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### Article:

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## Exploring the integration of child refugees in the United Kingdom: the case of the Kindertransport\*

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The Kindertransport (German for “Children’s Transport”) is a term used to refer to the rescue of nearly ten thousand unaccompanied minors of Jewish origin from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the Free City of Danzig (Gdansk) “between December 1938 and the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939”.<sup>1</sup> Commonly referred to as “Kinder”, these unaccompanied child refugees were identified and transported to the UK and placed in foster homes, hostels, schools, and farms across the country. Most of the children rescued through the Kindertransport were the only members of their families who survived the Holocaust, the genocide in which Nazi Germany “systematically murdered approximately 6 million European Jews between 1941 and 1945”.<sup>2</sup> It is considered to be “the single biggest rescue operation aimed at a specific group of people by British official bodies”,<sup>3</sup> with most of the financial support mobilized by civil society actors such as charitable bodies and private individuals.

The immediate trigger for the Kindertransport was Kristallnacht (German for “Night of Broken Glass”), a name given to the pogrom carried out by paramilitary forces and civilians with allegiance to Nazi Germany

1 Andrea Hammel, “Child Refugees forever? The History of the Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39”, *Diskurs Kindheits- und Jugendforschung Heft* (Discourse on Childhood and Youth Research) 2 (2010): 131.

2 Ronnie S. Landau, *The Nazi Holocaust: Its History and Meaning* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 3.

3 Andrea Hammel, “Representations of Family in Autobiographical Texts of Child Refugees”, *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 23, no. 1 (2004): 125.

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against Jews throughout Nazi-occupied territories on 9/10 November 1938. It prompted the British government to react with a “public avowal of assistance for the German Jews”. Before a debate in the House of Commons on 21 November 1938, civil society and religious leaders had met the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, at which the “idea of temporarily admitting a number of unaccompanied children [to the UK] for the purpose of training and education seems to have been discussed”.<sup>4</sup>

Alluding to the public consciousness which showed that the British population and media were aware of the situation and that there was a certain pressure on the government to be seen to be doing something, Chamberlain informed the House of Commons that his government would be considering “any possible way by which we can assist these people”.<sup>5</sup> He further told the Cabinet Committee on Foreign Policy that “something effective should be done to alleviate the terrible fate of the Jews in Germany”.<sup>6</sup> The British Government agreed to waive its stringent immigration restrictions, becoming one of the few countries to do so, and the Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, announced the new refugee policy, which included the directive that all children whose maintenance could be guaranteed by private individuals or charitable organizations were allowed to be admitted to Britain “without the individual checks used for older refugees”.<sup>7</sup> The Kinder were allowed to enter the UK “on the condition that (1) their stay would be temporary; and (2) a £50 bond per child [would be] posted with the Home Office, to ensure that children allowed into the country would not be a burden on the public purse”. Further, “voluntary organisations were responsible for organising the transports and making arrangements for the children to be cared for once they arrived in Britain [with] theoretically . . . no limit [placed] on the number of children that would have been permitted to enter Britain”.<sup>8</sup>

There is considerable emphasis in existing academic work on the early lives of Kinder and their memories on first arriving in the UK, with the bulk of it focused on the duration of the Second World War and its immediate aftermath. Here we focus on the lived experiences of Kinder over their

4 Hammel, “Child Refugees forever?”, 133.

5 Ibid.

6 Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933–1948: British Immigration Policy and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 99, quoted by Hammel, “Child Refugees forever?”, 133.

7 Ibid.

8 Isabel Wollaston, “The Kindertransport: 75 Years on”, University of Birmingham, [2013], [www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/perspective/refugees-wollaston.aspx](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/perspective/refugees-wollaston.aspx) (accessed 2 Oct. 2019).

larger lifespan. This is particularly important since there is scant research from the point of view of the integration of Kinder in the UK. Given that integration has emerged as both a key policy objective and a targeted outcome for projects working with refugees in the UK,<sup>9</sup> this work will look at Kinder integration and is intended to inform the Kindertransport Legacy Campaign, launched in the House of Lords in May 2018, and assist campaign groups in political advocacy for currently unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

### *Literature review: refugee integration*

While at a broad level, “integration” as a word can be thought to be synonymous with “assimilation”, there is general agreement between researchers and theorists that the two ought not to be used interchangeably, especially in view of the fact that “any notional acceptance of multiculturalism demands that minority identities are not supplanted in order to produce one dominant homogeneous culture”.<sup>10</sup> Terry Threadgold and Geoff Court, providing a more general definition of integration, say that “Broadly speaking integration is the process by which immigrants and refugees become part of the receiving society . . . [however] it is often used still to imply a one-way adaptation or acculturation to the dominant culture and way of life”.<sup>11</sup> This illustrates a fundamental clash that occasionally emerges in popular notions of integration, over whether it ought to be seen as a process in which refugees are expected or obliged to abandon elements of their original identity and cultural attributes to “assimilate” into the way of life of their host country, or whether it could be expectation-neutral, leading to multicultural societies with minority identities intact. A statist perspective emerging from the European Commission’s *Handbook on Integration* (2007) offers: “two processes are critical to improving immigrants’ outcomes: the elimination of inequalities, and the acquisition of competencies”, wherein inequalities are multidimensional and include areas such as education, economic life, security of residence, support for family life, anti-discrimination, and general social citizenship, while

9 European Commission, *The European Refugee Fund* (Brussels: EC, 2004); Her Majesty’s Government, *Commission for Integration and Cohesion Final Report: Our Shared Future* (London: Her Majesty’s Government, 2007).

