Eren Keskin was born in 1960, one year before representatives from the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the Republic of Turkey signed the bilateral labor contract that would change the course of his life. Thirty-three years later, in a bar in the Berlin district of Wedding, he sat across the table from a German historian to tell her his story of the intervening years. His parents had seen the recently signed contract as an opportunity to improve their family’s financial situation, and became two of the eventual hundreds of thousands of Turkish Gastarbeiter, or guest workers, who moved to the Federal Republic to work for West German companies. Young Eren, however, was initially left behind and spent most of his childhood in the family’s small home village in rural Turkey. At age thirteen, his parents brought him to live with them in West Berlin. Although he described that transition as a “trauma,” the teenaged Keskin was quickly distracted by the excitement of living in a big city. But the veneer, he told the historian, soon wore off, and at age sixteen he was already working to earn money for his family. By twenty-two, Keskin had married and started his own family, later becoming the owner of the small Kneipe (pub) where the interview was taking place.

But Keskin was not interested in talking about his experiences as an immigrant or his success as a business owner. Instead he focused on changes in his neighborhood that made him uneasy. His neighborhood of Sparrplatz, in Wedding’s Sprengelkiez quarter, had been more ethnically mixed when he was younger, and he had known all of his neighbors. In the last few years, though, the population had become majority Turkish. There used to be a lot of work before the Wall fell, Keskin explained to the German interviewer, but when the Wall came down, unemployment shot up. And people from the East work for cheap! To add to it, most of the kids that hang out at the park across from his business, Keskin complained, are doing drugs. Despite these changes, however, he insisted that “we are satisfied with Sparrplatz.”

The clatter of games in the background abated slightly as some of his customers paused to give their own opinions. One patron contended that
the kids were doing drugs because they didn’t have any work; another blamed the drug use on boredom. Keskin agreed that unemployment, boredom, and drug use were connected, but no one could agree which was the cause and which the effect. Talk shifted to asylum seekers – Germany needs to tell them, “We’re full,” Keskin posited, but they can’t because of Menschenrechte (human rights). At this point in the discussion, apparently wanting to bring the conversation back to the men’s own experiences, the interviewer interjected a question: What about getting German citizenship? Keskin replied dismissively, “Ha! We have black heads, and everyone knows that we’re not Germans. You know?”

The interview with Keskin and the debate among his customers provide a revealing snapshot of the complex and often conflicting forces at play in the settlement of Turkish immigrants and their children in West German society. In one moment, he expresses sentiments common among many former West Germans in the wake of reunification, while in the next, he sets himself unequivocally outside that community. What does it say about the situation of the Turkish population in Germany that a man like Keskin, after twenty years of living in the country, could simultaneously feel himself to be both a part of and apart from that society? How did that conflicted sense of belonging come about? That question is the focus of this book. In the pages that follow, I examine the history of first-generation Turkish immigrants and their children in the Federal Republic of Germany, primarily from Turkey’s inclusion in the guest worker program in 1961 to German reunification in 1990. In particular, I explore the ways they experienced and constructed belonging in the course of their daily lives in order to better understand the complicated and dynamic process we call integration.

The formation of a Turkish minority population in Germany began as a consequence of postwar labor policy in the Federal Republic. During the rebuilding efforts after the Second World War, the West German government began in 1955 to enter into a series of temporary labor contracts with southern and southeastern European countries. The migrant workers came to be called Gastarbeiter, or “guest workers,” both to distinguish them from the term Fremdarbeiter (foreign workers), most recently used by the Nazi regime, as well as to emphasize the intended temporary nature of their stay. 2 The majority of these migrant laborers

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2 The term Gastarbeiter was the result of a radio contest held to find a different name for these new foreign workers. See Ernst Klee, “Ein neues Wort für Gastarbeiter” in Ernst Klee, ed., Gastarbeiter: Analysen und Berichte (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981), 149–157.
worked in semiskilled or unskilled positions in industry, manufacturing, and agriculture; lived in dormitory or barrack-style housing; and intended to return to their homes after completing their term of service or accumulating a certain amount of savings. Historians such as Ulrich Herbert and Klaus Bade have shown how the Gastarbeiter program built on preexisting patterns of foreign labor employment, including the types of work for which migrant workers were hired, the areas of the country where they were employed, and the social and political separation of native Germans and foreign laborers. More recently, scholarship has uncovered startling similarities between Nazi Germany’s and the Federal Republic’s treatment of foreign workers, including the methods of transportation used to bring workers to Germany and the vocabulary West Germans used to describe those “transports.” These studies have begun the critical work of integrating the postwar labor program and its resultant ethnic minority communities into the broader narrative of German history, an effort this book continues. Yet this earlier historical scholarship has primarily approached postwar immigration from a German perspective, a focus heavily influenced by its German-language sources and reflected in the questions asked of these sources. In addition, these earlier studies often conceived of the guest worker program as “a history of men,” discussing women almost solely in connection with later family reunification. As we will see in the coming


