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# Islamophobia in Public Policy: The Rise of Right Wing Populism in Denmark

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**CLAREMONT McKENNA COLLEGE**

**ISLAMOPHOBIA IN PUBLIC POLICY:  
THE RISE OF RIGHT WING POPULISM IN DENMARK**

SUBMITTED TO

PROFESSOR EDWARD HALEY

AND

DEAN NICHOLAS WARNER

BY

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FOR

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The premise of this thesis would never have been formulated if it was not for Bente Skadhauge, *min mormor*, who taught me to always be vigilant for and speak up against inequality and injustice.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*We “the People”*

Nordic right wing populist parties have a relatively large voter base and claim international legitimacy by the very fact that they are not products of a “revisionist agenda.”<sup>1</sup> Unlike similar parties in Austria or Germany with their roots in fascism or nazism, Nordic right wing populist parties steer clear of these infamous labels from Europe’s past. However, the mass murder committed by a Norwegian Progressive Party member in the summer of 2011 exemplifies the unavoidable danger of right-wing populist rhetoric, no matter its historic roots. While traditional European populists stood against the elite as a way of gaining the political support of ‘the people,’ twenty-first century right-wing populism defines ‘the people’ along ethnic, national and religious lines to ‘otherize’ immigrants as threats to their country’s specific culture.<sup>2</sup> It does not shun its anti-elitist background, but casts the elite as the perceived profiteers of globalization who benefit financially from the presence of the ‘other.’<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, in the wake of heightened immigration from Arab countries, the ‘other’ is increasingly portrayed by European right-wing populists as Muslim immigrants and their descendants.

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<sup>1</sup> Anton Pelinka, “Right-Wing Populism: Concept and Typology” In *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*, ed. Ruth Wodak, et al. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013) 14.

<sup>2</sup> Pelinka, 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Ruth Wodak, “‘Anything Goes!’ - The Haiderization of Europe.” In *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*, ed. Ruth Wodak, et al. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 26.

In other words, right-wing populists offer themselves as defenders of European democracy against the encroaching globalization of Islamism.<sup>5</sup>

The chronic ‘othering’ of immigrants is the modern ticking bomb in European politics. However, before tackling the problem, it is crucial to understand its roots. Nordic right-wing populism began in Denmark. The Danish People’s Party, the DPP, was established in 1995, but gained parliamentary influence from 2001 to 2011 under the coalition government of the Liberal and Conservative People’s Parties which relied on the DPP to gain the requisite support for premiership. The rapid rise of the DPP has reflected a growing trend of Islamophobia among the Danish electorate and more importantly, it began the perilous trend of right wing populist parties in Nordic countries.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, this paper will attempt to chronicle the influence of the DPP in Denmark to exemplify the power of the Islamophobic rhetoric of right wing populism on public policy.

The growth of anti-immigration sentiment in Denmark is particularly startling when one considers the international attention Denmark receives for representing the pinnacle of good governance. Forbes Magazine has ranked it first in its list of “world’s most responsible governments.”<sup>7</sup> The Economist placed Denmark at number five on its

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<sup>5</sup> Pelinka, 12.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Rapoza, “The Worlds 10 Most Responsible Governments,” *Forbes*, November 29, 2012, accessed November 2, 2013, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2012/11/29/the-worlds-10-most-responsible-governments/>.



list of “where to be born in 2013.”<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, it recently regained its position as the “world’s happiest country.”<sup>9</sup> With one of the oldest democracies in the world, Denmark has long been a beacon of liberal democratic ideals and a model for the welfare state.<sup>10</sup> Considering Denmark’s global recognition for good governance, the integration of Muslims into Danish society represents the integration of immigrants into the small, welfare state in the wake of globalization. Furthermore, the rise of the DPP exemplifies a larger European effort to portray the immigration of Muslims to Europe as a collision of Islamism and democracy in what could also be understood as a form of neo-racism, or in the context of this paper, Islamophobia.

I will focus on three sectors of Danish society: the media, social services and the refugee and asylum system to exemplify the effects of the Islamophobic rhetoric of the DPP on Danish public policy. The rise in power of right wing populism in Denmark has direct and profound implications on the ability to effectively integrate Muslim immigrants into Danish society. In other words, in Denmark, extreme rhetoric is not confined to the fringes of the political spectrum, but rather reflected in governmental action. I will uncover the specific policies that have been formed from right wing populist rhetoric to specifically target Muslims living in Denmark to conclude that the Danish

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<sup>8</sup> Laza, Kekic, “The lottery of life: Where to be born in 2013.” *The Economist*, November 21, 2012, accessed November 2, 2013. <http://www.economist.com/news/21566430-where-be-born-2013-lottery-life>.

<sup>9</sup> John F. Helliwell and Shun Wang, “World Happiness: Trends, Explanations and Distribution” in *World Happiness Report 2013*, ed. John Helliwell, et al. (New York: UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2013), 8-37.

<sup>10</sup> Nichols Aylott, Magnus Blomgren and Torbjorn Bergman, “Denmark: Party Agents on Tight Leashes” In *Political Parties in Multi-Level Politics: The Nordic Countries Compared*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 51.

government is undergoing a threatening change in its values in order to protect an ill-defined “Danish way of life.”

### *Roadmap*

Firstly, Chapter 2 will look at the Danish media and its close ties to the right wing government. This will help explain why there is a long history of the negative portrayal of Islam in Danish media. I will pay special attention to the controversial Muhammad Cartoon scandal of 2005 and evaluate the responses to the controversy in Nyborg Fængsel to exemplify the direct and detrimental effects of Danish media on the proliferation of the right-wing populist agenda. I will argue that the crisis was exacerbated by a poor governmental response from the Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, whose Liberal Party had close political ties to the DPP. In many ways the 2005 crisis was a direct result of policy reflecting right wing populist rhetoric. Both the current infatuation with Muslims in fiction and the Muslim-as-a-victim paradigm in the news hint that media discrimination against Muslims is changing, but not necessarily for the better.

Chapter 3 will then evaluate Muslim immigrants’ relation to social services and their effects on the stability of the welfare state. The welfare state has an interesting influence on integration because of its involvement in the private sphere. I will discuss how the DPP has morphed its platform from anti-welfare state to anti-immigration and how this shift has affected these specific social services: refugee benefits, transnational

marriage, and education. These three areas of the welfare state have undergone policy changes to the specific detriment of Muslim immigrants and their descendants. I will conclude this section with a discussion of the welfare state in the wake of globalization to argue that the proper integration of immigrants could strengthen the system in the long run. A prevailing right wing populist rhetoric that actively suppresses Danish Muslim immigrants and their descendants will cause the more successful immigrants to emigrate before they have the opportunity to give back to the welfare system that had supported them.

Chapter 4 will follow the transformation of the Danish refugee and asylum system from one of the most liberal systems in the world to one of the world's strictest. This dramatic transformation began with a new "Alien Package" introduced by the Liberal-Conservative coalition with adamant DPP support. The Package has greatly effected the access to asylum, permanent residence and eventual citizenship of refugees. Meanwhile, the stifling living situations of refugees in legal limbo, in the confines of refugee camps, and regulations that seem to specifically target Muslim refugees has continued to undermine any chances of Muslim refugee's future integration into Danish society. The direction of the Danish refugee and asylum system has been internationally criticized as in-compliant with international and European human rights conventions. As a result, Denmark's unwelcome stance towards refugees could have the dual effect of ostracizing Muslim refugees from Danish society and of ostracizing the Danish state from international legislature.

Finally, I will conclude by discussing the current and future state of Denmark. After summarizing the findings from the previous chapters, I will give a brief explanation of why right wing populism remains so alluring to the Danish electorate. Then I will question the current left wing government that took power in 2011. I will also question the lack of academic research regarding immigrants and Muslims in Denmark since the shock of the 2005 “Cartoon Crisis” has subsided. I predict that the current government’s unpopularity will lead to a renewed power of the DPP. Furthermore, I suggest that, in order for integrationist policies to be effective and for Denmark to remain an active member of the international and European community, the DPP redefine its understanding of “Danishness” to include Muslim immigrants and their descendants, distancing itself from the dangerous power of right wing populist rhetoric.

To understand the issues surrounding Muslim integration I will refer to literature analyzing these three Danish sectors and question their integrationist impact on Muslim immigrants and their descendants. To further my research, I will refer to data taken from my project in the summer of 2012 in which I spent two months living within the grounds of a Danish Prison, Nyborg Fængsel. In addition to a wide range of literature on my specific policy sections, my work includes data from a mass survey sent to employees of the *kriminalforsorgen*, the prison service, and my own observations from my days in Nyborg Fængsel which will be referred to as a loose microcosm for Danish society as a whole.

Before embarking on an in-depth analysis of Danish media, social services and refugee and asylum system, I will offer a brief overview of the validity of analyzing a

prison as a microcosm, Danish culture in general and the complexities of Denmark's coalition government. This background information will help provide context for the dangerous rise of right-wing populism as a direct threat to Muslim immigrants in Denmark.

## CHAPTER 2: CONTEXT

*What makes a Prison relevant?*

While I have a dual citizenship and have spent a good portion of my life in Denmark, my research at Nyborg Fængsel gave me a unique insight into Danish society in a small, somewhat controllable setting. My observations and surveys there deserve attention. I believe that a prison can serve as an apt microcosm for the society lying outside its walls. The father of this theory is Donald Clemmer, author of the influential sociological book, *The Prison Community*.

*The Prison Community* discusses the prison as a microcosm for broader society. While Clemmer's thesis centers on an American prison, the notion of a prison as a microcosm can hold true for nearly any society that has an established and respected judicial system. However, the "diversification of economic activities" that make an American prison representative of American society are prevalent, and arguably more pronounced, in Danish prisons.<sup>11</sup> The Danish prison system functions on the premise of normalization, that is, simulating the outside Danish society.<sup>12</sup> Danish prisoners can take classes in a range of subjects, work in several different workshops, can cook for themselves, have multiple visitations from the outside, they can wear and buy their own

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<sup>11</sup> Donald Clemmer, *The Prison Community* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1958), 7.

<sup>12</sup> Kriminalforsgen, "A Programme of Principles for Prison and Probation Work in Denmark," Handbook from the Ministry of Justice Department of Prisons and Probation, Nyborg, 2008, 10.

clothing, and in some cases, leave prison grounds for important social events.<sup>13</sup> While this process of normalization may seem exceedingly liberal to a number of readers, the point I am making is that it offers a rare, semi-controlled environment to research the intricacies of Danish society.

Many other scholars have taken this theory into their own academic understandings of the prison. Most notably, in *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Michel Foucault explores the developments in punishment and the establishment of “panoptic” prisons as a representation of larger changes in the “disposition of centers and channels of power.”<sup>14</sup> He argues that scholars must view punishment as a “political tactic” and implores that his readers understand the societal implications of punishment. In his words, he wants us to “hear the distant roar of the battle.”<sup>15</sup> Other examples include Ann Goeting who draws on these understandings of a prison to describe the racism, sexism, and ageism prevalent in American prisons as a reflection of greater American society.<sup>16</sup> Loïc Wacquant argues that more funding should be given to the study of prisons because it can be “investigated *both as a microcosm* endowed with a distinctive material and symbolic tropism *and as template* or vector of broader social forces,

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix A for observations of daily prison life.

<sup>14</sup> Alan Sheridan trans., *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, 1977), 205.

<sup>15</sup> Sheridan, 305.

<sup>16</sup> Ann Goeting, “Racism, Sexism and Ageism in the Prison Community,” *Federal Probation* 10 (1985): 19, [http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/fedpro49&div=43&g\\_sent=1&collection=journals#188](http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/fedpro49&div=43&g_sent=1&collection=journals#188).

political nexi, and cultural processes that traverse its walls.”<sup>17</sup> With these ideas in mind, I contend that looking at a Danish prison can help one better understand complex issues in broader Danish society.

Naturally, there are limitations in using prison research as evidence about trends in Danish society. Firstly, and most importantly, the inmates are in prison because they broke the law, and by extension, do not fit into society and its norms. Therefore, their ethnic or religious tensions may not speak for all of Danish society. Clemmer concedes that a criminal does not fit within his rule bound society and therefore represents “the sheer individualist.”<sup>18</sup> To avoid misunderstanding Danish society, most of this paper is dedicated to reviewing supplementary literature, policies and political trends. This literary research demonstrates that my research conclusions within the prison mirrors, to some extent, beliefs and prejudices outside prison walls.

I must also permit the notion that some of my observations and survey responses could be distorted. While I tried to blend in as much as possible into the daily life of prison culture, my advanced, but not fluent, Danish language skills and relatively short two-month stay undoubtedly distinguished me as a visitor. Also, the Institutional Review Board for ethical research prohibits interviewing and surveying “vulnerable subjects” such as prisoners. Instead I had to change my project so that I *observed* prisoners and surveyed prison guards. My observations mostly stem from visits to an on-site drug treatment center where I ate many of my meals and engaged in several meaningful

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<sup>17</sup> Loic Wacquant, “The Curious Eclipse of Prison Ethnography in the Age of Mass Incarceration,” *Ethnography* 3:4 (2001):371, doi:10.1177/1466138102003004012.

<sup>18</sup> Clemmer, 6.



conversations with the inmates.<sup>19</sup> Although, a project that surveyed inmates would have been ideal, I think my prison guard survey, which was answered by over 75 prison service employees who deal with prisoners on a daily basis, can give insight into the habits of the prisoners. Furthermore, the prison guards' free response answers demonstrate Danish prejudices and beliefs in this "prison-as-a-microcosm" paradigm.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, despite several drawbacks, my research can still provide insight into the growth of Islamophobia in Denmark.

In my research I discovered the prisoners of non-Danish ethnicities, especially those who identified as Muslims, were largely ostracized from the rest of the prison "society" reflecting a trend in Denmark: A prevailing right wing populist rhetoric that actively suppresses Danish Muslim immigrants and their descendants. However, before beginning I would like to quote Clemmer in stating that my research is "in no sense...an attack on prisons, the people in them, or the ones who manage them. The prison world is interpreted as a natural outgrowth of social trends..."<sup>21</sup> In other words, I am not writing this to critique the prison system, but rather to learn about ethnic tensions in Danish society and to try to connect my findings to a larger European political climate, the rise of right-wing populism.

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<sup>19</sup> See Appendix A for observations of daily prison life.

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix B for further detail on Prison survey responses.

<sup>21</sup> Clemmer, xvi.

### *A numbers game*

It is important to discuss why Muslim immigrants bear the brunt of xenophobic criticism. In addition to the rise of right-wing populism, there are two factors that need to be addressed: the perceived threat of a large number of immigrants and, even more importantly, the pronounced cultural divergences.

Like many, small welfare states, Denmark's first wave of mass immigration lasted from the 1960s to the early 1970s. Turkey, Pakistan, Yugoslavia and Morocco were among the first countries to experience an exodus of citizens to Denmark. There were simply not enough Danes to maintain economic growth, and these immigrants were expected to fill the labor gap. They were deemed "guest workers," but most stayed and eventually became citizens. While there are no specific numbers on the guest worker population of this era, it is estimated that these four nationalities constituted around 15,000 citizens.<sup>22</sup> The largest demographic of guest workers were Turkish and today their descendants constitute nearly 55,000, or 12 %, of all foreigners in Denmark.<sup>23</sup> Next to Turkish, which is by far the largest demographic, the top five immigrant nationalities in Denmark are Iraqi, German, Lebanese, Bosnian and Pakistanis<sup>24</sup>.

While Denmark does not record demographics of religion, I will assume that most of all the immigrants from Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran, Pakistan, Somalia, Palestine and

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<sup>22</sup> Ulf Hedetoft, "Denmark: Integrating Immigrants into a Homogenous Welfare State," *Migration Policy Institute*, November 1, 2006, accessed November 3, 2013, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/denmark-integrating-immigrants-homogeneous-welfare-state/>.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

Morocco, all countries with a pronounced immigrant population in Denmark, are Muslim. This comes from the fact that 99.8% of Turkish citizens, 97% of Iraqis, 87% of Syrians, 99.4% of Iranians, 97 % of Pakistanis, 99% of Somalis and 99% of Moroccans are Muslim<sup>25</sup>. In addition to the large population of Turks, Iraqis and Pakistanis, Danish-Muslim understanding has been exacerbated by a string of Middle Eastern and African crises that have led to mass immigrations. However, as my research will present, these groups of immigrants received generally unwelcome greetings from Danish society.

After the atrocities of WWII, Denmark was internationally acclaimed for its fierce protection of its Jewish citizens. The majority of the small population of Jews was able to escape to Sweden under Danish tutelage. Historian Dr. Judith S. Goldstein began her prestigious NGO, Humanity in Action, based on these “courageous” actions<sup>26</sup>. The United States Holocaust Museum recognizes Danish bravery during this horrific era.<sup>27</sup> In addition to trying to save the Jews, Denmark had an infamous underground resistance movement which fought against the Nazi regime, the only oppressors to ever occupy Denmark in Danish history. However, after the War, the Danish government denied entry to Jewish immigrants during their diaspora.<sup>28</sup> This might be due to the fact that the

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<sup>25</sup> The World Factbook 2013-14, Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>.

Note that the demographic for Palestinian Muslims is undocumented, but, for the purpose of this paper, Palestinian immigrants will be understood as generally Muslim.

<sup>26</sup> Humanity in Action, “Our History,” accessed November 25, 2013, <http://www.humanityinaction.org/about/10-history>.

<sup>27</sup> Holocaust Encyclopedia, “Rescue in Denmark,” *United States Holocaust Museum*, accessed November 25, 2013, <http://www.ushmm.org/outreach/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007740>.

<sup>28</sup> Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson and Bent Blüdnikow, “Rescue, Expulsion, and Collaboration: Denmark's Difficulties with its World War II Past,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 18 (2006): 3-4, <http://www.jcpa.org/phas/phas-vilhjalmsson-f06.htm>.

number of stateless Jews was simply considered too large in 1945. Danes will defend their way of life above anything else and may feel jeopardized if another cultural demographic seems overpowering. In their eyes, this is logical considering there are only 5.5 million Danish speakers in the world.<sup>29</sup> Right wing populism has latched on to this fear of other large cultural groups.

