Project Prospectus:

Visual Representations of Refugees in German Media 2010 – 2020

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PROJECT PROSPECTUS OUTLINE

SECTION 1: DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project "Visual Representations of Refugees in German Media 2010-2020" examines photographs of refugees shared by German newspapers and magazines over the past decade presented in the form of a bilingual multimedia website. The project's goal is to juxtapose 20 photographs, both the positive and negative visual representations of refugees, across major German news organizations with varying political biases (*Der Spiegel, taz.de,* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung [FAZ]*) to demonstrate the need for a standard of practice with regards to content creation and photograph selection. Additionally, the project aims to encourage journalists and editors to use of first-person content and storytelling in stories and visuals published in the media, as is made possible by the increased availability of mobile phones or disposable cameras, as well as commissioned and targeted photo assignments completed by ethical photojournalists, in place of stock photographs supplied by databases such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or the *Deutsche Presse Agentur (dpa)* (German Press Agency).

The question of migration and the integration of immigrants into German culture is of particular interest again in contemporary cultural and political spheres, as a total of around 1.7 million asylum-seekers were living in Germany at the end of 2018 (Gaul et al) and, according to the *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* (Federal Agency for Civic Education), 20.8 million (25.5% of the total population) people with a *Migrationshintergrund* (migration background)[1] were living in Germany in 2018, of which 9.9 million (12.1%) were *Ausländer* (foreigners) and 10.9 million

[1] The *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* (Federal Agency for Civic Education) defines a person with a *Migrationshintergrund* (migration background) as: "wenn sie selbst oder mindestens ein Elternteil die deutsche Staatsangehörigkeit nicht durch Geburt besitzt" (when they themselves or at least one of their parents does not possess German citizenship by birth) ("Migrationshintergrund"). This definition has also been extended in current cultural and immigration debates to include people whose grandparents, sometimes even great-grandparents, do not possess German citizenship by birth.

(13.3%) Germans with a migration background ("Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund"). The famous statement by Chancellor Merkel "Wir schaffen das" (We can do it) in view of the refugee crisis in 2015 brought the controversial issues of a German *Willkommenskultur* (culture of welcome) and the integration of foreigners into German culture back into today's debate ("Sommerpressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel").

The period of analysis, 2010-2020, while broad, is dynamic and curious in relation to the possible change in the style of pictures during and after the 2015-2016 migration crisis. At a minimum, I believe this project will demonstrate the great and sudden increase in the number of visual representations of refugees suddenly present in both the country of Germany and mirrored then in the media. Moreover, it might be possible to see the growing xenophobic tendencies in the year of and years following the crisis in 2015 when refugees fled the war-torn Syria, Afghanistan, and other countries during which time refugees have been integrating themselves in the German society.

This project directly relates to my professional goals of working in a photo department of a news agency and gives me first-hand experience in analyzing the ethical and moral decisions of photo editors in relation to published photographs.

SECTION 2: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

As of 2017, Germany was the third most popular country for immigration in the world, trailing the United States and Saudi Arabia (United Nations). However, throughout the 20th century and into today Germany struggles with immigration and integration debates and the question of national identity. A central point in 20th century in connection to the debate regarding immigration and integration in Germany was the *Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitgesetz* 1913 (Citizenship Law of 1913). The *Staatsangehörigkeitgesetz* of 1913 was based solely on the *jus sanguinis* principle

of citizenship and stipulated that "those born of German parents thus became German citizens, but not those who were simply born on German soil" (Langels)[2]. This narrowly limited and outdated *Staatsangehörigkeitgesetz* prevented hundreds of thousands of first and second generation immigrants from acquiring German citizenship, even though they had lived in Germany for an extended period of time and some had even been born and raised in Germany until the citizenship reform in 2000[3].

