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Gender, Migration, and Education:
An Intersectional Analysis of a Labor Market Integration Project for Women with Migration Background[1]

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Abstract

Women with a migration background (WMB) are disadvantaged on the German labor market as multiple studies attest (e.g., Ferenschild, 2019; OECD/EU, 2018). Initiatives at regional, state, and federal levels have been commenced in recent years to support WMB's entry into the labor market, thereby also addressing the shortage of skilled workers in health and social care sectors in Germany. Within an intersectionality framework, this study examines the role of migration background as well as educational/occupational background in furthering or hindering WMB's chances of attaining educational qualifications and finding employment. Using data from a four-year evaluation of a labor market integration project for WMB, the study aims to answer the following questions: What is the educational and migration background of women in the project and how are both related? Are educational and migration background predictive of project success? Analysis is based on final monitoring data for the 234 women who had entered the project during the data collection period. Descriptive data confirm a highly heterogenous group of women in terms of all sociodemographic characteristics. Bivariate analysis showed statistically significant relationships for and between most migration and educational/occupational variables, pointing to clusters of advantage (e.g., permanent residency, high language level, recognized degree) and disadvantage (e.g., no formal schooling, time-limited stay permits) that are hypothesized to affect entry into the labor market. However, regarding project success – operationalized as case status outcomes and goal attainment outcomes – these variables did not play a statistically significant role, except for 'degree recognition' and 'language skills.' This suggests that the supportive and individualized approach of the project may equalize factors that would otherwise contribute to disadvantage. It also indicates that factors beyond migration background and educational/occupational background may be more salient for outcome.

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Explanations for the results are discussed from an intersectionality perspective and implications considered.

Key Words:

labor market integration; migrant women; program evaluation; labor market integration programs and services; intersectionality

1.   Introduction

Women with a migration background (WMB) are one of the most disadvantaged groups on the German labor market (Ferenschild, 2019; OECD/EU, 2018). In comparison to German women as well as men with a migration background, WMB have the lowest job rate, the highest rate of unemployment as well as under-employment and are more likely than either group to be looking for employment (Federal Employment Agency, 2022a). WMB experience hurdles in the recognition of educational qualifications, receive lower earnings, and encounter language barriers. These barriers can be compounded by insecure residence status, diverse forms of discrimination, and other psychosocial problems, such as elevated stress, lack of social networks, and higher rates of mental health problems (e.g., Farrokhzad et al., 2022; Kogan, 2016; Lutz & Amelina, 2017; Mackroth & Mühlbach, 2022). As such, WMB are a prime target group for current labor market integration efforts in Germany. Such efforts have been more focused in recent years due to demographic changes in Germany as well as political and legislative developments aimed at modernizing the current immigration law and reducing bureaucratic hurdles to improve labor market participation (Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, 2022).

Given the considerable challenges experienced by WMB on the labor market, it is worthwhile to examine their situation from an intersectional perspective. Central to the concept of intersectionality is the attempt to consider the reciprocal influences of multiple determinants rather than considering them as isolated dimensions (Crenshaw, 1989). In short, to understand the position of WMB on the labor market, it is necessary to examine at which level discrimination or disadvantages occur or intersect, and to explore how such barriers are created or maintained by service structures and practices (e.g., Crenshaw, 1989; Degele, 2019; Kurz, 2022). Such knowledge could be used to target integration efforts and reduce barriers.

In this paper, we will draw on data from a four-year evaluation of a model labor market integration project for WMB in a midsize city in Germany to examine, through an intersectional framework, factors that shape WMB's experiences as they prepare to enter the labor market. Specifically, within the context of a specific project, it will be determined what role migration background as well as educational/occupational background play – alone and taken together – in furthering or hindering WMB's chances of attaining educational qualifications and finding employment. Before describing key features of the labor market project and presenting methods and results of the evaluation study, relevant contextual information and conceptual considerations will be presented.

2   Relevant Background and Context

2.1   The Political Context

Current labor market strategies in Germany are guided by several developments at the federal level, of which two in particular are relevant to WMB's employment prospects. First, Germany's approach to the integration of persons who migrate to Germany has changed significantly in the last fifteen years. The strategy was encapsulated in the 2007 National Integration Plan, which formulated a new path forward. In this plan, labor market integration is viewed as a central stabilizing factor in migrants' life that would foster greater independence and social integration. Traditional restrictions to entering the job market, which are often in place for migrant groups, were seen as having adverse effects (Marbach et al., 2018). To remove such barriers, a range of new concepts and projects to support the labor market integration for various groups emerged and were initiated at state and regional/communal levels (Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, 2020; Hessian Ministry for Social Affairs and Integration, 2018; The Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees, and Integration, 2019). Women who have traditionally been viewed as dependent on their husbands, have only recently become a focus of such efforts (e.g., The Federal Government, 2007; Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, 2019). Instead of viewing them as locked in conventional roles, their agency and individual resources are now emphasized, and concepts and methods sought to activate or support this potential (Hessian Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration, 2018). Furthermore, women are viewed as crucial actors in the social integration process of their families, particularly their children (Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, 2019; Hessian Ministry for Social Affairs and Integration, 2018). In other words, it is assumed that the successful integration of women also increases the opportunities for future generations.

The second major thread influencing labor market strategies for WMB involves the growing shortage of skilled labor in Germany. This is in part due to an aging population, with people aged 65 and over accounting for about 22% of the total population in 2021 (Federal Statistical Office, 2022a). In addition, projections by the German Federal Statistical Office (2022b) indicate that around 30% of the current workforce will retire by the year 2036, a percentage which cannot be compensated by the employment of young people alone and would further contribute to critical labor shortages.

While the shortage of skilled labor is apparent in many industries, it is particularly salient in the so-called social economy sector, which includes social services jobs in elderly care, in child welfare organizations (e.g., daycare, kindergarten), and household care and assistance – jobs that traditionally have been occupied by women (Seyda et al., 2021). Particularly in long-term elderly care considerable need has been documented, fueled by the growing longevity of Germans (Federal Statistical Office, 2020c), and has further been amplified during the Covid-19 pandemic (Federal Employment Agency, 2022b).

To meet the demand for skilled workers, the political approach has been to fill labor gaps with foreign workers. The federal Skilled Labor Strategy ["Fachkräftestrategie der Bundesregierung"] was presented in November 2018 (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, 2018; The Federal Government, 2020). The overall objective is to attract potential domestic, European, and international laborers and to remove barriers toward their integration into the labor market (Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, n.d.).

The Skilled Labor Strategy has been supported through a number of legislative changes and reforms (The Federal Government, 2019) such as the Skilled Immigration Act for qualified professionals ["Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz"] (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2021). In 2018, an initiative called Concerted Action Care ["Konzertierte Aktion Pflege"] was launched that aims to improve the critical shortages in the health care sector in close cooperation with community partners (e.g., hospitals, churches, care organizations, vocational training schools). Women with migration background are a particular target of these efforts. The federal strategy of recruiting workers from abroad into the care sector is, however, not without critics and has been described by some as the "feminization of migration" (e.g., Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003; Lutz & Amelina, 2017; Ruokonen-Engler, 2019).

