and because of the constant illness of their children, especially in the winter. "We argued a lot during that period. We were stressed, [...] pressure, we vented this stress at each other. Many couples divorced during that period as they could not handle the stress", says Muṣṭafā. This issue of accommodation was resolved after many families obtained the right to reside and rent an apartment suitable for them, but this problem still remains for many families who have been living in the refugee housing complex for years. In this context, it is important to convey what pastor

309 Helberg, pp. 106–07.

310 One of the repercussions of staying in the camp for Syrian refugees was the spread of marital infidelity, which contributed to the disintegration of the Syrian family even leading to homicides in some cases. This issue will be dealt with in the next chapter.

Burhān narrated about one of the cases he encountered and the negative consequences that resulted from a family staying for a long time in these places, paying attention to his social analysis of these results and the negative consequences that the family experienced. He says:

> "A Syrian family stayed in the refugee complex, the 'Heim', for four years in a single room. Father, mother, and children were actually in a single room. They slept in it, ate and drank in it, and after a while the children became teenagers. Their private lives were compromised since everyone was in a one room. The residence permits took a long time to be issued. Finding accommodation before the residence permit was issued was difficult. This thing led to the adult child running away from the house. In the morning he went to school, after school he did not return home as he should, because when he comes home he would sit in one room with all the members of his family. So he stayed outside all the time and got to know friends who were of bad influence. He picked up the habit of smoking and started to smoke weed and hookah. That created the need to weed, so he needed money, and the parents did not have money, so he had to steal. This developed into selling weed. In one case the boy took a plastic pistol and entered a supermarket and put the pistol in the girl's head and told her to give him everything she had or he would blow her head up. Cameras they had everywhere filmed the event; he took a certain amount from the 'Kasse' (payment box), and then he ended up in jail. We know that what the boy has done is wrong, but if we analyze the whole event sequentially, we would find the roots of it. He was confined to a room with his dad, mom, sister, his brother, and his second brother, and I do not know who else was living in the same space. He did not have any private life, the parents did not have their own life, he had to run away from the house, when he ran away from the house […], it happened that he met with people who taught him taking drugs and stealing, and he ended up in prison. This is one of the clear matters where, let us say, the negativity happens to the parents while they have no hand in it."

Pastor Burhān does not blame this mistake on the parents. Despite the mistake committed by this young man, it was the social reality in general and the inappropriate housing for a long time in particular that had the greatest impact on the disintegration of the family. On the other hand, he also does not place all the blame on the government, which bore a heavy burden in opening its doors and received a huge number of refugees in less

than a year. The question that arises in this context is what hinders families from obtaining adequate housing even after many years of living in the refugee housing complex? Pastor Burhān pointed out the delay in issuing residence permits, which is a reason that played a big role in the beginnings of the large wave of refugees that Germany received. But the matter does not stop at this reason only, which leads us to the next point.

3.3.3.2 The difficulty of finding adequate housing

In many cases, finding suitable housing is linked to work, and finding work is linked to language. Thus, "when the Germans [the German house owners] know that a family is registered in the Job Center [that is, it takes social benefits from the Job Center], they refused to rent out the properties to them." Sihām, whom I met with her adult children I met in Adnan's house, added that she is angry at the long period of her stay in the "Heim" without finding a home. The brief period of the families' presence in Germany was not sufficient to achieve either of the two conditions (work and language) properly, and therefore some families are still running in a vicious circle in search of a home among large numbers of competitors, especially in cities that suffer from a housing crisis. In my opinion, there are three important obstacles that prevent some families from obtaining homes:

1) The first obstacle is the spread of illegal (exploitative) brokerage. The broker, i.e. the mediator between the owner of the house and the family, takes advantage of the families' need for homes and asks for a large sum of money from the family in return for securing a house for them. This amount of money varies from one city to another. From my observations in the field, it is estimated in Nuremberg between 1,500 and 3,000 euros, increasing or decreasing depending on the size of the house and the size of the family. But this amount may double in other cities. Many who reach a state of despair of finding a home through companies or acquaintances eventually turn to brokers to secure homes for their families. Ǧalāl, who still lives with his family in the refugee housing complex, mentioned how the brokers asked him for nearly 3,000 euros to secure him a house, a large sum that he cannot pay.
2) The second obstacle relates to the size of some Syrian families. There is a tendency among a segment of Syrian families to desire more children, and the social environment plays a major role in this trend. Ǧalāl, who is from Daraa, has seven children, meaning that the number of family

members is nine. A family of this size faces more problems of finding a suitable home than other families, as homes in Germany are often designed for small or medium families, not large families of this size.
I visited Ğalāl's family in the apartment complex of the "Heim", in which he and his family live, several times. The complex is equipped with the latest furniture and resembles a hotel system, separate rooms equipped with a kitchen and some bunk beds. Families of different nationalities reside in this community. The entity responsible for distributing families gave Ğalāl and his family two separate rooms. The father and his wife live with three of their young children in one room, and Ma'mūn and the rest of his three adult brothers live in the other. The movement of Ğalāl and his family between one residential complex and another has been going on for five years, and his struggle to find a home for him and his family is his biggest problem in Germany, as he pointed out.

3) The third obstacle relates to racial discrimination: Ma'mūn, the eldest son of Ğalāl, relates that most of his problems with his family are due to his inability to provide a home for his family despite his many connections with German governmental and civil institutions, and he feels that he is not welcome in the new society, as they put him and his family throughout this period (more than four years) in a refugee housing complex located far from the city. "We have tried hard to find a house, but I always see that the reason is just because we are people from another culture or from another society [...]. If my family called me Max Müller or Paul Hoffmann, everything would have taken a different way. There is a great deal of racism, but it is not well noticed by the people." His father feels that one of the reasons they do not have a home is racial discrimination, as their well-known Arabic names reveal their ethnic background. This discrimination may be due to prejudices about them as refugees, notes Lily Hindy.[311]

The problem of Ma'mūn and his family does not stop there. Rather, he points to the effect of a long stay in the refugee complex, as he feels very embarrassed to tell his friends about his place of residence, and another, perhaps greater embarrassment is that he cannot invite anyone to visit him in a place that was not prepared to receive guests. In addition, the place does not provide a suitable environment for study, neither for him or for his

311 Hindy, p. 23.

siblings or for his parents, not even to study German in general. Rossello's words sum up this dilemma families face by saying:

> "Being at home is being where you can not only eat and drink but also invite someone to eat, to drink, to chat. Being at home is where you can be the host, where you can offer hospitality … If one cannot offer hospitality, one has an address, not a home: 'You live here, but you are not at home'."[312]

3.3.4 The religious-cultural challenge – "the arena of persuasion"

I pointed out in the first section of this chapter that a segment of the Syrians found themselves facing a religious-cultural challenge, in other words, a challenge to the identity that these people hold. This challenge left them with the options of either accepting, rejecting, or aligning the norms of the new social environment with the norms they have. In this paragraph, we will review the repercussions of these challenges coming from the external environment on the family members under study. The repercussions of the clash of adaptation between family members - that is, on the relations between spouses or between parents and children - are discussed in the next chapter.

Some aspects, most of which are part of the culture of German society, have shocked some Syrians, especially those that clash with their religious or cultural norms. Some of them, as expressed by some interlocutors, include the phenomenon of alcohol and weed, same-sex relationships activities in public, intimate kisses in the streets, revealing clothing, and the presence of places for sex industry. All these manifestations were shocking to many segments of Syrian societies, even to some who came from open environments. In the context of her talk about German society, Nadā comments:

> "When there is a big difference in cultures, you will face difficulties, they are difficulties because during the process of persuasion you can accept, and they can also accept you. When you sit with other people who are completely different from you, you will find yourself in a possible arena of persuasion; I would like to try to influence you with my culture and

312 Mireille Rosello, *Postcolonial Hospitality. The Immigrant as Guest* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 17–18.