6 Ulrich Herbert and Karin Hunn, “Guest Workers and Policy on Guest Workers in the Federal Republic: From the Beginning of Recruitment in 1955 until Its Halt in 1973,” in Hanna Schissler, ed., The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949–1968 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 199. Here, Herbert and Hunn are specifically addressing the 1960s, arguing that more than two-thirds of participants in the guest worker program in 1962 were single men. While true, this position overlooks the fact that even in the 1960s and especially in Berlin, women were actively recruited by West German companies, and that, by 1962, there were already approximately 220,000 Gastarbeiterinnen (female guest workers) in the Federal Republic. See Monika Mattes, “Gastarbeiterinnen” in der Bundesrepublik: Anwerbepolitik, Migration, und Geschlecht in den 50er bis 70er Jahren (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2005), 9. More recent scholarship, such as Jennifer Miller’s study mentioned in note 4, work to correct this incomplete perspective of the guest worker program.
chapters, West German companies recruited both male and female guest workers, all of whom played an active role in shaping their work and living environments.

In 1961, when construction of the Wall halted the flood of people pouring in from East Germany, the Federal Republic looked to Turkey for labor, and thousands of Turks took advantage of the opportunity, becoming the largest national group of guest workers in the country by 1972. As Karin Hunn has demonstrated, German and Turkish migration politics; the state of, interests, and actions of business; and the attitudes of German society as well as Turkish immigrants all affected the shape and character of Turkish participation in the program and experiences in West Germany. Although many early Turkish guest workers returned home after a stint in West Germany, increasing numbers of these migrant laborers began renewing their work and residence permits and bringing their families from Turkey to live with them. Due to their larger numbers and to Germans’ perceptions of them as particularly “foreign” culturally, Turks became more visible and controversial than any of the other Gastarbeiter groups.

This important development coincided with two others in the history of the Gastarbeiter program. First, by the early 1970s, family reunification prompted many in West Germany to realize that these so-called guest workers were transforming into immigrants. Second, the global oil crisis of 1973 and the resulting economic downturn gave West German politicians, already considering the possibility, a clear opportunity to stop recruitment for the Gastarbeiter program. That action had the opposite effect to the one intended; seeing the waning opportunity to return to West Germany to work at a later point, many guest workers—and especially Turks—responded by bringing their families to live with them and settling into established multigenerational immigrant communities. Whereas earlier scholarship argued that, until after 1973, the Federal

9 In Chapter 1, we will see how West German companies, contrary to the initial aims and stipulations of the guest worker agreements, facilitated and encouraged renewal of work and residency contracts in order to retain their now-trained workforce.
Republic did little to nothing to help guest workers and their families integrate into West German society, more recent studies, including this one, demonstrate that what might have been the case on the federal level was not uniformly consistent on the city level. Sarah Hackett’s comparison of the city-state of Bremen with Britain’s Newcastle upon Tyne reveals authorities in that West German city (as well as the British one) were actively concerned with the integration of their growing population of foreign residents long before the official recruitment halt in the early 1970s.12

The growth of substantial ethnic minority populations, a direct consequence of the Gastarbeiter program, contributed to two major developments in postwar Germany and Europe more broadly than this book addresses. First, it has spurred debate and examination of dominant political and cultural identities. In the case of the Federal Republic, cultural and intellectual interventions of minority-background writers have compelled a significant rethinking of that perennial and problematic question, “What is German?” Historian Rita Chin’s groundbreaking book *The Guest Worker Question in Postwar Germany* examines the formative role of minority elites in this debate, and is critical to our understanding of the political and cultural history of the guest worker question. In particular, it explores the postwar histories of concepts such as integration, multiculturalism, and German identity.13 Yet, with its focus on cultural elites, Chin’s study does not give us a clear picture of the extent to which the lives of “ordinary” Germans, immigrants, and second-generation youth matched these ideological debates. Nor does it explore how those without access in wider realms of discourse and power – a situation shared by the majority of Turkish immigrants and their