Data on the development of labor market recruitment in the care sector is reported annually (Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, 2022; Federal Ministry of Health, 2021). The most recent report suggests that current initiatives are bearing some fruit, with the number of people employed in the health care sector and those entering vocational training rising (Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, 2022).

2.2   Germany's Dual Vocational Education Training System

Some of the problems experienced by various groups as they attempt to enter the skilled labor market are related to the system of German Vocational Education Training (VET), which will be briefly described here. The German VET system is quite unique as well as complex and involves different opportunities to participate in vocational training (e.g., Granato et al., 2015). The so-called dual VET ["duale Ausbildung"] is most common in Germany. It is organized and regulated at the regional level (Michaelis et al., 2022). The duration of the VET as well as its content might thus vary across regions within Germany but generally consists of a 2- to 3-year apprenticeship that is accompanied by structured learning in VET schools (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, 2022). The dual VET programs generally take place in specialized companies, which cooperate with specialized vocational schools or other forms of vocational schooling. This cooperation assures the teaching and learning of practical skills as well as theoretical knowledge (Kitzler, 2022). To enter dual VET, a school degree is not always a prerequisite (Michaelis et al., 2022). In other words, in certain professional areas the German VET system provides the opportunity to participate in an apprenticeship without a formal degree, which provides opportunities for entry with certain qualifications. In the context of the project described here, this refers, for instance, to the education in the field of home economics ["Hauswirtschaft"] or elderly care, for which a basic school degree [Hauptschulabschluss] is recommended but generally not a prerequisite.

It should also be noted that VET in the health care sector has recently been subject to modernization and change (Zöller, 2022) and that the training of educators (who work primarily in kindergartens) is undergoing a process of academization, which means that requirements in the VET are becoming more and more similar to university studies (Authoring Group Educational Reporting, 2022). In addition to the dual VET system, specialized academies and schools offer opportunities to obtain vocational training in the health and social care sector (Authoring Group Educational Reporting, 2022). Entering these schools and this system ["Schulberufssystem"] generally requires some form of formal education. Vocational training within this system normally takes between one and

three years (Authoring Group Educational Reporting, 2022). Lastly, possibilities for shorter trainings exist in certain fields (e.g., training courses in the field of home economics/household assistance or elderly care). Those courses seem especially relevant for project participants who want to quickly enter the labor market or who – for different reasons – do not have the possibility for longer trainings.

2.3   WMB in the Labor Market

WMB in Germany are a highly diverse group consisting of women with their own migration experience and those who are second- or third-generation migrants. As variable as the reasons for their migration are, so are their sociodemographic profiles (Berr et al., 2019; Spörlein et al., 2020). However, commonalities in educational background, family status, etc. have been noted in subgroups, such as refugees (e.g., Mackroth & Mühlbach, 2022). As already alluded to in the introduction, WMB, particularly mothers, encounter a broad range of challenges that present barriers on the way into the labor market. These include educational gaps, hurdles in the recognition of existing qualifications, lower professional status than actual qualifications would warrant, low wages, challenges in language acquisition, uncertainty regarding their residency status, diverse forms of discrimination inside and outside the family, social isolation as well as elevated rates of stress and mental health problems (e.g., Díaz, 2022; Farrokhzad et al., 2022; Ferenschild, 2019; Kogan, 2016; Liebig & Tronstad, 2018; Lutz & Amelina, 2017; Mackroth & Mühlbach, 2022). Also, institutional racism, discrimination, or exploitation have been noted (e.g., Felbo-Kolding et al., 2019; Férnandez-Reino et al., 2022; Khan-Gökkaya & Mösko, 2021). Beyond country of origin or ethnicity, reasons for disadvantages of migrant women may also be associated with traditional gender roles, religion or family situation (Knize Estrada, 2018). A review of the literature by Elo and colleagues (2020) suggests that migrant women are often affected by "brain waste," a term referring to "the non-recognition of the skills (and qualifications) acquired by a migrant outside of the EU, which prevents them from fully using their potential" (European Commission, n.d.). Institutional barriers, sociocultural values and self-perceptions may all stand in the way of recognizing available potential and skills.

Not surprisingly, relative to other disadvantaged groups, WMB are more likely to be affected by (unwanted) unemployment as well as under-employment (Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, 2019; Federal Statistical Office, 2022b), often despite considerable motivation to work or obtain an education (Federal Employment Agency, 2022a; Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017). In representative surveys of refugees in Germany, Brücker and colleagues (2016) and Brenzel and colleagues (2019) found that both men and women have considerable aspirations for further education in Germany (Brenzel et al., 2019) and that they are highly motivated to enter the German labor market (Brücker et al., 2016). In fact, 85% of refugee women stated that they are probably or surely interested in entering the labor market (Brücker et al., 2016). Schouler-Ocak and Kurmeyer (2017) indicate that refugees' primary desire for the future includes stability and the possibility to work or study. Whether such findings are generalizable beyond refugees to other subgroups of WMB needs to be investigated in further studies. But it seems safe to assume that labor market integration projects for WMB do not simply reflect political mandates but are in line with the personal aspirations of women. Along with a recognition of their desire to work, women's resources and capabilities are increasingly being addressed in the literature, shifting the focus from a

deficit-oriented perspective to one that attempts to focus on their strengths (Gericke et al., 2018; James et al., 2021; Walther et al., 2021).

3   Conceptual Considerations

3.1   Intersectionality and WMB on the Labor Market

Crenshaw introduced the construct of intersectionality as it provided a way of considering the interconnectedness of factors contributing to disadvantage and discrimination (e.g., Crenshaw, 1989). According to Carasthathis (2014), "intersectionality has become the predominant way of conceptualizing the relation between systems of oppression which construct our multiple identities and our social locations in hierarchies of power and privilege" (p. 304). Race, class, and gender are the classic analytic categories in debates on intersectionality as they have been shown to be primary determinants of inequality across societies. However, there is disagreement about the selection, number, and weighting of analytic categories. Lutz and Wenning (2001), for instance, proposed 13 categories, which include age, health, and culture. However, Winkler and Degele (2009) warn that more than three categories become unmanageable in analytic models. They argue that the choice of categories should depend on the focus of the analysis and the chosen level of inquiry. The effect of multiple dimensions of inequality is generally not considered to be additive. Instead, the focus should be on categories that mutually reinforce, weaken, or even change each other through their interconnectedness (Winkler & Degele, 2009). An analysis of discrimination and disadvantage can take place on different levels, involve various components and refer to different typologies (Degele, 2019; McCall, 2005). It should be noted that the intersectionality framework has been criticized by some for lacking a coherent theoretical foundation (for a critique see Cole, 2020; Settles et al., 2020). An intersectional framework seems particularly applicable in understanding the situation of WMB (Dederich, 2022; Kurz, 2022, Lutz et al., 2011).

> "The intersectionality approach challenges us to look at the different social positioning of women (and men) and to reflect on the different ways in which they participate in the reproduction of these relations. As we do this, intersectionality serves as an instrument that helps to grasp the complex interplay between disadvantage and privilege, a requirement to which objections have sometimes been raised" (Lutz et al., 2011: 8).

