One of the big changes since German unification has been the country’s increased cultural and ethnic diversity. As recently as the late 1990s, Germany was officially not a country of immigration. Today’s numbers paint a very different picture. According to the Statistisches Bundesamt (2015), in 2014 Germany had 16.4 million residents with an immigration background, representing 20.3 percent of Germany’s total population. How has the German political system responded to this growing diversity? By the mid-2000s, one observer noted, the German state seemed to have awoken from a “deep sleep,” recognizing for the first time the need for a more intentional and coherent approach to immigration and integration (Schroeder 2007, 37). The jury is still out on whether Germany’s efforts at immigrant integration have succeeded (Green 2013), but it is important to ask whether political structures have responded to and incorporated the political interests of the country’s immigrant communities.

The immigrant population’s political inclusion and representation is relevant as Germany faces new challenges at home and abroad. These pressures include a new diversity—a diversity that continues to build with recent refugee flows—as well as the well-publicized backlash against it. Recent research suggests that Germany has made significant inroads in terms of descriptive representation (Donovan 2007; Schoenwalder 2012). Studies on substantive representation also indicate that new political actors are giving a different cast to some aspects of Germany’s political discourse.
This chapter applies an intersectional lens to explore how minority status and gender come together to shape immigrant women’s interventions in the political sphere and their effect on policy discourse (see box 4). In particular, this chapter examines whether and how migrant women changed the dominant discourse with regard to the role of gender in immigrant integration.

Beginning in mid-2000s, gender took on a central role when integration policy discourse began to be marked by a persistent focus on Muslim immigrant women and girls, whose oppression and social isolation allegedly both epitomized the challenges of integration and represented significant obstacles to successful integration. By 2007, this construction of gender—the female immigrant as weak, downtrodden, and lacking in agency—faced challenges from a number of different groups and on a number of different fronts. What role did ethnic-minority migrant women have in framing this debate about the relationship between gender and integration? How did they mobilize, what kind of support did they receive from other actors in the political sphere, and in what institutional context? In other words, what helped or hindered minority women from making their voices heard?

The chapter begins by presenting the theoretical lens for examining

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**BOX 4. Migrant Women**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intersection Studied</th>
<th>Gender + Immigration Status (Migrant Women)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time Period Studied</td>
<td>2005–12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Migration Law (2005, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Integration Summit/Plan (2007/2012)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>German Islamic Conference (2006–12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German Policymakers as Allies</td>
<td>Interests appropriated by the CDU/CSU and partially the SPD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support from the Left Party and Alliance 90/ Greens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Interest Group</td>
<td>Human rights organizations (Pro-Asyl and Femmes des Terres)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allies</td>
<td>Partial support from Turkish groups such as Türkische Gemeinde Deutschland (<em>where interests overlapped</em>)</td>
</tr>
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these questions. It then turns to a discussion of methods and gives a brief background to immigrant integration in Germany. The chapter focuses primarily on integration debates conducted during Chancellor Angela Merkel’s first two terms in office (2005–12) and uses three sets of case studies—legislative debates surrounding integration policy, the National Integration Plans, and the German Islamic Conference—to explore the extent to which migrant women articulated policy interests and mobilized with regard to integration and gender. In addition, the chapter examines how the integration policy debate came to include the perspectives of migrant women. The chapter closes by examining the factors critical in enabling migrant women to make their voices heard in the political arena.

Theoretical Perspectives

The past few decades have seen a significant increase in immigrant populations in Europe and an accompanying growth in the associational politics of those groups, including their integration into political parties and public office. These developments have drawn the attention of scholars seeking to measure the extent of political incorporation of migrant groups (Green 2004; Koopmans 2010; Morales and Giugni 2011) and to determine the extent to which immigrants’ particular experiences shape their politics (Bird, Saalfeld, and Wüst 2011). Most recently, there has been recognition that intersections of identity are relevant to understanding immigrant representation and political incorporation. For example, are women who are also members of an immigrant racial or ethnic minority subject to a “double disadvantage,” and if so, does that disadvantage in turn inform their representational behavior, issue agendas, or policy successes? This area of scholarship draws heavily on empirical work done on the United States (Fraga 2006; Hardy-Fanta 2006; Orey 2006), but recent work has also been done on European cases (Bird, Saalfeld, and Wüst 2011; Mügge and De Jong 2013), with studies showing the effect of multiple intersecting identities on political behavior and institutional outcomes. One study on the Netherlands found migrant women to be relatively weak and unable to challenge dominant groups (Korteweg 2009).

Political intersectionality theories (Crenshaw 1991; Weldon 2008) typically predict the existence of significant obstacles to the representation of marginalized subgroups. In the case of ethnic minority women, support from women in general, either in the form of civil society organizations or female legislators, is not necessarily forthcoming, and research has found
that when women’s interests take on an institutional form, they tend to focus on the larger group (Strolovitch 2006). Political parties can be important allies, but intersectionality theory holds that they will not support more marginal groups if the parties do not face pressure from constituencies with an organized base or if there is no perceived electoral advantage (Celis et al. 2014).

A more general appraisal of resources and organizational structures offers some additional perspective (Fetzer and Soper 2005). An important factor is the ability of marginal groups to build alliances and coalitions with other actors. For example, bottom-up coordination and “political clubbing” with other civil society organizations is regarded as essential to getting migrant interests heard (Borkert and Bosswick 2011, 118). Research into the interest mobilization of immigrant groups must also incorporate the role of opportunity structure. Odmalm notes that different contexts “give rise to different types of participation and different targets of claim making” (2009, 154). Scholars have observed that changes in opportunity structure have a significant impact: according to Odmalm, “When the structure changes (the powerful groups change their attitude),” marginal groups respond “by increasing group action, founding new organizations, and using these channels for mobilization” (157). The kinds of opportunities afforded by particular sets of resources and institutional structures are therefore relevant to an explanation of the extent of the substantive representation of intersectional interests.

Migrant women in Germany make an interesting case study. Germany increasingly represents a shifting landscape with respect to immigrant political incorporation. Authors writing in the mid- to late 2000s described the impact of immigrant civil society organization on the integration debate in Germany as very limited (Borkert and Bosswick 2011, 116). The voices of migrant organizations were often passive (Klumeyer and Papademetriou 2009, 266), and their bargaining power was frequently limited (Yurdakul 2006, 437). Rottman and Ferree found that the German media rarely reported instances where Turkish immigrants made claims on the state (2008, 501). Korteweg and Yurdakul observed in the late 2000s that women’s immigrant groups were not “organized to establish a network and influence policymaking” (2010, 15). Another study reminds us that historically, Germany was regarded as having “weak opportunity structures to facilitate nonethnic German immigrant integration” (Klumeyer and Papademetriou 2009, 262–63). Odmalm characterizes German corporatism as embodying a “political sphere that [was] both highly centralized and
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bureaucratic despite its federal character” (2009, 154–55). Yet in the past decade, gains have been made in the descriptive representation of immigrant women at the national and state levels (Donovan 2007; Shoenwalder 2012; Wüst 2014). Moreover, in 2005, Germany dramatically shifted its approach to integration when the government created new opportunities for regularized input from a number of migrant groups (Musch 2012). Table 4.1 provides an overview of German governments during this time. (For an overview of the German political parties themselves, see table I.1 in the Introduction.)

This chapter examines to what extent immigrant women in Germany have participated in and shaped debates surrounding integration policy, in particular with respect to gender. Beginning with the 9/11 terror attacks and an ensuing conflation of migrant with Muslim, ethnic minority immigrant women in Europe acquired a certain hypervisibility in debates surrounding immigrants and integration, with oppression of migrant women ostensibly constituting a primary barrier to integration (Roggeband and Verloo 2007; Korteweg and Triadafilopoulos 2013). Muslim migrant women tended to be treated as a homogenous group suffering under general conditions of male oppression, reinforcing stereotypes with little appreciation for the diversity of Muslim women’s experiences in the West. Moreover non-Muslim women were often shut out of policy debates (Korteweg 2009). This construction took a very limited view of women’s agency or capacity to act independently (Korteweg 2008), and integration policy debates were dominated by headscarves, honor killings, and forced marriages, to the detriment of other issues or perspectives.