Among those impacted included a group of immigrants known as the *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers), who had come to Germany between 1955-1972 to rebuild the country during the *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle) and who in many cases had decided to settle in Germany rather than return to their home country, as well the children and sometimes even grandchildren of the *Gastarbeiter* decades later. When West Germany blossomed under the completely unprecedented and unimaginable *Wirtschaftswunder* in the 1950s, the country needed a large workforce to meet the demand of their newly-founded capitalist country. Yet while Germany recovered economically from World War II, its population still suffered from the losses of the war and lacked the labor force to meet the demand of its own citizens, which in 1955 consisted of a national population of just over 71 million citizens with about 33 million men ("Tabelle: Bevölkerung nach Geschlecht [Deutschland] - in 1.000"). In order to satisfy the demand for workers in the new market and to continue its economic success, Germany began recruiting *Gastarbeiter* abroad. The first recruitment agreement was established with Italy in 1955, followed by Spain and Greece (1960),

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[2] In German, the article reads: "Diejenigen, die von deutschen Eltern geboren wurden, wurden damit deutsche Staatsangehörige, nicht aber diejenigen, die einfach nur auf deutschem Boden geboren wurden"

[3] Under the red-green coalition government, it was decided in 2000 that „Ausländerinnen und Ausländer nun eingebürgert werden können, wenn sie seit acht Jahren rechtmäßig in Deutschland leben und über ausreichende Kenntnisse der deutschen Sprache sowie der Rechts- und Lebensbedingungen verfügen" (foreigners can now be naturalised if they have been living legally in Germany for eight years and have sufficient knowledge of the German language and of the legal and living conditions) (Langels).

Turkey (1961), Morocco (1963), Portugal (1964), Tunisia (1965) and Yugoslavia (1967) (Seifert). In 1973, an *Anwerbestopp* (recruitment stop) was imposed citing the risk of unemployment as a result of the oil crisis as an explanation, and no further *Gastarbeiter* were allowed to be recruited. In his essay "Gastarbeiter in West Germany," which was published in 1974 immediately after the recruitment stop, W.S.G. Thomas postulates contrarily that the recruitment stop essentially reflected the growing hostility of German nationals towards migrant workers in the mid-1970s (Thomas, 348). Even though the term *Gastarbeiter* linguistically suggested that the guest workers were only intended as guests in Germany from the German point of view in order to work and not to remain in the country or integrate into German society, Germany suddenly had a population of just over 4 million foreigners within its borders when the *Anwerbestopp* was imposed in 1973. Although the German government offered incentives[4] for *Gastarbeiter* to return to their home countries, many chose instead to bring their entire families to Germany and settle there, thus turning Germany into an immigrant country purely by chance. In the article "Als Deutschland zum Einwanderungsland wurde" (When Germany became an immigrant country) by Klaus Bade in *Die Zeit,* Bade explains this backfire effect: "In this way, most of them settled down and brought their families with them, and the foreign population continued to rise above the level reached in 1973 until 1978. The guest workers became immigrants" (Bade)[5].

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[4] For example, guest workers in the federal state of Baden-Württemberg were offered a severance payment of 8,000 marks, which was to be seen as "eine Art Starthilfe für den neuen Anfang in den Heimatländern" (a kind of start-up aid for a new start in their home countries) ("Gastarbeiter - Ab nach Hause?"). The amount was calculated by the Minister President at the time on the basis of what the state would otherwise have paid if the guest worker had become unemployed during the economic crisis. According to the then Prime Minister Hans Filbinger, in May 1975 they convinced 2000 guest workers to return within 14 days for this amount.

[5] In German, the article reads: "So ließen sich die meisten nieder und holten ihre Familien nach, die Ausländerbevölkerung stieg dadurch bis 1978 über das 1973 erreichte Niveau hinaus weiter an. Aus den Gastarbeitern wurden Einwanderer."

These same questions of integration and national identity reemerged during the 1990s as Germany accepted refugees from both the Bosnia War (1992) and the Kosovo War (1998), and again in the last decade as hundreds of thousands of refugees from countries including, among others, Moldova, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Turkey, migrated to Europe and in large part Germany in what is referred to as the 2015 European refugee crisis.