The authors further stress that women's reality is not only shaped by gender, but that other aspects such as migration experiences, education, and family status may play a crucial role and ought to be considered as intersectional determinants. In the context of the current project and analysis, we will focus on women's migration background and their educational and occupational experiences.

3.2   Previous Research on Intersectionality and Labor Market Integration

The relevance of the intersectionality framework to understanding challenges in the labor market integration of migrants and refugees has previously been addressed at a conceptual level (e.g., Browne & Misra, 2003; Moore & Ghilarducci, 2018) but has also been tested empirically in quantitative, qualitative as well as mixed-methods studies. For instance, Paul and colleagues (2022) used the categories of race and gender to analyze wage gaps of employers in the United States. Findings indicate that the wage penalty needs to be viewed in a nuanced way but also that black women are particularly affected by wage gaps. Di Stasio and Larsen (2020) applied an intersectional approach to a quantitative study on discrimination in the employment sector in five different European

countries. The categories of gender and race were analyzed to understand hiring preferences of employers. Di Stasio and Larsen (2020) found that while white women were preferred in "female typed" jobs, women of color did not have any advantages over men of color. Men of color or men from the Middle East were most discriminated in "male type jobs" (Di Stasio & Larsen, 2020). The authors summarized their main finding as follows:

> "The most glaring finding is that across occupations, members of racial or ethnic minorities face substantial discrimination, and race trumps gender as the target of discriminatory behavior by employers" (p. 243).

Lichtwardt (2016) used mixed methods within an intersectional framework to examine the experiences of WMB during the transition from school into the vocational training system. Lichtwardt's (2016) central finding with regard to the concept of intersectionality was that inequality-promoting structures and processes became apparent in the transition process from school to training/work among young WMB with a low level of education. While none of the specific categories had a dominant influence, the interrelation of factors contributed to a better understanding of the situation of WMB. Examples of qualitative studies in this area include research by Díaz (2022) who researched the labor market participation of women in Chile as well as Knappert and colleagues' work (2020) who examined challenges that refugees face in the labor market in the Netherlands. Rodriguez and Scurry (2019) used the intersectional framework to examine the situation of skilled migrant women in Qatar. Findings of such studies indicate barriers and facilitators at various intersecting levels. Those intersecting components include, for instance, strict language requirements or confrontation with stereotypes (organizational level) as well as legislative hurdles or lack of recognition of previously obtained education (country level) (Knappert et al., 2020). The "interdependency and simultaneity of gender and foreignness" classified WMB as outsiders and was noted to have a negative impact on them (Rodriguez & Scurry, 2019: 493). The authors further identified a contrast of WMB being included in the labor market on the one hand while at the same time being excluded with regard to other opportunities such as promotions. They emphasize that the intersection of gender and foreignness is inseparable yet needs to be understood in a nuanced way. Apart from the study by Lichtwardt (2016), empirical studies of WMB in the German labor market using an intersectional framework have, to the knowledge of the authors, not widely been taking place.

4   The Model Project and the Current Study

4.1   Overview of the Model Project

Initiated in 2018, the city of Kassel's model project "New Opportunities in the Social Economy – Qualification Perspectives for Migrant Women" (abbr. SoWi) is a labor market integration project for WMB with state funding until 2022. With some modifications, SoWi has been integrated permanently into the local labor market structures of the city of Kassel after the model project phase expired in the summer of 2022. SoWi was funded by the Hessian Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration's Social Economy Integrated ["Sozialwirtschaft Integriert"] funding program and implemented by the city of Kassel's Municipal Employment Promotion Department ["Kommunale Arbeitsförderung"] (www.kassel.de/sozialwirtschaft-integriert). In addition, the German Job Office

["Jobcenter"], as a cooperating partner, has become involved in the financing and implementation of the project.

The target group for the project are WMB (ages 18 to 45) who are seeking to (re)enter the labor market or who are interested in attaining further education with regard to the social (health-) care sector. Core elements of the project include support toward formal qualifications via remedial classes (e.g., secondary school courses toward attainment of the basic required school degree, language courses), internships, and vocational training in the social economy sector (especially childhood education, elderly care, home economics). Central to the project is the provision of individual coaching by female social work professionals from various cooperating organizations (Hessian Ministry for Social Affairs and Integration, n.d.). The coaching is intended to be individualized and to provide regular support with regard to logistic as well as personal challenges. A secondary objective includes strengthening the resilience and self-efficacy of women toward greater independence.

The entry requirements for participation in the project are basic German language skills (generally B1 level) a certain level of learning and educational experience, and requisite motivation, which all are determined during the assessment period. The inclusion criteria are deliberately broad to offer different women a pathway into the labor market. Interested women can either register on their own or be referred by cooperating organizations or the job center. A majority of WMB started the program with a three-month orientation phase, others entered without this project element. Following the orientation phase, women enroll in the various program elements, based on aptitude and interests, and receive coaching. The process from entry into the project until completion of qualifications or entry into the labor market can take from a minimum of about one year to more than three years. In collaboration with various cooperation partners (e.g., migrant organizations, job center, evaluation team) and based on emerging needs and changing policies, the concept of the project has been modified several times (to be addressed in a subsequent paper). Figure 1 provides an overview of the project concept and approach. Stated aim at the onset of the project was to support 50 women toward labor market entry during the four-year project period. Completion of vocational training is counted as meeting project aims as the successful completion of VET qualifies women for the skilled labor market.

Figure 1: SoWi Project Concept
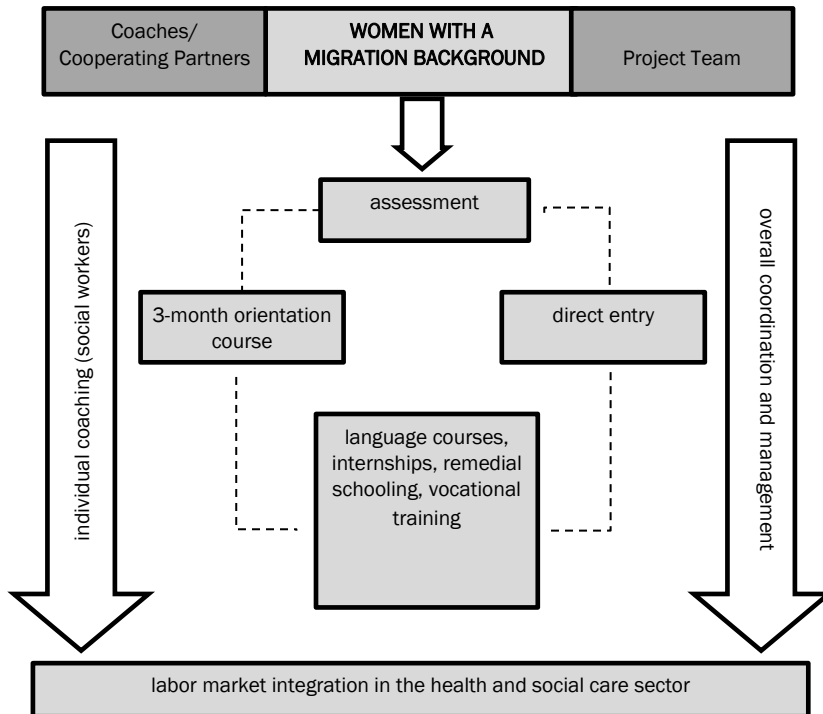
4.2   Purpose of the Current Study

To contribute to the empirical academic discourse on intersectionality as well as WMB and labor market integration, the current study will explore intersectional influences within the context of the SoWi labor market integration project. Using final evaluation data, the current study will expand preliminary analyses that were conducted at the project midpoint. Specifically, the analysis will focus on variables related to migration background as well as educational/occupational background as these are hypothesized to affect women's chances of entering the labor market. Since project participants are women, gender is a constant in this analysis, which allows for a deepened examination of the variables of interest and their intersecting relationships. The focus on these constructs was in part guided by the intersectional literature but also drew on findings from preliminary analyses that had examined the profiles of the women in the project (Fromm, 2020; James et al., 2020, 2021, 2022). While not encompassing of all possible factors that may further or hinder labor market entry (e.g., age, number of children, family status), the analysis is viewed as an important starting point for examining intersectional influences within the project.