13 Rita Chin, *The Guest Worker Question in Postwar Germany* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Similarly, Alexander Clarkson has written an excellent book on interactions between homeland-oriented immigrant activists and the West German state during the Cold War, which argues, in part, that such activism was “at the core of this process of community building, adaptation and paradoxically, integration” (186). Clarkson demonstrates how collective action and building networks with the West German government worked to both integrate immigrant activists within West German political spaces and prompt the FRG to engage with the idea and reality of diversity. Yet such activists, as with the cultural elites of Chin’s work, represented a minority within West Germany’s immigrant population. In addition, the large immigrant communities formed as a result of the guest worker program arguably forced the West German state to deal with issues of diversity, and the long-term implications of that diversity for German identity and society, to a greater and more lasting extent. See Alexander Clarkson, *Fragmented Fatherland: Immigration and Cold War Conflict in the Federal Republic of Germany, 1945–1980* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015).
children—shaped understandings of belonging in their own spheres of influence. In this sense, what I am doing here is shifting the focus from broader level debates about belonging to the more mundane efforts to construct it, and thereby demonstrating the agency of “ordinary” individuals in and the importance of everyday life to that process.

The debates surrounding German identity and the meaning of integration have taken on a particularly sharp tone in regard to perceived cultural differences stemming from the fact that the majority of people of Turkish background in Germany identify as Muslim. In retrospect, it is somewhat surprising to us now that both the West German and Turkish governments gave the religious lives of Turkish guest workers so little thought. Partly as a consequence of this oversight, practicing Muslims initially observed their religious duties relatively informally and largely outside the attention of the broader West German public. Then, in the 1970s, two developments dramatically influenced the character and perception of the Turkish immigrant community and, in particular, its Muslim members: the Anwerbestopp (recruitment halt) and the Iranian Revolution. The halt of the guest worker program in 1973 and the regulations on foreign residency that followed had the unintended consequence of speeding up the rate of family reunification among guest workers who decided to stay in West Germany. Now a growing multi-generational community with more diverse social, cultural, and religious needs, Turkish immigrants, including observant Muslims, became a more visible presence in local neighborhoods and schools.

The Iranian Revolution and the founding of the Islamic Republic were international events with distinct domestic ramifications in the Federal Republic. What began as a series of protests against the rule of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi in the fall of 1977 grew into a full-scale revolution that ended in his ouster in January 1979. Although the participants in the revolution had come from diverse religious and political backgrounds, the new government that assumed control instituted a theocratic state that strictly regulated all areas of life based on its fundamentalist interpretation of Islamic law. News coverage of these events shocked the Western world and gave Islam a revolutionary political character that caused great unease. West German politicians and media, and by extension the West German public, started to look at their local Muslim communities with new and increasingly suspicious eyes, imagining the radicalism they witnessed in Iran flourishing in Turkish immigrant mosques.14

I will address the role of the West German media in the construction of Muslim identities in Chapter 5.

14
In this environment, family reunification and the seeming hostility of West Germans toward Turkish immigrants contributed to an increasing importance of Islam among elements of the immigrant community, and feelings of insecurity prompted some parents to emphasize more conservative religious and cultural values that reinforced a patriarchal family structure. Yet, just as the presence of ethnic minority communities have prompted Germans to reconsider their national and cultural identity, so, too, has immigration to and settlement in West Germany led Turkish and Turkish-German Muslims to reexamine what it means to be Muslim, particularly in the European context.

Critical to these identity-based debates is the issue of gender. From the inception of the guest worker program, gender played an important role both in the motivation for employing foreign laborers and the types of work given to male and female *Gastarbeiter*. Earlier scholarly attention to first-generation working migrant women found that their participation...
in the workplace and economic contribution to their families had an emancipatory effect. Yet, as the second-generation Turkish Germans began coming of age in the later 1970s and the 1980s, researchers argued that conflicting expectations from both immigrant communities and West German society hampered their integration. Women, and especially women’s bodies, have been a measuring stick against which German politicians, the public, and researchers have evaluated the success of integration, but the focus shifted in the 1970s and 1980s from socioeconomic issues to concerns about perceived religious or cultural differences in the 1990s and 2000s. During these decades, public attention in Western Europe grew increasingly focused on Muslim women’s head coverings (known in Germany as the Kopftuch, or headscarf) as a symbol of Islam’s incompatibility with modern Western, democratic values. Historian Joan Scott argues convincingly that, in France’s case, this idea of incompatible cultures was not the cause of “differences between France and its Muslims” but rather “the effect of a very particular, historically specific political discourse.”

