Immigrants and refugees at German universities: Diversity, internationalization and anticolonial considerations

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Agenda

Rationale

Research questions

Conceptual grounding

Methodology and methods

Findings

Discussion + future research

Preview of results

In the context of the largest global refugee crisis since WWII…

❏ German Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) do not generally offer programs specifically supporting enrolled migrants/refugees

❏ However, frameworks for "diversity" and "internationalization" could be expanded through "Equal Opportunity Offices"

Rationale

Findings of 2017 study with German university faculty and staff, which probed pathway or bridging programs for refugees (~1.4 million refugees in Germany; 80% under 34 years old)

❏ Despite 100 million Euro federal investment, huge gaps by state and institution

❏ Varied understandings of diversity, race, religious minority status

❏ Separation between "migrant" and "refugee" categories

❏ **No supports for enrolled students**

Rationale

This piece takes a critical and historical perspective in parsing the status quo – which I posit represents an equity crisis – across German HEIs

I draw from theory in crafting an anticolonial approach as suggested by Patel (2014), dissecting how power hierarchies operate and proposing specific steps to engage change. The result is an interrogation of how and why the world's fourth largest economy – and its primarily public higher education system – have failed to engage systemic change, to address mechanisms of exclusion including racialization and xenophobia

No. Higher Education Institutions
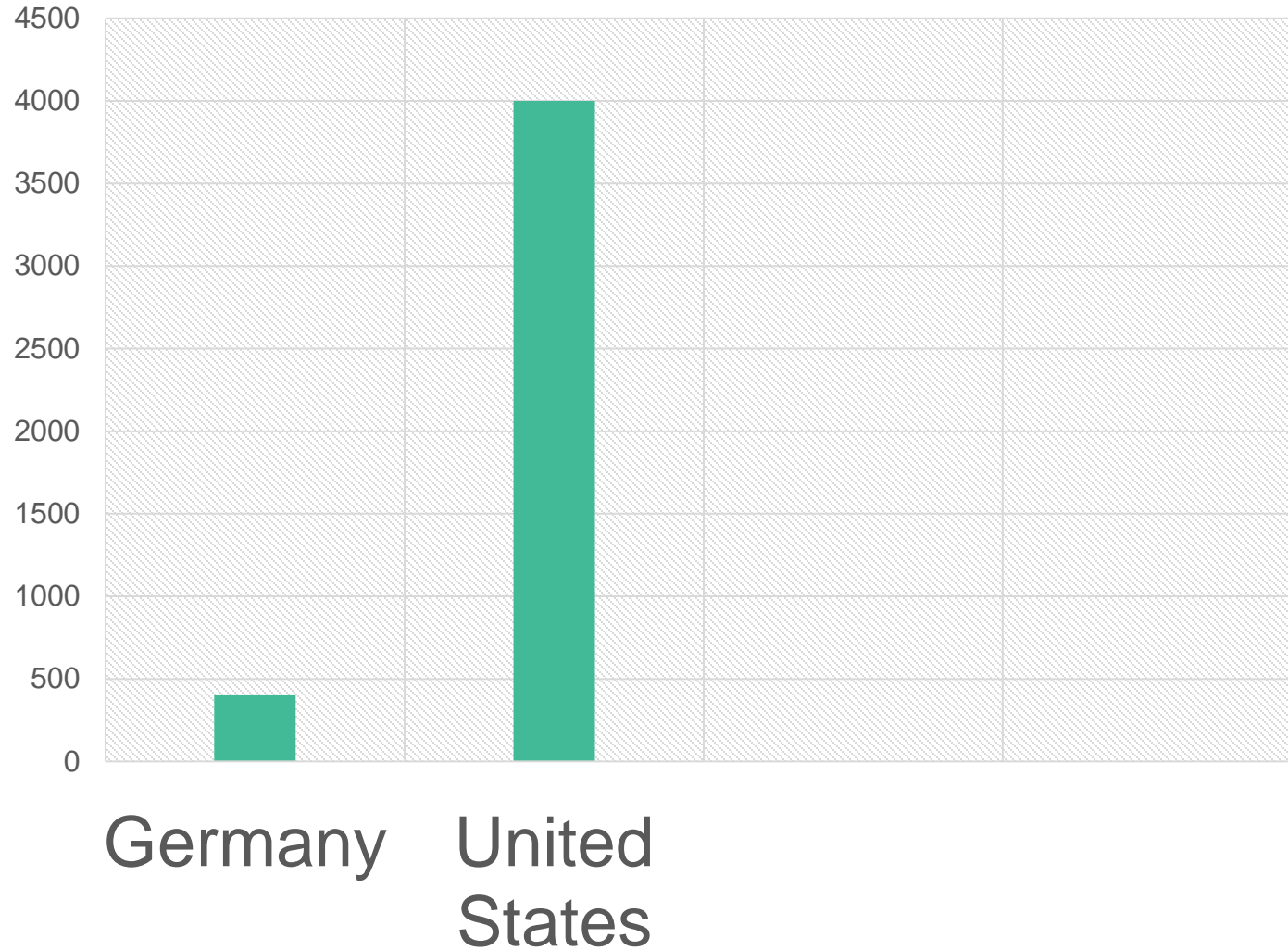
German pop. ~83 million, about 25% of whom identify migrant background