10 Scottish Refugee Council (SRC), *Integration Literature Review* (Glasgow: Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, 2010), [www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0000/5709/refugee\\_integration\\_-\\_literature\\_review.pdf](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0000/5709/refugee_integration_-_literature_review.pdf) (accessed 15 Oct. 2019).

11 Terry Threadgold and Geoff Court, *Refugee Inclusion: A Literature Review* (Cardiff: Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, 2005).

the acquisition of competencies “calls upon each individual to engage in a process of lifelong learning . . . [including] language, training and education”.<sup>12</sup>

This clash between definitions has been addressed from the perspective of an equilibrium: as William Bernard put it in 1973, “integration is achieved when migrants become a working part of their adopted society, take on many of its attitudes and behaviour patterns and participate freely in its activities, but at the same time retain a measure of their original cultural identity and ethnicity”, even though this is not necessarily a harmonious equilibrium given the natural part that conflict has to play in such a relationship, as Mekuria Bulcha noted (1988).<sup>13</sup>

The four “forms” of integration laid down by Friedrich Heckmann and Wolfgang Bosswick in 2006 comprise (1) structural identification, (2) cultural integration, (3) interactive integration, and (4) “identificational” integration, where “structural identification” is defined as representing the acquisition of rights, and thus access to core institutions within the host society, which is made possible by participation in the economy, labour market, housing system, welfare state institutions, and political processes.<sup>14</sup> These four forms of integration have several parallels with the domains of the framework on which we shall expand in the next section. Noting the difficulty in defining the processes that “integration” is used to incorporate, Adrian Favell (in 2001) accepts that alternatives like accommodation, incorporation, and assimilation are “either vaguer, overly precise or ignore agency”,<sup>15</sup> and therefore integration may be the most relevant concept available.

12 European Commission, *Handbook on Refugee Integration* (Brussels: EC, 2007), 8.

13 William S. Bernard, “Indices of Integration in the American Community”, *International Migration* 11, no. 3 (The Hague: Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, 1973); Mekuria Bulcha, *Flight and Integration: Causes of Mass Exodus from Ethiopia and Problems of Integration in the Sudan* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1988), both cited in Tom Kuhlman, “The Economic Integration of Refugees in Developing Countries: A Research Model”, *Serie Research Memoranda* (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 1990): 5, 8, 12.

14 Friedrich Heckmann and Wolfgang Bosswick, *Integration of Migrants: Contribution of Local and Regional Authorities* (Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2006), cited in SRC, *Integration Literature Review*, 3.

15 Adrian Favell, “Philosophies of Integration, Immigration and the Idea of Citizenship in France and Britain”, *Migration, Minorities and Citizenship* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), cited in SRC, *Integration Literature Review*, 3.

### *Conceptual framework*

Through this article, we address the question, what shaped Kindertransport refugees' experiences of integration in the UK? In this work we utilize a conceptual framework titled "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework", developed by Alistair Ager and Alison Strang (2008),<sup>16</sup> which has been widely accepted by researchers, policymakers and practitioners. Through their review of definitions of "integration" Ager and Strang developed a conceptual framework that provides "the most rounded basis from which an empirical study of integration can flow".<sup>17</sup> Their framework is grounded in the Indicators of Integration study, commissioned by the UK Home Office in 2002 with a view to evaluating the effectiveness of refugee integration projects throughout the UK. In an attempt to arrive at an operational definition of the concept, a conceptual framework was developed with ten core domains which the authors suggest reflects normative understandings of integration, and can provide a structure for analysis.

The ten domains of integration span four themes: achievement and access across the sectors of employment, housing, education, and health (titled "Markers and Means"); processes of social connection within and between groups within the community (titled "Social Connection"); structural barriers to such connection related to language, culture, and the local environment (titled "Facilitators"); and assumptions and practice regarding citizenship and rights (titled "Foundation"). As well as using the framework for empirical analysis of refugee integration cases, there is also a need for further assessment of the utility of the framework itself in different contexts and this study addresses both issues.

Under *Markers and Means*, "Employment", "Housing", "Education", and "Health" are identified by Ager and Strang as recurrent key issues in analyses and are specified as discrete domains that serve not merely as markers of integration but also as "potential means to support the achievement of integration".

*Social Connection*: "Social bonds, [defined as] connections within a community defined by, for example, ethnic, national or religious identity; Social bridges with members of other communities; and Social links with institutions including local and central government services" are included

16 Alistair Ager and Alison Strang, "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework", *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21, no. 2 (2008): 166–91.

17 SRC, *Integration Literature Review*, 1.

under this theme, which stresses the “importance of relationships to the understanding of the integration process”.<sup>18</sup>

*Facilitators*: “Language and cultural knowledge” and “safety and stability” figure as the domains under this theme since they constitute the “key facilitating factors for the process of integration”.<sup>19</sup> In the UK context, English-language competency is naturally crucial to integrate effectively in the fabric of the wider community.

*Foundation*: This theme consists of the single domain “Rights and Citizenship”. However, this is identified as a particularly confusing area that causes widespread disagreement owing to the different conceptualizations of nationhood in different countries depending on their understandings of nation and nationhood.<sup>20</sup> These range from Germany’s understanding of citizenship as *ius sanguinis* (blood ties) rather than *ius soli* (birth in the country), to France’s notion of *citoyenneté* (a nation to which people choose to belong) wherein full citizenship is considered an essential prerequisite to integration, to the UK’s focus since the 1960s on “multicultural” societies and “ethnic pluralism” contingent on diverse ethnic groups both coexisting and retaining their respective independent cultural identities. Stemming from the French *citoyenneté*, the state extending “rights” to refugees on attaining citizenship simultaneously implies attendant “responsibilities” as well. More recent UK policy holds that integration is achieved when refugees “become fully able to exercise the rights and responsibilities that they share with other residents”.<sup>21</sup>

### Methodology

In order to investigate the integration experiences of Kinder through this framework, we began by accessing archival material including original documents of Kinder and committees organizing the Kindertransport, reports, minutes, and pamphlets, as well as richly detailed life histories of Kinder, audio testimonies, and prior interview transcripts. We also

18 Alistair Ager and Alison Strang, *Indicators of Integration: Final Report, Home Office Development and Practice Report 28* (London: Her Majesty’s Government, 2004), 4.