Such findings hold true for Germany as well. According to Triadafilopoulos, Korteweg, and Del Moral, beginning in the mid-2000s, German integration discourse was marked by a focus on “putatively embattled immigrant women” regarded as “unable to access core institutions and the majority institutions more generally” (2013, 12, 17), a viewpoint that served as a barrier to social cohesion. Rostock and Berghahn have argued that gender came “to play a pivotal role in the process of redefining a ‘Ger-

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Governing Coalition and Chancellor</th>
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<tr>
<td>1998–2005</td>
<td>SPD-Alliance 90/Greens (Gerhard Schröder)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005–9</td>
<td>CDU-SPD Grand Coalition (Angela Merkel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009–13</td>
<td>CDU-FDP (Angela Merkel)</td>
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man’ identity,” with the debate over integration taking place “under the pretext of preventing the violation of women’s rights” (2008, 346). They observed that part of “the majority society seem[ed] to find the oriental and patriarchal ‘other’ necessary for its own self-definition” (351). Rottmann and Ferree have likewise noted that the image of the oppressed immigrant woman reinforced the prevalent construction of the “backward and traditional ‘other,’ typically figured as a Muslim immigrant, often Turkish, that serve[d] to accentuate a positive self-image of what it means to be German” (2008, 193). The dominant message was that integration would occur only if and when women abandoned their religion’s cultural practices and were released from the cultural and social constraints imposed by their own community. The state would serve as the agent of both integration and gender emancipation in eliminating such practices as forced marriage and the wearing of headscarves (the hijab) (Yurdakul and Korteweg 2012).

So how did immigrant ethnic minority women challenge the dominant German policy discourse with respect to gender and integration during Chancellor Merkel’s first two terms in office, a period that coincided with a dramatic shift in the government’s approach to integration and new opportunities for regularized input from a number of migrant groups (Musch 2012)? Specifically, how did ethnic minority immigrant women position themselves in debates surrounding integration and gender, and to what extent did their views prevail against those of other actors? Despite limited resources and a divided voice, groups of immigrant women, supported by civil society organizations and political parties, pushed policy in new directions. Moreover, changing institutional settings were critical in shaping the interplay of the different actors, creating opportunities for migrant women’s perspectives to be incorporated into debate and policy.

Sources of Evidence and Methods

This study centers on migrant women and women of migrant descent and on those who are of non-European origin or who represent visible minorities (Bird 2011, 225). Technically, a migrant is someone who has migrated, but German media and academic literature use the term to refer to immigrants, including children and grandchildren of migrants. This study uses the terms immigrant and migrant interchangeably and understands each to include first-, second-, and third-generation immigrants as well as naturalized citizens, permanent residents, and refugees with temporary status.
The 20 percent of Germany’s current population that is considered to have a migrant background includes many German-born persons whose parents and/or grandparents were born abroad (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2012). Immigrants of non-European origin make up about 50 percent of the overall migrant population, with Turks (17 percent) comprising the largest national group. Persons from the Middle East and Central Asia (Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan) make up about 10 percent, and just over half a million persons (or 3 percent) are from Africa. Germany has approximately four million Muslim residents.

A little over half of those within the immigrant population carry a German passport, although only about 17 percent of non-Europeans are naturalized (Migrant Integration Policy Index 2015). More than 20 percent of those who are nonnationals were born in Germany: “Many have lived in the country for longer than 10 years, and more than one-third have residence periods of longer than 20 years” (Green 2007, 48). This is largely the result of what was one of Europe’s toughest naturalization laws. Until 2000, German citizenship was based almost entirely on jus sanguinis rather than jus soli, largely preventing even German-born children of immigrants from acquiring German citizenship. The 2000 Citizenship Law eased the restrictions on naturalization by offering citizenship to German-born children if at least one parent had a permanent residence permit for a minimum of three years and had been residing in Germany for a minimum of eight. German law now also allows for the possibility of dual citizenship. Of the four million Muslims, half are German citizens. According to the Bundeswahlleiter, in the 2013 Bundestag election, 5.8 million naturalized citizens (9 percent of the electorate) were eligible to vote (die Bundeswahlleiter 2013).

Although a multiplicity of nationalities, ethnicities, and forms of religious expression are represented among immigrants in Germany, this study focuses on women with a definitive outsider or visible minority status (Bird 2011, 225) or who represent an ethnic and/or religious minority in the German context. However, even this group is diverse and does not possess the same set of experiences and interests. Even those of Turkish ethnicity cannot be said to constitute a single unit, given multiple intersections based in gender, religious ideology, ethnicity, and so forth. Thus, any discussion of an immigrant community or a set of immigrant-related political interests requires many caveats.

Numerous studies have found that the representational associations of
Turkish and Muslim communities have diverse ideological and political outlooks and very often feature internal divisions (Yurdakul 2006; Yurdakul and Yukleyen 2009). These associations have also traditionally focused more on homeland politics than on host country issues (Ögelman 2003; Koopmans 2004). Moreover, German Muslims of Middle Eastern or North African background display a range of interpretations of Islam and understandings of gender roles (Korteweg and Yurdakul 2014). The chapter studies the behavior of a variety of migrant women actors and women of migrant descent, including public figures such as authors, journalists, and lawyers; women legislators and party officials; and women organizing in civil society. Each of these groups may have more than one set of interests, and the chapter documents these differences where applicable.

The chapter uses process tracing to determine the extent to which ethnic minority immigrant women were responsible for the changes in the construction of gender during integration debates. Process tracing involves “theoretically explicit narratives that carefully trace and compare the sequence of events” (Amingaza quoted in Falleti 2006, 10) and is thus particularly well suited for exploration of policy inputs and outcomes. It “investigates and explains the decision processes by which various initial conditions are translated into outcomes” (George and McKeown 2005, 35). Moreover, by focusing on the microfoundations of political behavior, process tracing allows researchers to concentrate on a variety of causal mechanisms rather than one just one or a few independent variables (Bennett and Checkel 2012, 11). By focusing on “agents with causal capacities” (George and McKeown 2005, 137), process tracing takes into account not only individuals but institutions and social action. Process tracing is particularly useful for unpacking the interplay among a variety of agents and the institutional opportunity structure.

The processes at issue in this chapter are the making and gendering of integration policy between 2005 and 2012 in two different institutional contexts: the legislative arena and formal consultations between government and migrant groups, including the National Integration Summits and the German Islamic Conference. The chapter concentrates on policymaking at the national level to see how varying constructions of gender come into conflict in the process of defining the dominant societal discourse. Drawing on parliamentary and other official governmental proceedings, the publications of nonstate actors, media reports, and participant interviews, the chapter reconstructs the processes by which integration policy developed and evolved. It takes into account both individual and group actors.
The asylum policy debates in the early 2000s represented an early instance in which the integration policy discourse came to focus on women as a particularly affected group and thus served as an important precursor to later discussions. In 2000, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder appointed an Independent Commission on Immigration headed by former Bundestag president Rita Süssmuth to consider extensive revisions to German immigration policies. One issue was asylum policy. For years, Germany had been Europe’s most popular destination for asylum seekers, but policy did not recognize a number of categories of persecution, including gender-based violence. The commission recommended broadening the eligibility criteria for asylum to include gender-specific persecution, including both genital mutilation and sexual orientation.

In March 2002, the government proposed a migration law that included the broader interpretation of asylum eligibility, but the proposal met with opposition from the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU), which argued that such a broadening would bring rates of asylum and migration to dangerous new levels. The bill also met opposition from interior minister Otto Schily of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), who broke with his party on this issue. The Bundestag approved the bill, but the CDU used a procedural issue caused by a split state vote in the Bundesrat to involve the Constitutional Court, which in turn declared the law unconstitutional. The government reintroduced the bill, essentially unchanged, in January 2003, but this time the Bundesrat rejected it. By June 2004, negotiations finally produced a compromise, and with that, German migration law now recognized gender-based persecution as a basis for asylum.