Binary system: research universities and universities of applied sciences (*fachhochschulen)*

Decentralized funding of HE

Tuition-free

Excellence initiative: 4 billion+ invested

"Equal opportunity offices" est. 1980s

Historically situated hierarchies of inclusion/ exclusion

BUT most HEIs have no knowledge about the diversity of their students/staff

Early tracking into college prep pathways
- ❑ profound lack of ethnic diversity among teachers involved in this tracking decision

Women admitted to study in about 1900; some technical unis now employ 8% women faculty

Migrants from "guest worker" countries represent 27.9% of immigrant population as a whole, *but 12.7% of all HEI-qualified students* (Brueckner, 2017)
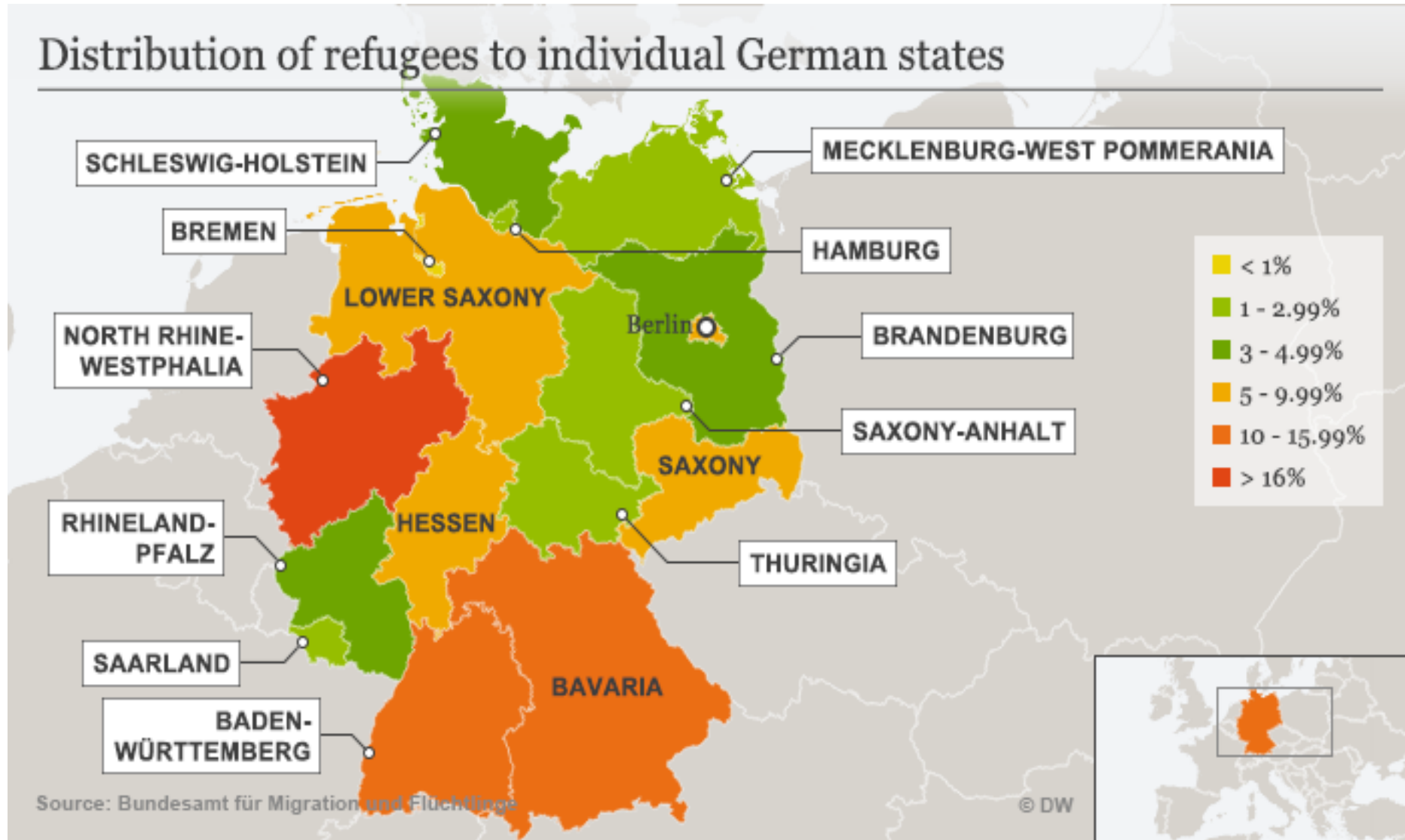
No departments of African or Asian-German studies