> push you to integrate with me, and you are trying to influence me with your culture and push me to integrate with you. No matter which side is more right than the other, it is possible, even in a very small percentage, that you cause me harm, or the other way around, even in a small percentage. Therefore, I find that we should be careful in dealing with the culture factor. We must always take the best and give the best only."[313]

The circuit of persuasion referred to by Nadā does not always proceed cordially in the relationship between Syrian families and the majority of the host community. 'Adnān and his wife recount that the first doctor (ophthalmologist) accepted her refusal to shake hands with him with an open heart. However, another doctor showed clear signs of discomfort for the same kind of incident.

Ma'mūn also recounts how his family cut off contact with a German family who was helping them with the language because of their repeated pressure to give up things his family deems "essential, meaning that it is impossible to give up." On one occasion, the German man wanted to introduce the family to his friends and asked Ma'mūn's mother to shake hands with them despite knowing that she did not shake hands. At that time they said that it was impossible to meet with him again. I asked them why, and they said, "It is our culture, and it is impossible to give it up. He has his culture and does not want to give it up and we respect that. But at the same time, he must respect us and respect our personal freedom that we do not give up."[314]

This seemingly simple "handshake" act sparked widespread controversy recently after a Lebanese doctor was denied German citizenship during his receiving ceremony as he refused to shake hands with the person responsible for handing over the citizenship certificate. The Court considers that "it can be assumed that the plaintiff does not give a hand to a woman for religious reasons and does not support the basic values of the constitution – here human dignity and equality between men and women."[315] Thus, this contradicts the principle of equality which is considered as a value of the free democratic basic system.[316] "[He refused to shake hands] as a result of

313 Nuremberg, 8 December 2019.
314 Nuremberg, 26 October 2019.
315 'Urteil des 12. Senats vom 20.8.2020 – 12 S 629/19' <http://lrbw.juris.de/cgi-bin/laender_rechtsprechung/document.py?Gericht=bw&nr=32523> [accessed 28 October 2020], par. 12.
316 'Urteil des 12. Senats vom 20.8.2020 – 12 S 629/19', par. 20.

a fundamentalist cultural and moral concept and because she is of different gender and thus *per se* a threat of sexual temptation or immoral behavior for the man. [This] does not guarantee its classification in German living conditions."[317]

Regardless of the circumstances and complexities of this case, it is certain that such a decision frightens these families. Many of those who refuse to shake hands are simple people who lived in a certain social environment that is not accustomed to shaking hands, whether from a religious or cultural perspective, which has nothing to do with a "fundamentalist" perspective. I noticed that many of the women whom I met might have refused to shake hands in the Syrian environment but showed flexibility in accepting and practicing it due to the nature of German society which deplores them not shaking hands. I also noticed that many of them tried to change the dress from the traditional Manteau, "Mānṭū", to a more contemporary dress such as the shirt and skirt or jeans, so that women keep the veil in contemporary forms and at the same time adapt to the culture of the new society in which they live. But the question that arises is what if some insist - as in the case of Ma'mūn's mother - not to shake hands. Will they be destined to be socially and legally excluded under the pretext of clashing with German living conditions?

The clash of families was not confined only to the external environment, but it was reflected in the relations between spouses or between parents and children because of their different perceptions about adapting to the new social environment and what can be abandoned - or *vice versa* what cannot be abandoned - of the religious/cultural norms that they came with from their original community.

3.3.5 Children's responsibility

The responsibility of children to parents has increased in the German context. The reason for this is due to two factors:

3.3.5.1 The fear of parents for their children

Among most of the parents who were interviewed there is a tendency to fear for their children because of the new German environment. This fear

317 'Urteil des 12. Senats vom 20.8.2020 – 12 S 629/19', par. 30.

differs from one family to another, from reduced severity of the fear to an exaggerated one. The family's concerns about their children can be summarized in the following directions:

1) "Excess freedom", which is the main source of fear for most families. These aspects of freedom are issues related to extramarital sex, homosexuality, alcohol, or drug addiction. When Salmā was asked if she had any fears for her son, she answered, "enormously". When I asked her about the reason for this fear, she replied:

> "The increased freedom, and although I support my son enjoying his rights and building his personality in the right way as he wants, but I am afraid of many things, God forbid, I pray to God that we do not go through these things like homosexuality or drug use, for example, that he leaves me and moves to live alone, that he becomes like those boys who live without any rules. I love the family atmosphere. I hope my family is big and my family is always by my side. I love that kind of atmosphere."

