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Willkommenskultur: A Computational and Socio-linguistic Study of Modern German Discourse on Migrant Populations

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by Sabina Hartnett

Abstract

In the lingering wake of the European Refugee Crisis of 2015, population demographics within Germany's borders continue to change. As these changes occur, sentiments in relation to incoming populations also shift. This essay details the findings of a socio-linguistic study of the portrayal of migrant populations in a corpus of news articles recently collected from four popular German news venues. Using topic modeling, (a computational method of large-scale text analysis), this study analyzes the discourse surrounding and sentiment toward migrant populations in German news media. By exploring the media contexts of the terms *Flüchtling*, *Ausländer* and *Einwanderer* this study reveals how media representations further propagate stereotypes and prevent the integration of migrant populations into German society.

Keywords

Refugee Crisis, *Flüchtling*, *Ausländer*, *Einwanderer*, news media, computational text analysis, topic modeling, digital humanities, socio-linguistics, migration, refugees

Introduction

“*Erstmals leben zehn Millionen Ausländer in Deutschland*” reads a prominent headline in the German weekly *Die Zeit* (“Erstmals Leben”). For the first time in history, more than 10 million ‘foreigners’ reside in Germany. Many Germans embrace these new populations, as outlined by Viktor Vasilyev’s description of the *Willkommenskultur* in Berlin and the goals instituted by Chancellor Angela Merkel. “[*Willkommenskultur*, writes Vasilyev,] has, in a sense, become a brand name for German identity synonymous with humanitarianism, tolerance, and loyalty to democracy. In 2012, more than 49% of Germans supported this form of culture, but in 2015 the proportion swelled to 59%” (Vasilyev 1). Many German citizens, especially early on in what is now known as the European Refugee Crisis, embraced recent immigrants. However, not all Germans share this sentiment. Vasilyev alludes to a shift in the public perception of migrant populations when he writes that “the tornado of migration has put an end to Germany’s trouble free existence” (Vasilyev 2). In 2018, migrant populations remain a hot topic in popular German newspapers (“2015: The Year”). This crisis has proven particularly divisive between German citizens and

politicians in favor of opening Germany's borders to incoming refugees and those opposed to such policies. This study analyzes the linguistic minutiae of a large corpus of news articles in order to reveal the consequences of written and spoken words in this prevalent discourse.

News media serves as a reflection of, as well as an influence on, the sentiments and linguistic norms of its time. Print media, specifically newspapers, echo current public discourse. While reflecting popular linguistic practices, the content and language in the articles published by these news outlets are also shaped by specific purposes and ideologies. Such strategic publication decisions, in turn, influence future sentiments and terminology of that discourse. In *Languages in the Media Representations, Identities, Ideologies*, Astrid Ensslin refers to 'mediation' as "the general process of information encoding, transfer and decoding," in which the sender has distinct control over the organization and presentation of each encoded message (Johnson and Ensslin 13). Specifically, Ensslin emphasizes the power-hierarchy that exists between publisher and consumer, detailing how news media has the power to encode political and social messages in the tone and language of each article in order to actively influence the relevant discourse. In his work *Media Interventions*, Kevin Howley refers to the strategic act of mediation through deliberate article publication as a 'campaign'. Implicit in the term 'campaign' are clear objectives and a self-awareness of the power newspapers yield. Without explicitly advertising political statements and opinions, newspapers are able to strategically and subtly campaign through careful language use. These campaigns, as a result of mediation and the aforementioned power hierarchy, can significantly influence the linguistic norms of their readers. These changes in linguistic norms are then internalized by readers and thus alter the reader's perspective and treatment of migrant populations. The language used in reference to migrant populations in contemporary Germany is thus understood to influence how such populations are viewed and received.

This study relies on a large corpus of recent articles which reference migrant populations from multiple German news sources in order to interpret linguistic trends in the relevant discourse. The increasing speed with which news outlets produce large volumes of available articles necessitates digital methods of analysis. The utilization of computational methods allows researchers to better understand large trends within a corpus and to effectively contextualize specific articles contained therein. This study implements topic modeling to reveal central themes of and interpret the overarching tone in the corpus of 1,056 collected news articles.¹ Topic modeling is a method of computational analysis which takes a text input (in this case, a corpus of news articles) and calculates term saliency and relevance to output sets of thematic topics.² The outputted clusters of terms, referred to as 'topics', are then available for interactive interpretation. In this way, topic modeling

¹ The articles used in this study were collected using a representative number of articles for each search term to reflect the current discourse on migrant populations in Germany.