19 *Ibid.*

20 Shamit Saggat, “Integration and Adjustment: Britain’s Liberal Settlement Revisited”, in *Immigration and Integration: Australia and Britain*, ed. David Lowe (Canberra: Bureau of Immigration, Multi-cultural and Population Research/Sir Robert Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, 1995).

21 UK Home Office, *Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration* (London: Her Majesty’s Government, 2005).

reviewed literature on policy-relevant areas relating to refugees in a global context, as well as specifically in Europe and the UK, through which we identified integration as a recurrent and relevant theme. To investigate these themes empirically, interviews were conducted with ten Kinder still living in the UK (four men, six women), accessed through existing Kinder associations and “snowball sampling”, to understand their experiences and views regarding integration.

A sample size of ten Kinder means that their experiences are not intended to be portrayed as representative of Kinder in general; rather, the Ager and Strang framework was utilized to build more general propositions from the primary data collected. The spread of the interviewees’ ages on arrival in the UK and currently, their countries of origin, and interview locations are given in the table here. As with many refugee studies, this research was unable to reflect the experiences of Kinder in all the various UK regions.<sup>22</sup>

We further tried to ensure higher validity of our findings by reducing the possibility of bias by avoiding seeking answers to support our preconceived notions, or misperceiving what the interviewee is saying, or leaving room for the interviewee to misunderstand what is being asked.<sup>23</sup> A weakness of this study matches the argument of Paul Brewerton and Lynne Millward (2001) that interviews have poor reliability: “due to their openness to so many types of bias, interviews can be notoriously unreliable, particularly when the researcher wishes to draw comparisons between data sets”.<sup>24</sup> Even so, in order to improve the reliability and validity of the interviews, techniques suggested by Hamza Alshenqeeti (2014) were followed,<sup>25</sup> including avoiding asking leading questions, taking notes, not depending just on recordings, and giving the interviewee a chance to sum up and clarify the points they have made.

Given the nature of snowball sampling, the “representativeness of the sample [cannot be] guaranteed, [as the] researcher has no idea of the true distribution of the population and of the sample” (as the research methods website Explorable has explained; 2009). Snowball sampling also raises the risk of sampling bias since “initial subjects tend to nominate people

22 Frances Williams, *The Forgotten Kindertransportees: The Scottish Experience* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Vera K. Fast, *Children's Exodus: A History of the Kindertransport* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011).

23 Louis Cohen et al., *Research Methods in Education* (London: Routledge, 2007).

24 Paul M. Brewerton and Lynne J. Millward, *Organizational Research Methods: A Guide for Students and Researchers* (London: Sage Publications, 2001).

25 Hamza Alshenqeeti, “Interviewing as a Data Collection Method: A Critical Review”, *English Linguistics Review* 3, no. 4 (2014).



TABLE Interviews conducted, July to August 2018

Name (pseudonym)	Age on arrival	Age current	Country of origin	Interview location
1 Alice	17	97	Germany	London
2 Bertha	5	85	Austria	London
3 Edith	7	87	Czechoslovakia	Nottingham
4 David	4	84	Austria	London
5 Frida	10	89	Austria	London
6 Samuel	7	87	Austria	London
7 Gertrude	12	92	Austria	North Shields (by telephone)
8 Maria	9	89	Germany	Leicester
9 Daniel	14	93	Czechoslovakia	Leicester
10 Michael	7	87	Germany	London

that they know well, [and hence] it is highly possible that the subjects share the same traits and characteristics, thus, it is possible that the sample that the researcher will obtain is only a small subgroup of the entire population.”<sup>26</sup> To avoid this, we compared what emerged from the coding and sorting of the primary data (transcripts) collected, with the secondary data and literature we had reviewed from diverse sources: this triangulation of our findings served to reduce the risk of sampling bias since it helped place the results in a wider context aided by data on a larger and more diverse sample of Kinder.

Interviews were semi-structured, with an interview guide based on elements of the analytical framework but with scope within interviews to follow new leads and topics, to ensure that the voice and views of the interviewees were heard, instead of our own assumptions being reflected. The interviews were guided by the research question and gaps in the literature, and took place between 21 July and 9 August 2018 in the private homes of the interviewees in different cities across the UK.

#### *Background: Kindertransport and Kinder*

The most notable and exhaustive source of data available on Kinder emerges from a 2007 survey conducted by the Association for Jewish Refugees (AJR), titled “Making New Lives in Britain”, which was published

<sup>26</sup> Explorable, “Snowball Sampling”, <https://explorable.com/snowball-sampling> (accessed 2 Oct. 2019).

in 2009.<sup>27</sup> It records the family and religious background, migration to Britain, arrival, placement, and experiences of 1,025 of the nearly 10,000 Kinder brought to the UK, amounting to nearly ten per cent of the total number of Kinder. Even though not wholly representative, this survey, carried out through questionnaires for living Kinder and supplementary questionnaires designed for the descendants of deceased Kinder, elicited an “unusually successful response rate” of about seventy per cent.<sup>28</sup> However, the sample of the Kinder who responded to the survey has been criticized by Jennifer Craig-Norton (2014) as both reliant on the small number of still living Kinder at the time and as “a uniquely self-selected group of participants”, since these Kinder were willing and actively associated with the AJR’s activities; thereby it should not be taken to be “a microcosm of the wider operation”.<sup>29</sup> Further, given that the survey was carried out in 2007, most of the Kinder were octogenarians who had gone through the traumatic experience of separation from family, so the data is prone to both loss of recall and selective revelation of details.