Much of the debate surrounding the proposed migration law was fueled by the CDU/CSU’s position that Germany’s security would be threatened by liberalized asylum and immigration policies. The 1993 Asylum Compromise had already done away with the most generous components, but debate had not abated. Some SPD members as well as members of the Bundestag from the Greens and the Left Party advocated strongly for more liberal policies. The debate prompted activist groups to mobilize. Given that the issue touched on international human rights law, Amnesty International took a public position, as did other human and women’s rights
groups, such as Forum gegen Rassismus, Pro Asyl, and Terre de Femmes, which lobbied for the continued inclusion of provisions for gender-based reasons for asylum (Forum solidarisches und friedliches Augsburg 2006). In one plenary session, Left Party legislator Petra Bläss argued for the primacy of the issue, saying that “women’s groups have been working on this for years” (BT-Plenarprotokoll 14/208, 13.12.01, 20584). The Intercultural Council in Germany, formed in 2004 to represent people of diverse backgrounds and nationalities, was also part of the lobbying effort and, in an example of political clubbing, joined forces with more established groups to issue joint statements. One local organization that lobbied for this provision was Refugio München, an organization supporting asylum and refugee populations in Germany.

The 2004 asylum debate offered an early example of how integration policy came to include the perspectives of minority women. In this case, the status of one intersectional group—migrant women who suffered from gender-based persecution—made its way to the center of a German debate initiated by Christian Democrats seeking to pursue restrictive migration policies. This appropriation sparked a countermobilization on behalf of gender issues and integration and the formation of political coalitions among the Greens and the Left Party, human rights organizations, and migrant women.

The Migration Law and the 2007 Revisions

Only after 2005 did gender assume a central place in integration debates. The 2005 Migration Law marked a reconceptualization of Germany’s integration policy framework (Green 2013) and consequently represented the beginning of a new chapter in terms of both integration policy and structure. There was a new focus on language acquisition as a pathway to labor market participation and social integration that brought Germany into line with trends taking place elsewhere in the EU (Joppke 2007). For Germany, language courses were nothing new, but the law brought to an end a decentralized, compartmentalized system of courses that distinguished between ethnic and nonethnic migrants. The law created a single national program and mandated a six-hundred-hour course of language instruction coupled with forty-five hours of cultural and civic orientation for all new migrants (though some participants were required to pay). A new Office of Migration and Refugees would oversee integration courses and be responsible for launching new integration initiatives (Borkert and Boswick 2011, 115).
The government announced that the new law was just the beginning of a “national-level dialogue” on integration (Klusmeyer and Papademetriou 2009, 278). An initial evaluation of the law’s integration provisions took place in June 2006, around the same time as the first in a series of annual national integration summits.

At around this time, questions concerning the social position of migrant women in Germany were becoming central to public discourse. The place of migrants in European society had attracted new attention as a result of heightened security concerns following 9/11, bombings in Madrid and London, and suburban riots in France. The debates involved a critical discursive shift: for example, “Turks” in Germany suddenly became “Muslims.” Moreover, in 2005, the publication of The Foreign Bride, by Necla Kelek, a Turkish-born German sociologist, unleashed widespread discussion about the social situation of Muslim migrant women in Germany, the prevalence of arranged marriages, and the existence of “parallel societies,” a term used to insinuate that communities of immigrants deliberately avoid social and political participation in mainstream society. The book received several literary awards and was praised by CDU/CSU officials as well as by SPD interior minister Otto Schily. Kelek’s book and her later statements regarding the incidence among Germany’s Muslims of arranged or forced marriages generated significant controversy both within and outside the migrant community. In 2006, Die Zeit published a petition signed by sixty migration scholars that accused Kelek of sensationalist writing that had little basis in reality (Karakasoglu and Terkessidis 2006). Declaring that the work was “unscientific and embrace[d] unserious methods,” the petition criticized Kelek’s “dangerous and unsubstantiated” association between Islam and forced marriage and warned that her work overlooked discrimination and low levels of labor market participation, issues that were central to the migrant experience. Kelek accused her critics of failing to recognize the “actual state of affairs” and of denying the failure of integration (Kelek 2006).

Issues of gender equality—specifically, gender emancipation—began to dominate discussions of integration. Kelek and Seyran Ates, a prominent lawyer of Turkish descent, became something akin to the “official” spokespersons for Muslim migrant women. The media sought them out for stories about the position of Muslim women in German society and the state of integration, and interior minister Wolfgang Schäuble chose them to serve as the “representatives” of Muslim women in the early years of the German Islamic Conference (Lowtzow 2007). At the same time, migrant women came to be identified as one of the main targets of inte-
Both the government and the media began to focus on the “Turkish-Muslim women who lack[ed] German language capabilities and [were] therefore unable to access core institutions and [interact with] the majority of society more generally[, resulting in] the alleged isolation of these groups in parallel societies” (Triadafilopoulos, Korteweg, and Del Moral 2013, 17). Kelek and others contributed to this stereotyping of Muslim women, but this framing of the role of gender converged with Christian Democratic ideology, and the image of the “embattled” Muslim woman deflected attention away from questions about the extent to which Germany was willing to adapt to significant demographic shifts. Further, by blaming migrant populations per se, the government could get public support for more restrictive immigration policies.

The 2007 Revisions to the Migration Law

In 2007, EU mandates introduced new requirements for asylum and residence policy, and the CDU/SPD Grand Coalition took the opportunity of revising the 2005 Migration Law to attempt to place limits on the immigration of family members and spouses from non-EU states. The proposed reforms included a provision that family members had to demonstrate a minimum level of German-language competency prior to their arrival. A candidate for spousal unification had to be at least eighteen years of age, while the receiving family member(s) in Germany had to be self-supporting—that is, not dependent on welfare. Revisions were also made to the integration courses, increasing the maximum time of language instruction to nine hundred hours; creating special courses for target groups, such as women, young people, and those who were illiterate; and imposing monetary penalties on those who failed to enroll or complete the mandatory instruction.

The debate surrounding the proposed revisions was particularly ugly and protracted, with the government’s position provoking significant opposition from the nongoverning Greens and the Left Party as well as migrant organizations. Some of the criticism focused on the discriminatory nature of the proposed changes—nationals of countries with no visa requirements with Germany were exempt from the new restrictions on family unification. Critics argued the provisions concerning spousal unification violated Article 6 of the Basic Law, which put family and marriage under special protection, as well as EU directives regarding fair and just treatment of cases of family unification. Four of the largest Turkish-German associa-
tions chose to boycott the July 2007 National Integration Summit because of the bill, protesting what they argued was intentional discrimination against specific ethnic groups (Fleig 2007). Twenty-one different migrant organizations published an open letter to Chancellor Merkel in which they described the proposed revisions as posing a “stark contradiction” to recent positive developments in integration policy. A number of migrant organizations, such as the Intercultural Council and Pro Asyl, formed a coalition with the German Federation of Trade Unions to launch a nationwide protest action against deteriorating conditions for migrants in Germany, attempting to pressure the German government from below.

On one level, the debate over the 2007 changes to the migration law was about discrimination and restrictions on immigration in general. On another level, however, the debate was about gender. Although the family unification provisions were theoretically directed at any potential family member, they were seen as targeting “embattled” Muslim migrant women. The government formally rationalized the new age and language restrictions on immigration as intended to deter forced marriages and marriages of convenience. In opening remarks at the first reading of the bill on 26 April, Schäuble defended the provisions as part of an effort “to limit abuses such as marriages of convenience and to fight against forced marriages by introducing age requirements and other similar measures” (BT-Plenarprotokoll 16/94, 26.04.07, 9545). Raising the age limit from sixteen to eighteen and requiring immigrants to have an elemental proficiency in the German would limit the number of sham or forced marriages. The language requirement would further set the stage for more successful integration of spouses once they arrived in Germany. In Schäuble’s words, “We want to facilitate [migrants’] ability to integrate by requiring basic German-language skills for the immigrating marriage partner” (BT-Plenarprotokoll 16/94, 26.04.07, 9545). The law also provided that immigration would be allowed only when “the marriage is not solely for the purpose of securing an entry visa and residency permit for the entering spouse” and when “neither partner is being forced into the marriage.”