The following research questions guided the analysis:

▪ What is the migration and educational/occupational background of women in the project and how are both related?

- ▪ Are migration and educational/occupational background predictive of project outcome?

5   Methods

5.1   Evaluation Design and Overall Objectives

The SoWi project has been evaluated since its inception to give it scientific grounding. Due to the dynamic nature of the project concept, the evaluation pursued primarily formative objectives but also generated data that allows the reporting of summative findings. The overall evaluation was guided by several broad aims, which included (1) establishing a profile of the women and their individual situations, (2) identifying participating women's psychosocial resources and stressors, (3) examining trajectories through the project, and (4) examining predictors of project success. Prior to commencing, the evaluation study was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Human Sciences at the University of Kassel.

5.2   Data Collection and Variables of Interest

Data were collected from multiple sources over the course of three-and-a-half years, using quantitative as well as qualitative methods, with a final date for (most) data collection set in April 2022. Data included monitoring (administrative) data, standardized surveys at two timepoints with participating women as well as coaches, casefile data, and repeated expert interviews. Additionally, a survey of women who dropped out of the project prematurely took place as well as a survey with questions related to the Covid-pandemic. Since monitoring data are available on all 234 women who entered the project between the fall of 2018 and the spring of 2022 and contain complete sociodemographic information, these data served as the basis for the current intersectional analysis. Several variables were available in the monitoring data and broadly captured the constructs of interest.

- ▪ Migration background: country of origin, country of citizenship, residency status, since when in Germany, German language level

- ▪ Educational/occupational background: years of schooling outside of Germany, school degree from outside of Germany, degree recognition in Germany, vocational training outside of Germany, job experience outside of Germany, type of school degree in Germany, vocational training in Germany, job experience in Germany

Existing variables in the data served as the basis for constructing new variables that could then be used in the analysis.

5.3   Data Analysis

Monitoring data was managed by the project team, provided to the evaluation team as an Excel File and exported to SPSS 28.0, which after careful screening for missing data and cleaning of all relevant variables was used for all analysis. As stated, several variables had to be newly computed and/or recoded in order to be useful for analysis. Descriptive analysis was conducted to describe the 234 women at time of entry into the project in terms of basic demographic characteristics, particularly their migration and educational background, and in terms of their outcome by April 2022. Bivariate analysis, using chi-square analysis, Pearson correlation analysis, t-tests and one-way analysis of variance,

examined associations between variables within the main constructs and then across. This served to examine the constructs of interest and explore initial intersectional relationships with regard to outcome. Due to the results of the bivariate findings, model building through multivariate analysis was not deemed to be sensible at this time.

6   Results

6.1   Descriptive Statistics

Women were almost 34 years old on average when they started the project, ranging in age from 18 to close to 53 years. Over half were married upon entry into the project while more than a quarter (27.4%) were single and another 17% were either divorced or separated. The vast majority (81%) have children (M = 2.3, SD = 1.1). Within this group, 138 (73.1%) women have children that are younger than age 12. Close to 60% of the women are Muslim, 31% identify as Christian.

Table 1 describes the women in terms of their migration background. Participating women come from 48 different countries across six different continents. Syrian women make up one-fifth of the women followed by women from Afghanistan (9.0%) and Turkey (8.6%). On average, women have lived in Germany for about 8.4 years (SD = 8.0), with some entering the country less than a year ago and others having been born in Germany (range about 41 years). Close to 70% are in Germany on a time-limited residence permit. Another four percent hold a temporary stay permit, and 2.1% have a fictional certificate. Less than one percent have a permanent residence permit. 18%, from very diverse countries, have obtained German citizenship and another 4.7% are citizens of another EU country.

Table 1: Women's Migration Background (N = 234)

	N (%)	M (SD)
Country of origin		
Syria	47 (20.2)	
Afghanistan	21 (9.0)	
Turkey	20 (8.6)	
Eritrea	19 (8.2)	
Somalia	14 (6.0)	
Iran	14 (6.0)	
Iraq	12 (5.2)	
Other	87 (37.2)	
Years in Germany		8.4 (8.0)
Residency status		
German citizenship	43 (18.5)	
Citizen of an EU country	11 (4.7)	
Permanent residence permit	3 (1.3)	
Time-limited residence permit	161 (69.4)	
Temporary stay permit	9 (3.9)	
Fictional Certificate	5 (2.2)	

Language level

A1	2 (0.9)
A2	25 (11.0)
B1	137 (60.4)
B2	39 (17.2)
C1	6 (2.6)
(like) mother-tongue	18 (7.9)

Note. Some variables may have missing cases.

Close to sixty percent of women entered the project with the required B1-language level. Almost 12% had a lower language proficiency level at entry into the project. However, almost 28% had language levels above B1, of which 7.9% spoke German as a mother tongue.

With regard to educational and occupational background (see Table 2), 59.2% of the women had obtained an academic degree outside of Germany, 12.4% finished school in Germany and 28.6% had no formal school degree, which could indicate a lack of formal schooling but could also imply missing requisite school records. Of the women, who obtained a degree outside of Germany, the average number of years in school was 11.4 years (SD = 1.6). Only 12.4% of women had graduated from schools in Germany while 40.2% had obtained foreign degrees that had been recognized in Germany. Another 5.1% were in the review process for degree recognition. Of the 123 women with recognized degrees, 33% had the basic 9-year school degree [Hauptschule], which is sufficient for entry into many vocational fields; 37% had a 10-year degree [Realschule], which in Germany is a type of intermediate secondary school degree, and another 30% had the university-qualifying high school diploma [Abitur]. Five women had obtained a bachelor degree.

With regard to formal or informal vocational training, professional studies and occupational background, 90 women (38.8%) indicated having learned a vocation or trade outside of Germany, an additional three had received such training both in Germany as well as abroad. Seven women were trained in Germany. Areas of training were very diverse and included being trained as accountants, electricians, hairstylists, teachers, midwives, educators, etc. Over half of the women (56.9%) indicated not having received vocational training. Almost three-quarters of the women reported having worked before (again, in very diverse fields) – 36.4% percent outside of Germany, about one-fifth in Germany, and another 17.3% in both Germany as well as abroad. More than one-quarter (27.3%) reported no job experience.