The following are the relevant results from the AJR survey on Kinder, contrasted with our sample of Kinder to provide context:

1 Originally most Kinder were German, while 66% of those answering the question took British nationality. However, 60% of our sample were originally from Austria, 30% were German, and 10% Czech.

2 Germans tended to come from towns other than the capital, with 16.5% of the sample from Berlin and 25.1% of the sample from Vienna, an aggregate 41.6% of the sample from these two cities. Only 10% of our sample hailed from Vienna, none from Berlin, and 10% from Prague (the only other capital in the sample).

3 It also emerged that their religious affiliation could have been affected by their experience, in that 30% of the sample identified their father’s affiliation as Orthodox, while 19% of the sample maintained their own current affiliation as Orthodox, pointing towards an 11% decline in the sample’s religious self-identification as Orthodox. In our sample, only 10% identified as Orthodox.

27 Association for Jewish Refugees (hereafter, AJR), “Kindertransport Survey completed: ‘Making New Lives in Britain’”, <https://ajr.org.uk/Kindertransport-survey/> (accessed 2 Oct. 2019).

28 Hammel, “Child Refugees forever?”, 139.

29 Jennifer Craig-Norton, “Contesting Memory: New Perspectives on the Kindertransport” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Southampton, 2014), 330.

4 At an average, there were more female Kinder in the sample (56.4%) than male Kinder (43.6%). The female Kinder were also slightly younger (mean age 11.5 years, median age 12 years) compared to male Kinder (mean age 11.9 years, median age 12.5 years). Our sample displays a similar trend, with 60% female Kinder and 40% male Kinder.

5 Of the sample, 31% arrived with one or more siblings (most frequently with just one). Of these, 36% were separated from their siblings on arrival. Of our sample 20% arrived in the UK with one sibling.

6 Of the sample, 16% had attained university degrees, and 22% had achieved some sort of higher education. However, due to lack of funding, several Kinder in the sample were left with no option but to attend evening classes after work to progress beyond elementary education. In our sample, 60% had attained university degrees, with 30% having opted for vocational education.

7 AJR infers that while family outcomes of the Kinder in the sample were often very painful, they largely appear not to have impeded a degree of later normality. This inference is based on the following data from the sample:

a. 54% of Kinder parents were believed to have been killed, whereas 75% of our sample's parents were believed to have been killed in concentration camps or Jewish ghettos in Europe.

b. 41% of Kinder never saw both their parents again, whereas 80% of our sample never saw both their parents again, while 20% saw at least one of their parents again.

c. 63% found other relatives after the war, while 70% of our sample revealed that they were in contact with other relatives after the war.

d. 94% had married, whereas 90% of our sample had married.

e. 84% had children, while 80% of our sample had children.

f. 81% have told their children or grandchildren of their own early life, while 100% of our sample have done so.

Most books on Kinder contain either self-written memoirs or compiled collections of testimonies.<sup>30</sup> However, such accounts have been described

30 See Bertha Leverton and Shmuel Lowensohn, eds., *I came Alone: The Stories of the Kindertransports* (Lewes: Book Guild, 1990); Olga L. Drucker, *Kindertransport* (New York: Henry Holt, 1992); Vera Gissing, *Pearls of Childhood: A Unique Childhood Memoir of Life in*

by Jennifer Norton as an “intricate tapestry of memory and forgetting [which is] mediated by the urge to leave a lasting record and the desire to suppress painful memories”.<sup>31</sup> Tony Kushner believes that around ten per cent of all Kinder have recorded their experiences in one way or another.<sup>32</sup>

Accounts of the experiences of Kinder in Nazi-occupied Europe bring forth recurrent incidents of ostracization, discrimination, and persecution, especially in school. After the National Socialist (Nazi) regime led by Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, and after the Nazi invasion of Austria in 1938, “it could be argued that children were even more prone to experience everyday violence because of their Jewish backgrounds than adults”, as Andrea Hammel holds.<sup>33</sup> Marion Kaplan (2001) outlines the growing exclusion of Jewish children from mainstream schools in Germany following the implementation of the law euphemistically called *Gesetz gegen die Überfüllung der deutschen Schulen und Hochschulen* (“law against the overcrowding of German schools and colleges”) in April 1933,<sup>34</sup> whereby a “quota for the admission of Jewish children to German schools was set, [and] many Jewish children were explicitly asked to leave their schools, others left after becoming more and more ostracized . . . [while] those who were still enrolled in mainstream German schools, [were] affected by exclusion from school trips and other extra-curricular activities”.<sup>35</sup> Innumerable instances emerge of life in the public sphere for children being affected by violence and discriminatory incidents in situations such as the journey from home to school, with several recounting feelings of fear and terror: “I no longer wanted to be out of doors, life seemed too unsafe”.<sup>36</sup>

Despite being scared of leaving their families, most Kinder understood

*Wartime Britain in the Shadow of the Holocaust* (London: Robson Books, 1995); Mark J. Harris and Deborah Oppenheimer, *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2000); Ruth David, *Child of Our Time: A Young Girl's Flight from the Holocaust* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003); Alison Pick, *Far to go* (London: Headline Review, 2011).

31 Jennifer A. Norton, “The Kindertransport: History and Memory” (M.A. thesis, California State University, Sacramento, 2010), 110.

32 Tony Kushner, *Remembering Refugees: Then and Now* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), cited in Hammel, “Child Refugees forever?”, 141.