### *Defining the “Danish way of life”*

Denmark has ruled over several countries including Germany, Sweden and Norway. Among Danes, the multinational history of their country is quickly forgotten, while its long era of international power is not. After several battles with Germany, Denmark’s most historically persistent enemy, Denmark was reduced to the small size seen today by the middle of the 19th century. By 1864, largely in response to the growing power in Germany, Denmark made its national slogan, “outward losses must be made up for by inward gains.”<sup>30</sup> Denmark then experienced its first “kulturkamp,” or culture war, in which the government focused on nationalism, the economic growth of the Danish peasant population and the maintenance of the Danish language.<sup>31</sup> The term “kulturkamp” exists in Danish politics to this day and even became a policy initiative during the premiership of Fogh Rasmussen and his Liberal-Conservative coalition.

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<sup>29</sup> The World Factbook 2013-14.

<sup>30</sup> Uffe OsterGard, “Denmark: A Big Small State The Peasant Roots of Danish Modernity” in *National Identity and the Varieties of Capitalism: The Danish Experience*, ed. John L. Campbell, et al. (Quebec: McGill-Queen's Press, 2006), 71.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

Since Denmark seceded land to Germany, its citizens have bragged about being from “a little land;” A land that that has held its name for centuries and whose flag, according to legend, “fell from the heavens” in the year 1219.<sup>32</sup> This pride stems from a deeply engrained Danish culture which was largely influenced by Nikolaj Frederik Grundtvig, also known as the “philosopher of Danishness.”<sup>33</sup> The Grundtvig movement of the 19th century served to reestablish a “Danish way of life” through Danish translations of traditionally Nordic texts and powerful sermons.<sup>34</sup> Grundtvig’s speeches permanently changed the schooling and church systems in Denmark, but more importantly, they defined a “Danish way of life.”<sup>35</sup> An excerpt from his poem “Folkeligheden,” whose title has no direct English translation, but means something similar to “the people’s way of life,” explains permeating Danish nationalism:

People! what is a people?  
what does popular mean?  
Is it the nose or the mouth  
where one discovers it?  
Is it hidden from the average eye....

....Call all that is un-Danish evil,  
Guardians of Denmark’s native land,  
And while people have different pursuits,  
All are like one another,  
They have blood and ancestry in common,  
The mother tongue and lion’s courage...<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> OsterGard, 91.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> OsterGard, 76.

<sup>35</sup> OsterGard, 79-80.

<sup>36</sup> Aarhus Universitet, “N.F.S Grundtvig “Folkelighden” 1848,” *Danmarkshistorien.dk*, accessed December 20, 2014, <http://danmarkshistorien.dk/leksikon-og-kilder/vis/materiale/n-f-s-grundtvig-folkelighden-1848/>.

Translated by author.

This poem emphasizes language, loyalty and a certain sense of indigenusness, all characteristics of a Dane's connection to his or her homeland. Since the early 19th century, the Danish government has expected its citizens to share this level of connectedness to a 'Danish way of life.' It helps explain the "peculiarity of Danes" throughout history.<sup>37</sup> For example, their hesitance towards joining the European Union, their determined opposition to Nazi occupation and, of course, its rise of Islamophobic right wing populist rhetoric.<sup>38</sup>

### *Defending the "Danish way of life"*

Denmark's emphasis on a prevailing monoculture is explained by its general policy of integration over multiculturalism.<sup>39</sup> Integration will be mentioned throughout this paper in regards to Danish policy implementation. Unlike many of its European counterparts, such as Sweden or the UK, Denmark has shunned the notion of multiculturalism, the idea that wholly different cultures can live together while maintaining their own languages, beliefs and traditions. In fact, multicultural policies are often viewed as "udansk," or "un-Danish".<sup>40</sup> More than anything else, immigrants are expected to

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<sup>37</sup> OsterGard, 94.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Ulf Hedtoft, "Multiculturalism in Denmark and Sweden," Danish Institute For International Studies Brief, Copenhagen, December 2006. <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?id=26877>.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

embrace Danish culture rather than prioritize their own. However, this is particularly difficult for Muslim immigrants.

On the official website of Denmark, it is suggested that immigrants new to Denmark learn Danish, follow Danish traditions, and, most contrary to believers in Islam, “Don’t talk too much about religion.”<sup>41</sup> Islam is commonly described as “a way of life,” something that effects Muslims on a day to day basis. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the Arabic language is full of common sayings that mention God. “Inshallah,” or God willing, is reflexively stated after any plan, wish or even statement. “Al-hamdulillah,” or thank God, is also an extremely common saying. These colloquialisms, along with other public displays of faith, are clearly unwelcome in Denmark. Lastly, Denmark is a country of sarcasm. Meaning Danish humor often involves being laughed at, not with. God is not immune to this harsh sense of humor. However, God and Muhammad are not subjects to be trifled with among observant Muslims. This divergent understanding of humor is best reflected in the 2006 Danish cartoon crisis which will be further expanded upon in the “Media” chapter.

Danish and Muslim cultures diverge on many more areas, especially in their private lives. Firstly, Islam expects a level of modesty in dress, especially among women. However, in Denmark, nudity is common-placed on basic cable T.V. and local beaches. Secondly, Muslims are expected to wait until after marriage to have sex while the

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<sup>41</sup> Denmark.dk, “Nine essential tips if you are new to Denmark,” accessed November 19, 2013. <http://denmark.dk/en/meet-the-danes/ninetips/>.

majority of Danish children are born out of wedlock.<sup>42</sup> Islam also forbids alcohol consumption, a staple of Danish culture. Denmark has a purchasing age of only 16, but no drinking age, meaning children can legally drink at home. Furthermore, Danes over the age of 15, consume an average of 14.38 liters of pure alcohol per year.<sup>43</sup> These cultural differences will be further explored in regards to DPP exaggeration which has caused further fissures between Muslim and Danish cultures.

It should be noted that some scholars argue that Muslim immigrants are inherently opposed to the nature of integration. In his essay, “Muslims Pluralize the West, Resist Assimilation,” Mustafa Malik contends that Muslims share an unshakable bond that supersedes national identity, *Umma*. This “global socioreligious fraternity” means that religion will remain a main source of identity in the wake of globalization.<sup>44</sup> According to Malik, while Muslims may blend culturally into some Danish norms, they will never blend structurally.<sup>45</sup> Therefore *Umma* denies the possibility of full integration. However Malik also predicts that in the wake of a growing multicultural agenda, *umma* will only further “pluralize the west.”<sup>46</sup> However, Malik’s prediction does not account for the influential power of right wing populism.

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<sup>42</sup> Stanley Kurtz, “The End of Marriage in Scandinavia,” *The Weekly Standard*, February 2, 2009, accessed November 19, 2013, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/003/660zywpwj.asp>.

<sup>43</sup> World Health Organization, “Denmark,” WHO Global Substance Use Report, 2011, [http://www.who.int/substance\\_abuse/publications/global\\_alcohol\\_report/profiles/dnk.pdf](http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/publications/global_alcohol_report/profiles/dnk.pdf).

<sup>44</sup> Mustafa Malik, “Muslims Pluralize the West, Resist Assimilation,” *Middle East Policy* 11 (2004): 71, doi: 10.1111/j.1061-1924.2004.00142.x 71.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Malik, 74.



*Big power for small parties*

American anthropologist and immigrant to Denmark, Jonathan Schwartz, has said, “In America there’s one politics and fifteen ways to celebrate Christmas. In Denmark there are fifteen political parties and one way to celebrate Christmas.”<sup>47</sup> In other words, Danish politics are confusing, but the importance of its monoculture is straightforward. Right wing populism is able to utilize this confusing Danish political system to propagate Islamophobic rhetoric under the banner of protecting the coveted Danish culture.

Before chronicling the rise of Danish right wing populism, it is important to understand the landscape of Danish politics. The sheer number of political parties and confusing nature of their names, for example, the “Liberal” party is to the right on the political spectrum, which can make studying Danish politics from an American perspective more difficult. Furthermore, it is important to understand the coalition government system that characterizes much of Europe which is prime breeding ground for small nationalistic parties. These parties can align themselves with larger parties to gain governmental power. Denmark, like all Nordic countries, employs a system of negative parliamentarism in which a government need only be tolerated by the majority of Parliament, not supported.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, Denmark has a history of small parties quickly gaining support and power. For example, in 1973 the party representation doubled in

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<sup>47</sup> Jonathan Schwartz in OsterGard, 92.

<sup>48</sup> Aylott, Blomgren and Bergman, 51.

Parliament from five to ten parties.<sup>49</sup> Seven of these parties were right of the center demonstrating the explosive power of small right wing parties.<sup>50</sup> However these small parties typically experience a very short life-span. The longevity of the DPP represents the acute power of right wing populism.

Denmark has a long history of traditional populism, that is, the belief in the rights of the common people, or in Denmark's case, "the folke."<sup>51</sup> While every Danish political party, like most Western parties throughout the world, claims to be speaking for "the people," the DPP makes this claim blatant in its name. Danish sociologist, Jens Rydgren, has offered numerous explanations to explain the rise of right-wing populism in both Denmark and more generally throughout the world.<sup>52</sup> The following points come from Rydgren's essay, "Explaining the Emergence of Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties: The Case Denmark," which are the most pertinent explanations I have found regarding the rise of right wing populism, followed by my own analysis:

1. "The emergence of niches on the electoral arena": *In this case the niche is the fear of large groups of Muslim foreigners.*
2. "Dealignment and realignment processes": *The realignment of the Progress Party, which will be discussed briefly, helped make room for the DPP.*
3. "Politicization of new issues": *In Denmark, the politicized issue is Muslim immigrants and it receives ample media coverage as the "Media" chapter will demonstrate.*

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<sup>49</sup> Aylott, Blomgren and Bergman, 54.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> OsterGard, 94.

Note that after WWI the ruling Social Democrats made a coalition with the Radical Liberals in a ploy to maintain power by shifting to a more populist base. Since 1929, populism has been a staple of all Danish political parties.

<sup>52</sup> Jens Rydgren, "Explaining the Emergence of Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties: The Case Denmark," *West European Politics*, 27:3 (2004): 475-477, doi: 10.1080/0140238042000228103.

4. “The degree of convergence in the political space”: *A feeling among the Danish public that politics were converging on economic and welfare policies helped make the shift towards “value politics” which are further propagated by right-wing populism.*
5. “The relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political systems”: *Denmark has one of the most open political systems in the world allowing for the growth of several small parties.*
6. “Situations in which the established parties chose to collaborate with emerging RRP parties [Right wing populist parties] and lend legitimacy to these parties”: *In hopes of support, Premiership or media coverage many Danish political parties have made a coalition with the Danish People’s party.*
7. “Must present political programs – and, even more important, use a political rhetoric – that fit the available niches”: *DPP members are well known for their rhetoric that has both gotten them in trouble with the law and allowed for widespread support under the guise of a charismatic leader.*

The first Danish populist party, The Progress Party, stood on the platform of tax reform.<sup>53</sup> However, as immigration increased to the point where it has become a perceived threat, the Danish People’s Party broke away from the Progress Party in 1995.<sup>54</sup> After their landslide victory in the 2001 election in support of the winning Liberal-Conservative coalition, the DPP stood as the sole powerful populist party in Denmark.<sup>55</sup> Like most small, populist parties, the DPP rose under a single-issue platform.<sup>56</sup> In this case the issue was immigration and the Danish electorate was easily persuaded. The historic 2001 election, which led to a ten year right wing hegemony, has

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<sup>53</sup> Bjorn Fryklund, “Populism-Changes over Time and Space: A Comparative Retrospective Analysis of Populist Parties in Nordic Countries from 1965 to 2012” in *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*, ed. Ruth Wodak, et al. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 269.

<sup>54</sup> Aylott, 55.

<sup>55</sup> Marsdal, Magnua E.. “Loud Values, Muffled Interests: Third Way Social Democracy and Right-Wing Populism.” In *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*, ed. Ruth Wodak, et al. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 50.

<sup>56</sup> Pelinka, 10.

been described as the triumph of the DPP and the “value politics” it supports.<sup>57</sup> In other words, issues such as immigration, environmental protection and punishment for criminals triumphed in importance over issues included in the “economic axis” of welfare state provision, wages or regulation.<sup>58</sup> The DPP was able to gain nine seats in parliament, 12% of the total seats, due to its coalition with the Liberal Party.<sup>59</sup> Propelled by the September 11th attacks, which had occurred just two months prior, the DPP was now on the forefront of Danish politics; a place it remains until today.

After the 2001 elections, the power of the DPP continued to rise. In 2005 and 2007 it held 13.3% and 13.8% of Parliament respectively.<sup>60</sup> However, after the financial turmoil of the 2008/09 economic and financial crisis, the electorate began to return to its “economic axis.” The DPP therefore lost 3 seats and now holds 12.3% of Parliament.<sup>61</sup><sup>62</sup> While this paper will focus on policies during the Liberal-Conservative coalition government from 2001 to 2011, their presence still influences the current political climate run by the left wing party, the Social Democrats.

For a right wing populist party to remain powerful it needs a charismatic leader.<sup>63</sup> In Denmark, voters have the option to vote for a candidate, usually a party leader, or a

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<sup>57</sup> Marsdal, 50-51.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Fryklund, 268.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Marsdal, 51.

<sup>62</sup> Fryklund, 268.

<sup>63</sup> Pelinka, 10.

party. However, Danes have increasingly chosen to vote for a candidate demonstrating the shift to a greater candidate orientated over party oriented political process.<sup>64</sup> In the case of the DPP, this charismatic leader is Pia Kjærsgaard, the patriotic founder of the DPP. Her party's famous tagline "dit land, dit valg," your land, your choice, resonates with a large portion of the Danish population.<sup>65</sup> She is known for saying controversial, attention-grabbing statements such as, "If they [the Swedes] want to turn Stockholm Gothenburg or Malmoe into a Scandinavian Beirut, with clan wars, honor killings and gang rapes, let them do it. We can always put a barrier on the Oeresund Bridge."<sup>66</sup> Her 2012 predecessor, Kristian Thulesen Dahl, is also known for similar statements. When discussing the future of Denmark, he has stated that by 2050 there should be no Muslim women with headscarves in Denmark.<sup>67</sup> As the first powerful right wing populist leader in Scandinavia, Kjærsgaard has been a "trendsetter" for similar party leaders in the rest of the Nordic region.<sup>68</sup> This paper will now assess whether or not this Islamophobic rhetoric has seeped past the parliament and into policy implementation.

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<sup>64</sup> Aylott, 51.

<sup>65</sup> Dansk Folkeparti, accessed December 19, 2013, <http://www.danskfolkeparti.dk>.

<sup>66</sup> Pia Kjærsgaard in BBC Monitoring, "Denmark's Immigration Issue," *BBC News*, February 19, 2014, accessed December 20, 2013, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/4276963.stm>.

<sup>67</sup> Chris Kjær Jessen, "Thulesen-Dahls drøm om Danmark i 2050: »Islam Light«, lavere skat og mere kulkraft," *Politiko* August 3, 2013, accessed February 20, 2014, <http://www.b.dk/politiko/thulesen-dahls-droem-om-danmark-i-2050-islam-light-lavere-skat-og-mere-kulkraft>.

<sup>68</sup> Pelinka, 14.

## CHAPTER 3: MEDIA

### *Questioning an egalitarian media*

With a history of freedom of speech that spans back to the 18th century, Denmark prides itself in its egalitarian media.<sup>69</sup> However, a brief overview of Danish media will exemplify a focused interest on the differences between Muslims and Danes rather than an all-encompassing media that treats religions and ethnicities equally. The negative portrayal of Islam in Danish media stems from the deeply engrained, politicized nature of the topic. Furthermore, the media is intimately tied to both the existing government and varying political parties. This means that the depiction of Islam in the media generally follows political trends, including the Islamophobic rhetoric of the DPP.

The Danish Broadcasting Corporation, the oldest electronic media corporation in Denmark, is a publicly run institution that includes DR, Danmark's Radio, and the popular news channels on basic cable, DR TV 1 and TV2.<sup>70</sup> It is financially supported by government funding, advertisements and state-issued licensing fees.<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, print news media is privately owned, but as this section will demonstrate, historically tied to a variety of political factions. Surprisingly, the largest segment of the Danish media

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<sup>69</sup> OsterGard, 64.  
Note that censorship was first banned in 1770.

<sup>70</sup> MarketLine Industry Profile, "Media in Denmark," *Market Research.com*, April 30, 2013, accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.marketresearch.com/MarketLine-v3883/Media-Denmark-7845144/>, 21.

<sup>71</sup> MarketLine Industry Profile, 13.

industry is publishing.<sup>72</sup> With this in mind, after a brief discussion of the portrayal of Islam in electronic media outlets and its relationship to the government, this chapter will focus largely on print news media. I will give special attention to the infamous Muhammad cartoon crisis of 2005 which stemmed from a publication of cartoons in *Jyllands-Posten*, one of the most widely read and influential newspaper in Denmark. I will then briefly discuss the popularity of politicized fiction which has worked to counteract the continuing “othering” of Muslim immigrants in the news. Lastly, I will conclude with a discussion of Danish media today and the future of the portrayal of Muslims in Denmark.

#### *The source of Islamophobia in media*

Many scholars have argued that news biases stem from the political environment, meaning that a negative portrayal of immigrants may be a temporary phenomenon that changes with the political climate. Christoffer Green-Pedersen and Rune Stubager argue that the Danish media in particular gives attention to issues that opposition parties want politicized.<sup>73</sup> Analyzing radio news from 1984-2004, their hypothesis is supported as changes in government power alters the type of issues addressed by the media.<sup>74</sup> For example, from 1993-2001, when there was a left wing government, right wing issues

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<sup>72</sup> MarketLine Industry Profile, 9.