Syrian families, in general, have a fear of losing their children because of German society's culture, customs, traditions, and "to be too open", as Janā puts it. Janā adds, "I do not want to lose my children here. We lost our country. What if I lose my children too! That is the problem."

2) That the children leave the family home to live alone when they become young. Salmā indicated her fear of her son leaving her when he grows up, influenced by the culture of German society, which considers it common for children to leave their families after the age of eighteen. Fāṭimā refers to these two cultural differences in this context, saying:

> "The society here pushes the children out of the parents' control […]. The Europeans abandon the responsibility of their children when they reach the age of 15, while in Syria the son gets married and has children, and he keeps living in the same house as his parents. Yet, the father keeps feeling that he is still responsible for his son and his grandchildren as well."

Syrian families, in general, realized the danger of this matter for them, and as a result many of them, under the pressure of German laws that protect children or young people, showed a change in their behavior with their children by fear of losing them. This change occurs within a scope going from parental control and domination over the family, which may amount

to violence or coercion to carry out orders, to giving free space to children or young people to express their opinions or do whatever they want within the scope that this allows. Ǧalāl indicated that he is forced to talk to one of his sons through dialogue and not to pressure him for fear of losing him by leaving the family. This change from the parents was a reaction to a change in the behavior of the children, who felt the freedom and legal protection granted to them in the new German context, which is something the families realized too.

3) The loss of the "Arabic" mother tongue. If the obsession with losing the religious-cultural identity for children represents the greatest challenge for families, then the fear for the children losing their mother tongue is another. This obsession is a common fear among most Syrian families. Sāmir, who belongs to the Ismaili sect, says: "My daughter [she is in the fifth grade] is losing the Arabic language, which is very upsetting to me." During a conversation about his discomfort with living in Germany, Ǧalāl points out his concerns about his young children: "I have my son now who is six years old. He has a disability in Arabic. His Arabic is not strong, he cannot express in Arabic words as he should. This society is different from our society, to be honest." Because of these fears, many families share Ǧalāl's thinking of returning to Syria in the future if the situation changes and the country stabilizes.

3.3.5.2 The nature of the German system towards children

Job Centers, which provide social assistance to families, require both spouses to learn the language and to look for work. This is something many Syrian families are not accustomed to. Many families are accustomed to different roles that are divided between the husband/father, who works and secures the family's livelihood outside the home, and the wife/mother, who bears the responsibility of the home and cares for the children inside the home. Nurseries or kindergartens were not widespread in Syria, and the child often started going to school when he/she reached the age of six. It was therefore difficult for parents when the Job Center obliged them to send their children to kindergarten so that they would be able to search for

work and take employment.[318] This family's daily routine has put pressures on them that were not there before.

> "You don't suffer in your country as much as here […]. There you will find your family around you, you will not feel the responsibility or the burden of your son/daughter being on the street and doing something wrong, because then your neighbor will alert him and tell him not to do this, otherwise I will complain to your father, while here everyone lives alone and has nothing to do with others […]. There we have the uncle who does part of the upbringing, and the most important people in the house are the grandfather and grandmother. I told you that we were living in my parents' house, and when we were going out to work, we would leave our son with them [i.e. on the lower floor where his family lives], […] this was not a problem for us."