33 Hammel, “Child Refugees forever?”, 132.

34 Marion Kaplan, *Der Mut zum Überleben: Jüdische Frauen und Familien in Nazideutschland* (The Courage to survive: Jewish women and families in Nazi Germany) (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2001), cited in *ibid.*

35 Hammel, “Child Refugees forever?”, *ibid.*

36 David, *Child of Our Time*, 16.

the need for their parents' efforts to find a way for them to emigrate.<sup>37</sup> In our interviews with Kinder, discrimination in school took the form of labelling Jewish children with the Star of David on uniforms,<sup>38</sup> the compulsory chanting of "Heil Hitler",<sup>39</sup> and sporting of swastikas on uniforms,<sup>40</sup> segregation of Jewish children from mixed public schools and their transferral to Jewish schools,<sup>41</sup> refusal by teachers in mixed public schools to correct Jewish children's work and unfairly marking down on purpose,<sup>42</sup> and unpleasant journeys to school littered with invectives and physical abuse.<sup>43</sup> Through in-depth interviews with Kinder, published in 2009, Iris Guske finds three major coping strategies that Kinder adopted: (1) the utter inability to cope with a sequence of traumatic events, (2) outright denial that any trauma had been suffered, and (3) the lifelong effort to work through and integrate the traumatic experiences.<sup>44</sup>

### *Critical assessment of the Kindertransport*

The Kindertransport has been labelled as "one of the most spectacular rescue operations"<sup>45</sup> and the Kinder as "now the most famous and commemorated group of refugees coming to Britain".<sup>46</sup> Craig-Norton argues against the Kindertransport being portrayed as "an unambiguously celebratory narrative . . . especially when considering the plight of parents who had to make agonizing choices to send their children away".<sup>47</sup> Contemporary calls for a blanket imitation of the operation have been discouraged in the light of "an examination of the fate of parents and siblings who were not welcomed to Britain [suggesting] that it is a mistake

37 Hammel, "Child Refugees forever?", 132.

38 Gertrude, interview, 2 Aug. 2018, North Shields.

39 Maria, interview, 7 Aug. 2018, Leicester.

40 Samuel, interview, 1 Aug. 2018, London.

41 Gertrude, interview.

42 Alice, interview, 21 July 2018, London.

43 Gertrude, interview.

44 Iris Guske, *Trauma and Attachment in the Kindertransport Context: German-Jewish Child Refugees' Accounts of Displacement and Acculturation in Britain* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 190.

45 Rebekka Gopfert, *Der jüdische Kindertransport von Deutschland nach England 1938/39: Geschichte und Erinnerung* (The Jewish Kindertransport from Germany to England 1938/39: history and remembrance) (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1999), cited in Guske, *Trauma and Attachment*, 10.

46 Kushner, *Remembering Refugees*, 10.

47 Jennifer Craig-Norton, "Contesting the Kindertransport as a 'Model' Refugee Response", *European Judaism* 51 (2017): 24.

to call for the reimplementation of the Kindertransport on any scale to respond to the wave of religious and political refugees currently crossing into Europe in large numbers".<sup>48</sup> While "admission [to the UK] saved the children's lives, exclusion sealed the fates of their parents".<sup>49</sup>

Excluding the admission of parents and solely allowing children is linked, it has been argued, to the relative ease of acculturating children compared with adults, since it would be far easier for white, European children to "be Anglicized, [grow] up speaking English, and thus less likely than adults [to] arouse xenophobia".<sup>50</sup> Hammel (2010) holds that children were viewed as less of a threat to British society and way of life, because their dispersal throughout Britain and accommodation in foster families and hostels meant their public visibility was limited and they were not perceived as an immediate threat to the labour market in Britain.<sup>51</sup> The perception of child refugees as embodying innocence led to an often reductionist and redemptive portrayal of the whole Kindertransport effort in the media, which furthered the narrative of Britain as the saviour.

#### *Analysis: exploring the integration of Kinder*

Employing the framework analysis method, we proceeded with sifting, charting, and sorting the gathered primary data (interview transcripts). We followed the five-step process prescribed by Jane Ritchie and Liz Spencer in 2002:<sup>52</sup>

1 *Familiarization*: this is the "process during which the researcher becomes familiarized with the transcripts of the data collected . . . and gains an overview of the collected data". Here, we listened to the audio recordings of the interviews, transcribed, and noted key and recurrent themes emerging from the data.

2 *Identifying a thematic framework*: the "emerging themes or issues may have arisen from a priori themes and issues, however it is at this stage that the researcher must allow the data to dictate the themes and issues". In this vein, while we did devise themes and sub-themes relevant to the

48 Ibid.

49 London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, 118.

50 Ibid., 121.

51 Hammel, "Child Refugees forever?", 136.

52 Jane Ritchie and Liz Spencer, "Qualitative Data Analysis for Applied Policy Research", in *The Qualitative Researcher's Companion*, ed. A. Michael Huberman and Matthew B. Miles (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 305–29.

conceptual framework, with a view to subsequently populating it, we also identified new recurrent themes that added to existing a priori themes. We also ensured that the original research question was being addressed in this developing thematic framework.

3 *Indexing*: at this stage, we identified “portions or sections of the data that correspond to a particular theme” by coding recurrent terms and phrases related to each theme and sub-theme, as expressed by the interviewees.

4 *Charting*: the portions of data corresponding to the themes and sub-themes that were indexed in the previous stage were then arranged in the form of charts of the themes, spanning both those connected to the a priori research inquiries and emergent themes. “Although the pieces of data are lifted from their context, the data is still clearly identified as to what case it came from . . . and is kept in the same order in each chart”.