<sup>73</sup> Christoffer Green-Pedersen and Rune Stubager, “The Political Conditionality of Mass Media Influence: When Do Parties Follow Mass Media Attention?” *Cambridge University Press* 40 (2010):663, doi: 10.1017/S0007123410000037.

<sup>74</sup> Green-Pedersen and Stubager, 670.

such as the dangers of a wide-reaching welfare state and the infringement of immigrants were the most prevalent in radio news.<sup>75</sup> Their argument is further emphasized when one considers that during the 2001 election, a game-changing election that put the right in power after years of left-wing domination, 66% of TV news stories were about immigrants.<sup>7677</sup>

On the other hand, Mustafa Hussain argues that Danish media runs on a “negative ethno-political consensus” rather than as a product of oppositional parties.<sup>78</sup> Of 82 domestic news items about ethnic minorities, religious predicates were only used for two religions, 42 times for Muslims, 3 times for Jews.<sup>79</sup> Instead of being introduced by just their name, names followed a reference to their religious faith, in most cases, a reference to Islam. This demonstrates a clear “otherness” attributed to Muslim immigrants and their descendants in Danish media. Furthermore, in the time studied in 1997, 24 out of 27 news items concerning crime were centered around Muslims<sup>80</sup>. Even more shockingly is his uncovering of tabloids and advertisement using the phrase “Perker,” which is a derogatory term to describe Arabs similar to the phrase “nigger.”<sup>81</sup> This data demonstrates that there may be something beyond the oppositional political climate that dictates media coverage in regards to Muslim immigrants.

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<sup>75</sup> Green-Pedersen and Stubager, 673.

<sup>76</sup> Marsdal, 51.

<sup>77</sup> Green-Pedersen and Stubager, 673.

<sup>78</sup> Hussain, Mustafa. “Islam, Media and Minorities in Denmark.” *Current Sociology*, 48:4 (2000): 98, doi: 10.1177/0011392100048004008.

<sup>79</sup> Hussain, 106.

<sup>80</sup> Hussain, 105.

<sup>81</sup> Hussain, 97.



The very controversial nature of Muslim immigration may lend weight to a more permanent Islamophobia in Danish media. The “thrill effect” of Muslims in the media is arguably irreversible with changes in public opinion. Hussain tests John Zaller’s Theory, that public opinion is affected by the immediate reaction to media rather than further evaluation, through a series of interviews. The interviewees recognize discrimination, but blame immigrants for their inability to assimilate. Furthermore, when asked about immigration, the interviewees only responded by discussing Muslims despite several other immigrant groups and despite the fact that Muslim immigrants stem from many different cultures<sup>82</sup>. These responses represent the influence of media on Danish public opinion that places Muslims in a clear “us versus them” paradigm.

My prison survey garnered similar responses regarding the powerful influence of news media on the Danish public.<sup>83</sup> When the guards were asked if the news affected the behavior of the inmates on a regular basis, 70% responded “sometimes,” while 16% responded “often” and only 13% responded “never.” These responses demonstrate the ideological shaping power of the news media. Therefore, if the news media is regularly broadcasting supposed cultural clashes between Muslim and Danish citizens, it can be assumed that these polarizing sentiments will be absorbed, to some extent, by Danish society as a whole.

In conclusion, negative portrayals of Muslim-Danish relations may be a permanent staple of Danish media rather than a fluid issue dependent on an oppositional right. This is best exemplified by the 2005/2006 Cartoon Crisis which occurred during a

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<sup>82</sup> Hussain, 108-109.

<sup>83</sup> See Appendix B for further detail on Prison survey responses.

right-wing government with left-wing opposition. The crisis, which has been deemed the worst catastrophe to hit Denmark since WWII, took over Danish media and plagued Muslim-Danish relations to this day.

*A “Muhammad Crisis”*

In 2005 the media got hold of a new and captivating story. Writer and journalist, Kåre Bluitgen was unable to find an illustrator for his children’s book on the story of the prophet Muhammad. Once he found an illustrator, he or she wished to remain anonymous in fear of backlash from the Muslim community. The Danish media was hooked on the story that pitted freedom of speech against Islamic beliefs. Flemming Rose, cultural editor of the most popular Danish newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*, responded by asking Danish cartoonists to submit cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad “as they see him.” Many cartoonists ignored the request, but on September 30, 2005, 12 Muhammad cartoons were published. The Danish Muslim community was outraged at what they saw as an example of systemic negative portrayals of Islam in Danish media. On October 30, 2005 the Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, refused to meet with 11 ambassadors hoping to discuss Islamophobia in Danish media. Members of the Danish Muslim community then took their grievances to the international arena and rioting ensued throughout the Arab world. By March 2006, the crisis had left a 139 people dead,

over 800 injured and over 10,000 unemployed because of embargoes and destroyed buildings.<sup>84</sup>

The majority of Danish journalism deems this crisis “Muhammed-krisen,” the “Muhammad crisis.” This emphasizes an issue connected to Islam rather than a “tegningskrisen,” a “cartoon crisis,” which emphasizes an issue with the actual publishing of the cartoons.<sup>85</sup> In Flemming Rose’s article, “Why I Published Those Cartoons?,” he depicts himself as a defender of freedom of speech in the wake of a destructive stream of political correctness. He begins with examples of self-censorship responding to fears of Muslim backlashes. He then argues that by satirizing Islam, the cartoons incorporate Muslims into Danish humor, and by extension, Danish culture. Lastly, he blames “radical imams” for misinforming rioters in the Middle East<sup>86</sup>. Many scholars and most of the Danish media have taken this line of reasoning. Therefore, in the eyes of most of the Danish population, the crisis demonstrates the incompatibility of Islam with Western liberal ideals and the Danish imams are to blame for setting fire to the conflict. In December of 2005, a Danish imam supposedly went to the Middle East with a 43 page folder of cartoons and drawings.<sup>87</sup> Offensive cartoons, such as a depiction of the prophet Muhammad as a pedophile, were added to stir unrest and initiate a

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<sup>84</sup> Anders Per Rudling, “Denmark as the Big Satan: Projections of Scandinavia in the Arab World and the Future of Multiculturalism,” *Review of European and Russian Affairs* 2:3 (2006):74-76, <http://www6.carleton.ca/rera/ccms/wp-content/ccms-files/vol2-3-Rudling.pdf>.

<sup>85</sup> Peter Hervick, *Current Themes in IMER Research Number 13: The Danish Muhammad Cartoon Conflict* (Malmö: Malmö University, 2012), <https://www.mah.se/upload/Forskningscentrum/MIM/CT/CT%2013.pdf>, 39.

<sup>86</sup> Flemming Rose, “Why I Published Those Cartoons,” *The Washington Post*, February 19, 2006, accessed December 20, 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2006/02/17/AR2006021702499.html>.

<sup>87</sup> Rudling, 78.

response<sup>88</sup>. The true effect of “imam delegations” during this time period is highly debated and remains a mysterious part of the entire debacle. Some experts have concluded that Danish imams did not spread false information, but simply displayed drawings that were part of the hate material sent to Muslim organizations in the aftermath of the 2005 cartoons.<sup>89</sup> Either way, the governments of the Muslim world became involved.

At first, distaste with the Danish government was merely symbolic. Iran passed a law officially changing the name of Danish pastries to “Prophet Muhammad’s Roses.” Palestinians made black-market money in an “attempt to meet the demands of the local flag burning market.”<sup>90</sup> However, in some countries, most likely to distract from their own domestic turbulences, governments fueled violent reactions to the Danish cartoons. The Syrian government has been blamed for sending out mass anonymous text messages of falsities to fuel demonstrations against Denmark.<sup>91</sup> Mohammed Yaqoob Qureshi, the minister in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, offered mass sums of money for the death of Danish cartoonists.<sup>92</sup> Meanwhile, in Denmark, Danish Muslims were being blamed for the international violence in what Lasse Lindkilde deems the “negative boomerang

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<sup>88</sup> Rudling, 81.

<sup>89</sup> Hervick, 62.

<sup>90</sup> Rudling, 87.

<sup>91</sup> Rudling, 85.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

effect” of trans-national activity.<sup>93</sup> The DPP used this opportunity to further isolate Muslims from the Danish community.

At the height of the crisis, the DPP was calling Danish Muslims “traitors” and actively campaigning for the removal of the citizenships of 4 Danish imams.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, many Danes were disappointed by the disapproving response of major Western international actors such as the USA and the UK.<sup>95</sup> However, this lack of international support helped the DPP rise in popularity to a record high 17.8% support rate, making it the third largest party in Denmark.<sup>96</sup> Hundreds of news articles and more than a dozen books were immediately written on the dangers of Islam. Most of these writings stemmed from the Giordano Bruno and Free Speech Societies, right-wing organizations that share the idea that the Western world is in the midst of a culture war.<sup>97</sup> The media response to the crisis just furthered exacerbated the “otherness” attributed to Muslims in Danish media.

In 2008, Peter Hervik conducted focus group interviews with Danes undergoing higher education. Most of them described Muslims as irrational and dangerous people. They also blamed Danish imams, Danish Muslims and Islam as a whole for the crisis.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Lasse Lindekilde, “Soft Repression and Mobilization: The Case of Transnational Activism of Danish Muslims During the Cartoons Controversy,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 42 (2010):463, doi: 10.1017/S0020743810000449.

<sup>94</sup> Lindekilde, 458.

<sup>95</sup> Rudling, 88.

<sup>96</sup> Rudling, 89.

<sup>97</sup> Hervick, 78.

<sup>98</sup> Hervick, 79.

This common rationale fits with the description of a “Muhammad Crisis;” a crisis of irreconcilable values between Islam and Denmark, or even more broadly, Islam and the West.

My Prison survey serves as further evidence for the common Danish notion of a “Muhammad Crisis.” Of the Prison Guard responses regarding changed behavior following the cartoons, all responded by either discussing the increased radicalization among Muslims or by blaming the Imams. In other words, if there was an issue following the crisis, it was an issue foremost with Islam. The following are a sample of responses that place blame on Muslim inmates for “othering” themselves from the greater ethnically Danish prison population.<sup>99</sup>

There was no change [following the cartoons], the clientele was just as negative and standoffish etc. as was the case before the cartoons.

The religious aspect is very prominent. We see many [inmates] with Muslim backgrounds who want to control according to their belief.

Hatred towards Christians.

Yes, there was a different mood among the Arab detainees. If we had a difficult time communicating with them before then, it did not get any better.

More of them-and-us behavior. i.e. Muslims and non-Muslims. Prisoners who previously didn't care about the religion, suddenly became extremely religious and had to go to Friday Prayer and Christians were no longer allowed to use the kitchen tools meant for everyone. Every time they were caught doing something illegal (or against the rules...) they excused it by them being Muslims and that they were being persecuted against.

The young non-assimilated Muslims stick together more and have become rougher with the other inmates. They are more intolerant and might for instance claim pots and pans in the kitchen in regards to whether or not they can be used to

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<sup>99</sup> See Appendix B for further detail on Prison survey responses.

cook pork. They are very much on edge ready to fight and demand respect, which one of course must first earn. I assume it is because they feel exposed and insecure in their foundation. I have never experienced any racist behaviors from Danes towards the Dark Danes.

All of these guard responses place blame on Muslim inmates. The most shocking response referred to the Muslim immigrants as the “mørke danskere,” or “Dark Danes.” A term I have never heard used before, but serves as an example of the generalization of Muslims in Danish society.

One of my most interesting research discoveries was that one of the men that were blamed for spreading the crisis to the Middle East was a Prison Imam at my research center, Nyborg Prison. Some guards also blamed the Imam as the following response demonstrates:

Oddly enough it didn't seem as though any of the inmates changed behavior, nor that anything was happening in secret that the staff were not supposed to know about. Most noteworthy was the fact that the Prison Imam (who was hired by the prison and therefore a state employee at the time) had the audacity to travel with a group to the Middle East and talk about Denmark in a very negative way. Therefore he was both directly and indirectly partly responsible for the entire Muhammad case blowing out of proportion as it did.

On one of my first days of research I visited the deserted Nyborg Prison mosque. No Imam has been rehired since the firing of Mohamad Al-Khaled Samha, the Prison Imam who, according to a few discussions with a number of inmates and guards, supposedly “riled up” Muslim inmates and participated in the public defamation of Denmark while traveling in the Middle East.<sup>100</sup> Without a religious leader on the Prison grounds, not a single Muslim entered the prayer room during my two month stay. These survey

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<sup>100</sup> See Appendix A for observations of daily prison life.

responses and observations demonstrate the Danish propensity to depict the cartoons as a “Muhammad Crisis.”

#### *A “Cartoon Crisis”*

International migration and ethnic relations specialist, Peter Hervick, argues that the crisis is an example of Islamophobia within the Danish media that spans decades. Hervick, like a small portion of the Danish population and a growing base of scholars, argues that the cartoons were in fact a “cartoon crisis” rather than a “Muhammad crisis” between two conflicting cultures that pit an “enlightened” view of media against a “barbaric” religious view. The “cartoon crisis” argument stems from years of right-wing populist rhetoric against immigrants in Danish media and a history of newspaper-political party affiliations.

Hervick describes the sensationalist nature of Islam in the news media as a consequence of “re-politicization” to compete in a rapidly expanding market.<sup>101</sup> For example, to compete with free dailies, which at one point held 60% of the print news market, larger newspapers used the values and opinions of the extreme right to compete.<sup>102</sup> In 1997, *Ekstra Bladet* and *B.T.*, the most popular tabloid papers in Denmark, began a string of opinion pieces highly critical of immigration and Islam which Hervick connects to the rise of the DPP.<sup>103</sup> These pieces were reinforced by the larger and more

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<sup>101</sup> Hervick, 20.

<sup>102</sup> Hervick, 21.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*



respected *Jyllands-Posten*. During *Ekstra Bladet*'s campaign, "The Foreigners", *Jyllands-Posten* published a highly politicized story about a ten-year-old Danish Muslim boy named Amin.<sup>104</sup> Amin, who was expelled from school for refusing to bathe with his peers before swimming, began as a story defending the boy against perceived racism. However, after a number of *Jyllands-Posten*'s letters to the editor, it quickly transformed to a culture war, with Amin being on the wrong side of the battle.<sup>105</sup>

Another example Hervick stresses is the "Mona Sheikh story" of 2001. Three Danish Muslims, Mona Sheikh, Tanwir Ahmed and Babar Baig, ran for political office in the Radical Left. However, they were attacked by a number of news sources as supporters of terrorist organizations and party officials quickly distanced themselves from the three men.<sup>106</sup> *Jyllands-Posten* published more anti-Islamic articles than any other Danish newspaper during this time and was the only news source that did not retract their statements after the Danish Press Council ruled that the connection to terrorism was completely unfounded.<sup>107</sup> With these examples in mind, a long-lasting campaign against Muslim immigrants in the Danish media seems like a likely explanation for the "Cartoon Crisis" of 2005/06.

Furthermore, a "Muhammad Crisis" insinuates that Christians in Denmark differ from Muslims because they allow the satirization of their own religion. However, *The Guardian* was contacted by a Danish cartoonist in 2006 to leak a story in which *Jyllands-Posten* refused to publish his cartoons with Jesus on the basis that they would be too

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> Hervick, 22.

<sup>106</sup> Hervick, 23.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

offensive. *Jyllands-Posten* responded by stating "in the Muhammad drawings case, we asked the illustrators to do it. I did not ask for these [the Jesus] cartoons. That's the difference."<sup>108</sup> This demonstrates a clear case of provocation in regards to Danish Muslims. Jytte Klausen, a Danish Political professor, describes the intention of *Jyllands-Posten*'s cartoons most clearly by stating, "They are the pebble that started a tsunami -- but they were never meant to be innocent."<sup>109</sup>

Four of the twelve cartoonists who drew the Muhammad cartoons were directly employed or previously employed by *Jyllands-Posten*. Those four cartoons are the most controversial of the group.<sup>110</sup> For example, the most infamous cartoon, "Muhammad with a bomb turban," was drawn by *Jyllands-Posten* employee, Kurt Westergaard. It is especially offensive because it contains the Islamic testimony of faith on the bomb which insinuates Islam in its entirety is a violent faith.<sup>111</sup> The cartoonists who were independent from *Jyllands-Posten* illustrated more ironic and less aggressive cartoons. Most notably, one cartoonist depicted Muhammad as a child writing on a blackboard "Jyllands-Posten's journalists are a bunch of reactionary provocateurs," demonstrating that not every participant condoned the "freedom of speech" premise behind the cartoons.<sup>112</sup> The difference in the cartoons drawn by *Jyllands-Posten* employees and those less offensive

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<sup>108</sup> Gwladys Fouche, "Danish paper rejects Jesus cartoons," *The Guardian*, February 6, 2006, accessed December 20, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2006/feb/06/pressandpublishing.politics>.

<sup>109</sup> Jytte Klausen, "Cartoon Jihad: Rotten Judgement in the State of Denmark," *Spiegel Online International*, February 8, 2006, accessed December 20, 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/cartoon-jihad-rotten-judgment-in-the-state-of-denmark-a-399653.html>.

<sup>110</sup> Hervick, 45.

<sup>111</sup> Marion G. Müller and Esra Özcan, "The Political Iconography of Muhammad Cartoons: Understanding Cultural Conflict and Political Action," *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 40:2 (2007): 288, doi: 10.1017/S104909650707045X.

<sup>112</sup> Klausen, "Cartoon Jihad: Rotten Judgment in the State of Denmark."

ones drawn by independent artists suggests that *Jyllands-Posten*, like many other Danish media sources, is more incentivized by Islamophobic political discourse than an actual battle for freedom of speech.