² *Term saliency* is a metric which considers the frequency of a terms appearance multiplied by the *distinctiveness* of the term (how exclusively the term appears in the specified topic). The *relevance* of a term to a given topic is defined using the marginal probability of the term within the full corpus relative to the term's *lift*, where *lift* is defined as "the ratio of a term's probability within a topic to its marginal probability across the corpus" (Sievert and Shirley 65).

allows researchers to reverse engineer thematic trends in a corpus of articles through analysis of the use frequency of and relationship between words within a singular topic.³

Using topic modeling to analyze a collection of German news articles which reference migrant populations, we can deduce the public sentiments towards immigrants and refugees in Germany as gauged by the specified outlets. For this study, articles were collected from four popular German news sources, each with a different political leaning and readership. Of all articles published in *Die Zeit*, *Der Spiegel*, *Der Tagesspiegel* and *Berliner Zeitung* from January of 2009 to March of 2018, nearly 11% reference migrant populations in Germany.⁴ By analyzing topic models created from corpora of recent articles referencing migrant populations in Germany, this study reveals semantic as well as thematic trends within the discourse on those migrant populations.⁵ Further discussion of these trends is included in the second part of the paper through interpretations of the employed topic models.

The topic models created and indexed for each of the four newspapers used in this study (*Berliner Zeitung*, *Der Spiegel*, *Der Tagesspiegel* and *Die Zeit*) reveal each newspaper's overall representation of migrant populations in Germany.⁶ Additional topic models for each of the three most frequently appearing search terms (*Flüchtling*, *Ausländer*, and *Einwanderer*) within each newspaper provide insight into the differences in the context and sentiment of each term. The following arguments, made in reference to specific terms and news outlets, evolve interactively with the digitally-hosted topic models.

By moving back and forth between the written interpretation and topic models (hosted on web pages linked throughout the article), the reader can best follow the arguments developed in this article. Within each topic model, specific topics (each topic is numbered, as referenced in the article) are activated by scrolling over their respective bubble. Each model contains four clusters of terms, referred to as topics, which are estimated using Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA). By calculating each term's relative frequency to each other term, LDA uses this relative affiliation of terms to uncover *latent topics* (Chuang et al. 2). On the left panel of the visualization, the two-dimensional plane maps the computed distance between topics: topics which are closer in distance are more similar in content. Activating a topic, (scrolling over the topic to highlight it in red), then prompts the right panel to display the 30 terms which are most useful to interpreting the selected topic. Using the relevance metric bar displayed on the upper right-hand corner of the model, the user can alter the order of terms within the topic based on the weight given to the probability of the term under the specified topic. Setting the relevance metric to 1 will order the results in decreasing order of their probability to occur in the specified topic, whereas setting the relevance metric to 0 will rank the terms solely by their lift. As users interact with the models, they can define the order of the terms within each topic they want to see based on each term's uniqueness to that topic. For purposes of this study, the topics were analyzed

³ Topic modeling is implemented under the assumption that the relevant corpus can be translated into a series of coherent topics that an algorithm creates based on word frequency and proximity.

⁴ This statistic reflects the sum of articles returned for searches of *Ausländer*, *Emigrant*, *Einwanderer*, *Migrant*, *Immigrant*, *Aussiedler*, *Flüchtling*, *Auswanderer*, and *Ausgewanderte* for the four newspapers.

⁵ The articles used in this study were collected in reverse chronological order, starting in March, 2018.

⁶ These links will bring the reader to the index for each newspaper, where they can select and view each of the topic models created for this study.

with a relevance metric of 1, focusing on the 30 terms that have the highest topic-specific probability.

When analyzed, these models reveal distinctions between linguistic tendencies of popular German newspapers and the terminology they use to reference migrant populations in Germany. The conclusions drawn from analytical practices in this study are research interpretations that may not entirely explain, but rather analyze the collected corpora in conjunction with close reading of articles therein. These analyses map the terrain for further study and identify the necessity of close reading for specific articles.

Overall Discourse Within Each Venue

Published daily in Berlin, *Berliner Zeitung* it is the largest subscription newspaper in the city (“Berliner Zeitung”). Echoing popular sentiments of the city itself, *Berliner Zeitung* takes pride in being young, dynamic and modern. The topic model created from the corpus of all 557 articles referencing migrant populations scraped from [Berliner Zeitung](#) reveals a trend of informative and narrative articles which present the experiences of immigrants and refugees through a familial (Topic 2), geographic (Topic 4) and future-oriented lens (Topic 3). Topic 1 provides a general overview of the political and social discourse currently surrounding migrant populations with reference to many political parties, society (*Gesellschaft*), and integration. Topic 4 highlights the actual process of migration by listing some of the countries that migrant populations are travelling from and through in order to reach Germany as well as statistical counts of incoming migrant populations.

In contrast to the explanatory/informative focus of Topics 1 and 4, Topics 2 and 3 reveal individual narrations, stories and realities for migrant populations. The second topic names family members, including children (*Kinder*), mother (*Mutter*), father (*Vater*), and parents (*Eltern*), which emerge as a result of repeatedly published individual stories or particular family-focused narrations. Here, migrants are often portrayed as family members with personal anecdotes and individual significance which builds an interpersonal connection between the migrant subject and the reader. The third topic of the *Berliner Zeitung* model discusses different stages of continued life in Germany, starting with reference to immediate arrival in the country, specifically referencing asylum seekers (*Asylbewerber*) and accommodations (*Unterbringung*). Then, the inclusion of school (*Schule*), work (*Arbeit*) and life (*Leben*) mark the next stage of migrants contributing to and integrating into German daily life, further enforcing a narrative for a ‘normal’ future for migrant populations in Germany. Overall, articles referencing migrant populations in *Berliner Zeitung* provide a broad summary of recent events and movements into Germany focused on family, personal experiences and continued life in Germany.