5 *Mapping and interpretation*: here, the researcher “pulls together key characteristics of the data, and [maps and interprets] the data set as a whole”. The mapping was done in the form of a schematic diagram to aid the interpretation of the data. The interpretation is elaborated in the next sections, titled “Markers and Means”, “Social Connections”, “Facilitators”, and “Foundation”. However, it was undertaken while keeping in mind the objectives of qualitative analysis, including “mapping [the] range and nature of phenomena, creating typologies, finding associations, providing explanations, and developing new ideas or theories”.

#### *Markers and Means: Employment*

Ager and Strang (2008), while acknowledging the observation in Stephen Castles et al. (2001) that employment is possibly the most researched area of integration, cite Frances Tomlinson and Sue Egan’s 2002 article to identify factors relating to the experiences of refugees that are shaped by employment. These include: “promoting economic independence, planning for the future, meeting members of the host society, providing opportunity to develop language skills, restoring self-esteem and encouraging self-reliance”.<sup>53</sup> Under-employment is identified

53 Stephen Castles et al., *Integration: Mapping the Field, Report of a Project carried out by the Centre for Migration and Policy Research and Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford* (London: Home Office, 2001), 130; Frances Tomlinson and Sue Egan, “From Marginalization to (Dis)empowerment: Organizing Training and Employment Services for Refugees”, *Human Relations* 55, no. 8 (2002): 1019–43, cited in Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration”, 170.

as a recurrent problem for refugees, wherein they find themselves in employment for which they are over-qualified.<sup>54</sup>

A well distributed range of professions emerged in our sample of ten Kinder. They comprised a biochemist and academic researcher, a retired headteacher of a secondary school, a deputy headteacher of a grammar school, a secondary school French teacher, three entrepreneurs, a home-maker who had previously worked in assembly lines at factories, an experimental physicist, and a rabbi and secondary school religious education teacher. In terms of professional histories, the Kinder in our sample opted for diverse paths. Those in academia expressed a resolve to “give back to a country that gave us everything”,<sup>55</sup> while the entrepreneurs believed their contribution to society took the form of the ventures they founded and the regular proceeds to charity that emanated from them. The resolve to contribute to Britain also emerged from an interviewee who volunteered in numerous roles during the war such as sewing soldiers’ uniforms.<sup>56</sup>

Closely linked to their employment was their financial situation, which most in our sample described as “comfortable”, with certain qualifications in the case of one Kind such as having to hold multiple part-time jobs simultaneously to achieve financial stability. Under-employment did not emerge as a significant theme in this sample, as most Kinder can be described as reasonably successful professionally, with none having to settle for employment that did not match their qualifications.

### Housing

“The difference between a house and a home is the difference between a place to stay and a place to live. A home is a place of safety, security and stability, the lack of which was the main reason refugees left their country of origin”, said the Dutch Refugee Council in 2001. “The effect that housing has on refugees’ overall physical and emotional wellbeing, as well as on their ability to feel ‘at home’, is well established”.<sup>57</sup> Most Kinder in our sample who had to change homes many times in their youth, through

54 Africa Education Trust, *Refugee Education, Training and Employment in Inner London: A Baseline Study* (London: FOCUS Central London and the Refugee Training Partnership, 1998).

55 Gertrude, interview.

56 Alice, interview.

57 Dutch Refugee Council and European Council on Refugees and Exiles, *Good Practice Guide on the Integration of Refugees in the European Union: Housing* (Brussels: ECRE, 2001), cited in Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration”, 171.



frequent transfers from one foster home or hostel to another, reported a sense of impermanence and lack of feeling “at home”.

Those Kinder who were later reunited with family, as well as those who found welcoming foster parents who treated them with equality, displayed far greater satisfaction with their living conditions while growing up, regardless of the financial situations of such families and the concomitant physical conditions of their housing. “I could go and live with my uncle and [for] all the big houses [of foster families] and all the rest of it, what did it matter, just to be with the family”.<sup>58</sup> In contrast, a complete unfamiliarity with the concept of privacy emerged from interviewees who had spent the bulk of their childhood in hostels throughout the UK.<sup>59</sup> The effects of uncertain and impermanent housing during their youth notwithstanding, ninety per cent of the Kinder in our sample now own their own homes, which, it could be observed during the interviews, were comfortable and well-situated in their respective urban settings.

### Education

Education “provides skills and competences in support of subsequent employment, enabling people to become more constructive and active members of society”, and schools are generally the “most important place of contact with members of local host communities, playing an important role in establishing relationships supportive of integration”, according to Ager and Strang. They cite “insufficient support for learning the host-society language, isolation and exclusion (bullying, racism, difficulties making friends, etc.)” as reasons that impact refugee children’s experience of education.<sup>60</sup> None of the Kinder in our sample recalled experiencing discrimination or being bullied in school while in the UK. They gave generally positive feedback about their educational experience in school and beyond: in most cases, the various committees responsible for their supervision while growing up provided support to the extent of changing a Kinder’s school whenever he or she felt uncomfortable in a given environment. Of those in the sample old enough to remember their schools in Europe in comparison, most experienced far less bullying and discrimination in their educational experience in the UK. Sixty per cent of our sample of Kinder had attained university degrees, with 20 per

58 Bertha, interview, 24 July 2018, London.

59 Michael, interview, 9 Aug. 2018, London.

60 Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration”, 172.

cent holding doctorates in the sciences and 30 per cent having received a postgraduate degree as their highest qualification. One person in the sample who arrived in England at the age of seventeen missed out on a formal education but completed her A-Levels in English and German by correspondence at the age of eighty.<sup>61</sup>