With these words, Muṣṭafā describes the contribution and assistance of the extended family in raising children and taking care of them in the absence of parents. The separation of the Syrian nuclear families from their extended families constituted a great burden that doubled the roles of both spouses, as the wife bears the burden of learning the language, searching for work, and caring for children, and the husband was not accustomed to carrying out childcare responsibilities. This burden was also indicated by Hindy through her interviews with some workers in some civil institutions that offer initiatives to develop the individual skills of women refugees.[319] In addition, in Syria families had little fear of children's delinquency. The social control that Muṣṭafā referred to, which was also discussed in the first section of the chapter, plays a large role in the process of raising children, so the anxiety that they formed in their new environment did not exist in their previous environment. 'Imād confirms this and mentions that

> "the responsibility here is double. There I had my responsibility to work and provide for the needs of the house and children. If my wife had to go to a place and my daughter was in the house, she was with my family. My mother or my sister was taking care of her. This thing here does not exist. It is one of the problems. The second problem: the children who are close to the school, I cannot leave them to go to school alone, there is

318 There are other challenges such as sex lessons, swimming, and school trips that clash with the norms and culture of Syrian families, and some of the interviewees pointed to them as a kind of cultural difference between Syria and Germany.

319 Hindy, p. 18.

> a distance of about one kilometer, every day I take them [...]. Everything is difficult, here the issue of raising children is more difficult than [in] Syria."

In this context it is important to wonder what do parents do in the face of these challenges. Parents intend to preserve the linguistic, religious, and cultural identity by sending their children to the mosque or the church to teach them the Arabic language and religious teachings. But some families from other sects refuse to send children to these places, and Sāmir believes that he does not like to send his children to the mosque, as he does not know what they can teach his children there. He urges his children to read some Arabic books for children, and he wishes that there were centers that focus on the Arabic language away from "religious ideologies". Many families wish that Arabic could be taught in schools as an optional language for children.[320]

The result of these fears is that they generate pressures that create anger or bad feelings in the relationship between parents and children on the one hand, given the different views between parents and children regarding adaptation in the new society, and lead to a crack in relations between spouses on the other hand. In a qualitative study conducted by Baobaid and colleagues that monitored the effects of pre- and post-immigration on Arab-Syrian/Iraqi families in Canada after settlement, he stated that "conflict may also be heightened in response to parental worry about their children and their future."[321]

It should be noted that, in contrast to these concerns for children, there is a keenness and motivation from parents for their children to excel in school.[322] This motivation and encouragement from the parents may be motivated by the economic, social, and psychological sacrifices they made on the refugee journey in exchange for a better future for their children.[323] Or it may be because they feel the loss of their home country. This explains

320 The newspaper "Der Spiegel" reported in a survey that ten German states offer Arabic lessons, which are organized and financed by these states. However, there are six states that do not provide this support for the mother tongue of immigrant children, including Bavaria, where the city of Nuremberg is located. See "Arabisch an Schulen: Zehn Länder machen mit', *Der Spiegel* 36/2017 <https://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-152925991.html> [accessed 14 December 2020].

321 Baobaid et al., p. 32.

322 Ibid.

323 Charles Hirschman, 'The Contributions of Immigrants to American Culture', *Daedalus*, 142.3 (2013), 26–47 <https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED_a_00217>.

the superiority of a number of Syrian students in several German states in schools.[324] It also shows the different dynamics of Syrian families' responses to these challenges.

3.3.6 Racial discrimination and racism

> "I do not feel safe because I wear the veil, the 'ḥiğāb' […]. This causes fear for us […]. For a while, when there were incidents of assault on veiled girls, I became afraid to go out alone, so I always went out with my husband, because I was afraid that someone would push or hit me; this could happen, I was exposed to a number of racist situations here in Germany, when I used the Subway (U-Bahn) and when I sit next to one of them (Germans), she (a German woman) immediately changes her seat and sits in another seat just because I wear the ḥiğāb […]. Once I was walking with my husband, then someone said a very bad word to me, 'Du bist böse', which means evil, just because I wore a headscarf, and looked at me in a way I would never forget. Then he insulted me."

With this comment, Janā and her husband went on to talk about many topics after I asked them about the challenges they face in Germany, especially with regard to the religious challenge.