Table 2: Women's Educational/Occupational Background (N = 234)

	N (%)	M (SD)
Secondary School/Academic Degree		
Outside of Germany	138 (59.2)	
Years of schooling outside of Germany		11.4 (1.6)
From Germany	29 (12.4)	
No formal degree	67 (28.6)	
Degree recognition		
Yes, graduated in Germany	29 (12.4)	
Yes, foreign degree but recognized	94 (40.2)	
Under review	12 (5.1)	
No	99 (42.3)	
Type of degree (n = 123)		
9-year degree [Hauptschule]	41 (33.3)	
10-year degree [Realschule]	45 (36.6)	
High School diploma [Abitur]	32 (26.0)	
University degree/BA	5 (4.1)	
Vocational training		
Outside of Germany	90 (38.8)	
In Germany	7 (3.0)	
Both, in and outside of Germany	3 (1.3)	
None	132 (56.9)	
Job experience		
Outside of Germany	84 (36.4)	
In Germany	44 (19.0)	
Both, in and outside of Germany	40 (17.3)	
None	63 (27.3)	

Note. Some variables may have missing cases.

6.2   Bivariate Analysis

A series of bivariate tests were first conducted between variables within the main constructs and then across. This served to examine the constructs of interest and explore initial intersectional relationships. For ease of presentation, these results are shown in two tables (Table 3a and Table 3b). Table 3a displays bivariate results with continuous dependent variables and Table 3b presents crosstabs and chi-squares. The left column of both tables shows which variables' relationship was tested; the middle column displays relevant descriptive results while the results of the statistical tests are shown in the right column. Most of the tested relationships were statistically significant.

Findings for the construct migration background indicated that language level (operationalized as a continuous variable from A1-level to mother tongue) was positively correlated to a higher number of years in Germany. Residency status differed by language

level as well as years in Germany, with greater permanency being associated with a higher language level and more years in Germany.

When examining the relationship between variables related to migration background and those related to educational/occupational background, several statistically significant findings emerged: Women who had recognized degrees in Germany had lived in Germany significantly longer – on average 21 years. Women with recognized degrees from outside Germany had been in Germany on average for six years. Of interest is the group of women who had lived in Germany for over seven years, yet had no recognized degree. The relationship between type of degree and years in Germany was not statistically significant. However, language level was significantly associated with having degree recognition as well as type of degree, with having a degree recognized in Germany and having a higher degree being associated with at least a B2-C1 language level. Language level was also associated with having obtained vocational training, with women with at least a C1 level being more likely to completing vocational training in Germany. Job experience, interestingly, was not related to language level at baseline. Lastly, both vocational training and job experience were associated with more years in Germany, with notably more years reported for women who had either in Germany. Notable are the women with neither vocational training or job experience who in both cases had the second longest stay in Germany.

Table 3a: Bivariate Relationships (Within Migration Background; Between Migration Background and Educational/Occupational Background) (N = 234)

	M (SD)	Stat.
Within Migration Background		
Language level x Years in Germany		r=.566; p<.001***
Residency status x Language level	*(language level)*	F(2) = 11.9; p<.001***
Temporary stay permit/fictional certificate	3.0 (0.6)	
Time-limited residence permit	3.2 (0.8)	
Citizenship/permanent residency	3.9 (1.4)	
Residency status x Years in Germany	*(years in Germany)*	F(2) = 30.3; p<.001***
Temporary stay permit/fictional certificate	3.0 (1.5)	
Time-limited residence permit	6.7 (5.8)	
Citizenship/permanent residency	14.6 (10.5)	
Migration Background x Educational/Occupational Background		
Recognized degree x Years in Germany	*(years in Germany)*	F(3) = 44.1; p<.001***
Graduated in Germany	21.1 (12.4)	
Recognized degree from outside Germany	6.0 (4.3)	
No recognized degree	7.3 (5.7)	
Under review	6.7 (4.0)	

Type of (recognized) degree x Years in Germany	*(years in Germany)*	$F(4) = 2.2$; $p = .075$
No recognized degree	7.3 (5.7)	
9-yr. degree/Hauptschule	11.1 (10.4)	
10-yr. degree/Realschule	9.0 (9.6)	
High school diploma and higher	8.4 (8.4)	
Recognized degree x Language level	*(language level)*	$F(3) = 28.2$; $p<.001$***
Graduated in Germany	4.8 (1.5)	
Recognized degree from outside Germany	3.3 (0.7)	
No recognized degree	3.0 (0.8)	
Under review	2.9 (0.7)	
Type of (recognized) degree x Language level	*(language level)*	$F(3) = 6.0$; $p<.001$***
9-yr. degree/Hauptschule	3.6 (1.4)	
10-yr. degree/Realschule	3.6 (1.1)	
High school diploma and higher	3.7 (0.8)	
No recognized degree	3.0 (0.8)	
Vocational training x language level	*(language level)*	$F(2) = 7.191$; $p<.001$***
Yes, in Germany	4.5 (1.7)	
Yes, outside of Germany	3.3 (0.7)	
No vocational training	3.3 (1.1)	
Job experience x Language level	*(language level)*	$F(2) = 32.260$; $p = .107$
Yes, in Germany	3.5 (1.1)	
Yes, outside of Germany	3.2 (0.7)	
No job experience	3.5 (1.2)	
Vocational training x Years in Germany	*(years in Germany)*	$F(2) = 14.978$; $p<.001$***
Yes, in Germany	19.8 (13.0)	
Yes, outside of Germany	6.4 (4.9)	
No vocational training	9.0 (8.5)	
Job experience x Years in Germany	*(years in Germany)*	$F(2) = 13.473$; $p<.001$***
Yes, in Germany	11.3 (9.3)	
Yes, outside of Germany	5.2 (3.4)	
No job experience	9.0 (9.1)	

*Note. ***$p<.001$*
Some variables may have missing cases.

Table 3b shows results from chi-square analysis within educational/occupational background and between migration background and educational/occupational background. Findings indicated that having job experience in Germany was neither statistically significantly related to having received vocational training nor having obtained job experience outside of Germany. On the other hand, analysis on residency status, which (for purposes of sufficient cell size) was limited to the 218 women who had either time-limited stay permits or had permanent residency or citizenship, yielded several statistically significant findings. Degree recognition, vocational training and job experience were related to residency status. Solely with regard to type of degree no difference in residency status could be detected. Specifically, half of the women with time-limited stay permits had no recognized degree. Of those with citizenship or permanent residency, slightly below one-third (31.5%) had no degree, another 31.5% had graduated in Germany and 37% had degrees from abroad that were recognized. With regard to vocational training, more than

half the women with citizenship or permanency had no vocational training and only eight women in this group had obtained vocational training in Germany. In terms of job experience, about 31% of women with time-limited stay permits reported job experience in Germany. Only about half the women with citizenship or permanency had job experience in Germany.