As *Jyllands-Posten*'s cartoons are put in the context of the larger history of Danish media's sensationalization of Islam, the crisis is more clearly unveiled as a "Cartoon Crisis." "Cartoon Crisis" insinuates an issue with Danish media rather than an issue between two competing cultures. In fact, the Muslim ambassadors who called for a meeting with the Prime Minister had a long list of grievances in addition to the cartoons that were perceived as slander against Islam.<sup>113</sup> Considering their list of media slander, one questions the decision of the government to refuse the meeting with the Muslim ambassadors and, more importantly, the connection between the media and the Danish government. Instead of meeting with the 11 Muslim ambassadors, on October 30, 2005, Prime Minister Fogh Rasmussen gave an interview with *Jyllands-Posten* stating "Freedom of speech must be used for provocation."<sup>114</sup> This drastic move sheds light on a criticism that more left-wing papers have attributed to *Jyllands-Posten* for years: that it, like several other media sources, work together with right-wing parties.<sup>115</sup>

Firstly, freedom of speech is the very thing that allows Fogh Rasmussen, who was also Minister of the Press, to criticize the cartoons.<sup>116</sup> However, instead of distancing the government from the newspaper or condemning the views behind the cartoons, he brought his government closer to *Jyllands-Posten*. Furthermore, the ambassadors were

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<sup>113</sup> Hervick, 64.

<sup>114</sup> Hervick, 61.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Hervick, 60.

not asking the Prime Minister to remove the cartoons, which would be a legal violation of freedom of speech, but rather to discuss the portrayal of Islam in Denmark and discuss the steps necessary for inter-faith dialogue<sup>117</sup>. Their complaints, as stated earlier, were not against the cartoons alone. They had a long list of grievances that included a neo-nazi radio station and some public remarks from DPP members which Fogh Rasmussen's government had previously condemned.<sup>118</sup> The refusal to distance themselves from *Jyllands-Posten* demonstrates a deeper connection between certain media outlets and political parties.

In an internal survey made by *Jyllands-Posten* in 2004, 81% of employees answered "yes" to the question, "Do you feel that *Jyllands-Posten* has become more right wing in its way of prioritizing journalistic stories?"<sup>119</sup> Therefore, it may not come as a surprise that *Jyllands-Posten* supported the premiership of Fogh Rasmussen, the leader of the right wing Liberal Party. Anders Fogh Rasmussen launched his political strategy, "kulturkamp," or "culture war," which was quickly joined by *Jyllands-Posten* in the summer of 2003 with their "culture war" strategy that would focus on the maintenance of Danish culture.<sup>120</sup> In 2004, they hired their Moscow correspondent, Flemming Rose, as the cultural editor to spearhead this strategy.<sup>121</sup> His call to depict Muhammad "as you see him" is a clear offshoot of a larger right-wing political strategy.

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<sup>117</sup> Hervick, 60.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Hervick, 28.

<sup>120</sup> Hervick, 27.

<sup>121</sup> Hervick, 28.

Jytte Klausen suggests that the governmental response to the “cartoon crisis” may be a direct result of DPP influence. The success of Fogh Andersen’s Liberal Party depended on the support of the DPP, without which they could not hold on to the premiership. Therefore, Pia Kjaergaard may have threatened to withdraw support of the DPP if Fogh Rasmussen did not take a stand affirming *Jyllands-Posten*.<sup>122</sup> The DPP uses freedom of speech as a central platform and actively campaigns to get the blasphemy law taken out of the Danish constitution. In fact, many DPP members have a personal stake in this campaign in order to avoid legal problems with their own speeches. For example, in 2006, DPP members, Jesper Langballe and Soren Krarup, described Muslims as "a cancer on Danish society" in Parliament which leads to them being threatened with the blasphemy law.<sup>123</sup> Another explanation is that Fogh Rasmussen genuinely believes that Denmark is in the midst of a culture clash and that the media is at the forefront of the battle.<sup>124</sup> Either way, by responding to the crisis with an interview in *Jyllands-Posten*, Fogh Rasmussen and his government seemed in full support of the cartoons.

While the tabloid papers, *Ekstra Bladet* and *B.T.*, were the strongest supporters of both *Jyllands-Posten* and the government during the cartoon crisis, Fogh Rasmussen set a political precedent for many other media outlets.<sup>125</sup> On February 17, 2008, following the uncovering of a murder plot against one of the cartoonists, seventeen Danish newspapers, even those with a political history connected to the left wing, republished the twelve cartoons as a statement of “freedom of expression” and in solidarity with *Jyllands-*

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<sup>122</sup> Jytte Klausen, *The Cartoons That Shook the World*, (Orwigsburg: Yale University Press, 2009), 149.

<sup>123</sup> Klausen, “Cartoon Jihad: Rotten Jurdgement in the State of Denmark.”

<sup>124</sup> Klausen, *The Cartoons That Shook the World*, 162.

<sup>125</sup> Hervick, 20.

*Posten*'s cartoonist.<sup>126</sup> Despite even more media support for the Muhammad cartoons, this publishing did not cause an international uproar.

Hervick argues that the crisis could have been avoided if the government distanced themselves from the Danish media rather than showing solidarity with the cartoons. Without being able to engage in dialogue in their own country, it can be argued that it is only natural for Muslims to turn to their home-government or to network with Muslim organizations for support and consultation.<sup>127</sup> Sweden had their own Muslim cartoon debacle in 2007, but the government quickly distanced themselves from the newspaper and used the experience as an opportunity for inter-faith dialogue.<sup>128</sup> Consequently, the Swedish crisis did not cause international outrage. With this logic, it was the link between the Danish government and *Jyllands-Posten* that led to the mass outrage.

Since the Danish Cartoon Crisis, the Danish government has learned to respond in a manner similar to the Swedish government's response. In October 2006 the free daily, *Nyhedsavisen*, published images from a Danish People's Party's youth organization which held a competition to see who could draw the most vulgar prophet Muhammad. The government immediately invited Muslim ambassadors to Denmark to apologize for and discuss the cartoons which distanced the government from the drawings.<sup>129</sup>

Similarly, the 2008 mass republication of the Muhammad cartoons was handled by inter-

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<sup>126</sup> Hervick, 86.

<sup>127</sup> Hervick, 62.

<sup>128</sup> Hervick, 62.

<sup>129</sup> Hervick, 64.

faith and inter-cultural dialogue and without a government presence behind the cartoons. Consequently, there was no transnational action from Danish Muslims and a crisis was easily avoided.<sup>130</sup>

*Politicized fiction: a small critique of the right*

As the crisis subsided, so has data about Muslims in Danish media. We know that there has been a learning process since the publishing of the 2005 cartoons, but are Muslims given a fairer portrayal in the current Danish media? This is a hard question to answer without further data collection. However, what can be deduced from current analysis is that Muslim integration into Danish society is still a highly politicized and popular topic in Danish media through both positive and negative responses to the continuing presence of right-wing populist rhetoric. In fact, it has been widely discussed by scholars that Denmark is now in an era of politicized fiction.<sup>131</sup> From popular novels focusing on the lives of Danish politicians, to a large number of controversial Danish films, the assimilation of Muslims and the meaning of “Danishness” is highly debated in the arena of fiction.

A popular 2007 film, *AFR*, uses a documentary style to satirize the premiership of Anders Fogh Rasmussen and criticize the Danish People’s Party. The concept of “freedom of speech” is tested by calling Fogh Rasmussen gay and by using out-of-

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<sup>130</sup> Lindekilde, 465.

<sup>131</sup> Anna Paterson, “Politics and Contemporary Danish Fiction,” *World Literature Today*, 82:1 (2008): 46-49, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40159609>.

context quotes from the Danish People's Party's leader, Pia Kjaersgaard, are used to emphasize the "otherness" attributed to this stigma. By the film's conclusion, it is insinuated that Fogh Rasmussen was murdered by members of the Danish People's Party.<sup>132</sup> Similarly, The T.V. show, *Borgen*, whose title refers to the parliamentary building, Christianborg, uses fictionalized Danish politics to discuss and satirize the Danish People's Party. *Borgen* has a popular following that has surpassed Danish media and spread to America. The show follows a female Prime Minister, who after her premiership, becomes so upset with the growth of right-wing populist rhetoric in other parties, that she begins her own political party.<sup>133</sup> These examples are just some of many that represent a Danish fascination with politicized fiction. It also demonstrates that after the "cartoon crisis," many Danish media outlets recognize the spread of right-wing populism as an instigator for Danish discrimination against their Muslim population.

However, criticism of right wing populist influence in Danish politics are not seen or heard in everyday media outlets. The inability to assimilate Muslims in Danish society is still a popular headline that guarantees mass viewership. Many arguments made in Mustafa Hussain's aforementioned 2006, article still hold true. Muslims are still portrayed in an "us versus them" paradigm.

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<sup>132</sup> *AFR*, directed by Morten Hartz Kaplers (2007, Denmark: Liberty Film, 2008), DVD.

<sup>133</sup> *Borgen*, directed by Adam Price, Jeppe Gjernig Gram and Tobias Lindholm (2010-2013, London: BBCshop, 2013), DVD.



### *Muslim victims over Danish Muslims*

The only positive news coverage of Muslim immigrants seems to place Muslim women and children as “victims.” A quick search through a number of Danish newspapers shows heavy coverage of the “unjustness” of Islam on weaker members of society. This is best exemplified by one of the few Muslims to receive positive Danish media attention, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Somali- American activist who fights against Islamic practices that harm women. In 2010, she received the “Freedom of Expression Award” from *Jyllands-Posten* and gave a widely covered speech at the Danish People’s Party Convention.<sup>134</sup><sup>135</sup>

In the news, human interest stories also play this “victim card” when discussing Muslims to capture a large audience on established news channels. In the fall of 2013, “Stor A: fra bandekrig til jihad,” translated to “Big A: from gang to jihad,” was a two part, story on the public news channel, DR 2, that followed a former gang member into the brutal fighting against the Assad regime in Syria. The news story portrayed the plight of the Syrians and the “jihad” rebels as hopeless.<sup>136</sup> In March 2009, Iraqi asylum seekers were arrested and, in some cases, repatriated to their home country after hiding out in a

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<sup>134</sup> *Jyllands-Posten Blogs*, “Ayaan Hirsi Ali recipient of the Jyllands-Posten Freedom of Expression Award,” *Jyllands-Posten*, April 28, 2010, accessed January 2, 2014, <http://blogs.jp.dk/hvisduvilvidemere/2010/04/28/ayaan-hirsi-ali-recipient-of-the-jyllands-posten-freedom-of-expression-award/>.

<sup>135</sup> Søren Espersen & Ayaan Hirsi Ali, “Ayaan Hirsi Ali: Islam is a political movement,” *EuropeNews*, October 17, 2010, accessed January 2, 2014, <http://europenews.dk/en/node/36499>.

<sup>136</sup> “Stor A: fra bandekrig til jihad,” DR dk SE TV, 56:00, Part I September 10, 2013, Part II September 17, 2013, <http://www.dr.dk/tv/se/store-a/store-a-fra-bandekrig-til-jihad-2-2/#!/00:05>.

Danish church.<sup>137</sup> The media coverage for this event was so intense that it developed into a conflict with radical left-wing groups confronting the police in the streets. While Muslims are widely viewed as “victims” in the Danish media, they are rarely referred to as “Danish.”

One of the only Danish Muslims I was able to find in Danish media was Yahya Hassan. Yahya is known for his widely viewed YouTube videos in which he reads his poetry describing life as a Danish Muslim. His poems are delivered intentionally in broken Danish with a heavy Arab accent, satirizing his fellow Danish Muslims. The following is an excerpt (because of foul language, a very short excerpt) from his poem, “Langdigt,” or “Long Poem”

Me, I’m telling a truth, what are you saying about your God with the smell of weed in your mouth? You, you’re a Muslim. You, you don’t know whether you want Halal or Haram. You, you know that you want Haram, but you’re pretending to want Halal. You, you don’t want pork, may Allah praise your eating habits. You, you want Friday prayer until the next Friday prayer. You, you want Ramadan until the next Ramadan. And in between the Friday prayers and the Ramadan, you, you want a knife in your pocket. You, you want to bump in to people and ask them if they’ve got a problem, even though *the only problem is you*.<sup>138</sup>

It is clear that Yahya takes the view of many right-wing populist Danes and of much of the Danish media; that Muslims in Denmark fail at assimilating because of their own

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<sup>137</sup> Marie Vejrup Nielsen and Lene Kühle, “Religion and State in Denmark: Exception Among Exceptions?” *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society* 24:2 (2011): 182. <http://tapir.pdc.no/pdf/NJRS/2011/2011-02-5.pdf>.

<sup>138</sup> Yahya Hassan, “Langdit,” from *Yahya Hassan*, Gyldendal, 2013, MP3 file, downloaded November 25, 2013, Amazon. Note that “haram” means sinful in Arabic and “halal” means permissible. Translation by author, italics added by author.

wrongdoings. This opinion has gotten him a fair amount of media attention culminating with an upcoming weekly column in the newspaper *Politiken*.<sup>139</sup>

Similarly, Basim, who recently won the Danish representative spot in the upcoming 2014 Eurovision singing contest, emphasizes his Danish integration. The first Danish Muslim participant has repeatedly stated that he was taught to stand firmly by his “Danishness” and the power of integration.<sup>140</sup> The talented, Arab-Danish singer was voted by viewers at the Dansk Melodi Grand Prix after his patriotic performance of “Cliche Love Song.” His performance was the only one that donned a large Danish flag and a prideful “Danmark!” exclamation between breathless verses.<sup>141</sup> His patriotic show emphasized his integration and led to the support of his Danish viewers.

In Danish media today, it seems that Muslims are either being portrayed as victims of their own religion or as either successes or failures at assimilation. Either way, they are told that “the problem is you.”

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<sup>139</sup> Mads Zacho Teglskov, “Bagsiden præsenterer ny satsning: Yahyaliv,” *Politiken*, January 6, 2014, accessed February 10, 2014, <http://politiken.dk/bagsiden/ECE2174928/bagsiden-praesenterer-ny-satsning-yahyaliv/>.

<sup>140</sup> Jan Eriksen, “Bag triumfen gemmer sig sorg og stærk familie- følelse: Basim - en hårdt prøvet rollemodel,” *BT*, March 3, 2014, accessed March 5, 2014, <http://m.bt.dk/?article=28562779-Bag-triumfen-gemmer-sig-sorg-og-staerk-familie--foelelse-Basim---en-haardt-proevet-rollemodel>.

<sup>141</sup> “Basim-Cliche Love Song,” YouTube video, 3:10, posted by “Melodi Grand Prix,” March 8, 2014, accessed February 11, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRHKkYrXSjM>.

### *The future of Danish media*

The 2006 cartoon crisis became a “crisis” because of a poor governmental response. The media and the Danish political right wing have a history of cooperation in regards to pressing “value politics,” or politics focusing on the issues of immigration and perceived culture clashes. However, in the aftermath of the crisis, Danish fiction has been increasingly politicized and critical of the right wing influence on Danish public opinion. However, the victims of Islam and assimilation arguments like that of Yahya Hassan will continue to permeate the Danish media.

Danish anchors and interviewees are infamous for their unchallenging stance with their interview guests<sup>142</sup>. In other words, politicians with a right-wing populist agenda can say almost anything on the news without being challenged; it makes for good television. The Danish People’s Party and their ally, the Liberal Alliance are still fighting for the removal of the blasphemy section of the Danish constitution so they can continue to exercise this “freedom of speech” in Danish media.<sup>143</sup> The Blasphemy Act protects all religions from defamation, but has not resulted in an actual conviction since 1938.<sup>144</sup> The fact that the DPP is actively campaigning for its removal demonstrates their intentions to drive Denmark towards their right wing populist agenda through the media. The public and political responses to the misleadingly titled, “Muhammad Crisis,” and the direction

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<sup>142</sup> Hussain, 106.

<sup>143</sup> Nils Thorsen, “DF og LA: Drop blasfemiparagraf nu,” *Politiken*, January 14, 2014, accessed January 16, 2014, <http://politiken.dk/kultur/ECE2181548/df-og-la-drop-blasfemiparagraf-nu/>.

<sup>144</sup> Nielsen and Kühle, 179.

of Danish entertainment and news media shows that, in the case of the media, Danish policies are intentionally “othering” Muslim immigrants and their descendants.

## CHAPTER 3: SOCIAL SERVICES

### *The welfare state enters the private home*

Denmark's welfare system has long functioned as a powerful force in everyday Danish society. However, the tax funded system penetrates into the depths of the private sphere. Given the anti-immigration sentiments of right wing populism, comes a disdain, albeit a limited one in the American sense, for this power of the welfare state. To continue my focus on the superimposed struggles of Muslim integration in Denmark, I will discuss the welfare laws that specifically affect Muslims immigrants and their descendants. Since welfare touches many aspects of societal infrastructure, from education to housing, it plays a powerful and interesting role in the process of integration. Karen Fog Olwig sums up integration in the Scandinavian welfare state by stating that it has become a "...term denoting the ability to conform to social norms and cultural values defined in dominant discourse as basic to proper citizenship...designating who belongs- and by implication who does not belong-in society."<sup>145</sup> Since the wide reaching branches of the welfare state, as Olwig aptly summarized, have the power to dictate society's norms, it has a particularly important role in regards to the integration of Muslims in Denmark.

This is not a complete review of the Danish welfare system, an entirely new research topic in itself, but rather an overview of a few issues that directly effect Danish immigrants and have are supported by research: The social benefits available to refugees,

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<sup>145</sup> Karen Fog Olwig, "Integration': Migrants and Refugees between Scandinavian Welfare Societies and Family Relations" in *Migration, Family and the Welfare State: Integrating Migrants and Refugees in Scandinavia*, ed. Karen Fog Olwig, et al. (New York: Routledge, 2012), 2.

the welfare objections to trans-national marriages, and changes in educational services. Hopefully this review can be used as both a jumping off point into further research and, most importantly, paint a more detailed picture of Danish Muslim life in the wake of a lasting right wing populist influence.