Der Spiegel, renowned for its investigative journalism, is currently the largest weekly news-magazine in all of Europe. The magazine prides itself on its exposés and dependable reporting. With wide readership, both within Germany and internationally, *Der Spiegel* provides readers with thorough investigations of German, European and international news. From the collected corpus of 212 articles referencing migrant populations from [Der Spiegel](#), the topics that emerge in a four-topic model provide a broad overview of the discussion (Topic 1), zoom in on family life (Topic 2), and highlight a scope of German as well as international right-wing politics (Topics 3 and 4 respectively).

The first topic provides a broad overview of the discourse including reference to two specific events involving non-Germans. The name *Amri* included in this model refers to the Tunisian, failed asylum-seeker who drove a truck into a Berlin Christmas market in 2017 and the term *Tafel* references the *Essener Tafel*, a food charity-organization which recently decided not to serve non-citizens. The frequent inclusion of these two references, in the context of *Der Spiegel's* reporting goals, serves to inform readers of recent controversial events involving migrants in the country. The appearance of these references in the topic model exemplify how singular acts and decisions can become defining stories within the discourse and risk propagating stereotypes about migrant populations as a whole. Especially with an international base of readers, these stories become the image readers may hold for a population they do not directly interact with.

The remainder of the *Spiegel* corpus focuses on German and international politics. Though centered around the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) and its members, Topic 3 also includes other German political parties, likely as comparisons and political baselines. As a party explicitly focused on anti-immigration, the AfD is especially important to note when it appears with high frequency within a topic. As an international publication, *Der Spiegel* also reveals a topic largely devoted to international politics and politicians. Topic 4 features the names of a variety of American political actors along with Swiss right-wing politician Roger Köppel and German right-wing extremist Beate Zschäpe, who is currently on trial for her involvement in multiple xenophobic murders. In a time when American politics are highly racialized and prominently feature a discourse on immigration and border control, this topic likely indicates a comparison between current American and German immigration politics. In a publication known for its investigative journalism, the centrality of the AfD and American conservative politics within this corpus reveals a comparison of international politics concerning migrant populations.

From the corpus of 188 articles referencing migrant populations collected from [Der Tagesspiegel](#), a classically liberal publication based in Berlin with daily national readership, the topics that emerge in a four-topic model focus on family experience (Topic 1), reference historical and international prejudice (Topic 2), name geographic locations of migration (Topic 3) and cover German politics (Topic 4). Topic 1 references migrants, refugees, schools (*Schulen, Studie*), money (*Euro*), work (*Arbeit*), families (*Familien, Kinder*) and society (*Gesellschaft*), providing a broad overview of changes that occur with incoming migration. With references to both family and day-to-day life, Topic 1 results from relatable portrayals of migrant populations, thus encouraging a feeling of shared experience and empathy from German readers toward the discussed migrant populations. Topic 2 of the corpus includes reference to the current immigration debate in the United States as well as other populations with historical prejudice.

Topic 3 of the *Der Tagesspiegel* corpus provides geographic detail of these migrations by listing many countries along the path of migration for the populations prominent in this discourse (including Turkey, Greece, Hungary and Libya). Noting the home country of a specific group of migrant populations defines them by their nationality, which also indicates their legal status in Germany and their ability to apply for asylum and refugee status. Topic 4 addresses a range of German political parties and the political infrastructure, notably including *Die Linke*, Angela Merkel's *CDU*, *Die Grünen*, as well as the anti-immigrant *AfD*. This topic also reveals a prominent debate about living accommodations that affects both migrant populations and current residents alike. In

Berlin, where housing was already difficult to secure, the influx of accommodation-seeking migrants exacerbated the problem. Topic 4 also references specific locations (*Bezirk, Standorte*), housing (*Wohnungen*) and accommodations (*Unterkunfte*) which, in conjunction with close reading of the respective articles, reveals the stance of many neighborhoods within Berlin against creating standardized buildings for refugee accommodation (*Modularen Bauten zur Flüchtlingsunterbringung (MUFs)*) (“Bezirke Protestieren”).