While France’s headscarf debate began in 1989 with the rights of schoolchildren, Joyce Mushaben locates the origins of its German version in 1997 Baden-Württemberg when Fereshta Ludin, the daughter of an Afghani diplomat, found herself barred from completing her teaching degree and obtaining a position due to her wearing a headscarf. A series of legal actions and political debates ensued about whether civil servants, as employees and representatives of the state, were or should be allowed to wear a headscarf, which opponents argued constituted a form of proselytizing. Both Scott and Mushaben argue that the headscarf debates create false dichotomies that proscribe the belonging of Muslims in European society and obscure the deeper political and socioeconomic

23 Joyce Marie Mushaben, *The Changing Faces of Citizenship: Integration and Mobilization Among Ethnic Minorities in Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 294. The Berlin Assembly’s response to the headscarf debate in connection with the civil service was the 2005 Neutrality Law, which banned the head covering for officials serving in schools, legal professions, and law enforcement. See Mushaben, 303.
challenges that hinder immigrants and their children from becoming full members of the receiving society. It has been easier, in other words, to point to the headscarf and claim it as evidence of essential and incompatible cultural difference than to address basic assumptions of political membership and national belonging. Interestingly, debate about the headscarf was scarce in West Germany before reunification. Instead, focusing on the local level prior to reunification reveals how behaviors and expectations served as the primary markers of perceived cultural differences.

The rising discourse of cultural difference was not limited in focus to Muslim women who both began and continued to wear a headscarf, however. Public debate and political attention expanded to include growing concern about the assimilability of Turkish and Muslim men (those two identities often being conflated). The headscarf as a symbol reflected equally on Muslim women and men. Anthropologist Katherine Pratt Ewing explores how German society has used specific definitions of Turkish and Muslim masculinity as a tool of publicly accepted xenophobia, a way to exclude and justify the exclusion of certain identities from being “German.”

Ewing’s approach to the post-reunification period is especially effective in illuminating the “new racism” focused on cultural difference, but it is also critical to consider the impact of the Iranian Revolution and the formation of the Islamic Republic as well. As noted earlier, in the period between the beginning of postwar Turkish immigration and German reunification, the FRG’s perception of these developments significantly influenced the conflation of Turkish and Muslim identities and the characterization of Islam as an internal threat.

Related to the reexamination of “German” and “Muslim” identities is the second challenge to the Federal Republic that emerged from the guest worker program: the place of immigrants and their children in relation to German society. This second challenge clearly interweaves with the first, as identity constitutes the critical determinant of belonging, yet it also contains a spatial element. Where and how have immigrants fit? Spatial belonging – fitting in – has both abstract and practical implications. In regard to public discourse, use of the word and image of a

25 Ibid., 27–55. Ewing thoughtfully mines “the genealogies of contemporary representations of Turkish and Muslim manhood” (27) from nineteenth-century European travelers to the Ottoman Empire to twenty-first-century Turkish feminists and scholars, and produces an insightful analysis for how those representations converged, but that representation needs to be expanded to account for the impact of the Islamic Revolution. See Chapter 5.
“ghetto” to describe particular locations associated with immigrants has reduced Turkish-German places of belonging to specific urban sites, thereby emphasizing difference and foreignness and ignoring the transnational spaces of Turkish Germans that make them a part of Berlin beyond their ethnic or religious ties. Such urban sites have often been viewed as part of a Parallelgesellschaft (parallel society), a separate space hindering the integration of Turkish immigrants and their children into larger German society. This perspective often conceives of integration as a linear journey with an endpoint where one essential identity (Turkish) converts to another (German). In the context of daily life, however, the Turkish-German community has often utilized those physical spaces to localize their identity and enable themselves to engage with the host society on their own terms in ways that have challenged commonly held understandings of “integration.”

Connected to this, examination of how members of the Turkish-German community shaped and understood “home” more abstractly gives insight into the impact of gender and generation on immigrants’ sense of belonging.

By bridging these three themes resulting from the Gastarbeiter program—the impact on postwar German history, the implications of a growing Muslim population, and the place of immigrants in a host society—this book examines the history of Turkish immigrants and their children from the beginning of Turkey’s participation in the guest worker program to German reunification in a way that recognizes their integration as a process that is historical, reciprocal, and spatial in nature. The Turkish-German community actively made a place for themselves within, and at times alongside, West German society by constructing spaces of belonging within the context of their daily lives. A number of factors influenced that process, from individual agency and community dynamics to larger institutional factors such as educational policy and city renovation projects, but it was profoundly linked to local-level daily life and experiences.

“Integration” is a word assigned many meanings, some at odds with each other, that seek to describe the relationship between immigrants and host societies. Earlier, both policy makers and scholars used “integration,” or its antecedent “assimilation,” to describe the endpoint of

28 Esin Bozkurt, Conceptualising “Home”: The Question of Belonging Among Turkish Families in Germany (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2009).