*The DPP: bridging welfare and immigration*

The DPP rose to prominence through its anti-taxation rhetoric, but gained power through its anti-immigration stance.<sup>146</sup> In the eyes of many Danes, the two platforms are intimately connected. A relatively high unemployment rate in Denmark caused public concern over immigration to spike drastically from 4% in 1989 to 25% in 1998.<sup>147</sup> The DPP was able to capitalize on this fear that immigration was the cause of economic disruption. Increased unemployment is a tool that the DPP uses to oust a system that, they argue, drains citizens of resources as foreigners monopolize any positive effects of the high taxation. Furthermore, studies have proven that there are no positive net transfers to the state from immigrants of non-western countries.<sup>148</sup> However, this evidence does not necessarily support the demise of the welfare state. In the latest documented financial quarter, only about 15.6% of Danes receiving public benefits were born outside of

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<sup>146</sup> Harald F. Moore, "Immigration in Denmark and Norway: Protecting Culture or Protecting Rights?" *Scandinavian Studies* 82:3 (2010), 357, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25769037> .

<sup>147</sup> Moore, 358.

<sup>148</sup> Eskil Wadensjö and Christer Gerdes, "Immigrants and the Public Sector in Denmark and Germany" in *Migrants, Work, And The Welfare State*, ed. Torben Tranaes et al. (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2004), 334.

Denmark. Meaning, 84.4% of Danes receiving public benefits are, in fact, born in Denmark.<sup>149</sup> In other words, the welfare state is still widely utilized by ethnic Danes.

Using the 2002/2003 European Social Survey, Claudia Senik, Holger Stichnoth and Karine Van der Straeten analyze the connection between immigration and the opinions on the welfare state of European citizens of their country's ethnic origin. They conclude that immigration does not necessarily reduce native citizens' support for the welfare state unless they have a "pure dislike" of immigrants and/or they are concerned about the economic consequences of immigration. When both sentiments are felt, as in the case of the DPP, they will react much more negatively towards the welfare state.<sup>150</sup> However, being anti-immigration is not a precursory stance to being anti-welfare state. In fact, those who felt neither a "pure dislike" of immigrants nor concern for the economic consequences of immigration were more inclined to be anti-welfare state independently of immigrants.<sup>151</sup> The fact that the DPP has brought immigration and the welfare state together as intrinsically connected issues reflects a greater xenophobic attitude.

### *The refugee meets the welfare state*

In the previous chapter I briefly discussed the 1997 Ekstra Bladet article series, "The Foreigners" as one of many examples of the media defamation of Muslim immigrants and their descendants. The article series explored specific immigrant cases of

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<sup>149</sup> Statbank, AUK04: Persons receiving public benefits by region, type of benefits, country of origin and sex, *Statistics Denmark*, <http://www.statbank.dk/statbank5a/default.asp?w=1280>.

<sup>150</sup> Claudia Senik, Holger Stichnoth and Karine Van der Straeten, "Immigration and Natives' Attitudes towards the Welfare State: Evidence from the European Social Survey," *Social Indicators Research* 91:3 (2009), 345, doi: 10.1007/s11205-008-9342-4.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*



abuse of the ‘generous’ Danish welfare system. The series was so widely read it spurred a reality TV show about a Somali man with two wives and eleven children.<sup>152</sup> Somalis, one of the latest refugee groups to enter Denmark, were already under fire for their stark cultural differences and their high crime rate. The series, sponsored by government funding, caused such a public outcry that the right quickly campaigned against welfare benefits for refugees. The campaign, demonstrating the powerful influence of the media, was successful.<sup>153</sup> By 1999, under the pressure of the mounting political clout of their ideological competitor, the DPP, the Social Democrats introduced the first refugee integration law, the “Spatial Dispersal Policy.”

According to Olwig, it is the fear of “parallel societies,” or small ethnic communities, that spur the supposedly “integrationist” welfare policies of the Danish government.<sup>154</sup> While integration and assimilation may be the tag lines of Danish welfare policies towards refugees, the goal tends to favor the development and perpetuation of the welfare system, rather than the needs of the displaced families.<sup>155</sup> The “Spatial Dispersal Policy” is the ultimate example of this bias. Birgitte Romme Larsen discusses the policy by building off the argument of political scientist, Peter Nannestad. Nannestad theorizes

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<sup>152</sup> Moore, 362.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> Olwig, 3.

<sup>155</sup> Olwig, 6.

that the social connections from intra-group bonding are what immigrants may need to mediate social relations with the society of their greater host country.<sup>156</sup>

Refugees are required to live in local, often extremely small, Danish communities for three years. During these years they must take language and culture classes with the financial aid of “introduktionsydelse,” or introductory benefits.<sup>157</sup> While the stated purpose is geographical distribution to avoid marginalized ghettos, Larsen argues that the political motivation is still obvious: to turn refugees into “good members of mainstream Danish society.”<sup>158</sup> Choosing a home is delving into the deepest aspects of people’s lives. It means choosing their children’s daycare, dictating their social networks and, most contradictory, limiting their employment opportunities.<sup>159</sup> These issues were only exacerbated in 2001, when Fogh Rasmussen’s Conservative Liberal government reduced the “introduktionsydelse” to 60% of ordinary public welfare benefits to “motivate them to work.”<sup>160</sup>

Larsen interviews several refugee families who were “spatially dispersed” throughout Denmark. Those who were able to drive to nearby family or similar ethnic groups had a much easier time assimilating into Danish society. They were able to learn the Danish cultural quirks from groups they trusted which allowed them to later connect

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<sup>156</sup> Birgitte Romme Larsen, “Becoming Part of Welfare Scandinavia: Integration through the Spatial Dispersal of Newly Arrived Refugees in Denmark” in *Migration, Family and the Welfare State: Integrating Migrants and Refugees in Scandinavia*, ed. Karen Fog Olwig, et al. (New York: Routledge, 2012), 154.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> Larsen, 155.

<sup>159</sup> Larsen, 157.

<sup>160</sup> Larsen, 154.

with the ethnic Danes in their own towns.<sup>161</sup> Larsen discusses in depth the plight of one Sudanese refugee family who struggled in a small Danish town without any connections to other immigrants of their background. Danish child services were heavily involved in their case because the parents did not understand Danish grocery stores and were sending their children to school with “unhealthy” lunches. They did not trust the authorities and had no ‘mediators’ with established roots of trust to explain that the typical Danish bread “rugbrød” is expected for lunches. The constant involvement of child services made the parents feel undermined and hopeless. Meanwhile, they were increasingly ostracized from their local community. They expressed their wishes to leave Denmark once they built up the means.<sup>162</sup> In other words, their negative experience from spatial dispersal will cause them to leave before they have the opportunity to ever give back to the economy of the welfare state that has thus far funded them.

The importance of a mediating group of the same ethnicity is further evidenced by my research at Nyborg Prison. Of the 76 guards interviewed, a startling 100% answered that the prisoners divided themselves into groups along ethnic lines. Several other categories were mentioned as well, including, but not limited to, religion, age and type of crime. However, ethnicity was a group category that was *always* seen.<sup>163</sup> While the prison is supposed to be viewed as a microcosm for Danish society, this may be an observation closer to the human condition as a whole. It demonstrates the naturalness of forming

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<sup>161</sup> Larsen, 162-164

<sup>162</sup> Larsen, 158-161.

<sup>163</sup> See Appendix B for further detail on Prison survey responses.

connections between individuals of a similar ethnicity. These natural connections may bring the inmates closer to the wider prison community.

An ethnic community can serve as a bridge to the culturally homogenous welfare state. However, Danish bureaucratic policies serve to isolate rather than assimilate refugees into Danish society. While the welfare policies for ‘spatially dispersed’ refugees has undergone influence from right wing populist rhetoric, it is not as intentionally Islamophobic as the Danish state’s involvement in transnational marriage.

### *The Danish state on marriage*

Transnational marriage has been incorporated into the discussion of ‘Danishness,’ making Denmark the self-proclaimed ‘hardliner’ on ethnic minority marriages.<sup>164</sup> The dialogue of the Liberal-Conservative government between 2001 and 2011 can be understood as “an experiment in subjugating family reunification rights to the greater goal of sustaining the welfare state.<sup>165</sup>” Despite being a signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights over 60 years ago, the citizen’s right to a private family life has been overlooked for the greater interests of the nation.<sup>166</sup> In fact, the Migrant Policy Index attributes Denmark a low score of 37 out of 100 in regards to family reunification. This is particularly startling when compared to its Scandinavian counterparts whose

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<sup>164</sup> Garbi Schmidt, “Law and Identity: Transnational Arranged Marriages and the Boundaries of Danishness” in *Migration, Family and the Welfare State: Integrating Migrants and Refugees in Scandinavia*, ed. Karen Fog Olwig, et al. (New York: Routledge, 2012), 77.

<sup>165</sup> Emily Cochran Beck and Per Mouritsen, “Restricting the Right to Family Migration in Denmark: When Human Rights Collide with a Welfare State under Pressure” in *Europe’s Immigration Challenge: Reconciling Work, Welfare and Mobility*, ed. Elana Jurado, et al. (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2013), 160.

<sup>166</sup> Beck and Mouritsen, 167.

scores range from 68 to 84. Concern for the Danish welfare state has altered the freedom of marriage, with a particular effect on Muslim immigrants and their descendants.

In his research paper on Pakistani immigrants in Denmark, Garbi Schmidt uncovers the individual significance of transnational marriage. In addition to marriage serving as an investment in maintaining culture, the Pakistani interviewees argued that their marriage choices were part of individual priorities and free will, a staple of Danish society.<sup>167</sup> However, the mounting laws restricting their freedom to choose a spouse seem to be directly aimed at Muslim immigrants. For example, while it is legal to marry one's cousin in Denmark, the cousin cannot be from a country other than Denmark.<sup>168</sup> Laws like this stem from a “moral panic,” largely spurred by the Danish media and the loud rhetoric of the right wing populists, to ‘save’ Muslim women from arranged marriages and abusive relationships.<sup>169</sup> The laws are also explained by law makers as modes of post 9/11 securitization and as part of Fogh Rasmussen’s integration plan, “kulturkamp.”<sup>170</sup> The goal is greater compliance with Danish civic expectations, most notably, that women will stand ready to work, pay taxes and participate in Danish institutions.<sup>171</sup> The most intrusive and interesting law for the purposes of this research is the law of national attachment that, according to Schmidt, has “established a hierarchy between citizens in

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<sup>167</sup> Garbi Schmidt, 88-89.

<sup>168</sup> Garbi Schmidt, 85.

<sup>169</sup> Mikkel Rytter, “‘The Family of Denmark’ and ‘the Aliens’: Kinship Images in Danish Integration Politics,” *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology*, 75:3 (2010), 302, doi: 10.1080/00141844.2010.513773.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> Emily Cochran Beck and Per Mouritsen, 172.

which, based on an assumption of ‘true’ belonging, some have certain rights that others do not.”<sup>172</sup>

The National Attachment law was introduced in 2000 in regards to family reunification for foreigners living in Denmark. In 2002 it was applied to Danish citizens who married foreigners. Both of the individuals getting married must have a total national attachment greater to Denmark than any other country.<sup>173</sup> The parameters of national attachment change often, but have included parameters like how well they speak Danish, how long they have lived in Denmark and whether either partner have any children or family members in another country.<sup>174</sup> Furthermore, both partners must be over 24, the Danish resident should be able to deposit 50,000DK to caution against support payments from public welfare and the Danish resident must not have received social support in the previous year, a difficult feat in a welfare state.<sup>175</sup> These laws had quick and effective results. From 2001 to 2009 the percentage of first and second generation immigrants from non-western countries that wed people from another country decreased from 61.1% to 24.9%.<sup>176</sup>

The bias against immigrants from the Middle East is best exemplified by Søren Pind, the Minister of Integration in 2010, who suggested in Parliament that people from USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea should be exempt from

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<sup>172</sup> Garbi Schmidt, 82.

<sup>173</sup> Rytter, 305.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> Emily Cochran Beck and Per Mouritsen, 161-162.

<sup>176</sup> Emily Cochran Beck and Per Mouritsen, 165.

citizen and national attachment tests.<sup>177</sup> Since the election of the new Left wing Social Democrat government in 2011, a few of the most restrictive measures of National Attachment have been repealed. However, “the paradigm of the competition welfare state still stands” and spousal reunification remains standing as an issue of “Danishness.”<sup>178</sup> The National Attachment law is still widely supported and the new government does not want to isolate voters who have widely shifted to the right on immigration issues.<sup>179</sup> Without being able to choose their own spouse, many immigrants end up moving to Sweden to marry, taking with them their economic contributions from the Danish welfare system.<sup>180</sup>

#### *The Danish state on education*

One of the most important aspects of a welfare state is its educational system. The Danish educational system boasts high international rating and progressive policies.<sup>181</sup> While the notion of multiculturalism has been shunned in most sectors of Danish society, the Danish education system has recognized the importance of differentiating teaching methodology for immigrants who may require some special attention. The Folkeskole Act of 1993 set an obligation to differentiate teaching for different types of students, a

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<sup>177</sup> Emily Cochran Beck and Per Mouritsen, 176.

<sup>178</sup> Emily Cochran Beck and Per Mouritsen, 160.

<sup>179</sup> Emily Cochran Beck and Per Mouritsen, 177.

<sup>180</sup> Emily Cochran Beck and Per Mouritsen, 167.

<sup>181</sup> “Presentation film about Denmark,” Ministry of Education video, 9:33, 2009, <http://eng.uvm.dk/Education/General/Presentation-film-about-Denmark>.

milestone requirement in a very decentralized system.<sup>182</sup> However, the OECD still reported unsatisfactory academic performance for Danish bilingual children. In fact, a 2004 report on OECD progress stated that almost 50% of bilingual children who leave Danish primary education are without functional reading skills.<sup>183</sup> The Ministry of Education has worked quickly to remedy this educational gap with more centralized evaluations. While the Ministry of Education is confident in the educational reforms Denmark has made, it acknowledges the issues of implementation in the very decentralized Danish education system.<sup>184</sup> However, I contend that there may be something that goes beyond decentralization that hinders these reforms, most notably, the highly politicized nature of Muslim immigrants from right wing populist rhetoric.

The majority of bilingual children undergoing Danish education are descendants of parents from Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon and Somalia.<sup>185</sup> Meaning, the majority of these bilingual students who need specialized educational attention are Muslim. In the wake of a powerful right wing populist influence, Muslim families are increasingly perceived as a hindrance to the Danish school system. For example, Danes often hold the opinion that Muslim parents “push” their children rather than allowing them the *freedom* to choose their own paths, a highly valued component of Danish education.<sup>186</sup> In Denmark, all

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<sup>182</sup> Ministry of Education and Rambøll, “Country Background Report for Denmark,” OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes, Aarhus, April 2011, <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/47747224.pdf>, 13.

<sup>183</sup> Ministry of Education and Rambøll, 71.

<sup>184</sup> Ministry of Education and Rambøll, 72.

<sup>185</sup> Ministry of Education and Rambøll, 5.

<sup>186</sup> Mikkel Rytter. “Money of Education? Improvement Strategies Among Pakistani Families in Denmark” in *Migration, Family and the Welfare State: Integrating Migrants and Refugees in Scandinavia*, ed. Karen Fog Olwig, et al. (New York: Routledge, 2012), 29.



stages of education are paid for by the public sphere and living stipends are offered by the government so that every student can follow a path that best suits him or her.

Furthermore, 'play' is considered one of the most developmentally important aspects of childhood.<sup>187</sup> In addition to allowing children to play at school, parents are expected to allow their children similar freedoms at home. This focus on 'play' and freedom can lead to the first of many cultural misunderstandings.

Mikkel Rytter explores this value clash in his article, "Money or Education? Improvement Strategies Among Pakistani Families in Denmark." Rytter studies the immense improvement in the educational achievements of the descendants of Pakistani immigrants. Rather than their goals being dictated by a societal pressure for success, Pakistani families set their own ideals for achievement. These goals "from below" reflect the family's collective honor among their immigrant community.<sup>188</sup> The prestige of being a taxi driver or a shop owner have diminished and immigrant parents expect their children to become doctors, engineers or lawyers. Pakistani parents see their unskilled labor as a road towards their children's higher education making education a "family project."<sup>189</sup> This parental pressure clashes with Danish culture and reflects a greater issue in Danish education: a lack of communication between the school system and immigrant parents.

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<sup>187</sup> Ministry of Education, "The Folkeskole," An overview of the Danish primary and secondary schools. Copenhagen, February 2008, [http://eng.uvm.dk/FactSheets/~media/UVM/Filer/English/Fact%20sheets/080101\\_fact\\_sheet\\_the\\_folkeskole.ashx](http://eng.uvm.dk/FactSheets/~media/UVM/Filer/English/Fact%20sheets/080101_fact_sheet_the_folkeskole.ashx), 6.

<sup>188</sup> Mikkel Rytter: "Money of Education? Improvement Strategies Among Pakistani Families in Denmark," 19-24.

<sup>189</sup> Mikkel Rytter "Money of Education? Improvement Strategies Among Pakistani Families in Denmark," 26.

In Denmark, parents are expected to be highly involved at every level of their children's education.<sup>190</sup> The NGO, Humanity in Action, has explored the disconnect between Danish educators and immigrant parents through a series of interviews. These interviews revealed that parental pressure is not the only cultural issue that comes into play. Danish culture places a lot of emphasis on birthdays, Christmas and most controversially, the staple food of pork, a food that is forbidden in Islam. Consequently, cultural misunderstandings are rampant in the Danish classroom. The situation is only exacerbated by the fact that linguistic barriers often keep immigrant parents ostracized from their children's education. Parents also may choose to be uninvolved because they feel unwanted and misunderstood by other parents and teachers.<sup>191</sup>

As a result, a number of immigrant parents have chosen to send their children to private schools rather than to public schools that they feel culturally ostracizes them. The public school tradition in Denmark runs on a norm of decentralization in which parents have nearly complete control over their children's education.<sup>192</sup> The probability that a student will go to private school increases by age and usually offers some special religious or linguistic focus.<sup>193</sup> While they are established by the parents, they are mostly

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<sup>190</sup> Harry Daniels. "Parents and schooling in the European Union: a case study from Denmark and Germany" In *Equality and Diversity in Education: National and International Contexts*, ed. Patricia Potts, et al. (London: Routledge, 1995), 104.