Ager and Strang also identify vocational education and skills training as key aspects of integration, since “such measures foster employability either in general terms or through enhancement of specific language or work skills”.<sup>62</sup> In our sample, thirty per cent of Kinder opted for vocational education in areas ranging from optometry to fashion designing. A view that is representative of refugees’ perception of appropriate life choices for themselves emanated from Frida as she narrated her father’s advice to her to opt for a trade school over university: “If you are a refugee, you can’t go to university. You have to have a trade in hand because when we move on to the next place, you’ll have yourself a career.”<sup>63</sup>

### Health

Ager and Strang’s 2008 documentary sources revealed that “good health was widely seen as an important resource for active engagement in a new society”, and that “reliable access to health services marks effective engagement with a key state service”.<sup>64</sup> None of the Kinder in our sample experienced any difficulty in accessing health services. While language barriers affecting communication between healthcare providers and refugees is often cited as a problem, none of the Kinder in our sample reported any such difficulty, mostly attributable to their ease of communication in English given that their acculturation began at an earlier age. Twenty per cent of our sample said that they had suffered from breast cancer and another 20 per cent reported heart ailments in the past but they believed such health problems to be under control ever since. The remaining 60 per cent merely cited old age as a reason for loss of energy but otherwise reported good health on the whole, as well as a general sense of satisfaction with access to, and quality of, public health services such as the NHS.

61 Alice, interview.

62 Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration”, 171.

63 Frida, interview, 1 Aug. 2018, London.

64 Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration”, 172.

*Social connection: Social bonds*

“Many refugees . . . valued proximity to family because this enabled them to share cultural practices and maintain familiar patterns of relationships”, and “such connection played a large part in them feeling ‘settled’”.<sup>65</sup> Seventy per cent of our sample never saw both their parents again. Even as 70 per cent of the Kinder in our sample revealed that they were in contact with other relatives after the war, despite the centrality that religion often holds in public life within refugee communities, 90 per cent did not identify themselves as Orthodox. However, 50 per cent did identify as religious to varying degrees and 30 per cent identified as being practising Jews. Of this 30 per cent (three Kinder out of ten), two were raised by their Jewish parents who had been able to emigrate to the UK after their children, and one was brought up in Orthodox Jewish hostels, followed by a career as a practising rabbi. The remaining 20 per cent held Judaism as central to their cultural identity but did not consider themselves as practising Jews, and several revealed that the Jewish committees responsible for them during their youth made special efforts to ensure that they were brought up with sufficient introduction to, and instruction in, the Jewish faith. Six out of the ten Kinder in our sample lived in areas of north London with historically higher and more concentrated Jewish populations, such as Hendon.

*Social bridges*

According to Ager and Strang’s interpretation of integration literature, “consideration of the relationship between refugees and host communities is generally represented by issues relating to social harmony, and also . . . refugee participation in the host society”.<sup>66</sup> A marked trend emerged when Kinder in our sample were asked whether they felt any difficulty in mixing with people from different communities, with nine out of our sample of ten categorically stating that they never faced any such problems. It can be inferred that it was only those who received a sizeable period of education at British schools who felt this way, as the one Kind with no experience of attending school in the UK noted that, while she was friendly with people from different communities, she did not mix with them much. She attributed this to cultural differences, observing that, in her own

65 *Ibid.*, 178.

66 *Ibid.*, 179.

understanding, British etiquette considers it discourteous to speak to a stranger.<sup>67</sup> A striking view which linked social bridges to social bonds emerged from Daniel: “It’s only when [refugees] integrate that they’ll be able to practise their own culture as well. You want to be on the inside in order to be on the outside.”<sup>68</sup>

### *Social links*

Connections “between individuals and structures of the state, such as government services”<sup>69</sup> and “engagement with local governmental and non-governmental services, civic duties, and political processes, demonstrate a further set of social connections supporting integration”.<sup>70</sup> Every single Kinder in our sample reported having taken an active and continuing part in community organizations and committees, especially those bodies working with refugees. Their involvement ranged from refugee advocacy work to lecture circuits across UK schools to spread awareness about the Holocaust and the Kindertransport. In recognition of their services to the community, two of the Kinder in our sample were awarded high civilian honours, namely the CBE and MBE. Ten per cent of the sample played an active role in civic bodies and local government, while twenty per cent reported having been members of the Labour Party. On the whole, it will not be an overstatement that Kinder in our sample can be said to be thoroughly immersed and involved in this respect.

### *Facilitators: Language and cultural knowledge*

According to Guske’s findings in her study on Kinder, “language acquisition and attrition had . . . been shrugged off as a relatively minor issue by the Kinder”.<sup>71</sup> “In the UK context, not being able to speak English is seen as a barrier to social interaction, economic integration and full participation”,<sup>72</sup> yet it emerged that none of the Kinder in our sample faced any significant challenge in acquiring English language skills. This can be attributed to the early age at which most Kinder’s education and acculturation into life in the UK began. Timeframes cited by them to learn

67 Alice, interview.

68 Daniel, interview, 7 Aug. 2018, Leicester.

69 Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration”, 181.

70 Ager and Strang, *Indicators of Integration*, 20.

71 Guske, *Trauma and Attachment*, 48.

72 Home Office, *Integration Matters*, cited in Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration”, 182.

English on arrival in the UK ranged from a couple of weeks to a few years, with a marked correlation between a younger age of arrival in the UK and lesser time taken to learn English.

Most of the Kinder in our sample nevertheless point out that most of the English they learnt was self-taught and imbibed by interacting with peers, with limited to non-existent institutional and structural support, such as specialized English language classes targeted at non-native speakers. Similarly, for each Kinder, the process of learning English was accompanied by a decline in the quality of their native language (German and Czech) skills, except to an extent in cases where the Kinder either returned to the care of their birth parents or relatives, or were raised by German-speaking foster families.