Table 3b: Bivariate Relationships (within Migration Background and between Migration Background and Educational/Occupational Background)

	N (%)		Stat.
Within Educational/Occupational Background			
Job experience in Germany (n= 227) x	*Yes* (n=84)	*No* (n=143)	
Vocational training outside Germany			$x^2(1)=.328; p=.567$
Yes	32 (38.1)	60 (42.0)	
No	52 (61.9)	83 (58.0)	
Job experience outside Germany			$x^2(1)=2.013; p=.156$
Yes	40 (47.6)	82 (57.3)	
No	44 (52.4)	61 (42.7)	

Educational/Occupational Background x Migration Background

Residency status (n=218) x	Time-limited stay permit (n=161)	Citizenship/ permanent residency (n=57)	
Recognized degree			$x^2(2)=19.148;$ $p<.001***$
Graduated in Germany	12 (7.8)	17 (31.5)	
Recognized degree from outside of Germany	65 (42.5)	20 (37.0)	
No recognized degree	76 (49.7)	17 (31.5)	
Type of degree			$x^2(3)=5.703; p=.127$
9-yr degree	27 (17.6)	12 (22.2)	
10-yr degree	27 (17.6)	12 (22.2)	
High school diploma and higher	23 (15.0)	13 (24.1)	
No formal degree	76 (49.7)	17 (31.5)	
Vocational training			$x^2(2)=15.640;$ $p<.001***$
Yes, in Germany	2 (1.3)	8 (14.0)	
Yes, outside of Germany	63 (39.4)	20 (35.1)	
No vocational training	95 (59.4)	29 (50.9)	

Job experience			$x^2(2)=6.562$; $p=.038*$
Yes, in Germany	49 (30.8)	28 (49.1)	
Yes, outside of Germany	65 (40.9)	15 (26.3)	
No job experience	45 (28.3)	14 (24.6)	

Note. $*p<0.5$; $***p<.001$.
Some variables may have missing cases.

Although women were highly diverse in terms of their country of origin, sub-analysis were conducted on the 107 women from the four countries with the greatest representation – Syria (n=47), Afghanistan (n=21), Turkey (n=20) and Eritrea (n=19) – to explore whether country of origin might be a possible explanatory factor for variability in the various areas (see Table 4). Statistical testing is not reported due to small cell sizes, but findings are of interest descriptively. Women from Turkey had been in Germany by far the longest and also had the highest language level. Syrian women had the second highest language level although they had spent the shortest number of years in Germany on average. They also had the highest rate of being in Germany with a time-limited stay permit, followed by women from Eritrea. Despite their many years in Germany, 80% of Turkish women were on time-limited stay permits in Germany. With regard to degree recognition, Eritrean women had the highest rate of having no degree recognition (68.4%), followed by Turkish women (57.9%), Syrian women (41.3%) and women from Afghanistan (30.0%). Over two-thirds of women from Eritrea (72.2%) and Turkey (70.0%) had no vocational training, followed by Afghan (57.1%) and Syrian (55.3%) women. A considerable percentage of Syrian (42.6%) and Afghan (38.1%) women had received some vocational training outside Germany. Lastly, women from Afghanistan had the highest rate of not having job experience (47.6%), whereas between 70% to 80% of women in the other three groups were reported to have job experience, either in Germany or abroad.

Table 4: Differences by Country of Origin (N=107)

	Syria (n=47)	Afghanistan (n=21)	Turkey (n=20)	Eritrea (n=19)
	N (%) or M (SD)			
Years in Germany	4.0 (2.7)	7.5 (6.4)	17.3 (12.2)	5.5 (2.7)
Language level	3.4 (0.74)	2.9 (0.5)	4.0 (1.5)	2.9 (0.6)
Residency status				
Citizenship/Permanent	2 (4.4)	5 (25.0)	4 (20.0)	1 (6.2)
Time-limited stay permit	43 (95.6)	15 (75.0)	16 (80.0)	15 (93.8)

Recognized degree				
Graduated in Germany	0 (0)	3 (15.0)	5 (26.3)	3 (15.8)
Recognized degree from abroad	27 (58.7)	11 (55.0)	3 (15.8)	3 (15.8)
No recognized degree	19 (41.3)	6 (30.0)	11 (57.9)	13 (68.4)
Vocational training				
Yes, in Germany	1 (2.1)	1 (4.8)	1 (5.0)	0 (0)
Yes, abroad	20 (42.6)	8 (38.1)	5 (25.0)	5 (27.8)
No vocational training	26 (55.3)	12 (57.1)	14 (70.0)	13 (72.2)
Job Experience				
Yes, in Germany	10 (21.3)	5 (23.8)	11 (55.0)	7 (38.9)
Yes, abroad	23 (48.9)	6 (26.8)	5 (25.0)	7 (38.9)
No job experience	14 (29.8)	10 (47.6)	4 (20.0)	4 (22.2)

Note. Some variables may have missing cases.

6.3 Intersectional Influences on Project Outcome

Further analysis examined whether the variables of interest had an impact on outcome. Outcome can be operationalized and measured in different ways depending on interest, perspective, and availability of data. For instance, case status outcomes describe women's status in a project at a particular point in time – in case of this analysis, as of April 2022. Outcome could, however, also be described in terms of goal attainment as assessed by the SoWi Team or by the women themselves. For this analysis, case status outcome and goal attainment outcomes will be considered based on the availability of such information in the monitoring data (which is the best data source for this analysis).

6.3.1 Case status outcome

Women's status in the project is not easy to determine and varies significantly by time in project (p <.001), i.e., depending on when women entered and which vocational track they chose, their time in the project will necessarily vary. As such, time in the project is an important control variable for any analysis related to outcome. Table 5 shows outcomes for April 2022. For 83 women the outcome remains undetermined as they were still active in the program, which means they receive coaching and/or participate in preparatory activities or are in vocational training. Of the 151 women with a known outcome, 26 had found jobs within or outside of SoWi and another 9 had completed vocational training. The remainder had left the project prematurely for a range of reasons that will be examined in depth in a future publication. Bivariate analysis will focus on the 151 women for whom the outcome was known.

Table 5: Case Status Outcomes as of April 2022 (n=234)

	N (%)
Found job as part of *SoWi* objectives	15 (35.5)
Completed vocational training	9 (3.8)
Found job outside of *SoWi*	11 (4.7)
Left *SoWi* – broke off vocational training	18 (7.7)
Left *SoWi* – new orientation, referred elsewhere	17 (7.3)
Left *SoWi* – further preparation (e.g., language classes) outside of *SoWi*	12 (5.1)
Left *SoWi* – other reasons (e.g., family situation, moving away)	69 (29.5)
Outcome still undetermined, still active in project	83 (35.5)

6.3.2 Goal attainment outcome

From the beginning, the SoWi project pursued important secondary goals, which included the empowering of women and strengthening of their resilience toward greater independence. While 35 women had reached the official case status outcomes, even women leaving the program without reaching these goals had made important gains toward greater independence as assessed by the SoWi-Team. Assessment was based on professional judgment and occurred in the context of the helping relationship. Eighty-eight (58.3%) of the 151 women with a known outcome had fully or partially reached their goals.