<sup>191</sup> Simon Rosof and Lise Tjerrild, "Acknowledging a Multi-Cultural Denmark: Bringing Balance to the Folkeskoler," *Humanity in Action*, 2000, <http://www.humanityinaction.org/knowledgebase/23-acknowledging-a-multi-cultural-denmark-bringing-balance-to-the-folkeskoler>.

<sup>192</sup> Lejf Moos, Klaus Kasper Kofod, Katrin Hjort, and Peter Henrik Raae, "Denmark: New Links Between Education and Economics" in *Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership*, ed. Lejf Moos (New York: Springer, 2013), 19.

<sup>193</sup> Pia Skott and Klaus Kasper Kofod, "Independent Schools in Different Nordic Contexts: Implications for School Leadership?" in *Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership* (New York: Springer, 2013), 106.

funded by tax money or governmental subsidies, making them an affordable option.<sup>194</sup> A number of municipality changes in 2007 that caused many smaller public schools to shut down have directly influenced a spike in private schools throughout Denmark.<sup>195</sup> While these new schools range in affiliation, it is the small independent Muslim schools that have been highly contested in the media.<sup>196</sup> The government has responded by altering its free school tradition.

The DPP has outwardly criticized private Muslim schools for low quality education and teachers. However, their critiques clash with a 2006 Ministry of Education study that showed 41% of the pupils in Muslim independent schools progressed into upper secondary school, against a national average of 26%.<sup>197</sup> Nonetheless, the criticism of private Muslim schools led to policy changes under the Liberal-Conservative coalition government. For example, a school appointed supervisor must be certified by the Ministry and master Danish in speech and writing unless at a school with state permission to teach another language.<sup>198</sup> In 2011, under the left wing Social Democrat government, similar policies increased and the supervision of independent schools only intensified.<sup>199</sup> Today, “centralized and decentralized forms of government are interwoven in a new

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<sup>194</sup> Skot and Kofod, 107.

<sup>195</sup> Moos, Kofo, Hjort, and Raae, 20.

<sup>196</sup> Skot and Kofod, 105.

<sup>197</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, “Muslims in Denmark,” *Denmark in Lebanon*, accessed March 15, 2014, <http://libanon.um.dk/en/about-us/aboutdenmark/muslimsdenmark/>.

<sup>198</sup> Skot and Kofod, 105.

<sup>199</sup> Skot and Kofod, 98.

way” and the victims tend to be the small Muslim schools.<sup>200</sup> Changes in evaluation techniques and increased multi-cultural education in Danish public schools has perhaps pacified members of the international community such as OECD, but it has not stopped the growing cultural divide between Muslim immigrants and ethnic Danes.

Meanwhile, private schools are also on the rise in big cities where parents of ethnic Danish origin choose to keep their children separate from immigrant majority public schools.<sup>201</sup> This trend in ‘free schools’ has been recently addressed by scholar, Christer Gerdes. By taking socioeconomic status in to account, he demonstrates that pupils in private schools tend to have lower mathematical and written Danish scores than those in public schools.<sup>202</sup> His research suggests that parents, to some extent, choose to send their children to private school for reasons beyond academic promise. While factors like religion or perceived educational superiority could come into play, he hypothesizes the role of racial and religious prejudices.<sup>203</sup> While this is less contested in the media, the possibility of a “native flight” of Danes from public education paints a worrying future for Muslim integration.

In the conclusion of his study of the education of Pakistani Danes, Rytter predicts that as Islamophobia continues to penetrate Danish society, the more educated Pakistani Danes will immigrate to Sweden leaving the less educated to subsist largely off the

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<sup>200</sup> Moos, Kofo, Hjort, and Raae, 19.

<sup>201</sup> Skot and Kofod, 106.

<sup>202</sup> Gerdes, 650.

<sup>203</sup> Gerdes, 161.

Danish welfare system.<sup>204</sup> This prediction can be expanded to the greater population of Muslim immigrants. If Muslim immigrants feel that they are unable to give their children the education they have worked towards, it is safe to predict a mass emigration of those who have built up the means to do so. If the Danish government does not apply reforms to public schools more rapidly or address the expansion and selective repression of private schools, it may experience a greater welfare drain issue in its future.

### *The future of the welfare state*

Immigration undoubtedly disrupts the homogenous, small nation that is perceived as the ideal home to the welfare state. However, historically, Denmark has publicly embraced the effects of globalization in order to serve as an international player. In their article “Small is Resilient—the Impact of Globalization on Denmark,” Klaus Nielsen and Stefan Kesting state that the Danish government has been able to bring the neo-liberalism of the increasingly globalized world into the arms of the welfare state through a continuous restructuring of a thoroughly developed state infrastructure and society.<sup>205</sup> Regrettably, they state that the xenophobic attitudes of groups such as the DPP have thrown the fate of the welfare state as a whole and that of Denmark as an international power into dire question. Nielsen and Kesting lament:<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Rytter “Money of Education? Improvement Strategies Among Pakistani Families in Denmark,” 30.

<sup>205</sup> Klaus Nielsen and Stefan Kesting, “Small is Resilient—the Impact of Globalization on Denmark,” *Review of Social Economy* 61:3 (2003), 381, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29770214>.

<sup>206</sup> Nielsen and Kesting, 384.

Overall, the impact of glowing globalization trends on Denmark's negotiated economy seems to resemble a Viking ship in rough sea. To stay the course and avoid wreckage one has to rely heavily on a social consensus about the intended direction and ensure the collaboration of all crew members through a certain degree of solidarity and equality. In the rough sea of globalization, the political elite is engaged in efforts to steer the ship, eager to utilize its new opportunities while many ordinary citizens are worried about the costs. It remains to be seen whether this recent split can be healed or signifies the emergence of persistent disruptions in the social consensus.

In other words, the DPP hinders the societal transformations Denmark requires to both profit from the growth of globalization and maintain the established welfare system.

According to the rhetoric of the DPP, immigration reflects the fundamental issue with the welfare system; that it steals from the very ethnic Danes who fund it. This compelling stance coupled with blatant Islamophobia has allowed the DPP to have a profound influence on the type and amount of social services provided to immigrants. Refugees have had their stipends cut and their communities dispersed, the right to choose a spouse has been drastically restricted, and the Danish education system has been unable, and in the case of private school codes, unwilling, to incorporate immigrant Muslim students. This uncovers a serious paradox in Danish social services: it works to actively push out the very Muslim immigrants who could repay, or even strengthen, the welfare state while leaving the poor and needy in the warm embrace of Danish tax payers. The Danish welfare state is not evolving with globalization; it is withering under the political and social influence of right wing populism.

## CHAPTER 5: THE REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SYSTEM

*From the freest to the strictest*

Denmark is recognized as the first state to ratify the 1951 UNHCR Convention, a milestone in refugee and asylum rights. About thirty years later, the Danish Government proudly unveiled its 1983 Aliens Act as the most liberal refugee legislature in the world. However, in 2002, a new Aliens Act was enacted; this time it was revered as the strictest in the world.<sup>207</sup> Rapid changes in the political environment brought the Danish asylum system from one extreme position to the other.

In the wake of the destabilizing Arab uprisings, the detrimental aftermath of the Iraqi War, and the protracted and bloody Syrian Civil War, Muslim refugees are in desperate need of a safe haven. However, the routine defamation and ‘otherizing’ of Muslims in the Danish media and the fear of immigrant infringement on the welfare state during the Liberal-Conservative government culminated in restrictive measures against asylum-seekers. These measures range from policies specifically aimed at decreasing the number of accepted asylum cases to a decrease in funding for refugee-supporting NGOs. I will begin by addressing the adoption of stringent criteria for becoming a Danish refugee which has both decreased the number of refugees in Denmark and increased the number of refugees waiting in limbo at deportation sites. This will supplement a discussion of the lack of advocacy for refugee rights in both the Danish Parliament and in Danish civil society.

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<sup>207</sup> Schmidt, 79.

In the previous chapter, the shortcomings of the Spatial Dispersal policy and the welfare benefits of refugees were addressed. This chapter will examine the steps before and after the Danish welfare system comes into play: The acceptance or rejection of refugees into Denmark as asylum-seekers and the eventual acceptance or rejection of those granted asylum as Danish citizens. The increasing strictness, and stunning arbitrariness, of these decision making processes reflect a heavy right wing populist influence and, by extension, an Islamophobic bias.

### *An anti-alien Alien Package*

The new “Alien Package” of 2002 drastically changed the Danish asylum process. The controversial bill begins with the following statement which aptly summarizes its political roots and motivations: “The Government and the Danish Peoples Party agree that the number of aliens coming to denmark must be restricted...”<sup>208</sup> The “Alien Package” was a product of the Liberal-Conservative government of former prime minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, and relied on the Danish People’s Party for a Parliamentary majority. The new package completed its goal of decreasing the number of aliens, but it was mostly to the detriment of refugees. Before the stringent bill even passed, its “signal value” caused a decline in asylum applications, mostly from Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>209</sup> After it was firmly in place, the Danish Immigration Service, the DIS, drastically increased their number of asylum rejections, from a 50% rejection rate in 2002

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<sup>208</sup> Kim U. Kjær, “The Abolition of the Danish de facto Concept,” *International Journal of Refugee Law* 15:2 (2003): 256, doi: 10.1093/ijrl/15.2.254.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*



to 90% in 2005.<sup>210</sup> The decreased amount of asylum-seekers and grantees can be attributed to stricter refugee conditions, harsher application procedures and, arguably, arbitrary selection choices that reflect the biases of DIS officers.

The most influential transformation in the new Alien package on incoming refugees was the Danish government's replacement of the "de facto" clause with its weaker successor, "status B." The de facto clause offered asylum to refugees who were not clearly covered by the 1951 UNHCR Convention. This included, but was not limited to, those fleeing active war service, those without sufficient documentary evidence and those fleeing because of a subjective fear of their chaotic home country.<sup>211</sup> While the "de facto" clause began rather informally in the 1960s, it was codified in the previous 1983 Aliens Act.<sup>212</sup> It continued to grow in scope and, eventually, about two thirds of the accepted refugees were accepted through the de facto code. This means that only one third of asylum grantees were covered by the 1951 Convention.<sup>213</sup> However, in 2002 it was replaced with "status B" which promises asylum to refugees who, in addition to the conditions in the 1951 Convention, risk the death penalty, torture or inhumane punishment. While this may seem fair on paper, these "extra" areas of coverage are already in the Convention and therefore do not offer asylum-seekers any legal leeway

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<sup>210</sup> Fethi Mansouri, Michael Leach and Amy Nethery, "Temporary Protection and the Refugee Convention in Australia, Denmark, and Germany," *Refugee* 26:1 (2009):138, <http://pi.library.yorku.ca/ojs/index.php/refuge/article/download/30615/28126>.

<sup>211</sup> Kim, 256.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> Kim, 258.

like its legislative predecessor.<sup>214</sup> In fact, some even argue that by ignoring “chaotic” situations and issues of proper documentary evidence, “status B” works in violation of the European Council of Human Rights.

As of 2002, thousands of refugees seeking asylum in Denmark were no longer eligible and were either denied entrance or feared deportation. “Status B” had the most detrimental effect on Somali aliens who were nearly all “de facto” refugees. While Somalis feared their chaos in their country, they could not prove that they would be subject to inhumane treatment upon their return.<sup>215</sup> Some scholars, such as Kim U. Kjør, a former researcher at the Danish Institute of Human Rights, have argued that the deportation of aliens such as the Somali refugees violates ECHR article 3, the prohibition of inhumane punishment or torture.<sup>216</sup> He cites *Ahmed vs. Austria*, a case in which Austria was sued for deporting a refugee to a country with chaotic conditions.<sup>217</sup> Kjør argues that the decrease in the number of refugees, while domestically perceived as a national gain, is countered by a loss of respect in the European community. By violating article of the EHCR, Danish reforms are led in the opposite direction of those reforms suggested by the Council of Europe, a symbolic and political mistake.<sup>218</sup> A similar political misstep took place nine years later. In 2011, at the end of the Liberal-Conservative government’s administration, the DPP pressed for the reinstatement of border controls. The move was seen internationally as a challenge to the Schengen

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<sup>214</sup> Kim, 261.

<sup>215</sup> Kim, 264.

<sup>216</sup> Kim, 265.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> Kim, 272-275.

accord, sending shockwaves through Europe and proving that international political agreements would not hinder the seriousness of the right wing's animosity towards foreigners.<sup>219</sup>

There were several other aspects of the "Alien Package" that made it undesirable to asylum seekers, especially those coming from the Middle East. For example, rather than being able to lodge applications at local embassies, asylum seekers must be present in Denmark. As a result, difficulty attaining visas often equates to an un-reviewed asylum application.<sup>220</sup> More importantly, was the decision to limit the number of seats on the Refugee Board, those who make the final decision on asylum statuses, from five to three seats. The two seats that were cut belonged to the only NGO represented on the board, the Danish Refugee Council. Kjær argues that this hurt the legitimacy of the Board by abolishing the seats that could "act as an independent guarantor of due process taking into account the requisite humanitarian considerations."<sup>221</sup> However, the DRC is not the only NGO to rapidly decline in influence. Many NGOs in the early stages of the "Alien Package" felt their government financial support and advocacy steadily waning while others complained of personal DPP attacks.<sup>222</sup> For example, the Rehabilitation and Research Centre for Torture Victims was forced to give up broader advocacy work and

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<sup>219</sup> Stephen Castle, "Denmark Warned Over Border Plans," *New York Times*, May 13, 2011, accessed March 28, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/14/world/europe/14border.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/14/world/europe/14border.html?_r=0).

<sup>220</sup> Mansouri, Leach and Nethery, 138.

<sup>221</sup> Kim, 273.

<sup>222</sup> Mansouri, Leach and Nethery, 143-144.

continue on a “paid per session” basis.<sup>223</sup> Without civil sector advocacy, refugees are more susceptible to systematic discrimination.

*Hospitality has its limits*

The need for more civil sector and human rights involvement in the Danish asylum process is of paramount importance when one considers its lacking influence prior to the Alien Package. In 2005, Edith Montgomery and Anders Foldspang published a disturbing article regarding the predictors of asylum decisions in Denmark. Using data from 149 refugee families who entered Denmark in 1992, they concluded that the selection process favored refugees who were better socially and culturally situated. Most notably, if the family’s religion was another than Islam, it was positively associated with a residence permit. Therefore, their findings demonstrate a diminishing role of human rights violations in asylum decisions even before the 2002 crack-down.<sup>224</sup> Without the Danish Refugee Council and other NGOs advocating against discrimination in asylum decisions, one should fear for the future of Muslim asylum seekers in Denmark.

The discrimination against Muslim refugees became clear under Birthe Rønn Hornbech, The Minister of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs from 2007 to 2011. Despite being a loyal member of the right-wing Liberal Party, her statements often took members of parliament by surprise. Against the will of her own party, she

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<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>224</sup> Edith Montgomery and Anders Foldspang, “Predictors of the Authorities’ Decision to Grant Asylum in Denmark,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 18:4 (2005): 454–467. doi: 10.1093/refuge/fei040.

disapproved of headscarf bans.<sup>225</sup> However, her hospitality did not extend to Muslim *refugees*. In 2009, to the shock of the international community and after an agreement to offer asylum to a certain number of Iraqi quota refugees, Rønn Hornbech rescinded her Iraqi quota and replaced it with Burmese refugees. A clear reason was not given to explain the decision other than the Danish government had “very good experience in integrating Burmese”<sup>226</sup> However, the fact that a less controversial Buddhist group replaced the more media-centric Muslim refugees should not be overlooked. While this example only hints at Rønn Hornbech’s discriminatory bias, the events of March 2011 more strongly it. Evidence eventually surfaced about the failure to grant Danish citizenship to stateless Palestinians born in Denmark, a blatant violation of international law.<sup>227</sup> Rønn Hornbech was quickly dismissed, but the discrimination has not been forgotten among the Palestinian Danish population as several Palestinians are still demanding financial compensation.<sup>228</sup>

The limitations of Danish hospitality is further explained in Ulrik Pram Gad’s paper for the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, “Conditions for Hospitality or Defense of Identity?: Writers in need of Refuge- A Case of Denmark's 'Muslim relations.’” In it, he discusses the discriminatory language in the 2008 bill passed in

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<sup>225</sup> Matias Seidelin, “Birthe Rønn: Politikerne skal holde sig fra tørklædesag,” *Politiken*, May 13, 2008, accessed April 1, 2014, <http://politiken.dk/indland/politik/ECE508105/birthe-roenn-politikerne-skal-holde-sig-fra-toerklædesag/>.

<sup>226</sup> Mikael Børsting and Claus Blok Thomsen, “Rønn sløjfer nye irakiske flygtninge,” *Politiken*, September 9, 2009 accessed April 1, 2014, <http://politiken.dk/indland/politik/ECE784505/roenn-sloejfer-nye-irakiske-flygtninge/>.

<sup>227</sup> Europa World Plus, “Denmark: Lars Løkke Rasmussen’s premiership,” *Europa World Online*, London: Routledge, accessed April 13, 2014, <http://www.europaworld.com/entry/dk.is.12710839011>.

<sup>228</sup> Berlingske Politiko, “Statsløse hiver Pind og Rønn i retten” *Berlingske*, March 21, 2011, accessed April 5, 2014, <http://www.b.dk/politiko/statsloese-hiver-pind-og-roenn-i-retten>.