The deliberative process on the proposed law comprised two plenary debates (26 April and 14 June 2007) as well as hearings of the Interior Committee of the Bundestag conducted in May. The government’s position found strong support from within the CDU/CSU, where it was defended as a necessary step to liberate Muslim women in Germany from a religious patriarchal culture. According to legislator Reinhard Grindel (CDU/CSU), the government had every right to be concerned about these women:
They get married, they are brought to Germany, then kept in apartments, some become victims of domestic abuse. There are women that have been in Germany for 17 or 20 years but speak not a word of German who don’t ever leave their immediate surroundings, because they are unsure, or are not allowed to leave. Spousal unification, has until now largely been a case of resettlement in a parallel society. We are not going to leave these women to their fate; we are going to make sure that someone finally looks out for them.

He concluded, claiming boldly that the law would enable German authorities “to reach into the parallel societies.” On a similar note, Hans-Peter Uhl (CDU/CSU), stated during the second debate, “We must break up these parallel societies that are so hostile to women.”

Opposition parties, migrant groups, and spokespersons for migrant interests were quick to charge the government with duplicitous motives, with using gender issues—the claim of taking up the cause of “embattled” wives in forced marriages—to stigmatize migrants and to feed suspicion of ethnic and religious minorities. According to Sevim Dağdelen, integration spokesperson for the Left Party, this law was “not at all about protecting women in and from forced marriages. . . it is a form of preventive integration to the effect of ‘don’t let any more in!’” (BT-Plenarprotokoll 16/103, 14.06.07, 10592). More pointedly, the opposition argued that the proposed revisions discriminated against women. A common theme of parliamentary motions (Anträge) and the plenary speeches criticizing the law was the frauenfeindliche (hostile to women) character of the provisions. According to the Greens’ caucus integration spokesperson, Josef Philip Winkler, the family unification provisions were antithetical to “integration, women, and families” (BT-Plenarprotokoll 16/103, 14.06.07, 10593). Dağdelen maintained that by “seizing rights to marital choice, cohabitation, and family unification,” the law would discriminate against women and their families (BT-Plenarprotokoll 16/103, 14.06.07, 10592). According to a petition to the Interior Committee submitted by Burco Akdoğan, representing the German Turkish Community (TGD), the provisions would affect any number of legitimate marriages by putting any marriage with a foreign woman under suspicion. According to a group of SPD members of the Bundestag, the revisions would further discriminate against women overseas, whom pregnancy, child care demands, or geographical location
would prevent from taking a German-language instruction course (BT-Plenarprotokoll 16/103, 14.06.07, 10641).

There was also significant criticism of the particular construction of gender the government was employing. Focusing on “embattled” Muslim women, the government was ignoring real issues affecting migrant women, precluding action relevant to those women. The Greens’ motion stated that although forced marriage was an abhorrent practice, the way to deal effectively with it as a societal problem was not to create regulations that put restrictions on women’s right to marry and travel freely; rather, the government should provide independent residence rights for those affected by forced marriage; a right of return for those who go abroad for forced marriages; and humanitarian victim status for victims of forced marriage (BT-Drucksache 16/5103, 25.04.07). In the TGD petition, Akdoğan noted that forced marriage was already punishable under existing law and that a much more meaningful approach would be measures to increase awareness, offer counseling, and provide victim support services for those affected by forced marriages and domestic abuse (Kolat 2007, 6). Instead of demonizing immigrant women and their ethnicity and religion, the government should focus on interventions that could make a difference in individual women’s lives. Similarly, Kenan Kolat, TGD president, argued that the social situation of immigrant women was “not an ethnic problem. . . . [I]t is about education and jobs” (2007, 4).

Despite the very rigorous debate, the proposed bill did not change significantly over the course of the deliberations, and in July 2007 it became law. The debate surrounding the bill was not insignificant, however; it had led migrant groups, civil society groups, and left opposition parties to mobilize against not only a new set of restrictions on immigration but also a construction of gender that reinforced negative stereotypes of Muslims and ignored the pressing issues facing immigrant women in Germany. What influence did migrant women have in this process?

Several prominent migrant women contributed to the construction of gender that supported the government’s position, and both Kelek and Ates backed the gender-related rationale behind the new restrictions. However, some of the most significant spokespersons for the opposing perspective were migrant women—for example, Dağdelen; Akdoğan; Lale Akgün, an SPD member of the Bundestag; and Green member of parliament Ekin Deligöz. Further, the left parties in general were closely aligned with position of migrant women in this debate and strongly defended the migrant experience. Both the Greens and the Left Party moved to change the pro-
posed law (BT-Drucksache 16/5103, 25.04.07; BT-Drucksache 16/1204, 13.06.07). The strong support may have resulted in part from the influence of representatives with immigrant backgrounds: both parties had immigrants serve spokespersons on immigration and integration issues. The SPD, although a member of the coalition government, split on the bill, with twenty-one party members voting against it. Moreover, many of those who voted for it publicly expressed their misgivings or opposition. The Plenarprotokoll documenting the roll call featured five attachments comprising letters and statements in which eighty-nine SPD members explained their reservations (BT-Plenarprotokoll 16/103, 14.06.07). The overwhelming concern was the extent to which bill discriminated against women. A number of legislators, including Sebastian Edathy, integration spokesperson for the SPD and himself of migrant background, rationalized the bill as a necessary compromise to ensure of reform of residency law (BT-Plenarprotokoll 16/103, 14.06.07, 10600) but lamented the bill’s discriminatory and antifemale character (BT-Plenarprotokoll 16/103, 14.06.07, 10639–40).

Input came from the grassroots as well. Among the numerous civil society organizations that lobbied the government to change the bill were several migrant women’s organizations, including the Association for Binational Marriages (VBI) and Papatya, a crisis resource organization. The women’s angle found favor with migrant and human and women’s rights organizations in general, and those lobbying against the proposed bill included the Intercultural Council, Pro Asyl, Terre des Femmes, and the German Women’s Council. May 2007 hearings held by the Bundestag Interior Committee included seventeen statements from individuals, including several legal experts and six representatives of relevant nongovernmental organizations. Present were two individuals with migrant backgrounds, both representing migrant organizations: Mehmet Kilic, head of the federal Ausländerbeirat (Council for Foreigners), and Kenan Kolat, president of the TGD. No female migrants were present, although Burco Akdoğan was listed as the author of part of the brief submitted by the TGD to the Interior Committee. The VBI also submitted a formal brief to the committee.

Immigrant women were just a few of the many voices heard on this issue, but their perspectives found strong support and featured heavily in the debate, primarily as a result of several prominent spokespersons, the backing of domestic civil society organizations and left parties, and an op-
portunity structure that allowed for some degree of grassroots mobilization. Their influence on the outcome of the debate was minimized by the fact that a majority of SPD members of the Bundestag supported the bill and the reality that in the popular media, more conservative voices such as Kelek and Ates, both of whom drew a strong connection between Islam and patriarchy, continued to dominate.

Language Courses

The interests of migrant women featured in another place in the 2007 bill—the proposed revisions to the integration course structure. The revisions were based on a formal evaluation of the course framework that began in March 2006, when the government invited input from twenty-eight federal, state, and municipal offices plus eleven nonstate organizations, including two migrant organizations, the TGD and VBI. The TGD’s Kolat and Emine Demirbürken, integration spokesperson for the Berlin municipality Tempelhof-Schöneberg, had migrant backgrounds. Although the deliberations were not made available to the public, the forum resulted in a published report. Furthermore, Rambøll, a private consulting firm, presented the results of a systematic evaluation of the integration courses in December 2006 (Bundesministerium des Innern 2006).