Numerus clausus admissions system
- ❑ Impacts selection at most prestigious HEIs

Refugees = heterogeneous group in terms of sending country, linguistic preferences, religious affiliation, etc.

Wide gaps in refugee resettlement across federal states

32.000 projected HEI enrollment among refugees in 2020 (of ~1 mil. entrants)

Distribution of refugees to individual German states

SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN
MECKLENBURG-WEST POMMERANIA
BREMEN
HAMBURG
LOWER SAXONY
Berlin
NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA
BRANDENBURG
SAXONY-ANHALT
SAXONY
RHINELAND-PFALZ
HESSEN
THURINGIA
SAARLAND
BAVARIA
BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG

< 1%
1 - 2.99%
3 - 4.99%
5 - 9.99%
10 - 15.99%
> 16%

Source: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge

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Research questions

1. At selected German public universities and *fachhochschulen*, **how does the "equal opportunity plan" (*Gleichstellungsplan*) reflect goals for marginalized student groups** beyond the traditional focus on women?

2. At selected German public universities and *fachhochschulen*, **how do "equal opportunity office" (*Gleichstellungsbüro*) faculty and staff interpret their roles in terms of their institutions' "equal opportunity plan"?**

- ❑ How does their programming reflect goals for marginalized student groups beyond the traditional focus on women?

- ❑ Further, how do they do this in light of the specific institutional culture?

# Conceptual orientation: Interrogating coloniality in public higher education

Attention to: inequitable power structures inherent to a primarily public system that reproduces Euro-centrism and frames "German" as white and Christian (Bhabha, 1994; El-Tayeb, 2016; Kilomba, 2008; Said, 1978)

Sensitizing concepts: *power, hierarchy, and hybridity*

2010: Germans held more negative opinions of Muslims than European average by 20 points (Arani, 2015)

2015: University of Bremen proposal for Black Studies dept. without engaging any scholars of color