Parliament to include Denmark in the “International Cities of Refuge” network for writers escaping persecution. The fleeing writers are not granted asylum rights in Denmark like in many other “Cities of Refuge” locations.<sup>229</sup> Instead, the writers must sign a “Declaration of recognition of the fundamental values of Danish Society” and agree to leave the country within two years. In the words of Pam Gad, their stay is “conditional” and the declaration is basically a “caricature catalogue of the vices of Muslims, as they appear in Danish debates on integration.<sup>230</sup>” The writers, who are carefully not described as refugees in Danish debate and legislature, must agree to give up the cultural traits the Danish government identifies them with. This list of imposed traits includes undermining democracy, oppressing or disrespecting women and children, and supporting acts of terrorism.<sup>231</sup> By using the “Cities of Refuge” bill as an example, Pram Gad concludes that the Danish government follows a “Making us good by listing their vices” approach in its legislature in order to not “compromise the homogeneity of Denmark.<sup>232</sup>” In other words, hospitality for refugees seems to have its limits when Muslims are concerned.

### *The woes of permanent residence*

If granted asylum, the residence of the refugee is expected to be temporary. The eventual repatriation and reintegration of the refugees to their home country is naturally

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<sup>229</sup> Ulrik Pram Gad. “Conditions of Hospitality or Defense of Identity? Writers in Need of Refuge - A Case of Denmark’s ‘Muslim Relations,’” In *The Conditions of Hospitality*, ed. Thomas Claviez (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 111.

<sup>230</sup> Gad, 117.

<sup>231</sup> Gad, 117-118.

<sup>232</sup> Gad, 114-119.

the preferred solution. Accordingly, the Danish Act of Repatriation offers a 12 month leeway for repatriated refugees to return to Denmark. Unfortunately, this focus on repatriation can lead to “circular repatriation,” the unsuccessful reintegration of repatriated refugees who then return to Denmark.<sup>233</sup> A 2008 UNHCR study analyzes the circular repatriation of Iraqis with refugee status in Denmark. Of 306 repatriated Iraqis, 76 returned to Denmark within their allotted time. The reasons for their return ranged from indirect economic pressure to leave Denmark to direct pressure from their individual caseworkers. In almost all cases, their desire to leave Denmark was greater than their desire to return home.<sup>234</sup> Repatriation rather than integration seems to take the forefront for those with Danish refugee status. However, many refugees do not *want* to live in Denmark, but cannot return home. This does not bode well for their eventual return to Danish society.

Despite the pressure to repatriate, those still vying for permanent residence in Denmark may rely on their mental illness. Specific mental health problems can lead to a humanitarian residence permit. However, a humanitarian residence permit will only last two years before the refugee needs to reapply, with the same basis as before.<sup>235</sup> In other words, if the refugee wants to stay in Denmark, he or she must still be mentally ill. In their article regarding the rights of children in this asylum system, Kathrine Vitus and

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<sup>233</sup> Maria Helene Bak Riiskjaer and Tilde Nielsson, “Circular Repatriation: the unsuccessful return and reintegration of Iraqis with refugee status in Denmark,” UNHCR New Issues in Refugee Research: Research Paper No. 165, Geneva, October 2008, <http://www.unhcr.org/48eb34c72.html>, 1.

<sup>234</sup> Riiskjaer and Nielsson, 8-10.

<sup>235</sup> Kathrine Vitus and Hilde Lidén, “The status of the asylum-seeking child in Norway and Denmark - comparing discourses, politics and practices,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23:1 (2010): 75, doi: 10.1093/jrs/feq003.

Hilde Liden argue that this route towards humanitarian residence is “paradoxical” because it possibly “encourages a deterioration in the asylum-seekers’ mental and physical health as a way of receiving asylum.”<sup>236</sup> Nonetheless, it is one of the very few routes available towards a residence permit.

In the rare cases a permanent residence permit is given, the route to citizenship has been personally attacked during the Liberal-Conservative government. As of 2007, the citizenship test was directly from the textbook *Danmark Før og Nu*, Denmark Past and Present, which was taught in Danish language schools to prepare residents for the test.<sup>237</sup> However, with pressure from the DPP, the test was suddenly changed in September 2008 and the new guidelines were not posted until November. The change seemed like a direct attack on applicants who had registered relying on the old conditions. Headmasters of language schools tried to fight the rapid change, but their struggle was to no avail.<sup>238</sup> The pass rate dropped suddenly from 97% to 23.5% in December 2008.<sup>239</sup> The unexpected change and stark decline in pass rates supports the theory that it was an attack on the extension of Danish citizenships. After the guidelines had been posted for a longer time and students had a fair amount of study time, the pass

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<sup>236</sup> Vitus and Lidén, 76.

<sup>237</sup> Eva Ersbøll, “On Trial in Denmark,” in *A Re-Definition of Belonging?: Language and Integration Tests in Europe*, ed. Ricky van Oers et al. (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2010), 144.

<sup>238</sup> Ersboll, 146.

<sup>239</sup> Ersboll, 147.



rate plateaued at 42.1% in June 2009.<sup>240</sup> Nonetheless, the questions of the new test faced serious criticisms

Seven questions on this new citizenship test were questioned as imprecise, while one was quickly proven blatantly incorrect. Difficult questions like, what was the Danish population in the Viking era, were nearly unanswerable by Danish citizens themselves.<sup>241</sup> A 2010 study at a Danish High School showed that 2 out of 3 high school level social studies students were unable to pass the test.<sup>242</sup> Similarly, but more shockingly, another study around the same time revealed that, despite 84% of DPP members approving of the strict text, only every third member could pass it.<sup>243</sup> The goal of this test was not to make Danish citizens; the test was a ploy to prevent the growth in number of Danish citizens.

### *The forgotten: camps and children*

In my prison research, the most depressing section to visit was the deportation floor.<sup>244</sup> The silence on this floor in comparison to the rest of the prison could have several explanations: they were depressed about facing deportation because of their crime, they lacked human contact because of language barriers, or they were just completely isolated from the rest of the prison community. Nonetheless, with only a few

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<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>242</sup> Kristian Brårud Larsen, "Danske gymnasieelever dumper danskhedsprøven," *Avisen*, December 19, 2010, accessed April 4, 2014, [http://www.avisen.dk/danske-gymnasieelever-dumperdanskhedsproeven\\_139217.aspx](http://www.avisen.dk/danske-gymnasieelever-dumperdanskhedsproeven_139217.aspx).

<sup>243</sup> Michael Bræmer, "Dansk Folkepartis vælgere er dårligst i Danmarks-kundskab," *Ugebrevet A4*, January 25, 2010, accessed April 4, 2014, [http://www.ugebreveta4.dk/dansk-folkepartis-vaelgere-er-daarligst-i-danmarks-ku\\_19109.aspx](http://www.ugebreveta4.dk/dansk-folkepartis-vaelgere-er-daarligst-i-danmarks-ku_19109.aspx).

<sup>244</sup> See Appendix A for observations of daily prison life.

inmates occupying the section, the floor seemed oddly void of conversation or activity. Even among the wider prison community, those who feared deportation in the future were clearly taking steps that distanced themselves from the other inmates and, by extension, the wider Danish community. For example, a few potential deportees explained that they chose English language classes over Danish classes because if they were deported the Danish language is futile; a valid point that unfortunately and inadvertently undermines attempts at Prison integration. Issues of loneliness, isolation and integration are representative of issues among refugees facing the constant threat of deportation in Danish asylum camps.

Those refugees known as “phase 3 rejected asylum seekers” are faced with time, ranging from a few days to dozens of years, at an asylum camp.<sup>245</sup> These refugees are either held up by administrative and bureaucratic processes or are refusing to return to their home country. Most of these refugees come from Iraq, Iran and Somalia, countries that Denmark has no treaty allowing for the forced return of asylum-seekers.<sup>246</sup> The largest and most controversial camp is in Sandholm, a Suburb of Copenhagen. Many journalists have travelled to Sandholm to comment on its overarching depressive “feeling of uncertainty.”<sup>247</sup> While the conditions are not bad, one of the denied asylum seekers compares her temporary home of 12 years to “a grave” because she “feel[s] like a dead

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<sup>245</sup> Mansouri, Leach and Nethery, 141.

<sup>246</sup> Dominic Hughes, “Denmark’s refugees in legal limbo,” *BBC News*, June 17, 2008, accessed April 5, 2014, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7458967.stm>.

<sup>247</sup> Awad Joumaa, “Denmark’s forgotten asylum seekers,” *Aljazeera*, March 16, 2009, accessed April 5, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/focus/2009/03/20093111200253161.html>.

person in it- with no future, nothing.<sup>248</sup>” Meanwhile, no changes have been made to account for these long, possibly indefinite, stays.

A 2008 BBC article discusses how Sandholm and its Danish counterparts are only built to last people one or two years, despite its long term occupants. Most notably, how education cannot develop with the asylum-seekers rendering their education and skills virtually useless. In the article, Mads Carstensen, former head of training at the Danish Red Cross, laments “You spend all this time in the Danish asylum system without working, without using your skills, and eventually you become passive. You lose your ability to act for yourself.”<sup>249</sup> This forced passivity does not help alleviate the mental problems of those already in the camp. A 2007 study by Amnesty International of 142 people at Sandholm Camp, most of whom were from Iraq, Iran or Syria, revealed that 65% fulfilled the symptom criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder. Amnesty International concluded its report by stating that this vulnerable group required attention and aid that they were not receiving.<sup>250</sup>

Scholars have also begun to question the legality of this forced passivity in regards to its compliance with the Children’s Rights Convention. The vast majority of children attend asylum schools for “reception level” classes that have fewer hours and subjects than the public school system. Additionally, with a deficient number of

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<sup>248</sup> Dominic Hughes, “Denmark’s refugees in legal limbo.”

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>250</sup> Masmus, Tania Nicole, Eva Møller, Cæcilie Buhmann, Vibeke Bunch MD, Jean Hald Jensen, Trine Nørregård Hansen MD, Louise Møller Jørgensen, Claes Kjær, Maiken Mannstaedt, Annemette Oxholm, Jutta Skau, Lotte Theilade, Lise Worm and Morten Ekstrøm, “Asylum seekers in Denmark: A study of health status and grade of traumatization of newly arrived asylum seekers,” *Torture* 18:2 (2008): 77-86, [http:// www.ircct.org/Files/Filer/TortureJournal/18\\_02\\_2008/asylum\\_seekers\\_in\\_DK.pdf](http://www.ircct.org/Files/Filer/TortureJournal/18_02_2008/asylum_seekers_in_DK.pdf).

multilingual teachers, the asylum schools find themselves out of compliance with the CRC's right to equal opportunity and education.<sup>251</sup> Other criticisms of CRC compliance include a random process of selection that ignore the child's health and, by extension, denying them the rights of "individual personality" or a "place in the decision making process."<sup>252</sup> However, the CRC, like other aforementioned international conventions, finds itself outside of Danish legal and public discourse.<sup>253</sup> If the residents of the camps, including the children, are ever able to enter Danish society, they will be unable to contribute. Until then, they wait.

Even though Sandholm refugees have no education or job opportunities available to them outside the camp's gates, they are typically allowed to leave and return freely. However, this freedom was restricted by the most notable piece of legislation to reach the camps in years, the 2008 "Law 69." After three Tunisian Muslim asylum-seekers in Sandholm were suspected of plotting an attack on cartoonist, Kurt Westergaard, the illustrator of the infamous "Muhammad bomb-turban" cartoon, they were forced to check in with authorities every day. In December 2008, under pressure from the DPP, this precaution was extended to every refugee in Sandholm. Law 69, nicknamed "the Tunisian law," only affects Sandholm camp refugees. Rønn Hornbech introduced this "Special law," meaning an unusually specific and quickly implemented law generally

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<sup>251</sup> Vitus and Lidén, 71-72.

<sup>252</sup> Edith Montgomery and Anders Foldspang, "Seeking asylum in Denmark: refugee children's mental health and exposure to violence," *European Journal of Public Health* 15:3 (2005): 235-236, doi: 10.1093/eurpub/cki059.

<sup>253</sup> Vitus and Lidén, 71-72.

effected by public opinion, which was then supported by the DPP.<sup>254</sup> It has since been called a waste of resources for adding to the bureaucracy of camp procedures, illegal for changing the contract of those already in the camp, and Islamophobic for its roots in the Cartoon Crisis.<sup>255256</sup>

### *The future of the refugee and asylum system*

The Danish refugee and asylum system as it stands presents two serious problems that stem from the right wing populist influence during the Liberal-Conservative coalition. Firstly, it is being questioned by scholars for its compliance with international and European code. While the reinstatement of border controls that challenged the Schengen accord have since been rescinded by the current Social-Democrat government, most of the internationally questionable refugee legislation remains intact. Most notably, the replacement of the asylum “de Facto” clause with “status B,” which moves in the opposite direction of reforms encouraged by the European Council of Human Rights. Furthermore, the CRC remains unaddressed in Danish refugee discourse. Secondly, the pressure for repatriation, difficulty in gaining asylum and the mentally trying and isolationist life in Danish refugee camps mostly likely hinders refugee integration into and appreciation of Danish society. What remains is a system that is increasingly

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<sup>254</sup> Ulrik Dahlin, “Rønn Hornbechs særeste særlov,” *Information*, November 21, 2008, accessed April 2, 2014, <http://www.information.dk/172534>.

<sup>255</sup> Rune Jellesen Smith, “Meldepligt er ressourcospild,” *Information*, June 19, 2010, accessed April 2, 2014, <http://www.information.dk/236878>.

<sup>256</sup> Ulrik Dahlin, “L 69: Lovgivning med tilbagevirkende kraft,” *Information*, December 1, 2008, accessed April 2, 2012, <http://www.information.dk/173470>.

detached from international legislation and a refugee population, mostly Muslim, who feel increasingly unwelcome in what they see as a hostile and discriminatory country.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

### *Right wing populism in Denmark*

The election of 2001 brought a Liberal-Conservative coalition into power. They would remain in a place of political supremacy for ten years. This ascent of the right-wing in Danish politics relied on the continued support of the DPP, the first powerful Nordic right wing populist party. The Danish electorate is attracted to the nationalist platform that the DPP claims ownership of. However, the electorate understanding of nationalism hinges on the protection of the “Danish way of life” from a perceived threat, in this case, a Muslim population with conflicting values. An Islamophobic right wing populist discourse has since colored Danish political debate.

The political and social environments in Denmark since 2001 have worked to hinder rather than bolster successful integration of Muslim immigrants. A significant portion of the Danish media, arguably influenced and supported by the government, functions under an “us-vs. them” paradigm framed by the extreme right in Danish politics. Furthermore, a welfare system has emerged that withholds rights from immigrants who must first prove their “Danishness,” an arbitrary term defined by right wing populist rhetoric. Cultural misunderstandings have culminated in an outward movement of both Muslim and ethnic Danes from the Danish public school system and the growth of private schools that are divided along religious lines. Lastly, the strict

refugee and asylum system functions to further isolate Muslims from Danish culture. The rise of right wing populist power has made Denmark a country where Muslim immigrants feel increasingly unwelcome.

The explosion of right wing populist policy and rhetoric in Denmark that seems to specifically ostracize Muslim immigrants and their descendants could have profound consequences both domestically and internationally. Firstly, media crises, like the “Cartoon Crisis” of 2005, endanger both Danes and foreigners. While it seems that the Danish government is better equipped to respond to such crises in the future, there still needs to be a shift in media dialogue. Muslims need to become part of “Danishness” as it is portrayed by the media not to undermine governmental attempts at integration. Secondly, if Muslims feel generally ostracized or limited by Danish social services, they may emigrate out of Denmark. These emigrants will be those successful enough to afford passage and they will leave before they have an opportunity to repay the welfare system that had thus far funded them. Thirdly, by pushing refugees away, sometimes keeping them isolated in camps, Danish asylum policies can further hinder the future integration of its refugees who may end up resenting and, therefore, not contributing to the country that begrudgingly took them in. This can also lead to detrimental isolation from the international arena. If the Danish media, social services and refugee and asylum system continue to be heavily influenced by right wing populism, I predict that Danish policies will also contribute to the spread of vitriolic rhetoric throughout Europe. In other words, the legitimacy of a “liberal” state behaving illiberally is a potentially dangerous phenomenon.



I will now offer suggestions for further study and commentary on the future of the Danish state in relationship to Muslim immigrants. This will be done through an analysis of the current political climate and a critique of the modern understanding of integration into Denmark, into the “Danish way of life.” However, before embarking on these thoughts, it is important to pay homage to the legitimate arguments of the DPP.

### *The allure of the far right*

Before the DPP gained parliamentary power, there was a prevailing sense of uncertainty regarding the future of Denmark, that is, the future of the small welfare state in the wake of ever increasing globalization. This fear of the social and economic future spanned across the Danish political spectrum. Danes from a variety of political parties turned to the DPP because it seemed like the only party to offer clear solutions. In fact, in 2001, 25% of DPP voters used to vote for the left-wing Social Democratic Party and 10 to 12% of DPP voters were supporters of the far left Socialist People's Party.<sup>257</sup> If Danish society was to become multi-ethnic, the Danish citizens wanted to know under which conditions and at what speed.<sup>258</sup> The DPP had an answer: slow the stream of migration to a trickle and integrate those immigrants into Danish culture and society. Furthermore, the DPP eschewed the ‘political correctness’ that many voters had long felt was limiting necessary political discourse. In the words of political scientist, Eva Østergaard-Nielsen,

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<sup>257</sup> Eva Østergaard-Nielsen, “Counting the Cost: Denmark's Changing Migration Policies,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27:2 (2003): 449, doi: 10.1111/1468-2427.00457/.

<sup>258</sup> Østergaard-Nielsen, 448.

the DPP “initiated a veritable crusade against elitist `opinion-makers.”<sup>259</sup> The DPP offered Danes a populist understanding of the future of their country; an undeniably alluring concept.