The evaluations showed that women constituted a particular constituency when it came to the integration courses. From one set of perspectives, the language and culture courses appeared to be particularly relevant for women because they provided the state an opportunity to expose migrant women to German values and culture, meaning that the courses had a potentially emancipatory character, particularly for Muslim or Turkish women (Bundesministerium des Innern 2006, i). The reports found that about 10 percent of courses targeted specific groups such as women, youth, and illiterates. Only 6 percent of the courses targeted women, and more conservative groups supported increasing this number on the grounds that if only women were present, issues relating to the social and cultural dimensions of integration could be discussed openly, thereby empowering participants to cast off some of the constraints allegedly imposed by their religion or ethnicity. Sybille Laurischk of the FDP argued for the importance of women’s courses because of mothers’ central role in their families’ integration into German society (BT-Plenarprotokoll 16/94, 26.04.07, 9557). However, migrant organizations also advocated targeted courses:
Kolat, for example, supported more *Zielgruppenorientierung* (orientation toward specific groups) but emphasized that the courses should address education and job training opportunities with women specifically in mind (Kolat 2007).

Migrant organizations and left parties also expressed concern about child care opportunities for migrant women taking the courses. The Ram-böll report said that the most common reason why women withdrew from the courses was the absence of child care, yet more than half of the course facilities did not provide child care. During parliamentary deliberations, left parties urged the federal government to increase the financial resources to enable local providers to make child care available. In addition, the bill’s proposed sanctions against “integration refusers” provoked outrage among left parties and migrant groups. In the words of Greens integration spokesperson Winkler, it was outrageous “to impose a fine of 1,000 euros on those who drop the courses when we all know that most of those who don’t take or finish the courses are women who cannot afford or get access to child care during the hours they are in class” (BT-Plenarprotokoll 16/94, 26.04.07, 9553).

As with family unification law, groups across the political spectrum mobilized on behalf of migrant women. At the core of the debate was the question of the construction of gender as it related to the social position of ethnic minority immigrant women. Some saw such women as inherently oppressed and in need of cultural emancipation in the form of language and culture courses; others argued that the courses could be an avenue to greater social and economic participation. Moreover, left groups and migrant organizations drew attention to the barriers to integration that resulted from widespread discrimination and forms of social injustice, such as lack of day care. In the legislative arena, however, partisan imperatives heavily influenced the discourse and the framing of the issues, and change in the construction of gender was relatively slow. Indeed, 2010 and 2011 legislative debates regarding a law against forced marriage spoke to the extent to which dominant constructions of gender persisted in that arena.

*Integration Plans and Gender*

Migrant women’s perspectives nonetheless found their way into the legislative process, especially as part of the broad-based evaluative process that accompanied the new integration course framework. The incorporation of a broad variety of groups as consultants to governing institutions was evi-
dent in Merkel’s new approach to integration overall. Her government saw integration as an ongoing process that should include coordinated input from all levels of government—federal, state, and local—as well as from migrant organizations and their representatives. The government was also responding to the 2000 EU Race Directives, which called on member states to address discrimination issues by establishing special agencies with observatory, investigative, and consultative functions (Musch 2012, 74). As a result, the integration policy debate became increasingly inclusive. For example, the twenty-one members of the 2000–2001 Commission on Immigration included just one member with a migrant background and two women, among them Süßmuth. Moreover, migrants’ only previous formal consultative role had been through foreigner councils (Ausländerbeiräte), largely at the municipal level alone. By 2006–7, conversely, the integration policy arena involved consultation with and input from a broad base of social and political institutions.

Shortly after taking office in November 2005, Chancellor Merkel named Maria Böhmer to serve as commissioner on migration, refugees, and integration, a position located in the Federal Chancellery, and gave her the responsibility to develop a national-level dialogue on integration. In July 2006, the first Integration Summit took place, including more than eighty-five representatives of both federal and Land governments, local authorities, migrant organizations, trade unions, religious groups, and other nongovernmental organizations. The government sought to make the summits part of an ongoing conversation focusing on crafting solutions to specific problem areas. Böhmer’s office was responsible for selecting attendees and did so in a what was described as a very ad hoc way, without any formal criteria (Musch 2012, 79). Further complicating the selection process was the absence of any broadly representative migrant organizations. The result was a rather arbitrary representative structure. In the words of one government official,

We were interested in including as many countries of origin as possible. A consequence of this was that for instance a smaller African women’s organization from Frankfurt was invited because a nationwide body of African migrants has not yet built up. (Musch 2012, 79)

More than one-third of the participants in the 2006 summit had migrant backgrounds, including six women: a lawyer (Ates), an independent journalist, and four NGO representatives. Three women represented or-
ganizations dedicated to migrants, women, or woman-related issues: Mai-
sha, the African women’s association; the Federal Association of Migrant
Women, a group representing Turkish and Kurdish women; and the Fed-
eration of Turkish Parent Organizations. Members of the opposition par-
ties were upset at their exclusion (Musch 2012, 79), a problem remedied
at later summits by inviting the integration spokespersons for each party
represented in the Bundestag.

The summits were intended to recognize migrants as “permanent
members of society” (Kluschmeyer and Papademetriou 2009, 262) and in so
doing make them “stakeholders” (Mushaben 2011, 378) with a vested in-
terest in the success of integration. At the first summit, Böhmer announced
the formation of six working groups comprised of summit attendees and
others that would meet regularly to compile information and develop rec-
ommendations about how to improve integration policies at all levels of
society. The 2007 summit announced that the working groups had pro-
duced the National Integration Plan (NIP) with four hundred separate
initiatives that the various government organizations and nonstate actors
committed themselves to implementing.

The topics considered ranged from improvements in language course
instruction and educational and job training opportunities to enhancing
the general situation for women and girls, achieving integration through
sports, and supporting diversity in the media. The third summit was held in
November 2008, with the fourth summit following two years later. At the
2010 gathering, Chancellor Merkel announced a shift toward long-term
and more quantifiable integration goals. Over the following year, eleven
“dialogue forums” would devise a National Action Plan (NAP) to be pre-
sented at a January 2012 summit. Both integration plans flowed from
processes that involved dialogue between all levels of society, but the con-
versations were structured or controlled by the federal government and as
a consequence excluded certain, more controversial, issues. For example,
the 2007 report noted that several participants, especially nonstate actors,
were dismayed by the absence of committee discussion regarding immigra-
tion and residency status-related questions, which at the time were hotly
debated in the legislative arena.

The two national integration plans provide us with critical insights not
only into the institutional processes that shaped the integration debate but
also into the form of that discourse, especially as it related to gender. More-
over, the five-year gap between the two plans allows us to see changes over
time. Both plans addressed issues related to gender and reflected the per-
spectives of immigrant women. A comparison of the two, however, shows a marked shift in the ways in which the situation of migrant women in Germany was conceptualized.

The 2007 NIP, made up of reports and recommendations produced by each of the working groups, was organized around six themes, one of which was “The Situation of Women and Girls: Realizing Gender Equality.” This working group justified itself by asserting that integration could not succeed unless the “unique problems and special needs facing women and girls” were resolved (Der Nationale Integrationsplan 2007, 87). Each of the working groups met regularly for several months and included between thirty and forty members from all levels of government as well as nonstate actors. The working group on integration courses, which focused heavily on women’s concerns, consisted of thirty-three people. Few of the participants had migrant backgrounds, two of them were women—an independent journalist and a representative for Frankfurt’s Encounter and Continuing Education Center for Muslim Women.

The working group on women and girls comprised two subcommittees, both of which contained significantly higher levels of migrant and migrant women’s representation. The first subcommittee had thirty-eight members, among them eight women from migrant backgrounds. The ten migrant NGOs represented on that committee included several migrant women’s organizations: HUDA, a Muslim women’s network; agisra, a counseling center for migrant and refugee women; the Association for Binational Marriages; Papatya; and the Encounter and Continuing Education center. A number of feminist organizations also had a presence, including the Women’s Coordination Center, Terre de Femmes, and the Lesbian/Gay Association. Twelve of the thirty-three members on the second committee were migrant women, and Maisha was among the eight migrant organizations represented on that committee (Der Nationale 2007, 106).