For purposes of this analysis, the predictive influence of the migration and educational/occupational variables was examined with regard to the 151 women for whom the outcome was known. Analysis were conducted for both case status and goal attainment outcomes. To facilitate analysis, case status outcome was dichotomized as women who left the program prematurely and those who reached intended aims. Goal attainment outcome was dichotomized as women who partially or fully reached secondary goals (as appraised by the SoWi-Team) and those who did not. Results are shown with time in project included as a control variable (see Table 6). They show that the variable "recognized degree" was statistically significant for both case status as well as goal attainment outcomes. The variable "language level" reached statistical significance with regard to goal attainment. Specifically, compared to women with no recognized degree women with a degree recognized in Germany were almost three times as likely to have a positive case status outcome (i.e., complete vocational training and enter the job market) (p<.01) and 80% more likely to reach primary or secondary goals partially or fully as assessed by the SoWi team (p<.01). A higher language level improved the odds of attaining primary or secondary goals by 43% (p<.05). None of the other intersectional variables reached statistical significance. Given these results, further multivariate analysis was not conducted.

Table 6: Bivariate Relationships Between Intersectional Variables and Outcome with Time in Project as a Control Variable (N = 151)

		B	SE	Wald	df	p	Exp(B)
Time in project (Control) †					1	(<).001	
Years in Germany	Case status outcome	.023	.022	1.130	1	.288	1.023
	Goal attainment outcome	.031	.023	1.821	1	.177	1.031
Language level	Case status outcome	.047	.189	.062	1	.803	1.048
	Goal attainment outcome	.364	.185	3.878	1	.049*	1.439
Residency status (ref=time-limited)	Case status outcome	-.161	.464	.120	1	.729	.852
	Goal attainment outcome	.106	.418	.065	1	.624	1.226
Recognized degree (ref=no recognized degree)	Case status outcome	.203	.415	.240	1	.006**	2.944
	Goal attainment outcome	1.080	.392	7.592	1	.007**	1.797
Type of degree (ref=9-yr degree)	Case status outcome	-.001	.001	.399	1	.528	.999
	Goal attainment outcome	-.002	.001	2.974	1	.085	.998
Vocational training (ref=no vocational training)	Case status outcome	.372	.406	.841	1	.359	1.451
	Goal attainment outcome	.322	.379	.721	1	.396	1.380

Job experience (ref=no job experience)	Case status outcome	.576	.487	1.400	1	.237	1.776
	Goal attainment outcome	.777	.418	3.447	1	.063	2.175

Note, † Time in project was statistically significant at .001 or <.001 for all predictor variables. As Beta values, Standard Errors, Wald values and Odds ratios varied somewhat they are not listed for each variable.
*p<0.5; **p<.01

7 Discussion

On the basis of three-and-a-half years of empirical data from a labor market integration project for WMB in the city of Kassel, Germany, this paper examined the intersections of gender (being a constant), migration background and educational/occupational background. The evaluation and this analysis took place in a broader sociopolitical context that is in the process of reforming modern immigration law (Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, 2022) and views WMB as a target group for labor market integration efforts. Examining the relationship between factors which prove to be particular barriers for WMB may contribute to a deeper understanding of the possibilities and limitations of labor market integration projects. It may further serve to improve such projects (e.g., their underlying concepts and program elements) so they are better able to address existing barriers. In this context, the intersectionality approach holds promise. It has been used and promoted in social science/social work research to investigate how categories known to be associated with disparity interact and amplify inequality and disadvantage (e.g., Khelifa & Mahdjoub, 2022).

Two research questions guided this analysis and were answered using monitoring data available for April 2022, the date at which data collection for the evaluation study ended. Several points need to preface the discussion of the results: First, the end of the evaluation does not mark the end of the project. Instead, following the end of the model project phase (in 2022), SoWi became part of the regular spectrum of services offered by the city of Kassel. Thus, conclusions presented here are limited to those women who participated in the project during its model project phase. Second, many women, who entered the project at varying timepoints during that period (and were captured in the evaluation), are still active in the project. This means these women are still in the process of going through the various phases and program elements of the projects (e.g., remedial work, internships, vocational training) as indicated by their qualifications and goals. As such, the outcome for 36% of the project participants is not yet known, and summative results presented here are in fact provisional or limited to those with a known outcome at the end of the evaluation period. Third, "time in project" is an important control variable for all analysis related to outcome. Women entered the project throughout the three-and-a-half year data collection period, meaning that those who started in 2018 and 2019 would have a much higher likelihood of having completed specific goals or to have dropped out of the project prematurely. Additionally, the duration of active participation in the project is highly variable based on what vocational training and job a woman may be pursuing, with vocational training as a home economic assistant taking only seven months and the vocational training as an educator taking from four to five years. With these limitations in mind, results for the two research questions will be synthesized and discussed.

7.1 "What is the migration and educational/occupational background of women in the project and how are both related?"

Data confirm a highly heterogenous group in terms of the main constructs, and as such, they are representative for WMB more generally (e.g., Berr et al., 2019; Spörlein et al., 2020). Project participants come from diverse backgrounds: they are very different in terms of their country of origin and their rootedness in Germany and speak German at all levels from A1 to mother tongue. They are similarly diverse in relation to their educational/occupational background and include WMB with no formal degree as well as those who hold a university degree. As the majority of WMB with formal school degrees obtained their schooling abroad, degree recognition is a crucial issue for this group. Over 40% of the women do not have recognized degrees in Germany. While three-quarters have had job experience, less than half have gone through vocational training, which in Germany is generally a prerequisite to finding work in the skilled labor market.

Bivariate analysis showed strong relationships between most variables within each of the two constructs and across. Most of these relationships are intuitive. For instance, women, who have lived in Germany longer, speak German better, are more likely to have German citizenship, to have a German school degree or have degree recognition, to have received vocational training or prior job experience. Of interest is a sizable group of women who despite a considerable number of years in Germany (an advantage), do not have a recognized degree, have not completed a vocational training and have no job experience. Similarly, almost one-third of women with the advantage of permanency in their residency status, had no recognized degree. All this suggests that there is a constellation of factors (permanency in terms of residency status, recognized degree, higher language level, prior vocational training and/or job experience) that should position women well to attain the objectives of the labor market integration project. However, there seems to be a subgroup of women who despite advantageous factors related to migration background (more years in Germany, permanency in residency status, higher language skills) remains disadvantaged in terms of educational/ occupational background. What role other factors, such as age, number of children, psychosocial factors, etc., play in explaining differences in these subgroups deserves further investigation.