#### *Safety and stability*

On the safety front, which is a common concern among refugees and the broader communities within which they live, “racial harassment and crime erodes confidence, constrains engagement in social connection, and distorts cultural knowledge”.<sup>73</sup> Fifty per cent of our sample reported at least one incident of discriminatory and antisemitic remarks or incidents levelled at them, while the rest held that they never personally experienced such incidents despite having heard of their occurrence to others known to them.

In terms of stability, all ten Kinder in our sample had to change living arrangements after arriving in the UK owing to mismatched foster families or hostels. Feelings of impermanence and “not feeling at home” were common for those Kinder in our sample who had to change living arrangements multiple times during their youth after arriving in the UK. A factor that necessitated such frequent movement was the stipulation that those classified by the government as “enemy aliens” should not be allowed to reside close to the British coast during the war. This classification extended to those immigrants who held nationalities of Axis-controlled countries, with whom Britain was in conflict at the time.

#### *Foundation: Rights and citizenship*

While all the Kinder in our sample acquired British citizenship once the “enemy alien” tag was removed after the war, complexities emerged with regard to the question of British identity. All Kinder in the sample declared

<sup>73</sup> Ager and Strang, *Indicators of Integration*, 22.

themselves as regular voters, if not necessarily overtly political in their outlook, and considered themselves as well-integrated in British life. However, their perception of their identity was often complicated with their Jewish heritage, as exemplified by Alice: “I can only feel as British as one can as a Jewish girl with a continental family! I certainly don’t feel Austrian. I suppose I feel British in some ways. I quite like some of the reservedness [sic] in a way. But I feel if you’re Jewish, you can never belong to any other country because you know that once the crunch comes, that’s it. I can say so because I’ve been through that.”<sup>74</sup> Most Kinder did not perceive the dual nature of their identity as both Jewish and British to be irreconcilable, with Michael believing that “I feel I’m British, I’ve made my home here since 1939. While I have strong support for Israel, it doesn’t mean I have no loyalty to the UK, I’m as loyal as anyone else. I feel part of my life’s duty as a Jew, and as a British citizen, is to do something for society”.<sup>75</sup>

On the question of whether they believe it is more incumbent on the State to extend rights and services to refugees, as opposed to refugees assuming greater responsibility to self-integrate, most Kinder replied that it should ideally be a mixture of both. However, a divide emerged in our sample, broadly in line with the personal political worldviews of the Kinder, as to whether rights matter more than responsibilities. Interestingly, in an almost one-to-one equation, those Kinder with self-declared left-leaning views tilted relatively more towards refugee integration being the primary responsibility of the state, while those with more conservative worldviews put greater emphasis on the refugees assuming greater responsibility to integrate themselves.

### Conclusion

This article set out to answer the question: what shaped Kindertransport child refugees’ experiences of integration in the UK? In order to do so, we used the key domains of refugee integration proposed in a conceptual framework developed by Ager and Strang in 2008. Our analysis, based primarily on the interviews conducted with Kinder, with secondary data to provide broader context, shows that the integration experiences of Kindertransport child refugees have been influenced by all domains of the framework, while the extent of their influence varies across domains. This could be attributable to the framework being developed for refugees

74 Alice, interview.

75 Michael, interview.

in general, not specifically child refugees: hence certain domains were less relevant challenges to the Kinder because of their early acculturation into British life. These domains included acquiring language and cultural knowledge, and accessing health services. Ager and Strang's conceptualization of housing as being a key domain in a physical sense was held to be largely irrelevant, which can be attributable to the brunt of securing housing arrangements not falling directly on the Kinder during their youth. Further research towards developing a robust framework intended specifically for child refugees, which is identified as a gap in current literature, is suggested.

"To me integration is work, if we work we are integrated", reported a Rwandan refugee to the European Council for Refugees and Exiles in 1999.<sup>76</sup> Domains such as education and employment played a major role in the integration of the Kinder interviewed, securing for most their economic security and self-identity, with several in our sample having achieved remarkable professional success and none reporting a state of under-employment vis-à-vis their qualifications. This interpretation holds both for those in our sample who opted for a university education and for those choosing vocational education and trade schools. On average, the Kinder described their experience of education and work environments in the UK as being safe and largely devoid of discrimination and bullying; however, half the sample reported at least one incident of being affected by discrimination. Housing conditions were expressed by the Kinder as linked more to their treatment by foster families or hostels, rather than physical and locational considerations and, for the Kinder who experienced frequent changes in living arrangements while growing up, a sense of a lack of stability emerged. There was general satisfaction regarding access to, and quality of, health services, with most of the Kinder in reasonably good health despite advanced age, with any previous ailments under medical control.

Most Kinder in our sample believed themselves to be well-integrated in their communities, cutting across people with both similar and dissimilar backgrounds from themselves, but to varying degrees and often dependent on the age at which their acculturation into British life commenced. The early age of the Kinder's arrival in the UK is also linked to their relative lack of difficulty in acquiring English language skills and cultural knowledge.

<sup>76</sup> Rwandan refugee cited in European Council for Refugees and Exiles, *Bridges and Fences to Integration: Refugee Perceptions of Integration in the European Union* (Brussels: ECRE, 1999), 42.

They were also found to be thoroughly immersed and engaged in civic bodies, committees, community organizations, local affairs, political advocacy, and non-governmental organizations working with refugees. While the Kinder positively identified as British, they also balanced the self-perception of their identities as being simultaneously linked to being Jewish, and placed importance on both the extension of rights and services by the state towards refugees and the concomitant responsibilities of refugees themselves to integrate.