Die Zeit is a national publication famous for its divergent opinion pieces and spectrum of articles with opposing sentiments. This weekly newspaper, published in Hamburg, fosters a culture of debate among the articles it publishes. The topic model for the *Die Zeit* corpus of 99 articles details the experience of migrating to Germany and reveals hardships such as lack of jobs, and migrant populations within Germany feeling marginalized and foreign (Topics 1 and 4). Without mentioning specific events, the second topic in this model provides a broad overview of the discourse surrounding migrant populations. Topic 3 includes geographic locations on the path to Germany for many migrant populations (especially those coming from Libya) as well as international institutions that are integral to the experiences of those populations during and upon their arrival in Germany (including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the European Coast Guard). In conjunction with Topic 3, Topic 2 outlines the process of migrating to Germany. Topic 1 includes Jews (*Juden*), anti-semitism (*Antisemitismus*), history (*Geschichte*), and integration (*Integration*). This historical reference to a persecuted population acknowledges prior issues with racism and nationalism in Germany. Finally, Topic 4 includes details of the *Essener Tafel* decision to no longer serve foreigners, a controversial decision heavily debated within Germany, as well as references to Angela Merkel, who has spoken out against the decision. True to its goals, *Die Zeit* reveals a range of historical, social, and political debates within the articles it publishes referencing migrant populations.

Term Specific Analysis: *Flüchtling*

In the corpus of all articles collected for this study, *Flüchtling* (refugee) is the most common term used to refer to migrant populations of any legal status in Germany. The frequency of its use indicates that the sentiments of the discourse interpreted in this study are primarily aimed at those in search of asylum. International migration in search of refuge is currently common in much of Europe, northern Africa and the Middle East. By studying the topic models created for this search term, we denote trends and consistencies that exist within the *Flüchtling* corpora. In particular, many articles reference the legal status of and institutions relevant to refugees, lists of countries fled by refugees and statistics on the number of incoming refugees.

Although the *Flüchtling* corpus constitutes over 60% of the *Berliner Zeitung* corpus, the topic model created for these 345 articles diverges significantly from the topic model created using the entire *Berliner Zeitung* corpus collected for this study. In the full-corpus topic model, we see a neutral central theme of family and future-focused experiences of migrants, whereas the topics in the *Flüchtling* model highlight refugees as controversial. In Topic 3, and negative assessments, including the fear (*Angst*) of and problems (*Probleme*) between refugees and the rest of the population, appear in the

Berliner Zeitung corpus for the first time. This differentiation from the full *Berliner Zeitung* corpus establishes a barrier of distrust between refugees and Germans. This sentiment of distrust is included in the same topic as society (*Gesellschaft*), integration (*Integration*), life (*Leben*) and children (*Kinder*), revealing the concerns expressed in Topic 3 as socially-oriented. In addition to social concerns, *Berliner Zeitung* accentuates economic concerns with regard to the cost of supporting refugees in Germany. Topic 1 highlights the economic stress refugees place on the country they migrate to by referencing money (*Geld, Euro*) in addition to the specific infrastructures and accommodations provided to them in Germany. Here, the topic models reveal the economic cost of hosting refugees in Germany as well as the potential inability of refugees to integrate into German society as central themes published by *Berliner Zeitung*.

Der Spiegel, true to its intentions of investigative journalism, covers the experience of refugees in Germany, the legal institutions which manage the country, and political opposition to the acceptance of refugees in Germany. In the topic model created for the 62 articles found and collected using the search term *Flüchtling* in *Der Spiegel*'s archive, the four topics focus on the experience (*Erleben*) of refugees (Topic 1), the institutions in place to control and govern refugees in Germany (Topic 2), German and European politics (Topic 3) and geographic specifications of migrant populations (Topic 4). Without explicitly mentioning fear, Topic 2 portrays refugees as needing to be controlled by German politics and police forces. This topic includes reference to federal police (*Bundespolizei*), federal government (*Bundesregierung*), problems (*Probleme*), police (*Polizei*) and integration (*Integration*), implicitly casting refugees as an unstable population in need of German governance. Additionally, the *Der Spiegel Flüchtling* model includes a topic which features many details of the AfD and its politicians along with other members of the German government both domestically and within the European Parliament (*Alternative für*). Further analysis via close reading of articles discussing political perspectives and elections reveals frequent reference to refugees and the AfD and their ability to exist in the same country ("Oberbürgermeister-Wahl in Gera"). Especially notable in this corpus is that *Der Spiegel* reports primarily on the legal and political forces which govern and control refugee experience in Germany, thus painting refugees themselves as passive members of the discourse surrounding their experience in Germany.

Similar to *Berliner Zeitung*, *Der Tagesspiegel* includes reference to political and physical barriers to integration for refugees. Similar to the full *Der Tagesspiegel* corpus, the discussion around standardized buildings for refugee accommodation (*MUFs*) in Berlin emerges in Topic 4 of this corpus. These protests serve to maintain physical separation between German residents and refugees in the city. Although Topic 2 in this model largely focuses on the geographic origins of migrant populations, it also includes reference to refugee politics (*Flüchtlingspolitik*) and acceptance (*Aufnahme*). Here, the wording reveals refugees as passive residents in Germany, where refugee politics are governed by Germans and the responsibility of accepting refugees is placed on German citizens (rather than the standard of *Integration*, which places responsibility on refugees to assimilate into German culture). While still portraying refugees as passive subjects, Topic 1 of this model reflects empathy for refugees via the inclusion of home (*Heimat*), family (*Familie*) and *Miliband* (the name of a British politician who advocates that "the refugee crisis is a test of our character") (Miliband 18:30). In all, the discourse surrounding *Flüchtlinge* in *Der*

Tagesspiegel is highly German-centric, focusing on German decision-making with regard to refugees in the country.