As part of the variables related to migration background, country of origin was, however, explored as a possible explanatory factor. Comparative analyses between women from the four countries most represented in this project were conducted. While findings were only presented descriptively, they suggest that country of origin may indeed need to be considered in intersectional analyses. Afghan women had a particularly high rate of "no job experience" despite a comparatively high rate of recognized degrees and even some vocational training in their country. This might indicate that other factors (e.g., precarity in residency status, factors related to migration experiences) might interfere with women's chances or ability to enter the labor market. When comparing the four ethnic groups, results also showed that Syrian women had comparatively high language levels despite the shortest number of years in Germany. This likely reflects the systematic efforts in Germany, following the 2015/2016 entry of many Syrian refugees, to provide and at times require broad-based language training. Afghan women, on the other hand, have the lowest level of job experience, which may in part be explained by prohibitions for women in Afghanistan to work outside the home but may also reflect this group's complex migration histories, which often involved extended stays in transition countries with little to no

opportunities to work. In addition, the German government never launched the type of systematic labor market integration effort for Afghan refugees that are available to more recent refugee groups. However, there is ample evidence of the aspirations of these women to enter the labor market (e.g., Conrads et al., 2020). Somewhat surprising was the elevated number of time-limited residence permits among Turkish women along with a comparatively high rate of not having a recognized degree despite a high average number of years in Germany and the highest language levels. Data suggest that the average number of years in Germany among Turkish women was affected by a number of women in their thirties and forties who had been born in Germany and speak German as a mother tongue (e.g., Doerschler & Jackson, 2010). While migration from Turkey has a long history in Germany, accompanied by changes in policy, and while average patterns can be detected, it deserves emphasizing that Turkish women (like women from other nationalities) are not a homogeneous group. They include women who grew up in Germany and those that came more recently. The needs of these women likely differ significantly and thus require different programmatic responses. Lastly, women from Eritrea had the highest rate of lacking school degrees, which presents a disadvantage on the labor market. Since policies and services are often created in response to new migrant groups, it is thus worthwhile to consider cohort effects.

7.2 "Are migration and educational/occupational background predictive of project outcome?"

As stated, data provide evidence of great sociodemographic heterogeneity among participating women. Yet, the stated goal of the project is broadly the same for all women – to enter and complete vocational training and to find a job in the social economy sector. This stated goal obscures inherent complexities, which are introduced through different vocational pathways and their respective qualifying prerequisites as well as the different starting points of the women themselves. Operationalizing outcome in various ways to do justice to this complexity is therefore justified. For this analysis, outcome was operationalized in two ways, capturing both official case status outcomes for those women for whom the outcome was known as well as goal attainment outcomes as determined through the appraisal of the professionals in the project. Undoubtedly, evaluating outcome through the eyes of professionals who are invested in the success of the project, needs to be viewed critically. Given the individualized approach of the project, however, that aims to take account of the unique situations of the women, the perspectives of the professionals have weight and ought to be considered. Future analysis will focus on also describing outcome in terms of women's initially stated goals and their attainment. The difficulties of adequately capturing outcome in labor market integration projects has been previously addressed (Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, 2019).

Not surprisingly, the great heterogeneity of the women presents a challenge for projects such as SoWi. It would be expected that characteristics related to migration background as well as educational/occupational background, which, as shown, are closely correlated with each other, would amplify advantages and disadvantages toward the goals of the project. Yet, analysis with regard to outcomes yielded few significant findings. Except for degree recognition, which was statistically significant for both case outcome and goal attainment, as well as a small effect of language level on goal attainment outcomes, none of the other migration and educational/occupational background variables affected

outcome in the project. This can be interpreted in two ways: For one, it could mean that the highly individualized approach the SoWi project embraces to address the individual needs of the women equalizes otherwise relevant sociodemographic differences. Through individualized coaching, flexibility in the duration of project engagement and services to remove barriers (e.g., tutoring, childcare), women regardless of their background of advantage and disadvantage are supported toward reachable goals. The project has resisted tightening of inclusion/exclusion criteria to remain accessible for all WMB that may have interest in joining the project. If this approach does indeed contribute to an equalizing of factors that may otherwise contribute to disadvantage, this could be regarded as evidence that SoWi is successful in its objectives and adherent to its open and individualized approach. However, these null findings could also be viewed critically as constellations of advantage should propel women toward positive outcomes. For instance, if having maximum advantage (e.g., high language skills, advanced degree) does not translate into a measurable advantage, it could indicate a lack of recognition of existing potential and resources.

The importance of a recognized school degree as a prerequisite to entering Germany's vocational training system and ultimately the labor market, was supported by the data and may suggest that this is a structural requirement that needs to be met regardless of the supportive services that are otherwise available. The centrality of having a recognized school degree underscores the importance of creating processes and procedures that as quickly and unbureaucratically as possible work toward the recognition of degrees. This is an issue that has been repeatedly raised in the literature (e.g., Bähr et al., 2019; Federal Ministry for Education and Research, 2019). The importance of language skills has been addressed as well and been identified as the key factor to successful integration (Bähr et al., 2019; Doerschler & Jackson, 2010). The current analysis only had one marginal finding with regard to language skills and outcome, which raises questions and deserves further investigation. It may in part reflect that some of the participants enter fields where advanced language skills may not (yet) be quite as central. It may further suggest that the SoWi project largely succeeds in providing remedial and supportive services in this area, thus again mostly equalizing the effect of this factor for the vocational paths chosen by the women. However, this issue deserves additional nuanced analysis.

Finally, results with regard to the second research question may also indicate that ultimately other factors beyond migration and educational/occupational background are more salient in relation to project success. Prior analysis of psychosocial data has indeed shown that variables such as having younger children, stress and resilience affect outcome (James et al., 2021). In addition, other intersectional factors such as economic factors like income or welfare status as well as age and family status deserve to be investigated. Unfortunately, the monitoring data, which is the most comprehensive data source available for evaluation does not include variables such as forms of disability or psychosocial factors. Such variables could, however, be drawn from other data sources in the evaluation (surveys, case records) but would only be available for some of the women. Nonetheless, further inquiry with a broader spectrum of intersectional variables is clearly needed.

7.3   Limitations and Conclusion

Program evaluation is fraught with challenges (e.g., complex data collection context, changes in policies and procedures and program concepts, non-consistent data collection

standards, etc.) that often undermine its value for knowledge generation. Despite these inherent challenges and limitations, the SoWi project and the accompanying independent evaluation stand out in multiple ways due to programmatic strengths (e.g., individualized coaching through professionals) as well as aspects of the evaluation study (e.g., length of engagement, the amount and type of data that has been collected), and are thus believed to be able to make a contribution to current discourses on WMB, labor market integration, and intersectionality. In this context, it should be emphasized that the evaluation was first and foremost formative, and summative conclusions (for reasons discussed in the paper) must be drawn with caution. Therefore, model building and more complex analysis that would deepen intersectional understanding, were neither intended nor possible.

In the German academic literature, the framework of intersectionality is frequently cited in theoretical discussions, yet it is less often used as the basis for empirical investigations. For the current paper, the intersectionality framework offered a helpful lens to approach the data and to examine profiles of participating women and characteristics related to migration background as well as educational/ occupational background. It aided in identifying clusters of advantage and disadvantage, leading to conclusions that appear to underscore the value of the SoWi project as a supportive and equalizing resource for WMB. Beyond this analysis, which is understood as an important first step, multiple other factors (as stated above) ought to be examined that are likely to shape WMB's experiences in the labor market and in the project. However, intersectional analysis, barring large sample sizes, tend to become unmanageable when too many categories are considered. For future investigation, latent class modeling or cluster analysis might offer other analytic approaches to identifying subgroups of women along intersectional categories and examining differences between them. Finally, labor market integration projects are well advised to consider the multiple intersectional influences that shape WMB's experiences inside and outside of such projects and could constitute barriers on the pathway into the labor market. As was shown here, projects have the potential of equalizing some of these hindering influences through the creation of supportive and targeted services as were implemented in SoWi-project.

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