The data revealed that most of the veiled women who were interviewed were exposed to racist or racially discriminatory attitudes. Hāğar notes that she has been subjected to a lot of situations: insults in the middle of the road, the uncomfortable look and frown when you are sitting in the subway, and they change places because they do not want to sit near you, and a lot of these things. She says:

> "Once we were going to the church because our kids were having a party there, and when we came back at night, someone started cursing us nonstop even though I did not understand most of those insults pouring in, I was not bothered […]. Everyone is free in their religion and maybe she is right […]. But what really bothered me was that all of this happened in front of my children, and it is possible that such behaviors affect my children, they will say to themselves, 'surely something is wrong'. Perhaps

324 See for instance Joachim Fahrun, 'Die klugen Schüler von Neukölln', *Berliner Morgenpost*, 2020 <https://www.morgenpost.de/bezirke/neukoelln/article229366384/Die-klugen-Schueler-von-Neukoelln.html> [accessed 13 September 2021].

> my daughter is afraid to wear the ḥiǧāb because I was insulted because of it."

Her husband, 'Imād, mentions about being subjected to harsh words from a German woman, such as, "they do not like to see these scenes in Germany", and "you are ruining German society." The dangerous thing about some of these situations, which Hāǧar pointed out, is that young children sometimes get involved in them. 'Imād recounts that "once I was with her (i.e. with his wife), when another woman said to her: Do you really think about wearing this veil for your little daughter? She said it with a point of mockery and ridicule. It was my daughter who responded to her, and said to her: 'Yes, I will wear the ḥiǧāb when I grow up and you have nothing to do with us.'" These attitudes with women, especially when they speak in front of their children, cause greater pressure on them than men because of the apparent religious identity of women represented by the ḥiǧāb. In addition, this does not mean that men are not subjected to racist situations or racial discrimination. When I asked Sāmir if he was exposed to racist situations, he said: "A lot […]. Once I was behind the central train station (Hauptbahnhof). A woman hit me with her umbrella […] and said, 'go back to your home' ('Zurück in deine Heimat') […]", and Sāmir continued by telling that such physical violence was normally accompanied with strong verbal insults.

People's experiences in this aspect are varying. Some situations are harsh and some are less severe than others. The sources of racism or racial discrimination vary, from those emanating from ordinary people in everyday life on the street to workplaces to some employees of government institutions. Ma'mūn recounts that he was insulted by a German woman in the city center and called the police during the incident.

> "They told me, 'we will communicate with you, and we regret this thing' that I experienced […]. They told me that I cannot file a complaint against her. I told them, 'why?' They told me that she is a woman from the street and a stranger whom you do not know. Honestly, I felt they were a bit biased with her since she is German. It is possible to talk in this context about institutional racism. Then I did not know what to do, as I was new to Germany […]. This was not the only time that I was exposed to it, it is possible that you will be exposed to the same bitterness every weekend, when I go to the bar, for example, or to any place where there are security guards; because I look like a stranger or Arab, they say: 'No' ('Nicht')! 'Why?' ('Warum?') 'Today no'" ('Heute nicht') […] just

> because of your appearance. They allow the Europeans to enter and leave you outside because you are merely Arab or perhaps oriental."

I went out with Ma'mūn several times to some of the places he frequented, sometimes with him alone, sometime with him and his companions, and I could observe that many of these situations occurred in the manner he had explained in his interview. While Ma'mūn was prevented from entering the bars, young people with "blond" European features were allowed to enter them, which made Ma'mūn and his friends madly angry at this treatment. The result, as Sulaimān pointed out after recounting some of his painful situations in his "expression" of racism or racial discrimination, is that you "feel that society does not want you, so you say, what a predicament!"[325]

Racial discrimination is not only a stress factor on families and their relations with each other but also plays an important role as an obstacle to the process of integration or assimilation in general and economic assimilation in particular.[326] Their failure to integrate or assimilate in the face of experiences of discrimination makes them become caught in a vicious circle with regards to the legal conditions that guarantee their stay and stability, i.e. the process of obtaining citizenship, in Germany.