From the topic model created for the 49 articles referencing *Flüchtling* scraped from *Die Zeit*, the four topics focus on politics (Topic 3), geographic origins (Topic 2), legal status (Topic 1) and crime (Topic 4). Notable in Topic 1, which also includes references to families and broad parts of the discourse, is the inclusion of asylum (*Asyl*) and protection status (*Schutzstatus*). Refugees in Germany are, as displayed in the *Der Spiegel* and *Berliner Zeitung* *Flüchtling* Topic Models, defined by their legal status. This legal status is primarily determined by the refugee's country of origin. Topic 2 in this model lists the geographic locations where refugees are coming from, including Libya, Turkey, and Greece. Notable here is that Turkey and Greece are two countries with large transitory populations crossing from the Middle East, Libya and other African nations over the Mediterranean Sea towards Europe. At the end of 2016 there were nearly 3 million refugees residing in Turkey, 200 times the number of refugees that had been in the country in 2010 ("2015: The Year"). Topic 3 then takes a political perspective on refugees and their travels to Germany, focusing on the laws and politics concerning refugees, including reference to politics concerning what to do with refugees (*Flüchtlingspolitik*) and the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention (*Flüchtlingskonvention*), where the legal status of refugees was first declared.⁷ In Topics 2 and 3 in this model, refugees are referred to as objects of German law and politics. This objectification creates a hierarchical divide between German citizens as law-creators and refugees as acted upon by those laws. As refugees cannot contribute to law creation or enforcement, this segregation further enforces that refugees need to be contained and legally acted upon by German forces.

Finally, Topic 4 of *Die Zeit* includes details of the murder of a 15-year-old German girl by her Afghan, asylum-seeking ex-boyfriend in Kandel, Germany (including *erstochen*, *Altersfeststellung* and *Zweifel*).⁸ This topic exemplifies the phenomenon of singular events in news media becoming defining moments and characteristics for an entire category of people and thus the ability of news media to redefine terminology over time. Although the murder took place in December of 2017, it remained relevant enough in the discourse to appear in detail in one of four topics from a 49-article corpus in a study conducted in March, 2018. This murder, through the dissemination of *Die Zeit*, shapes the definition of *Flüchtlinge* as criminals. In conjunction with the previous three topics, this association portrays refugees as needing to be contained by law.

Term Specific Analysis: *Ausländer*

In the topic model created for the 95 articles found and collected using the search term *Ausländer* from *Berliner Zeitung*, all four topics feature legal terminology, separating this model from the general discourse highlighted in the topic model of all articles from

⁷ The '*Flüchtlingskonvention*' was the 1951 Refugee Convention, where the UN defined who constitutes a refugee and sets out the rights of individuals who are granted asylum and the responsibilities of nations that grant asylum

⁸ Although *Der Tagesspiegel* is a local paper published in Berlin, this murder took place in Kandel, a town on the other side of the country.

Berliner Zeitung. Topic 2 in this model includes *Ausländerbehörde* (agency for foreigners), deportation (*abgeschoben*) and residence permit (*Aufenthaltserlaubnis*) which reveal many of the hurdles foreigners face and requirements they must meet in order to remain in Germany. These struggles reveal the day-to-day stress of continued life in Germany for non-citizens. Topic 2 also names many family members: family (*Familie*), father (*Vater*), mother (*Mutter*), children (*Kind, Kinder*), use of such terms acknowledges that many migrants come as a family and likely produce some level of compassion from the reader. Topic 3 discusses many of the rights, rules and claims of citizenship as well as European politics. Terms such as social welfare (*Sozialhilfe*), benefits (*Leistungen*), family benefits (*Kindergeld*), citizen (*Bürger*), claim/right (*Anspruch*), toll (*Maut*) and rights (*Recht*), exist in this topic as part of a debate of which benefits non-citizens should receive. In Topics 2 and 3, we see *Ausländer* used in articles which describe a close-up view of the reality of foreign (legal, logistical and familial) experience in Germany in *Berliner Zeitung*. In Topic 1, we then see the emergence of subjective and narrative verbs, likely as a result of opinion pieces, including speech (*Sprache, Rede*), questions (*Fragen*), knowledge (*Wissen*), and beliefs (*Glauben*) that indicate personal narration. Similar to the full corpus analysis of *Berliner Zeitung*, the *Ausländer* topic model reveals two central narratives: one of practical, logistical realities for foreigners, and one of subjective opinions and statements.

Since the term *Ausländer* appears in nearly fifty percent of the articles collected from *Der Spiegel* referencing migrant populations, the topic model created from the [Ausländer](#) corpus shares many of the same terms and themes with the topic model for the full *Der Spiegel* corpus. Both corpora produce a topic specifically focused on family and at least one topic covering German politics, in particular focusing on the AfD. In addition to these two topics, the *Ausländer* topic model includes a topic which references two specific legal incidents in which the crimes were committed by, (or suspected to have been committed by), non-Germans. We see from this corpus that *Der Spiegel* refers to *Ausländer* as subjects of German politics and categorizes them as a non-law-abiding population as defined by individual instances.