SECTION 3: RESEARCH PLAN

3.1 CURRENT RESEARCH IN FIELD

Through the Fulbright Berlin Capital Program[6], a week-long journalism seminar in Germany, in November 2015, I learned to examine different media portrayals of the refugee crisis from media heads at *Der Spiegel, Die Zeit,* and *taz.de*[7]. For this project, I hope to reconnect with some of the editors we spoke with to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences during that time and the considerations that go into photograph selection and production surrounding refugees.

As the bibliography in section 3.5 indicates, there has been a considerable amount of research done on the topics of the power of images (Dahmen), the role of photojournalism in media (Blomfield and Lenette; Bleiker; Pantti and Ojala), the visual media published during the 2015-2016 migration crisis in both European and other Western countries (Chouliaraki and Tijana Stolic; Chouliaraki, Georgiou, and Zaborowski; Greussing and Boomgaarden; Stević; Zhang and Hellmueller), and individual cases dealing with questionable ethics in media — among them the famous and tragic Alan Kurdi photograph (Durham; Plascencia). All of these well-researched topics deal generally with European media or comparing German and U.S. media, but none relate

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[6] https://www.fulbright.de/programs-for-u-s-americans/journalists/berlin-capital-program

[7] In November 2015, this included Maltze Kreutzfeldt, Business and Environment Editor, *taz.die tageszeitung*; Matthias Streitz, Managing Editor and Member of the Board, *SPIEGEL ONLINE*; and Götz Hamann, Business and Technology Editor and Deputy Chief, Department Business, *DIE ZEIT*.

specifically to the German media's use of photographs depicting refugees during the expansive time frame 2010-2020.

3.2 KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Broadly, I would like to address the ethical questions related to how German media represent refugees through photography. More specifically, my research question is threefold: first, are the visual representations used in German media meant to further the cause of the refugees being depicted, or are they dehumanizing them and undermining the issue of immigration policy in Germany; second, in what ways do some German media focus on the individual rather than the collective group of 1.7 million asylum-seekers in Germany, and third, how can German media moving in to the next decade work towards a more ethical approach to publish visuals of refugees?

It is important to note that the ethical questions surrounding photographs published by news agencies actually have a minimum of two actors, sometimes three, prior to being published; the first being the individual photographer who captures the original photograph and the constant second being the journalist or editor who selects the photograph for publication. Oftentimes, if the photographs are from a database such as those hosted by the UNHCR or *dpa*, the third actor actually intervenes as a middle man between the standard two, as organizations hosting such databases have photo teams of their own who make the conscious decision to accept, catalog, and share the submitted photographs, thereby permitting their use in ways beyond their original intentions, a topic further discussed in Section 4.2 *Civil Contract of Photography*. Also worth noting is that in order to use photographs from such databases, publishers or news organizations must typically request to purchase the rights to use each individual photo and oftentimes, as in the case of the UNHCR, also provide a brief summary of its intended use. The requests can be denied if the database organization deems its intended use unfit. The number of actors within a single photo

selection can also reach beyond these minimums depending on the news organization's unique internal structure.

This project will change the conversation on this relevant and developing topic in the politics, media, digital culture debates and cross-cultural studies, hopefully elucidating the media malintent of a few of the most popular German media outlets. I believe creating an international platform such as a website to broadcast the photographs and accompanying analysis of both the positive and negative instances of German media depicting refugees will aid in the advent of an industry standard for photographs used in articles related to refugees. Furthermore, I hope my research encourages the commission and publication of first-person content produced by refugees during their migration and stay in Germany, as well as encourage original and personal content creation in partnership between German media outlets, photojournalists, and consenting refugees. By putting the power in the hands of the refugees to tell their own stories or by creating original and personal content through effectual partnerships, the German media can more constructively utilize their role as the bridge between refugees and the German public and aid in the integration and resettlement of the approximately 1.7 million asylum-seekers currently in Germany.