3.3.7 Feeling alienated

Christine Helberg, who lived in both the Syrian and German society, describes the shock of a Syrian coming from his/her country to Germany. She writes:

> "We see that 81 million people live in Germany preoccupied with themselves most of the time. It is a shock for a Syrian who has defined himself through his community throughout his life, feeling safe in his family circle. And he feels quite lost alone, and his daily life consists of networks gathered around him, accustomed to a familiar environment (friends, neighbors, colleagues, classmates), as life also in Syrian cities still has village-like characteristics, so that everyone knows each other. It is a shock."

325 Despite this position, many of those who were interviewed have pointed to the help and support they have received from certain German individuals as they started their new life in Germany.

326 Frank Kalter and Nadia Granato, 'Recent Trends of Assimilation in Germany', *Zentrum für Umfragen, Methoden und Analysen – ZUMA*, 2001/02 (2001), p. 8.

The Germans do not talk to each other, no one knows their neighbors, everyone is in a hurry, no one greets anyone from afar in the street, people do not talk when they are shopping, "this is how many Syrians describe their first impressions in Germany."[327] Many of those interviewed expressed their feeling of shock, as there is a vast difference between the social lifestyle in Syria and Germany. The Syrian crisis has forced many Syrian families to become dispersed in many places and many countries. This division is not only between extended families; rather, it is within the nuclear family, that is, between husband and wife, or between brothers, or between parents and children. This has led to the severing of the bonds of communication between them, as the countries on the borders with Syria have almost completely closed their borders, and those living in European countries are not allowed by the laws of these countries to bring in some family members or relatives except in limited and exceptional circumstances.[328] In addition, the Syrians see that their feeling of alienation and loneliness is exacerbated by two things: 1) the fact that the German society is closed to foreigners,[329] and 2) the weakness of social ties in German society compared to their strength in their country, Syria.

327 Helberg, pp. 96–97.

328 For instance, German law does not allow minor siblings and other family members to be reunited with brothers/sisters except in the case of an "extraordinary hardship" ("außergewöhnliche Härte"), ("Härtefallregelung") that poses a direct threat to a person's life such as a serious illness or disability. This is in addition to the many requirements that made it difficult to take advantage of the law. For more, see § 36a of the Residence Act (AufenthG) and § 26 of the Asylum Act (AsylG).

329 There were two contradicting currents in Germany with regards to the refugee crisis. The first is a radical right-wing position that polarized the German society in opposition to a more welcoming current. Nonetheless a sizeable segment of the German society still saw refugees as a great challenge that has actually gave voice to right wing movements. These movements adopt "Cultural Hegemony" theories and promote the fear of "the great exchange" in favor of Muslims. Instead, they advocate a closed culture which explains the retreat of the welcoming current and the closure of the German society vis-à-vis refugees. For more details, see Inken Rommel, '"We Are the People." Refugee–'Crisis,' and the Drag-Effects of Social Habitus in German Society', *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung*, 42.4 (2017), 133–54; Herfried Münkler and Marina Münkler, Die neuen Deutschen. *Ein Land vor seiner Zukunft*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2016).

Muṣṭafā points out that one of the things that shocked him in Germany was

> "the closure of German society regarding refugees.[330] Not everyone of course […]. In general here in Nuremberg they are used to foreigners. They will talk to you in the street but not to the extent of forming strong social ties that would help with learning the language. As a family, we tried to make friends. We were only able to develop ties with one girl who helps us occasionally. The last time she visited us was six months ago but I met her through AWO."

Like Muṣṭafā's family, many families tried to find a place for themselves in German society, but they could not. Ǧalāl compares the social ties in Syria and Germany, saying: "I mean, our surroundings are completely social. Here, you feel that the social ties between them are very limited, that is, even when they are friends, these relations still have limitations."

In addition to the societal alienation there was a kind of religious alienation. ʿĀmir tells about his brother's psychological suffering due to his failure to hear the call to prayer or his inability to practice his devotional rituals - especially Friday prayers - after he was placed for nine months in a remote area where there is no mosque, after which he decided to return to his family in Turkey to settle there.