In the topic model created for the 35 articles found and collected using the search term [Ausländer](#) from *Der Tagesspiegel*, foreigners are portrayed as a strain on the German system in terms of their sheer number as well as in the care they require. Topic 1 in this model addresses the number of foreign people in Germany and references the accommodations necessary to support them in the country. By referring to foreign populations as statistics, the individuals are reduced to numerical values. Furthermore, these foreigners are categorized as a strain on the German system, because of the described effort and accommodations put forth by Germany to assist them. In Topic 4 reveals a debate of whether or not foreigners should receive the same federal financial compensation as German citizens with the appearance of the terms family benefits (*Kindergeld*) and welfare system (*Sozialsystem*). Topic 3 underscores this sentiment by citing the decision by the *Essener Tafel* to no longer serve non-Germans, referencing the freedom of a company to not provide the same goods to foreigners as to German citizens. In all, the term *Ausländer* is used in *Der Tagesspiegel* to designate the rights of migrant populations as separate from those of German citizens.

In the topic model for articles returned using the search term [Ausländer](#) in *Die Zeit*, a legal focus emerges from within the four topics. Topic 1 highlights religion (specifically Judaism and Islam), religious prejudice, and migrant backgrounds and deportation laws,

specifically including custody pending deportation (*Abschiebehaft*), deportation (*Abschiebung*) and law (*Gesetz*). This topic reveals both national and religious intolerances and how they are intertwined with legal action within the articles from *Die Zeit*. Continuing the trend of legal rights (or lack thereof), Topic 2 of this model highlights citizenship and democratic rights as they adhere to non-citizens and Topic 3 focuses on the democratic practice of demonstrating, specifically in Cottbus, where there were demonstrations (*Demonstranten, Demonstration, Demo*) both against foreigners and against intolerance/hate (*Hass*) in early February. Citizenship (*Staatsbürgerschaft*), voting/the right to vote (*wählen, Wahlrecht*), and reference to those seeking refuge (*Schutzsuchenden*) all appear in Topic 2. Finally, Topic 4 details the decision by a private company (*Essener Tafel*) to no longer serve non-Germans, displaying an act of discrimination against non-citizens. These topic models reveal that *Ausländer* is often used in articles in *Die Zeit* in reference to populations that do not have the same legal, political and religious rights as German citizens. This separation highlights the institutional othering that separates migrants from Germans within Germany.

Term Specific Analysis: *Einwanderer*

In the topic model created for the 32 articles collected from *Berliner Zeitung* referencing [Einwanderer](#) in Germany, two opposing themes emerge. Topics 1 and 3 emphasize the personal, academic and political potential and accomplishments of immigrants (and their descendants), while Topics 2 and 4 reference international anti-immigration politics. Topic 1 of this model mentions students, teachers and family, thus alluding to day-to-day life and the potential that education can offer immigrants to learn and prosper in Germany. Topic 3 includes names of specific examples of German politicians with *Migrationshintergrund*, (including Aydan Özoguz, Sawsan Chebli, and Yasmin Fahimi), highlighting the accomplishments of former immigrants and their contributions to Germany. On the other side, Topic 2 focuses on American politics and the debate over construction of a wall dividing the United States and Mexico. Similarly, Topic 4 references both Hungarian and Italian right-wing politics, including Lega Nord per l'Indipendenza della Padania. The focus on right wing politics in Topic 4 exposes a clear dislike and distrust of immigrants in America, Hungary and Italy. These anti-immigrant political actors serve to normalize nationalism globally and can likely influence the way readers contextualize issues within Germany. In all, this model displays the duality of the term *Einwanderer* in *Berliner Zeitung* as both a symbol of hope and potential for migrant populations in Germany as well as a representation of international political opposition to open borders.

Right-wing and anti-immigrant politics are a prominent theme throughout the four topics modeled for the 23 articles collected from *Der Spiegel* referencing [Einwanderer](#) in Germany. Topic 1 includes details of the recent trial of Beate Zschäpe, a German right-wing extremist and member of the Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund (NSU) (“Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund”). Topic 2 references right wing politicians and political parties including Tories, a conservative party in the United Kingdom, and Matteo Salvini, the new deputy prime minister of Italy and a member of the neo-nationalist party, Lega Nord. An additional international right-wing focus, Topic 3 highlights current

American politics, which focus on anti-immigration policy. Together, Topics 1 through 3 discuss *Einwanderer* in *Der Spiegel* in the context of right-wing, anti-immigrant political references, a trend which defines *Einwanderer* as a victim of political discrimination and reveals the implications of anti-immigrant sentiments such as anti-immigrant groups and hate crimes. The final topic in this model, Topic 4 then reiterates the inability of immigrants to fully integrate into German society and become German by referencing them as *Deutschrussen*, and *Deuschtürken*. Denoting the migrant-background of these individuals differentiates them from ‘real’ Germans in the collected articles. In all, *Einwanderer* is used in articles published by *Der Spiegel* which discuss German and international anti-immigrant parties and differentiate between Germans with and without migrant-backgrounds.