3.3 RESEARCH STRATEGY/METHODOLOGY

The main form of research in relation to this project depends on the qualitative analysis and collection of primary sources from various German media sources, spanning the various platforms of newspapers and magazines. To locate these primary sources, I will rely on individual media sources', such as *Der Spiegel, taz.de, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* etc., website archives to also locate articles from within the timeframe 2010-2020. Additionally, I will require secondary sources who have conducted similar research to myself so I may compare and learn from their methods of analysis and presentation. In the search for secondary sources, I will use resources

available to me through the Georgia Tech Library, including access to thousands of databases capable of narrowing search filters to my specific needs. Databases which have aided thus far in developing the research bibliography expanded in section 3.5 include Newspaper Source by EPSCO, News & Newspapers by ProQuest, Press Reader, Factiva, JSTOR, and Project Muse. As the project also depends largely on the website as a multimedia platform to display the final results, it will be pertinent to consider and study similarly themed websites, as well as search for web design methods in databases such as Project Muse or JSTOR, to more deeply understand best practices in web design to most effectively present the research in a clear, coherent way, while remaining aesthetically appealing.

3.4 RESEARCH COMMUNICATION PLAN

The primary form of research communication lies in the website showcasing the photographs and excerpts of the paper accompanying the respective photograph. The full paper will also be available for download through a tab on the website and multiple hyperlinks throughout directing visitors to it. A website is an ideal and effective method of sharing the results of this research as the research surrounds visual media, therefore people must have an easy and accessible way to view the photographs to understand the analysis. By creating an international platform such as a website to broadcast the photographs and accompanying analysis of the ethics of publishing visuals of refugees by German media, the content can be easily shared and hopefully reach fellow photojournalists, journalists, photo editors, and editors so we can as a media community more deeply consider the photographs we both capture in the field and select during the publication process. Given that this topic is relevant for cross-cultural analysis, politics, media, and digital culture, it could also do well if marketed as a condensed version of the academic paper as an article to some non-scholarly online publications, such as Slate or the Atlantic.

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SECTION 4: LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 *ON PHOTOGRAPHY & REGARDING THE PAIN OF OTHERS*

Perhaps the most widely cited and well-known book of its kind, Susan Sontag's collection of essays *On Photography,* published over 40 years ago, is still referenced in photography studies today. In six essays Sontag analyzes how photographs influence our societies and shape the world around us. One of the most relevant quotes from the book in relation to the study of visual representations of refugees in German media is: "To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed" as it clearly acknowledges that all photographs taken, regardless of their intent, are appropriating the subject matter (2).

A quarter century after her critically acclaimed book *On Photography*, Susan Sontag revisits photographic ethics in *Regarding the Pain of Others,* which concentrates on assumptions we draw from photographs of suffering, including specifically war photography with examples from both a historical perspective such as the American Civil War and Nazi death camps, as well as more contemporary scenes in Bosnia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Israel and Palestine, and New York City on September 11, 2001. Sontag attacks the pervasive nature of war photography, and generally all photography which profits of the suffering of others, and notes that photography and war depend on a symbiotic relationship with each other in order to survive. She calls on Ernst Jiinger, German soldier and author of the WWI memoir *Storm of Steel* to buttress her argument: "There is no war without photography, that notable aesthete of war Ernst Jiinger observed in 1930, thereby refining the irrepressible identification of the camera and the gun, 'shooting' a subject and shooting a human being. War-making and picture-taking are congruent activities: 'It is the same intelligence,

whose weapons of annihilation can locate the enemy to the exact second and meter,' wrote Jiinger, 'that labors to preserve the great historical event in fine detail'" (53). Given her writings in this book, I would argue that Sontag would apply this same theory to the media's portrayal of the European refugee crisis in 2015, and furthermore all photographs dealing with the sorrowful experiences of refugees in the decade from 2010-2020.

Points from both of Sontag's texts should be taken into consideration during the photojournalism stage of content creation, as well as in the photo selection stage of publication. Photographers and journalists should observe Sontag's teachings for photojournalistic ethics.

