

The interplay of education, religiosity and feelings of belonging among refugees in Germany

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A significant share of the scientific and political discourses about migrant integration in Europe revolves around the incorporation of immigrants from countries with Muslim traditions into the European societies. Much of this research has looked at different dimensions of religiosity and their variation across countries of destination and migrant generations. A growing research field is the association of religiosity and integration in contexts of forced migration. Our study adds to the research field of social integration by investigating feelings of national belonging and religiosity among refugees from Syria and Eritrea, which have a high proportion of Muslims, but also a Christian minority. We use data from the quantitative survey "Forced Migration and Transnational Family Arrangements - Eritrean and Syrian Refugees in Germany" (TransFAR), collected in 2020. With 1,450 respondents, the data is representative of these two major refugee groups to Germany. We use belonging to the country of destination (Germany) and belonging to the respective country of origin as dependent variables in binary logistics regression analyses. The main explanatory variables are the key integration markers education and religiosity. We find evidence for an apparent integration paradox: Contrary to assumptions from assimilation theories, refugees with higher education express weaker feelings of belonging to Germany. At the same time, they show a stronger degree of belonging with their country of origin. Religiosity moderates this relationship as it is only observable among very religious individuals. Importantly, religiosity is more distinctive than religious affiliation because the patterns are found for Muslims and Christians.