The topic model created from articles mentioning *Einwanderer* in *Der Tagesspiegel* references the legacy of specific individuals to highlight international anti-immigrant sentiments (Topic 1) and focuses largely on American immigration politics (Topic 2). Topic 1 of this model focuses on American immigration politics, ultimately revealing an affiliation between the term *Einwanderer* and American anti-immigration law enforcement. While Topic 1 includes mention of the President, the White House and other general American political references, most notable in this topic are the details of a strongly anti-immigration law enforcement officer in Arizona. Topic 2 also includes many references to the United States, specifically geographic locations near the Mexican border, the point of entry for many immigrants into the US (*Houston, Texas*). *Einwanderer* is used in *Der Tagesspiegel* primarily in reference to US rather than German migration politics.

In the topic model created for the articles referencing *Einwanderer* from *Die Zeit*, the topics focus on German politics (Topic 2), inequality/need (Topic 3) and anti-immigration scholarship and the United States (Topic 4). Topic 2 covers general German politics and how they aim to fairly represent and protect Germans, with multiple instances of the Parliamentary Oversight Panel. Topic 3 includes terms that primarily refer to indigence; most notably in need (*bedürftig*), inequality (*Ungleichheit*), poor (*arm*), rich (*reich*) and disbursement (*Ausgabe*), which highlights large inequalities that exist between immigrants and many German citizens. Finally, Topic 4 includes mention of a criminologist whose research follows the relationship between migrants and crime and an anti-immigration German sociologist. While other corpora have mentioned individuals and specific stories, this corpus focuses on individuals in academia. By referencing anti-immigrant support from scholars, this topic provides academic evidence of migrant populations as a negative addition to Germany. The hierarchy between those in need of care and those in positions of power is accentuated by the topic model curated from this corpus.⁹

Conclusions

The two most frequent terms in this corpus, *Flüchtling* and *Ausländer*, appear in nearly 75% of the articles referencing migrant populations. *Flüchtlinge*, which directly translates

⁹ Because there were only 9 articles collected for the *Einwanderer* corpus from *Die Zeit*, Topics 1 and 4 are not described here as they were overwhelmingly representative of singular articles.

to ‘refugees’, are legally defined as migrant populations forced to leave their home country due to war, persecution or natural disaster. However, this study finds that articles referencing *Flüchtlinge* often express economic and legal concerns about incoming refugees rather than information or narratives about their forced departure from home. In the surveyed articles, focus on specific geographic locations indicates that refugees in Germany appear largely defined by their country of origin and the way in which political actors regard their legal status. Thus, much of the discourse in current news media references refugees as acted upon by German law and governance rather than as individuals or as an empowered population.

Implicit in the term *Ausländer*, which translates to ‘foreigner’, is a lack of familiarity and thus comfort, and implies a sense among Germans that foreigners do not belong in their current location. Whereas *Flüchtlinge* have a reputable cause for migration, *Ausländer* do not necessarily. *Ausländer* can refer to any non-German and is used to distinguish between those who belong (Germans) and those who do not. In the discourse on migrant populations, as surveyed in German news media, *Ausländer* often appears in discussions of legal rights and privileges. Just as the term itself segregates these populations, German law also segregates the two groups by differentiating between the rights of German citizens and the rights of *Ausländer* in Germany. By specifying the permissions afforded to foreigners, they are legally, as well as in the common discourse, othered from the German population. This othering stems from the concern that *Ausländer*, like *Flüchtlinge*, are also often portrayed as a strain on the German system and thus cannot be contained within it. In this separation, the narrative becomes one of provision, that Germany must provide for the foreigners residing there.

Across all four newspapers, *Einwanderer* is used specifically in discourses referencing international (largely centered around the United States) anti-immigrant sentiments. *Einwanderer*, which translates to ‘immigrant’, is defined as an individual (regardless of home country/legal status) who comes to live permanently in a foreign country. In a time of population influx and the resulting crisis, the arrival of additional foreigners seeking permanent residency is largely unwanted. Similar to *Ausländer*, the term *Einwanderer*, in the imagination of German readership, lacks implicit persecution and danger as a need for migration. The negative sentiments towards *Einwanderer* likely stem from the permanency of its definition. In this corpus, *Einwanderer* becomes defined as a population unwanted in the country they are in, highlighted by political parties and social and economic concerns. Much of the discourse on migrants in Germany highlights concerns of economic and social ability to sustain incoming populations. When the duration of these strains is extended, the discourse becomes even more actively anti-immigration.