Women’s issues featured extensively in the section on integration courses. This working group met at the same time as the evaluation of the 2005 Migration Law and the debates leading up to the 2007 revisions. Many of the discussions and recommendations echoed those taking place in other venues. The plan report recommended making three hundred additional hours available to particular groups, such as women, and creating more courses suited to particular needs. Moreover, the working group recommended that courses intended just for women focus on women’s and family issues and on job training opportunities. According to one participant who represented the Encounter and Continuing Education Center,
women on the subcommittee scored a big success in securing those recommendations and the broader acknowledgment that the language courses should be carefully tailored to women’s needs. For this participant, the other big success was the recommendation for more vocational training as part of the coursework. Her comments suggested that migrant women’s input into the discussion represented a move away from a more traditional construction of the ethnic minority migrant woman as a victim of a patriarchal culture and toward a construction that recognized that women faced barriers to labor market participation in the form of societal discrimination and limited opportunities for training and education.

In a similar shift away from a focus on ethnic and religious constraints to integration and toward acknowledgment of the role of receiving society, the plan’s section on improving the situation of migrant women and girls frankly admitted that “migrant women face prejudices” that denied them equal opportunity (Der Nationale Integrationsplan 2007, 87). However, it included no reference to the recently passed antidiscrimination law, thus seeming to minimize the role of discrimination in integration. Moreover, the report also continued the emphasis on forced marriage seen in the legislative arena. The section on “women and girls” was divided into three parts: violence and forced marriage, interest representation, and issues in health care and awareness, but most of the twenty-page report focused on domestic violence and forced marriage on the grounds that “there wasn’t any time to deal with any more issues” (88). Here, too, however, the migrant women’s voice was evident. The report called on the media to move away from negative reporting, noting that domestic violence and forced marriage were not a condition of one particular religion. The report cataloged different possibilities for enhancing the availability of victim support and counseling while calling attention to the need to dismantle stereotypes often found within the criminal justice system and among social and psychological counseling services. The plan concluded that the public and relevant authorities failed to perceive the diversity of the female migrant experience, resulting in discrimination and a lack of resources for migrant women.

The extent to which migrant women’s perspectives made their way into the 2007 NIP stood in stark contrast to outcomes in the legislative process, where the dominant construction of gender continued to prevail. The government-led national integration dialogue built on the idea that migrants needed to perceive themselves as stakeholders, creating a process that was more inclusive and open to input from migrant groups. A
small but diverse group of migrant women was included, and their voices were heard to the extent that discourse began to shift away from the stigmatizing of Muslims and relegation of migrant women to subjects with little agency. Instead, the report included a carefully expressed concern for the need to dismantle systems of discrimination prevalent in German society and focus on measures and policies addressing real needs of migrant women. Moreover, the working group report not only reflected input from marginalized groups but also featured their criticism of the process—including their disappointment that certain more controversial issues had been excluded from discussion (Der Nationale Integrationsplan 2007, 88). This inclusiveness was less evident in the partisan legislative process, which remained highly polarized.

The NAP followed a process similar to that of the NIP, although it involved eleven working groups. Each one was roughly the same size as the NIP working groups and included individuals with migrant backgrounds and migrant NGOs. However, fewer migrant women were involved in the NAP than in the NIP. Migrant women were represented on only four committees (media, public health, the public sector, and early childhood education), and the only migrant women’s organizations that participated were Maisha (health) and VBI (early childhood). However, the migrant women’s perspective that had begun to be expressed in 2007 apparently had become more mainstream and was absorbed into the advocacy of other actors, because the NAP reflected a significant shift in the discourse regarding gender and the role of women in the immigrant integration process.

The NAP differentiated itself from the earlier plan by taking an integrated approach to women’s issues: All working groups have included respective measures “to facilitate an equal and autonomous (self-determined) life for women and girls from migrant families in Germany” (die Bundesregierung 2011, 23). In other words, although women’s experiences were still considered a critical dimension of integration, challenges facing women were now regarded as intertwined with other factors and conditions. While the document allowed for some initiatives targeted specifically at women—for example, measures to boost the engagement and networking of migrant women’s organizations—it referred throughout to issues or recommendations that affected “both male and female migrants.” Gender, in other words, was no longer a separate category. This suggested a gender mainstreaming of integration policy—that is, gender perspectives were applied to all areas of policy. The NAP also demonstrated that the
government was beginning to move away from using gender as a way to stigmatize Muslims in Germany more generally.

The 2012 plan was noteworthy for the attention it gave to conditions of discrimination and racism. Indeed, the report talked about the “the double burden” of being a woman and a migrant (die Bundesregierung 2011, 451). The document repeatedly mentioned the multitude of forms of discrimination facing migrant women as a consequence not only of gender but also of religious and ethnic factors. The report spoke of the diversity of the immigrant experience and the need for intercultural opening and the dismantling of stereotypes. In stark contrast to the 2007 plan, the NAP made no mention of domestic violence or forced marriage. The dominant theme was the need for social actors at all levels to create conditions conducive to women’s self-determination and gender equality. Recommended measures included improving coverage of migrant women in the media, giving women more opportunities to participate in sports, reaching more women through integration courses, and opening opportunities for women in the workplace. In another noteworthy departure from the 2007 plan, the later report extensively discussed ways to facilitate higher rates of labor force participation in the context of the chronic labor shortages, reflecting recognition that effective integration and labor market participation of migrant women could help resolve Germany’s looming demographic and labor issues.

In short, the NAP rather dramatically illustrated how far the integration discourse in Germany had shifted and how the gender paradigm now focused less on headscarves and forced marriage and more on how migrant women could overcome discrimination and acquire skills for and access to the labor market. The document, the product of a deliberately inclusive institutional process, clearly reflected increasing public acknowledgment that immigrants were permanent members of society and could solve Germany’s demographic challenges. Moreover, a number of voices, including those of migrant women, had pushed successfully to have gender issues, including the specific forms of discrimination ethnic minority immigrant women faced, considered in the context of broader problems of integration rather than as the main issue or problem itself.

Gender and Islam

Another venue for the shifting discourse on gender and integration was the German Islamic Conference (DIK), established by minister of the interior
Wolfgang Schäuble in 2006 and taking the form of regular annual summit meetings and working groups. The roundtable discussions sought to work with Muslim leaders to resolve issues and conflicts surrounding the Muslim community in Germany (Laurence 2012, 149–51). According to Schäuble, the DIK aimed to “to improve the religious and sociopolitical integration of the Muslim population, to prevent violent Islamism and extremism, to counter the trend toward isolation of Muslims in Germany... and to preserve and respect the liberal democratic order” (Schäuble 2006).

In contrast to the national integration summits organized by Böhmer, the DIK was managed by the Ministry of the Interior, which set the discussion agenda and picked the participants. The group was smaller, with fifteen representatives of different levels of government and fifteen representatives of the Muslim community—five representatives of umbrella associations and ten individuals, including writers, artists, journalists, and academics. The process of choosing participants involved “long and controversial discussions about the selection procedure and the number of participants” (Musch 2012, 82). Critics objected to the group’s small size, arguing that it represented only a fragment of Germany’s very heterogeneous Muslim community (Mushaben 2011, 385).

The authorities distinguished between two phases in the development of the DIK: 2006–9, when the group focused on finding a consensus on values, the integration of Islam as a religion, and the relationship between security and Islamic fundamentalism; and 2010–13, when new CDU minister of the interior Thomas de Maziere sought to make the conference “more practical in its orientation,” dealing with issues such as Islamic religion education in public schools and imam education. The second phase also involved preparatory committees that would work closely with states and municipalities and was marked by language that called for improved efforts “to acknowledge the diversity of the Muslim community” (Deutsche Islam Konferenz 2010). The second phase initially intended to allow Muslim communities to choose their own leadership but ultimately resembled the first phase, although some participants were replaced (Klusmeyer and Papademetriou 2009, 178).