As a result of this alienation, many of those interviewed recounted the painful psychological conditions they experienced, either themselves or their family members. From crying, to experiencing isolation and wandering the mind all the time, to feeling orphaned, to contracting some diseases, to being exposed to a stress factor that leads to marital conflicts. Nadā and her husband Usāma recount that the conflicts between them after their arrival to Germany increased and that "external factors are what cause problems, such as loneliness, and alienation."

The question that arises in this context is, what are the dynamics that families resort to mitigate this alienation? ʿAdnān and his wife mentioned

330 Rohe and Jaraba point out in their field study conducted in Berlin to the feeling of alienation among Kurds and Palestinians in particular as a result of policies targeting refugees which lead to the formation of parallel societies. Despite of the great changes introduced to these policies in order to better integrate refugees, the feeling of alienation still dominates among many Syrian refugees. See Mathias Rohe and Mahmoud Jaraba, *Paralleljustiz. Eine Studie im Auftrag des Landes Berlin, vertreten durch die Senatsverwaltung für Justiz und Verbraucherschutz* (Senatsverwaltung für Justiz und Verbraucherschutz, 2015), p. 54–55.

that he suggested to five or six families they know that they meet periodically once a week in one of their homes, but the idea did not work, as these families were not fully compatible with each other, he added. The other alternative that families resorted to is places of worship - the mosque or the church - as some families there found an outlet for performing their religious rituals on the one hand and an outlet for their children and family gathering on the other. The third option is for a few of them to go to participate in some of the activities carried out by German religious or civil institutions, such as the Contact cafe ("Kontaktcafé"), in which they found an opportunity to communicate with each other on the one hand and with a small group of German society on the other.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that there are many reasons that constitute pressure factors on the Syrian family within the German context, including the fluctuation of the German political mood towards the presence of Syrians in Germany and thus the continuous change in the issuance of decisions or laws affecting their status as refugees. In addition, the media monitors their news and focuses on bad incidents related to some individuals that may harm their reputation as a whole. All of these things constituted a state of insecurity or instability for refugees. This chapter focused on the factors that play the most important roles in their family lives. There are other factors that need further research and exploration, especially with regard to the family's interactions with these other factors and to the dynamics with which families use to cope with them. This includes, for example, observing the effects of government policies towards them.

After its introduction, this chapter attempted to review theories that help in understanding the family dynamics towards the integration process adopted by the German government as a law and practice for the integration of new refugees, parts of which have been referred to in separate places in this chapter. The first section of this chapter reviewed the three options facing the Syrian family, which are to clash with the new society, to be in full harmony with it, or to harmonize between it and their previous society. These choices were driven by many factors that played a major role in the dynamics with which the Syrian family interacted, the most important of which are: 1) the social environment from which the Syrian family came; 2) social control and its role in monitoring the family's behavior

and responses, in rejection or acceptance of the new reality; 3) gender, as women had a tendency to accept this change more than men, which sometimes took a rebellious character and led to many conflicts; 4) age, as it appeared that young people were faster in adapting to the new society than the elderly, due to their greater exposure to the institutions of the new society and the reduced immersion in the culture of their previous society. Hence their susceptibility to change is greater than that of the elderly.

In the second section of this chapter, I reviewed the challenges that the Syrian family faced in its new society and the effects of these external challenges on the family from within. These challenges were represented in: 1) language, 2) work, 3) housing, 4) religious-cultural challenges, 5) children's responsibility, 6) racism and racial discrimination, and 7) feeling alienated.

In the end, it should be noted that, in return for these pressures and their negative consequences for the family, there is a positive side that these pressures may create and push towards. Charles Hirschman wrote, "[m]arginality is often considered to be a disadvantage. Migration, upward mobility, and intermarriage can bring people into new contexts where their mother tongue, religion, and cultural expectations are not the norm. The new experiences – cultural shock, feelings of loss, and uncertainty – are generally uncomfortable, at least until the new culture becomes familiar. Many immigrants, particularly those who arrive as adults, never really feel at home in the place of settlement. However, marginality can also stimulate creativity."[331] During the fieldwork, it was noticed that some of these families were keen for their children to achieve their ambitions and to strive in their studies to prove themselves in this new society.

331 Hirschman.