The current discourse on migrant populations in German news media is dominated by a German-centric narrative. Migrant populations hardly have any influence on the topology of this discourse and thus have virtually no voice in the media. This underlying condition furthers the ways in which individual topics discursively segregate migrants in Germany. Migrant populations are defined in this corpus by the German political parties that make many of the decisions regarding their legal rights and status, the institutions put into place to support them and the ways in which their actions are interpreted by the German people. No significant portion of the discourse (and thus, no representative topic in any of the models) reports news *for* or from the perspective *of* migrant populations in Germany. Rather, migrant populations constitute a subject on which German media report.

Without representation in the media, migrant populations are further discouraged from fully integrating into the host country. In their chapter, “Resources of Belonging: Assessing the Consequences of Media Interventions,” Majoribanks et al. describe the relationship between belonging, social exclusion and voice. “Belonging is intimately tied to social structural processes around forms of social exclusion and inclusion, as well as to issues of access and participation (Yuval-Davis et al., 2005; see also Anthias, 2008) ... Voice refers to the capacity to have your views represented in the media” (Marjoribanks et al. 57). The absence of migrant voices in German news media further segregates migrant populations from the German population.

Mainstream media is not only a reflection of, but also an important influence on how consumers of that media view current events and debates. Media venues pick up popular topics from common discourse and shape future discussions by strategic publication and mediation. In an age of large information and media consumption that influence is especially strong. The language and context used in the surveyed newspapers to describe migrant populations is directly correlated to how migrants are perceived in Germany by the wider public. This study reveals many of the stereotypes and negative perceptions of migrants in Germany and thus the reasoning behind their inability to be accepted in and integrate into German culture. In his chapter of *Media Interventions*, Marjoribanks discusses the implications of mainstream media and its representation of migrant populations by explaining that “negative media coverage can serve to stigmatize migrants, affecting how they are treated by others, while also potentially contributing to an unwillingness on the part of migrants to participate in public debate. Migrants may also internalize media criticisms, with significant consequences for individual and group well-being” (Marjoribanks et al. 57). The consumption of news media which references migrant populations effects both the way migrants are perceived by the general population as well as how they see themselves within that population.

In a paper which discusses German perceptions of migrant populations, Vasilyev writes that “polls suggest that half the population fears that the current inflow of migrants will result in the erosion of German national identity and lead to higher taxes as a source of support for newcomers,” a sentiment that is echoed in 21st century news media as social and economic concerns about the influx of migrant populations appear in the topic models analyzed in this study (Vasilyev 3). The correlation between the influx of migrants with an erosion of German national identity reveals an unwillingness by the German population to change what is considered proper ‘Germanness’. Rather than develop and nuance what it means to *be* German, news articles focus primarily on the negative effects of migrant populations on the existing German national identity. As becomes apparent from the analysis of this corpus, the otherness of migrant populations in Germany is depicted as a sociological as well as financial strain on current systems. The portrayal of migrants in reference to how they affect German identity and the German economy further highlights the German-centric focus of German news media. In effect, this reading of German news articles discussing migrant populations reveals more about country’s self-perception than it does about the migrant populations it references. An in-depth study of the discourse surrounding migrant populations in Germany reveals that ‘*Willkommenskultur*’ is confined to accommodations and legal status awarded to migrants.

As they currently exist, German newspapers and media portrayals impede migrant populations’ ability to fully integrate into German society. Media outlets represent

migrants as objects which are reported on by Germans through a German-centric lens. This othering creates a hierarchy between the two populations, further preventing migrants from being fully incorporated into German society. Johnson and Ensslin address the othering that occurs as a result of a lack of media representation as follows:

every media performance reflects the interpretations, perspectives and attitudes as well as, no less significantly, the constructions, ‘inventions’ (Schmitz 2004: 17) and thus the personal, institutional and corporate ideologies of media producers together with those *of other social actors who are similarly authorized to stage themselves and their agendas medially*. In other words, aesthetic production and linguistic expression are embedded in, and contingent upon, a range of conflicting arenas arising from the demanding and legitimating of power (Johnson and Ensslin 13, *emphasis mine*).

Johnson and Ensslin highlight the hierarchy implicit in the distinction between Germans as media producers and migrants as subjects of the news media. Here, ‘social actors’ refers to Germans with no migrant backgrounds or affiliations and thus those in the power position to report on migrant populations. By asserting the otherness of migrant populations, news media normalizes the hierarchical narrative that migrant populations can only be defined by their impact on the German national identity.

Language is cyclical; news media simultaneously reflects the common discourse of a population while also influencing the future language and sentiments of its readership. This study reveals the significance of the context in which a term is used in modern news media and predicts how that context will come to define the colloquial definition of the term. With two local and two national publications, including *Der Spiegel*, which has a weekly readership of over 6 million Germans (9% of the population age 14 and above), the corpora used in this section are far reaching in their influence on as well as their reflection of current popular discourse (“Six Decades”). As migrants continue to be portrayed in the media as a strain on the German social, economic and political systems, they will likely continue to be segregated and discriminated against in Germany. If these narratives continue in mainstream German news media, these populations may also begin to believe these portrayals and interpret them as an accurate reflection.

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