It was not clear at the outset that gender would feature as part of this institutional framework, but it quickly became an issue. In the weeks leading up the May 2007 summit, debate unfolded about what types of Muslim women should be included among the participants. The 2006 summit had involved two women, Kelek and Ates, both unveiled and regarded as antagonists of Islam. Both conservative Muslim associations and women’s
organizations called for the inclusion of at least one veiled Muslim woman at the second summit (Klusmeyer and Papademetriou 2009, 281; Mushaben 2011, 386). The Interior Ministry choose to avoid the issue by merely reappointing the same group of participants, including both Kelek and Ates. Conversely, De Maziere’s phase of the DIK sought to give expression to the diversity of the Muslim experience by including both veiled and unveiled women. Furthermore, four of the nine individual representatives were women, and Kelek and Ates were no longer present (Deutsche Islam Konferenz 2010).

In its second phase, the DIK chose gender equity as one of its working areas and created a preparatory committee of conference participants and other experts. Most were women, including several representatives of newly constituted Muslim’s women’s groups, including the umbrella organization Action Alliance of Muslim Women, founded in 2009. Some observers characterized this effort as just another opportunity for the state to present itself as protecting Muslim women from patriarchal Muslim men (Yudakul and Korteweg 2012). Careful examination, however, reveals that at least several of the women involved viewed the project as an important opportunity to take the discussion in new and relevant directions. One participant described how her organization, the Competency Center for Muslim Women, came to be involved in the DIK:

> We Muslim women are able to define our own needs and contribute to solutions. This is happening a lot more than it used to. . . . We were participating in various intercultural and interreligious dialogues, but not a lot of opportunities were available for Muslim women. We were always portrayed as . . . these “poor beings,” needing sympathy. We, however, feel that this victim characterization just leads to the establishment of social hierarchies and to a “clientelization” of Muslim women. We are not denying that there are many problems and issues. But we won’t solve the problems if we just try to hang it all on Islam. The social integration and emancipation of Muslim women won’t succeed with the constant call for a break with the Muslim faith, but only through adequate educational and vocational training, more jobs, and social participation.24

Another participant, a member of an organization founded to showcase integrated Muslim women, described having seized the discourse about integration and gender and Islam from more conservative forces:
We want to get around the stereotype of the undereducated, oppressed Muslim woman. ... [O]ur message is directed at the majority society but also the conservative Muslim organizations that have the attitude that all is wonderful and that there are certain religious prescriptions that must be upheld ... The Muslim associations think they represent all Muslims, but that is not the case. We didn’t see ourselves in the debate, and therefore we have organized ourselves.25

In short, Muslim women were participating in the DIK deliberations to challenge dominant constructions of gender (whether perpetuated by the German state or by conservative Muslims) and contribute to a redirection of the discourse concerning the role of women and integration.

One result of the committee’s deliberations was a DIK statement on domestic violence and forced marriage (Deutsche Islam Konferenz n.d.). The document condemned what it called a violation of fundamental human rights. However, in line with more nuanced discussions of forced marriage taking place in other arenas, the statement included several points that constituted a clear nod in the direction of Muslim women’s advocates. On one hand, forced marriage had its roots not in a specific religion but rather in “traditional patriarchal structures.” Moreover, the document recommended addressing the issue through outreach and cultural sensitization and by offering more support and protection for victims of violence, including through state-sponsored programs.

Under the auspices of the gender equity project, a group also examined gender roles in a Muslim context. Participants reported evidence of very traditional gender roles but concluded that they resulted more from particular patriarchal structures than from any specific religious faith (Deutsche Islam Konferenz 2011). The group hoped to understand how those roles could hurt women not only in their vocations but also in other aspects of their lives. The group sought to help women realize how they could recognize and defend their rights. Finally, the DIK gender equity group developed a website dedicated to exploring the relationship between Islam and gender that appeared under the auspices of the DIK. The website presented itself as a resource for Muslims and non-Muslims alike, with the main message that Islam and feminism were easily reconciled.26 For example, it linked to a pamphlet published by Cologne’s Center for Research into Women and Islam that exposed the reader to interpretations of the Islamic faith that accepted the idea that a young woman could move to an-
other city to pursue her education. The German Islamic Conference thus became a venue for a more considered discussion of the situation of the Muslim woman in German society, a discussion that was heavily influenced by migrant women and migrant women’s organizations.

Conclusions

The study of Germany’s political incorporation of its immigrant population and particularly the interests of migrant women is instructive on many levels. On the one hand, it documents important shifts in the political landscape of integration policy. On the other, it draws attention to key variables facilitating the inclusion of marginalized subgroups. As was the case elsewhere in Europe, by the early 2000s, Germany’s migrant women had become almost hypervisible, especially compared to migrant men. Gender had begun to feature heavily in integration policy debates concurrent with the advent of the Merkel administration. Public discourse initially focused heavily on headscarves, forced marriages, and parallel societies. And while this tone persisted and was reinforced by several prominent Muslim migrant women, more conservative voices, and alarmist publications by such figures as former SPD politician Thilo Sarrazin, other voices began to take the discourse in a different direction.

The 2007 NIP introduced considerations of gender that challenged the dominant construction, and the 2012 NAP went even further. Moreover, the German Islamic Conference became a forum for competing visions of the role of Muslim women, among them interpretations of gender that challenged more traditional and patriarchal constructs.

Critical to the effective reframing of debate to include perspectives of migrant women that were contrary to dominant discourse was bottom-up support from civil society organizations focusing on human rights issues. This support became evident during the early battles over pieces of legislation related to immigration and integration and was a key factor in the integration summits and the related working groups. However, in accordance with much of the research on intersectionality as it relates to subgroups of women, neither Germany’s main feminist organizations (including the Frauenrat) nor the parties’ women’s groups publicly aligned themselves with the migrant women. The one exception was the Terre des Femmes, a group founded in the early 1980s to address gendered human rights issues in the global arena. A variety of umbrella migrant organizations backed migrant women’s issues in some contexts, but not necessarily in the same
direction as the migrant women. Indeed, the substantive representation of migrant women’s interests by other migrant groups was often complicated by cross-cutting cleavages between more liberal and conservative interpretations of Islam, between secular and religious outlooks, and between host country and homeland politics. Nonetheless, domestic civil society organizations were essential in creating awareness, petitioning legislative bodies, and offering working support for summit participants’ positions that challenged dominant constructions of gender.

Convergence with political parties’ interests and agendas was also an important factor in explaining influence of migrant women. Their critical perspectives found support on the left, especially among the Greens and the Left Party, both of which were in the political opposition. These parties became primary allies during legislative debates. Parties in the governing coalition also became important facilitators of the increased involvement of migrant women, as both CDU and SPD leaders pushed immigration and integration policy in new directions. As Mushaben argues, “Policies adopted during [Merkel’s] first term . . . have done more to advance the legal rights and day-to-day opportunities of migrants and their offspring than any statutory changes witnessed since 1949” (Mushaben 2011, 376–77). This included creating new venues for policymaking.

The case of migrant women points to the importance of opportunity structures and suitable venues, confirming what a recent study of immigrant political participation in Europe concludes:

> Minority communities by definition have small population numbers and when that is compounded with socioeconomic disadvantages and low participation rates, it will be very difficult to obtain significant representation. However, research suggests that different institutional and contextual settings can make those disadvantages more or less easy to overcome. (Givens and Maxwell 2012, 7)

This study distinguishes among a number of different institutional contexts: the legislative setting and government-created consultative venues, institutionalized integration summits and the working group deliberations that led to the NIP and NAP, and the German Islamic Conference. In the consultative venues, migrant women’s perspectives could be brought to bear in ways not possible in the more polarized legislative setting, where those voices often lost out in political battles, as happened in 2007. In creating such venues, the Merkel government drew on an institutional model
familiar in the German context, where corporatism evolved historically to include newcomers who had been shut out; in this case, ethnic minority women got a seat at the table and an opportunity to increase their input in policy debates. There was criticism that the summits were superficial and staged to make the government look good, but by 2012 it was clear that this more inclusive process had led migrant organizations to be regarded as relevant interlocutors in debates surrounding integration. This included groups formed explicitly to represent ethnic minority women’s interests.