4.2 *Civil Contract of Photography*

The comparative literature and media scholar Ariella Azoulay analyzes the political and ethical implications of photography in her book *The Civil Contract of Photography*. The central question of Azoulay's book is under what legal, political, or cultural conditions does it become possible to see and to show disaster that befalls those who can claim only incomplete or nonexistent citizenship? She calls on photographs from the Israeli press captured in the Occupied Territories showing Palestinian noncitizens of Israel, as well as various samples of women being photographed in the early 20th century exemplifying the flawed citizenship of women in Western societies, to bolster her text's central argument that a photograph carries an infinite civil obligation beyond what the photographer may have originally intended. While not focusing on photographic representation of refugees directly, Azoulay's work reminds us that every photo captured may someday be used in ways other than the original intention, for the entire life that the photograph exists, which in today's digital age and with cloud storage technologies, could truly be infinite. This point is especially germane in regards to photographs captured by photographers on

assignment for organizations such as the UNHCR or *dpa*, whose photos later become a miniscule piece of a larger, dense database, available to journalists and photo editors at any moment they need an photograph to drop along with whatever story they are writing. Oftentimes with breaking news stories, adding a photo to accompany an article is an afterthought shadowed by the need to publish the story as quickly as possible and give your publication the edge over other publications even if only by a few seconds. However, journalists must be more conscious of the photographs they select, even when under the pressure of publishing a breaking news story, and must ask themselves if it truly represents the content being discussed and how it may differ from the photo's original intent, a question that is, according to Azoulay, too often ignored.

4.3 *Der Spiegel* "Titelsplit" July 2015

Johannes Arlt/laif/Der Spiegel

2015 marked the beginning of the European refugee crisis with Germany alone receiving an "unprecedented 442,000 individual first-time asylum applications" according to the Pew Research Center ("Record 1.3 Million Sought Asylum in Europe in 2015"). For their publication during the week of July 25, 2015, *Der Spiegel* created a *Titelsplit* (title split) cover page with six portraits of refugees in Germany with accompanying wordplays on stereotypical assumptions against refugees and counterarguments showcasing the truth behind refugees. From left to right the main cover lines read as follow: (top row) "Threatening? Threatened" / "Dangerous? Tortured" / "Uneducated? Oppressed" (bottom row) "Criminal? Persecuted" / "Greedy? Poor" / "Greedy? Hungry." Each of the portraits follows the same basic photographic structure: a full face, frontal

shot of the subject in front of a plain white, textured backdrop, which we might assume to be a wall. Five of the six subjects have an emotionless expression, with the woman in the top right corner of the compilation breaking the trend with a slight smile. During this point in the refugee crisis, the majority of the photos being published by news organizations were large group shots, depicting refugees on boats, at camps, or at intake facilities. By shifting the focus from photos of herds of people, especially young men, seemingly invading the continent to the actual individuals and their true motives for needing to migrate to a safer country than their own home, editors at *Der Spiegel* humanize the faceless crowds of refugees pouring into Germany. Additionally, the decision not to limit themselves to only one "poster child" demonstrates the diversity among the refugees and breaks down multiple stereotypes in a single week's issues. Developing this project into a series spread across multiple weeks would have strengthened its impact on the refugees' plight and further fought to educate the German public, but that is likely an unreasonable request for a magazine whose focus is mostly news about politics, economics, and culture, not specifically immigration issues. Perhaps able to have established this as a long-term series of portraits and individual stories would have been Diakonie Deutschland, a Protestant social work agency, or Pro-Asyl, a non-government organization dedicated to the protection and rights of asylum seekers in Germany and Europe, through their respective publications or social media channels.