My research has not been a scholarly attempt to bring Denmark closer to a multiculturalist agenda; a system in which every culture is allowed to function separately and outside of the confines of a Danish communal identity. In fact, Anders Per Rudling summarizes my sentiments best when stating, “No society is so void of values that it can provide that “neutral” cultural framework which multiculturalists so desire. The process of constructing this “neutral” society – itself an oxymoron - necessarily includes the retreat from liberal democratic values.<sup>260</sup>” The Danes are a small citizenry with a deeply-rooted heritage. The importance placed on a united community in Danish society would make the very establishment of a multicultural state an infringement on their democracy. Their language, culture, and that illusive and undefinable, “Danish way of life” will continue to pulse through the streets of Copenhagen and the rolling hills of Northern Jutland. I truly understand the emotional significance of clinging to the Danish identity. It is a culture I grew up with and hold very dear. Nonetheless, I have serious trepidations about the DPP and their influence on several sectors of Danish society. The systematic construction of an “other” through a right wing populist agenda is an unacceptable means of sustaining a culture that, in reality, is under no impending threat.

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<sup>259</sup> Østergaard-Nielsen, 449.

<sup>260</sup> Rudling, 110.

*Same game, new playing field*

Unfortunately, there is a serious gap in data from the last few years of the Liberal-Conservative coalition to today. Since the shock of the “Cartoon Crisis” has worn off, data regarding how Muslims are portrayed in the Danish media or how they are treated in the Danish asylum system are virtually not existent. This is a grave mistake. Denmark’s small size should not deter from academic research. It is important to analyze the continuing evolution of the treatment of immigrants to uncover the influence of right wing populist parties in Europe. Furthermore, continued research is important on the domestic front as it seems that the future of Denmark will include a strong right wing populist voice.

With the victory of Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt and her party, the Social Democrats, the premiership of the Liberal-Conservative coalition came to an end in late 2011 and, by extension, the direct influence of the DPP began to wither. As stated earlier, the citizenship test is now passable and border controls repealed. However, other than these two alterations, the Social-Democrats have changed few of the Islamophobic policies of their predecessors. Nonetheless, Thorning-Schmidt is increasingly unpopular among the Danish electorate. Her politics are increasingly unpopular and internal criticism from her own party is rampant.<sup>261</sup> Political experts are predicting that she will either resign in the immediate future to take a position among the

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<sup>261</sup> Johan Blem Larsen, “Analytiker: Intern kritik af Thorning er større end nogensinde,” *Politik DR*, April 3, 2014 accessed April 10, 2014, <http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Politik/2014/04/03/075435.htm>.

EU or that she will simply lose the next election.<sup>262</sup> It seems increasingly likely that the vacuum left by her retirement or loss of support will be filled by parties that have internalized the extreme rhetoric the DPP.

It is very plausible that the Liberal Party, with the voter support of the DPP, will win the next election, bringing the DPP back to its 2001-2011 level of political traction.<sup>263</sup> I suggest that Danish citizens recognize the role of right wing populism in the failures of integrationist policies when casting their ballots. If the DPP increases its influence in Parliament, and more importantly, its influence over the Danish electorate, I hope they can expand their limited understanding of “Danishness” to include Muslim immigrants. Otherwise, I predict integrationist policies will continue to ostracize rather than integrate Muslims and that Denmark may become a breeding ground for extremist rhetoric, ostracizing itself from the globalized European community.

### *Exploring “Danishness”*

Integration does not mean expunging the heritage of one’s descendants or shunning one’s religion in order gain the respect of fellow citizens. In her work, “Transnationalism and Ethnonational Diasporism,” Gabriel Sheffer defines integration as “various degrees of....learning to operate socially, politically, and economically within

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<sup>262</sup> Mikkel Fruerboel Secher, “Qvortrup: Derfor vil Thorning sige ja til EU-toppost,” March 29, 2014, accessed April 10, 2014, <http://nyhederne.tv2.dk/politik/2014-03-29-qvortrup-derfor-vil-thorning-sige-ja-til-eu-toppost>.

<sup>263</sup> Uffe Tang. “ANALYSE Løkke er bange for spøgelseset fra 73,” *Politik DR*, March 7, 2014, accessed April 10, 2014, [http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Politik/Politiske\\_analyser/Uffe\\_Tang/2014/03/06/143617.htm](http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Politik/Politiske_analyser/Uffe_Tang/2014/03/06/143617.htm).

the host land while maintaining cultural separation.<sup>264</sup>” In other words, it is possible to be Danish, function in Danish society, and celebrate Ramadan. Nonetheless, I recognize that if Muslims function on the fringes of society, living off Danish welfare and shutting off their wider community, they will continue to be defined outside the realm of what is Danish. Integration is crucial, but it needs to be done separately from right wing populist rhetoric. Integration is a dual process that involves mutual understanding and respect. It requires an acceptance of a level of hybridity among identities. The right wing populist policies and rhetoric beginning in 2001 have slowly worked to break this dual process on both sides: It places Muslims in a category wholly different from “Danishness” in the eyes of ethnically Danish citizens and it builds up resentment of the Danish state in the eyes of Muslim immigrants and their descendants.

Any Dane can easily discern the imposed attributes of the Muslim ‘other’ in public Danish discourse. If a Muslim beats his children, he is a Muslim, not a Dane. If a Muslim woman wears a hijab she is a victim of the Islamic patriarchy, not a Dane. If a Muslim has qualms with notions widely considered “liberal,” he is an example of the anti-democratic Muslim state, not a Dane. Most notably, if a Muslim openly practices his religion, he is a zealot, not a Dane. The list can go on, but the point is that “Danishness” is defined by what “Danishness” is not. However, ethnically Danish citizens who commit a crime or have conservative beliefs are still considered Danish by the wider public. Therefore, it seems that “Danishness,” as it is described by the prevailing right wing populist rhetoric, has one main criterion: to not be Muslim. This hypocrisy in a country that champions liberal ideals is what his paper has tried to unveil.

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<sup>264</sup> Gabirel Sheffer, “Transnationalism and Ethnonational Diasporism,” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 15:1 (2006), 131, doi: 10.1353/dsp.0.0029.

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## APPENDIX A: ABRIDGED OBSERVATIONS

*“The Danish Prison Experience” Research Project at Nyborg Fængsel from June 2012 through July 2012.*

(Only observations considered prevalent to this paper have been included.)

Location	Observation	Interpretation	Ethical Issues/ Further Questions
Guard House	Guards stress on numerous occasions that they always try to remain calm, treat inmates “like humans” (no matter their crime) and that they do not believe in using force unless absolutely necessary (a life is on the line).	This serves as evidence for the argument that the Prison works as a microcosm for the society it is in.	What does “like humans” really mean? It is possible that the guards are just telling me what they think I, an outsider, would like to hear. However, considering I never witnessed force from a guard I assume the violence part is true.
Middle Section	I often shake hands with prisoners and introduce myself.	This serves as evidence for the argument that the Prison works as a microcosm for the society it is in.	It is possible that prisoners were trying to impress me, the outsider. However, the behavior seemed normal.

Location	Observation	Interpretation	Ethical Issues/ Further Questions
Middle Section	I am taught that the Prison's "Middle Section" houses the "typical inmate" (about 20 in each section). Each inmate pays for his own TV, food, does his own cooking... It reminds me of a little village.	This serves as evidence for the argument that the Prison works as a microcosm for the society it is in.	Perhaps only those "typical inmates" (those who do not require isolation) are the only ones that the microcosm theory applies to.
Middle Section	Some prisoners were not given work because there was not enough work to go around. In this case, they received unemployment money. If they do work they can make an average of 500 kroner (about \$93) per week.	This can both serve both as evidence for and against the argument that the Prison works as a microcosm for the society it is in.	Does the unemployment in the prison compare to the unemployment level in Danish society?
Several Prison wings	"Weak" prisoners are kept separate for their own protection. This includes ex-gang members, sexual offenders, those who are "easily influenced," and drug addicts.	These "weak" inmates should not be included in a microcosm approach	Does the exclusion of these "weak" inmates from the "Middle section" delineate from the "typical" inmates "normalization" process.
Hospital wing	There is a dentist and physical therapist which inmates can pay for. They seem to be regularly used.	This serves as evidence for the argument that the Prison works as a microcosm for the society it is in.	I would like to know the statistics on who can afford such treatment.



Location	Observation	Interpretation	Ethical Issues/ Further Questions
On-site Church	<p>Church can convert into any other religious establishment, but there is only a priest on staff. Apparently, they discontinued the use of Imams because they “riled up” the Muslim inmates who are “usually not religious.” This happened during the Muhammad Cartoon Crisis of 2005, but no other information is offered by Prison Guard.</p>	<p>This can symbolize the “blame the imam” approach followed during the “Cartoon Crisis.” This is a very important observation.</p>	<p>Why has another imam not been hired (is there really not a single Imam in Denmark that does not “rile up” inmates)? Are Muslim inmates upset about this?</p>
Muslim prayer room	<p>Very nice room. However, it is never used by inmates. Sense of abandonment.</p>	<p>Perhaps Muslim inmates are not inspired to pray without an Imam present in their lives. This interpretation insinuates that the Prison is hindering the public demonstrations of Islam. Another interpretation is that Muslim inmates are really not religious. Finally, it can be interpreted that the inmates maybe feel uncomfortable about Islam and do not attend the prayer room in an attempt to “fit in.” All of these interpretations have obvious societal implications.</p>	<p>What would happen if one Muslim inmate started going to the prayer room? Would a barrier of fear be broken and would others attend to. Would there be a demand for a new Imam? Would he be ostracized by the wider prison community, including other Muslim inmates or would nobody care?</p>

Location	Observation	Interpretation	Ethical Issues/ Further Questions
On-site School	<p>School is a choice for everyone in the “middle section” and they get paid for attending. English is the most commonly requested class (much greater than Danish). After asking an inmate of Middle Eastern descent the response I got was: many of the prisoners are going to be deported following their sentence so learning Danish would be futile. However, most inmates are just already fluent in Danish.</p>	<p>Another example of the “Middle section” being an example of wider Danish society. The commonality of English over Danish classes is an important observation. It demonstrates that the fear of deportation stemming from harsh immigration and asylum laws can hinder integration into Danish society.</p>	<p>Of those that choose English over Danish because of a specific fear of deportation, how many are actually deported? Being a White, American observer the inmate may have just been telling me what he thought would sound interesting.</p>
Workshops	<p>Various types of workshops available. Some of these trades offer certificates of completion which can be used to find employment following release.</p>	<p>This serves as evidence for the argument that the Prison works as a microcosm for the society it is in.</p>	<p>Do most inmates utilize these certificates upon release?</p>

Location	Observation	Interpretation	Ethical Issues/ Further Questions
Workshops	<p>I am taken aback by a statement from the workshop teacher who states that the Polish have an aptitude for making shoes and Africans have an aptitude for welding. This blatant racist stereotype is said very nonchalantly and caused no response from surrounding inmates.</p>	<p>These stereotypical views are common-placed, perhaps representing beliefs in wider society</p>	<p>Perhaps this teacher was an anomaly.</p>
Workshops	<p>An issue that I notice with job training is that the manuals are often in only Danish or English which not all the prisoners understand, but teachers work hard to accommodate.</p>	<p>This could represent issues in the Danish schooling system in wider society.</p>	<p>Are these inmates who have Danish as a second or third language learning Danish in the language schools? If not, why?</p>
Middle Section	<p>Often the line between prison guards, teachers, and inmates is not clearly defined because many are so friendly together I often couldn't tell who is who.</p>	<p>This serves as evidence for the argument that the Prison works as a microcosm for the society it is in.</p>	<p>Perhaps relationships are accentuated for me, the outsider.</p>

Location	Observation	Interpretation	Ethical Issues/ Further Questions
Middle Section	<p>Many things have changed because a lack of funds; for example, they were moving out all the billiards tables because they were too expensive to keep up. Also there is a huge area outside of the prison that used to be a giant garden for inmates to work at, but it wasn't affordable.</p>	<p>This can both serve both as evidence for and against the argument that the Prison works as a microcosm for the society it is in. Perhaps budget issues hinder the "normalization" process or maybe it reflects economic issues in wider society.</p>	<p>How do budget cuts in the prison compare to cuts in other parts of Danish society?</p>
Middle Section	<p>All men under 18 must go to school or training. They are well aware of their educational and professional opportunities because of the "Skadhauge plan" (an informational packet they are given upon arrival.)</p>	<p>This serves as evidence for the argument that the Prison works as a microcosm for the society it is in.</p>	<p>Do those with lacking Danish or English skills properly understand all their professional and educational opportunities?</p>
Guard House	<p>There is a conference at the prison trying to recruit more workers of different ethnicities.</p>	<p>Representative of changes in society trying to incorporate a more ethnically diverse workforce.</p>	<p>How many of Middle Eastern descent were actually hired?</p>

Location	Observation	Interpretation	Ethical Issues/ Further Questions
Deportation Section	<p>There are two inmates in separate cells far away from each other. The guard comments it is a very boring floor because there are few guards on duty and the inmates rarely speak Danish or English. He also says, if they do speak English or Danish they are too sad or angry to communicate with guards. They are not offered the same education/work opportunities. I leave floor feeling very depressed. One inmate looks as though he had been crying. Neither speaks to me.</p>	<p>Very important observation for the demoralization of deportation. Could represent Danish asylum camps.</p>	<p>Do any of these inmates try to return to Denmark? I did not spend a lot of time in this section so my observation could have been an anomaly.</p>

Location	Observation	Interpretation	Ethical Issues/ Further Questions
On-site drug treatment center	There are two out of 12 openly Muslim inmates. Both are of Middle Eastern descent. One from Iraq, the other does not tell me his country of origin. Both seem well liked by other inmates.	There are two possible interpretations. Firstly, perhaps Muslim inmates fit in with no problems in Danish prison society. Or, perhaps in the “safe” environment of the treatment center, solidarity in recovery overcomes other ethnic and religious tensions.	On average, what is the representation of Muslims in the drug treatment center compared to the representation of Muslims in the prison as a whole? Were the Muslim inmates friends with the other men before coming to the treatment center? Will they remain close after?
On-site drug treatment center	The Iraqi in the Drug treatment center gets excited about the fact that I know a little Arabic. He tries to teach me Arabic over a few meals. (I am eating meals with inmates in the Drug treatment center)	He is proud and unashamed of their Middle Eastern and Muslim culture.	Is this only a representation of behavior in the “safe” environment of the treatment center?
On-site drug treatment center	Waiting lists for treatment centers because they are very desired but also very hard to qualify for. Everyone eats together (staff included) at treatment centers.	Lines are further blurred between inmates and guards which can be used as evidence for the argument that the Prison works as a microcosm for the society it is in. However, its exclusivity also hinders this theory.	Once again, I wonder, on average, what is the representation of Muslims in the drug treatment center compared to the representation of Muslims in the prison as a whole?

Location	Observation	Interpretation	Ethical Issues/ Further Questions
On-site drug treatment center	Other Muslim inmate gets caught with drugs and is kicked out of center. Some men cry at his departure. The Iraqi inmate refuses to believe his friend is guilty and tells me it is a conspiracy among the guards.	Further demonstrates friendship and solidarity between all inmates in drug recovery, no matter their ethnicity or religion. However, the “conspiracy theory” of the other Muslim inmate could reflect a distrust of Danish authority.	Once again, I wonder, were the Muslim inmates friends with the other men before coming to the treatment center? Will they remain close after?
On-site drug treatment center	The inmates are very upset to learn they cannot go to the store the day of my birthday because they wanted to bake me a cake.	Demonstrates that I have begun to “fit in” and my presence is not perceived as unnatural.	Am I honored with the same trust and respect as a guard, another inmate or none of the above?

## APPENDIX B: SURVEY AND RESPONSES

Survey sent out to employees in the Danish Prison Service (English Translation by author)

1. Gender?

Male

Female

2. How long have you worked in the Danish Prison Service?

1 year

2 years

3 years

4 years

5 years

6 years

7 years

8 years

9 years

10 years

11 years

12 years

13 years

14 years

15 years

16 years

17 years

18 years

19 years

20 years or more

3. How often do you socialize with colleagues outside of the workplace?

Often

I have many friends from work and we socialize outside of the workplace.

Sometimes

I sometimes meet with colleagues outside of the workplace.

Never

I have no friends from work and I do not socialize with colleagues outside of the workplace.

4. How did you become interested in the Prison Service?



5. Describe your job position?

6. Have you noticed a trend of “cliques” among the prisoners? (A group that stays together and excludes others)

Yes

Inmates ALWAYS form groups

Sometimes

Inmates OCASSIONALLY form groups

Never

Inmates NEVER form groups.

7. When prisoners form cliques/groups, what do you think is the basis for their formation?

You may well highlight more of the following answers.

(If you answered "No" to Question 6 please jump to question 8)

Ethnicity

Inmates of common ethnic background come together to form a group

Crime

Inmates who committed the same type of crime come together to form a group

Age

Inmates of a similar same age group come together to form a group

Religion

Inmates of the same religious background come together to form a group

Coincidence

Inmates form groups without seeming to have anything in common

Other

8. After the controversial publishing of Muhammad cartoons in Jyllands-Posten in 2005, did you notice a change in behavior among inmates from the Middle East?

I was not working within the prison system at the time.

I did not notice any change in behavior.

If you noticed a change in behavior, please describe what you observed:

9. Do you observe that current events in the news affect the behavior of inmates?

Yes

I OFTEN see that events in the news affect the behavior of inmates

Sometimes

I SOMETIMES see that events in the news affect the behavior of inmates

Never

I NEVER see that events in the news affect the behavior of inmates

10. In the time you have worked in the prison system, have you witnessed fights over ethnic or religious disagreements?

I have NEVER seen fights among the inmates of ethnic or religious disagreements.

I have a SINGLE fight among inmates over ethnic or religious disagreements.

I have seen SEVERAL fights among the inmates of ethnic or religious disagreements.

I OFTEN see fights among the inmates of ethnic or religious disagreements.