What explains the government’s move toward inclusiveness? Mushaben attributes Merkel’s initiative to create stakeholders among immigrant groups to her “feminist concept of power with” (2011, 378). Others see the effort as an instrument to deliver certain policy aims, such as social cohesion (Musch 2012, 74; Triadafilopoulos, Korteweg, and Del Moral 2013), that became increasingly important as the challenges of immigrant integration became ever more apparent. In addition, however, Germany faced some top-down pressure. In 2005, the European Commission had advised member states to introduce formal consultations with immigrant communities, and several other European countries began experimenting with integration summits (Musch 2012, 74).

It is difficult to ascertain whether migrant women’s groups mobilized in response to changes in the opportunity structure or whether their mobilization and advocacy prompted the state’s more inclusive approach. Much of these processes occurred simultaneously. The new consultative institutional structures increased incentives for migrant civil society organizations to organize and participate. In addition, however, the fact that no other actors—feminist groups or migrant organizations—advocated forcefully on behalf of migrant women certainly provided an impulse behind the founding of these explicitly intersectional organizations. Significant growth in migrant women’s political groups was a positive effect of the creation of a more inclusive institutional structure. These organizations positioned themselves to interact with the state and state-affiliated institutions and became active in networks with other domestic civil society organizations such as the Frauenrat, the Frauenhauskoordinierung, and the transnational European Network of Migrant Women.

Looking to the Future

Continuing debates over family unification and forced marriage in the legislative arena indicate that earlier constructions of gender continue to
prevail in parts of German public discourse, and migrant women and their supporters have not ceased their efforts to challenge this. Debates over residency and forced marriage laws in 2010–11 were replete with a rigorous back-and-forth over the social situation of migrant women in Germany. According to Dağdelen, the government was again trying to use forced marriages as a way to combat immigration.27 Aydan Özugas, integration spokesperson for the SPD, argued that the law intended to combat forced marriage acted in ways contrary to the interests of its victims.28 And the Federal Association of Migrant Women charged the government with instrumentalizing migrant women and their specific problems for the purposes of restrictive integration and migration policies.29

The debates were by no means over, but ethnic minority migrant women showed themselves to be a relevant constituency in Germany. In conjunction with support from left parties and civil society organizations and in the context of a more inclusive opportunity structure, migrant women mobilized, forming organizations, becoming parts of policy networks, and injecting a distinct voice into policy debates. The 2013 Grand Coalition government named an ethnic Turkish woman, Aydan Özugas, to the position of commissioner of migration, refugees, and integration.30

The shift evident in debates on the social situation of migrant women and on the relationship between gender and integration was visible if incomplete. Discrimination and racism remained prevailing features of German society, and both state and society continued to operate in an assimilationist vein (Joppke 2005; Yurdakul and Korteweg 2012), with migrants expected to lessen their attachment to their cultural practices in favor of German language and culture. Moreover, integration remained a highly politicized area of policy, with the result that civil society easily got pushed aside in favor of partisan imperatives. Nonetheless, integration policy was experiencing tremendous changes, especially at the municipal and state levels. And as a result of significant changes in the wake of the 2005 Migration Law, ethnic minority migrant women came to have a voice in shaping that policy.

NOTES

1. The German government officially took this position until the Red-Green coalition came to power in 1998.

2. The new approach was grounded in three pieces of legislation. The 2000 Citizenship Law eased criteria for naturalization. The 2005 Migration Law outlined measures that the state would undertake to provide for integration. And the
2006 Equal Treatment Law protected minorities and immigrants from sources of discrimination. Each piece had a clear integrative function. The first symbolized an acceptance of non-Germans as a potential part of the German national identity and eased immigrants’ access to political rights and therefore political integration. The second obligated the federal government to proactively integrate immigrants into society, particularly through a program of language and culture courses. The third offered legal protection to immigrants against societal discrimination. See Green 2013.

3. A number of scholars regard the growing “concern” for the Muslim woman in post-9/11 Europe as part of the ongoing racialization of Muslims in the West. See Fekete 2006; Weber 2013.


5. See the Pro Asyl and Terre de Femmes websites for documentation of lobbying activity: http://www.proasyl.de; http://www.terre-des-femmes.de/

6. Details of the Intercultural Council’s activities can be found here: http://www.interkultureller-rat.de/wir-ueber-uns/jahresberichte/

7. For more information about Refugio München, see http://www.refugio-muenchen.de/

8. For an overview of the objections to the law see here: http://www.bpb.de/themen/OGZA5T0,0,Die_Novellierung_des_Zuwanderungsgesetzes_2007.html

9. For the full text of the letter and the twenty-one signatories see here: http://archiv.proasyl.de/fileadmin/proasyl/fm_redakteure/Newsletter_Anhaenge/122/Offener_Brief.pdf

10. For a statement of their joint position and objections to the law see here: https://www.proasyl.de/material/stellungnahme-zur-aenderung-des-zuwanderungsgesetzes/

11. For the text of the law, see here: http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/StatistischeSeiten/Breg/IB/das-zuwanderungsrecht.html

12. The TGD’s full statement is available here: http://www.fluechtlingsinfo-berlin.de/fr/zuwg/kolat.pdf


14. For the VBI’s position see here: http://www.fluechtlingsinfo-berlin.de/fr/pdf/binationale_ZuwGE_050307.pdf

15. A list of the groups lobbying against the bill and their positions can be found here: http://fluechtlingsinfo-berlin.de/fr/gesetzgebung/2_AendG.html

16. For the organizations involved, see http://fluechtlingsinfo-berlin.de/fr/gesetzgebung/2_AendG.html

17. For the text of the final report, see here: http://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Veroeffentlichungen/evaluierungsbericht_zum_zuwanderungsgesetz.html

18. For examples of some conservative positions, see here: http://fluechtling-sinfo-berlin.de/fr/gesetzgebung/2_AendG.html
19. It is frequently noted that all of the largest Turkish migrant organizations represent only about 40 percent of Germany’s ethnic Turkish population.

20. For a full list of participants, see here: http://www.bundesregierung.de/Webs/Breg/DE/Bundesregierung/BeauftragtefuerIntegration/nap/integrationsgipfel/Integrationsgipfel1/_node.html

21. For a complete text of the NIP, see http://www.bundesregierung.de/Webs/Breg/DE/Bundesregierung/BeauftragtefuerIntegration/nap/nip/_node.html

22. For the complete text of the NAP (and an English-language summary), see here: http://www.bundesregierung.de/Webs/Breg/DE/Bundesregierung/BeauftragtefuerIntegration/nap/nationaler-aktionsplan/_node.html

23. For her assessment, see here: http://www.migration-boell.de/web/integration/47_1322.asp

24. The full text of the statement can be found at: http://www.deutsche-islam-konferenz.de/DIK/DE/Magazin/IslamGender/Kompetenzzentrum/kompetenzzentrum-node.html

25. For a full text of the statement see here: http://www.deutsche-islam-konferenz.de/DIK/DE/Magazin/IslamGender/FrankfurterInitiative/FrankfurterInitiative-node.html

26. The website address is http://www.deutsche-islam-konferenz.de/DIK/DE/Magazin/IslamGender/islamgender-node.html. For a critique of the stereotyping of the migrant woman from an Islamic feminist perspective, see http://www.deutsche-islam-konferenz.de/DIK/DE/Magazin/IslamGender/StereotypMuslima/stereotypmuslima-node.html

27. Daşgelen’s statement was previously available at http://www.sevimdagdelen.de/de/article/2046.bundesregierung_verhoehnt_opfer_von_zwangsheirat.html. Contact the author for a copy.

28. For the full text of her statement see here: http://oezoguz.de/gesetz-gegen-zwangsheiraten-bietet-keinen-ausreichenden-schutz/3885/

29. For more on the Federal Association of Migrant Women and their political agenda see http://www.migrantinnen.net/

30. For a full description of her biography and position, see here: http://www.bundesregierung.de/Webs/Breg/DE/Bundesregierung/BeauftragtefuerIntegration/beauftragte-fuer-integration.html

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