4.4 *TAZ.DE* "EINE FRAU AUS SYRIEN IN DER ERSTAUFNAHMEEINRICHTUNG FÜR ASYLBEWERBER IN MÜNCHEN"

This photo accompanied an article published on December 19, 2014, in *taz.de* with the headline "Die Not wird endlich anerkannt" (The need is finally acknowledged). The photo caption describes it as "Eine Frau aus Syrien in der Erstaufnahmeeinrichtung für Asylbewerber in München" (A woman from Syria in the initial reception center for asylum seekers in Munich) and credits the *dpa*. The female refugee wears a pink hijab and is facing away from the camera while viewing a mural, thereby blocking her face and identity. The mural's background is covered in blocks of shades of pinks, oranges, and yellow, with writing in various languages and symbols painted across the different squares. In the foreground of the mural are three figures painted in blacks and greys, a mother with her son and daughter. The face of the mother is out of frame, but the children wear sorrowful expressions. Shielding the face of the subject by shooting from behind, as the photographer did in this case, or by other means, such as through hand coverings or silhouettes, can be a useful tool for photographers in situations in which the subject wishes to remain anonymous for personal reasons or other safety concerns, as is sadly the case for many refugees.

However, when such a photo, whose original intent was to ethically protect its subject by concealing their face, is used by a syndicated organization like the *dpa*, the same photo becomes merely a propagation of the same namelessness and loss of identity caused by large group photographs. Although the article describes a positive change in the German refugee policy, it speaks to the issue on a broad political scale and describes the economics of Germany beginning to accept large numbers of refugees already at the end of 2014. The Syrian woman depicted in the photograph used as a companion for the article is never given a name, even a pseudonym, to relate her to the readership of *taz.de*, or given a platform to share her personal experiences. Rather, she is exploited as a placeholder, an industry requirement for news articles to include an accompanying photograph, even if only minimally applicable to the article itself – an issue already present in 2014 which has only grown further due to the algorithmic pressures of social media incentivizing posts including photographs in the last half of the decade.

4.5 *TAZ.DE* "FATALE DYNAMIK"

As a companion to the *taz.de* article "Fatale Dynamik" (Fatal dynamic) published on March 1, 2020, this photograph captioned "Migranten aus der Türkei kommen auf der griechischen Insel Lesbos an" (Migrants from Turkey arrive on the Greek island of Lesbos) and credited to the *dpa* shows a group of male refugees in a wooded area standing along a chain link fence topped with barbed wire. The photo has dark, muted tones and a tilted perspective from a low-angle shot, combining to create a rather intimidating atmosphere. Further bolstering the feeling of intimidation is also the young male refugee straddling the fence. Photographs similar to this featuring exclusively male migrants and brooding atmospheres were common and highly criticized during the height of the refugee crisis in late 2015 for the idea that the photographs were perpetuating the stereotype that asylum-seekers were only males, and the sprouting conspiracy that male migrants were inherently terrorists, yet here again in 2020 the same style of imagery portraying refugees resurfaces. While the content of the article does not degrade refugees or refugee policy, but rather discusses the dire state of refugee affairs currently ensuing at the Turkey-Greece border after President Erdogan encouraged refugee to cross the border, despite the border not yet being officially opened

for refugee passage, the use of such a photograph as the visualization for the disseminating of news sets the practice of ethical visual representations of refugees back years.

SECTION 5: CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE OUTCOMES

In summation, the preliminary examples analyzed in this Prospectus reveal the drastic difference in effect between using original content to bolster the theme of an article or pulling an photograph from a database and writing broadly about the topic. Original content, such as that from the *Spiegel* title split studied in section 3.3, allows for a more intimate and personalized story to be told through journalistic endeavors, thereby showing a positive public image of refugees and perhaps furthering better refugee policy in Germany. Contrarily, relying on database photographs as accompanying photos to news articles perpetuates the anonymity of refugees, thus further removing their individual plights and experiences from the readers of German media.

The final deliverable of the project will be a bilingual multimedia website hosting similar photo analyses as demonstrated in sections 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5, for a total of 20 photographs from German news outlets such as *Der Spiegel, taz.de,* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)*. It is my hope that this research will illuminate the need for more original and first-person content in news reporting, and change the conversation among journalists and photographers on the use of photographs from databases such as the UNHCR and *dpa.*