Methodology and methods: Phase 1

Constructing Grounded Theory
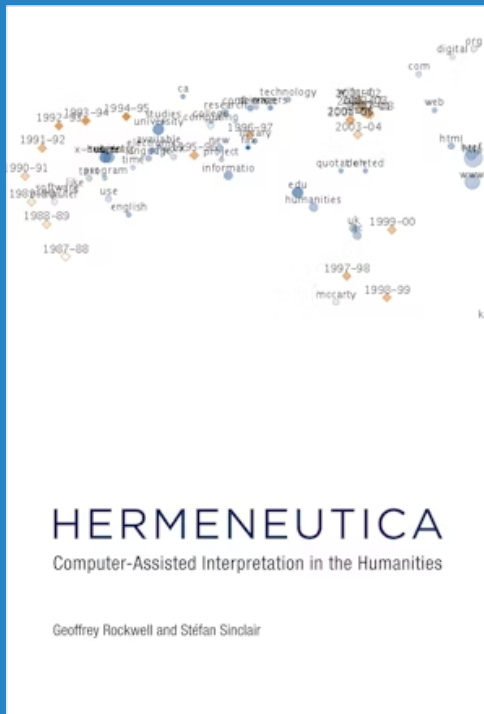2nd Edition
Kathy Charmaz
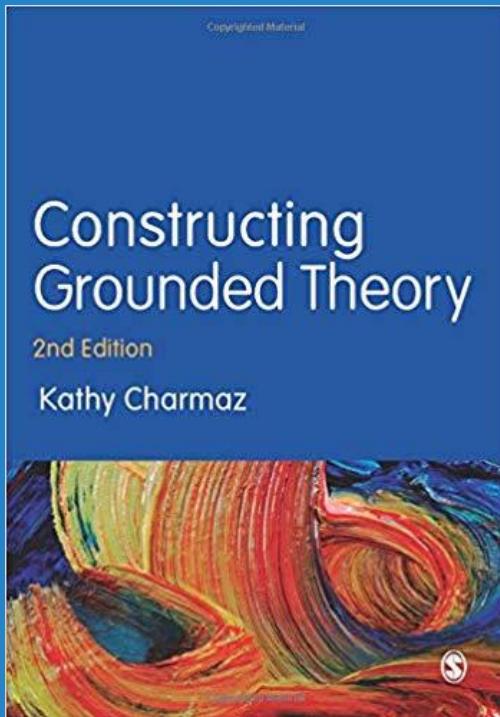
Process of iterative coding, memo-writing, and theoretical integration resulting in the creation of concepts and a theoretical model

CGT is ontologically relativist and epistemologically subjectivist, situating the researcher as inextricably linked to a project's findings (Charmaz, 2014)

CGT indicated by: scarcity of data; need for qualitative data on processes of change

Methodology and methods: Phase 2

HERMENEUTICA
Computer-Assisted Interpretation in the Humanities

Geoffrey Rockwell and Stéfan Sinclair

The developers of Voyant describe it as a "web-accessible, web-based set of tools" (Rockwell and Sinclair, 2016, p. 11). In short, these tools allow any user to index and correlate the words in documents or webpages

Data are visualized through word clouds, distribution graphs, indices of word/phrase frequency, and correlation and significance of any two words

Removes the author/intentionality from analysis

Methodology and methods: Phase 1
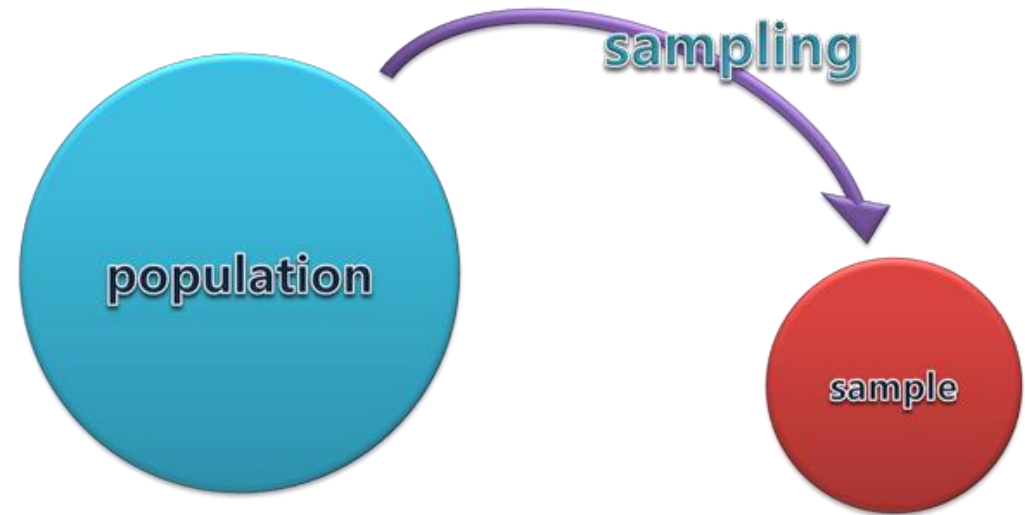
In 2019, using stratified random sampling and utilizing German Rector's Conference + census data, I selected:

- **16 research universities and 16 *fachhochschulen*, each representing a different federal state, of which**:

  - **10 institutions in rural areas of less than 50.000 residents**

  - **10 institutions in suburban areas of between 50.001 and 99.999 residents**

  - **12 institutions in urban areas of more than 99.999 residents**

Methodology and methods: Phase 2
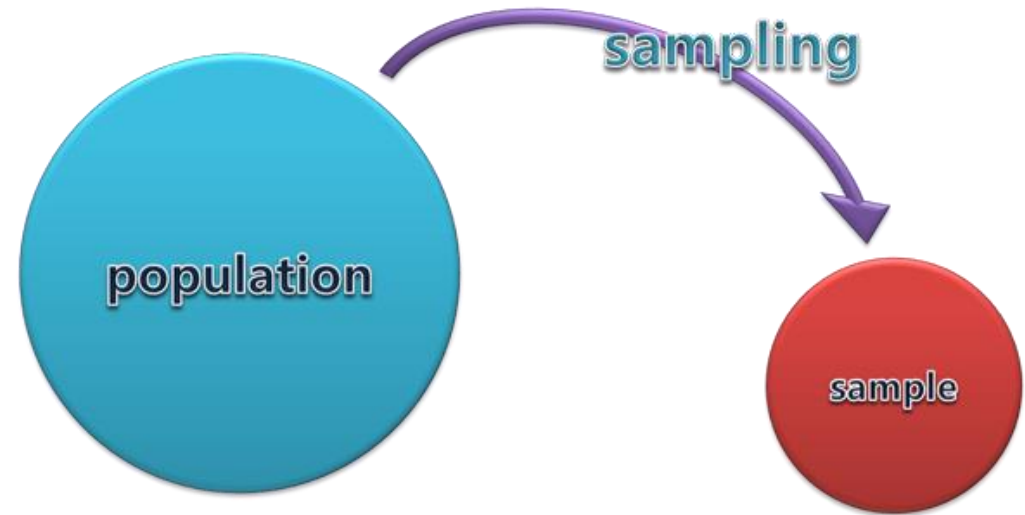
Considering 88 public institutions listed in HRK database, 21 equal opportunity plans were available and current as of summer 2022:

• **11 research universities and 10 *fachhochschulen*, together representing 14 states**:

• **across all plans there were 69 uses of words beginning with "rass," 105 to "migrat," and 1041 to "international"**

• **10 institutions in suburban areas of between 50.001 and 99.999 residents**

• **12 institutions in urban areas of more than 99.999 residents**

Data analysis and coding: exclusion criteria

Plans not comparable documents:

"equal opportunity plans" (*Glechstellungspläne*)

"equal opportunity concepts" (*Gleichstellungskonzepte*)

"action plans for equal opportunity" (*Aktionsplan zur Gleichstellung*)

"women's advancement plans" (*Frauenförderpläne*)

Plans included IF:

❑ issued within the last ten years and current

❑ produced by central administration

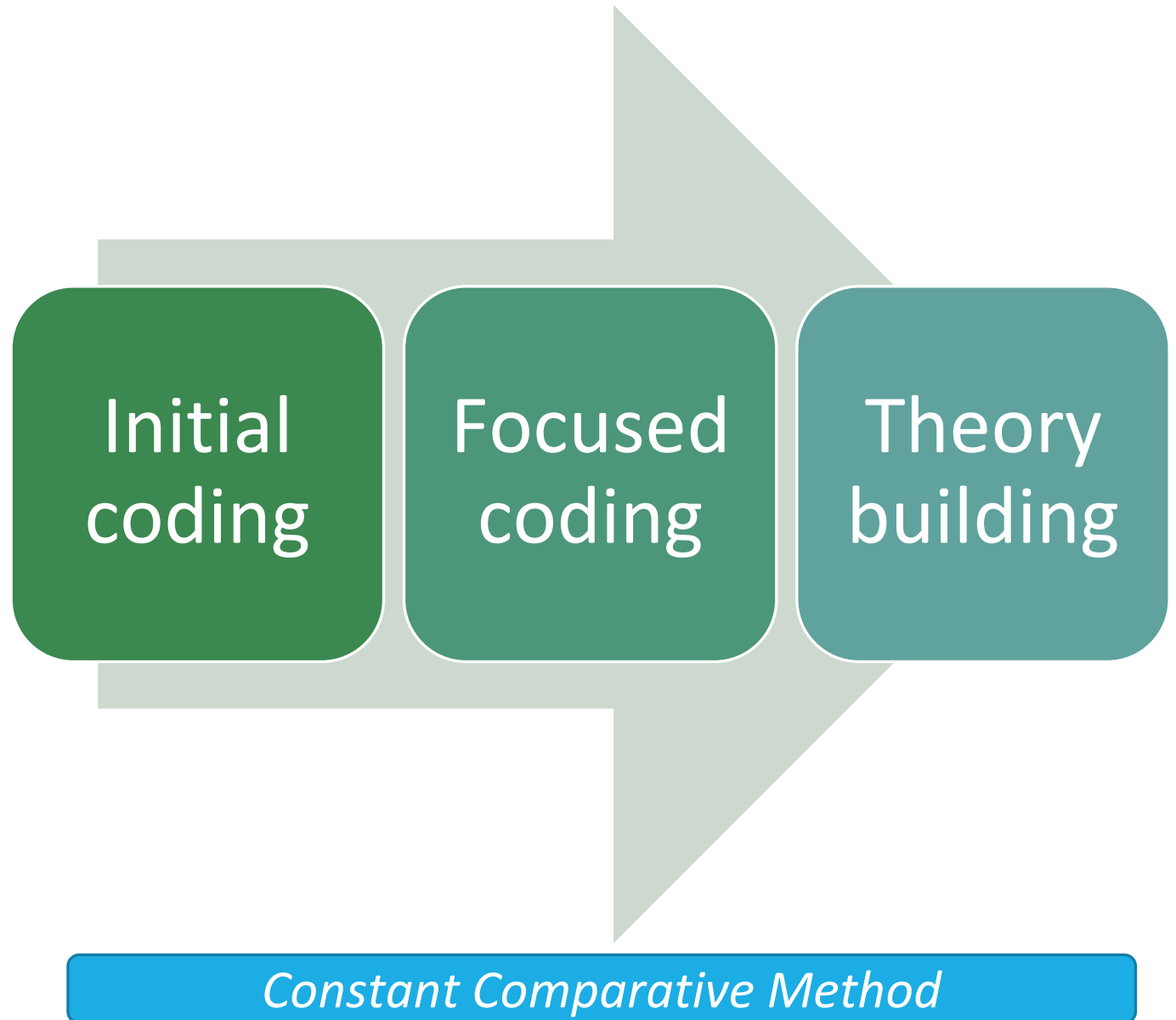❑ available online without password

Data analysis and coding: Phase 1

In sum: 21 plans analyzed ranged from 7-137 pages in length
+ 3 interviews

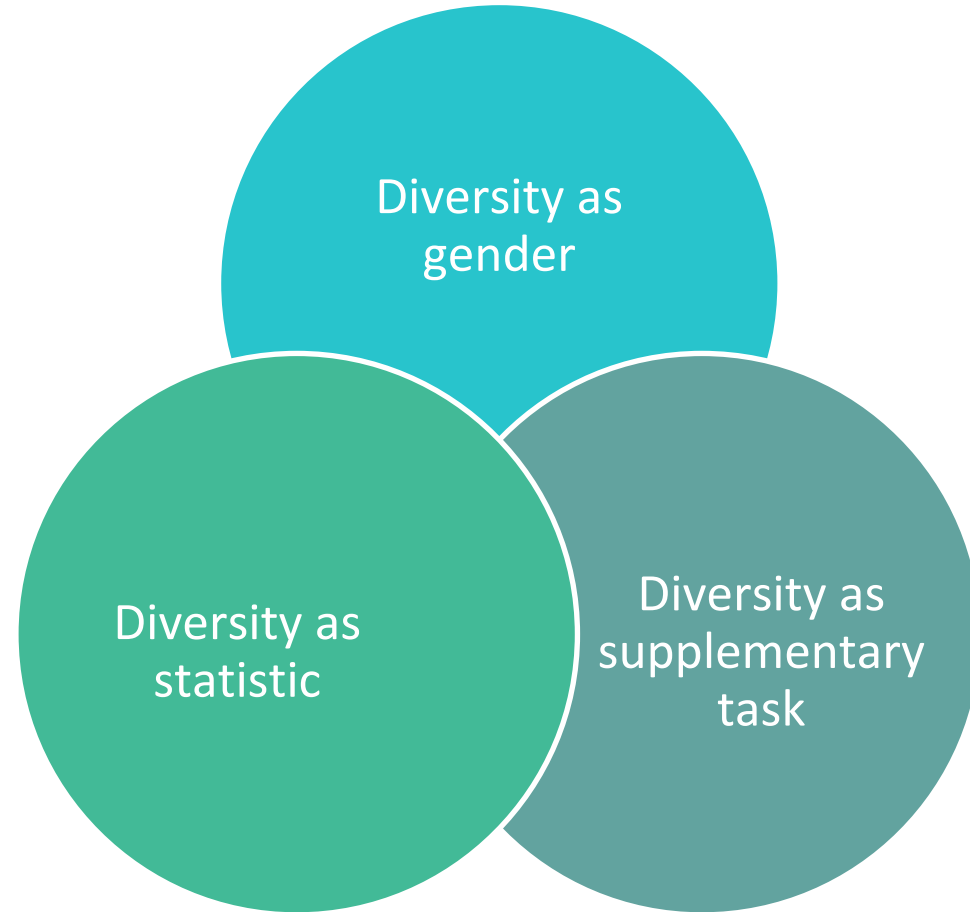| Former East/West					
	Urban	Suburban	Rural	*Fachhochschule*	University
Former East Germany: 7 institutions	2	1	4	2	5
Former West Germany: 14 institutions	6	5	3	8	6

Data analysis and coding: Phase 1

Focused codes included:

- ❑ *identifying budget limitations*

- ❑ *making a claim to town-university collaboration*

- ❑ *promoting funded research opportunities for women*

Initial coding → **Focused coding** → **Theory building**

Constant Comparative Method

Results

Results

Diversity as gender

Selective implementation of legal framework

Equal opportunity officers see ongoing, urgent need for their work

Emphasis on gender binary, women as mothers

Promoting personal motivation among emerging women researchers (*persönliche Motivierung*)

Results

Diversity as statistic

Reporting as vast compliance function (reporting numbers, hiring procedures)

Diversity as "performance" (Ahmed, 2007)

In contrast to expansive process of reckoning: equality, not equity

Results

Diversity as supplementary task

Limited budgets

Pervasive lack of student input

Operationalizing "sensitization"?

Internationalization > diversity

I'm actually working on the new plan this week… it's more than 50-60 pages… we know that nobody will read it, we can say but look here at this action plan, you see how it has to be done, please regulate this process or please do it in another way…
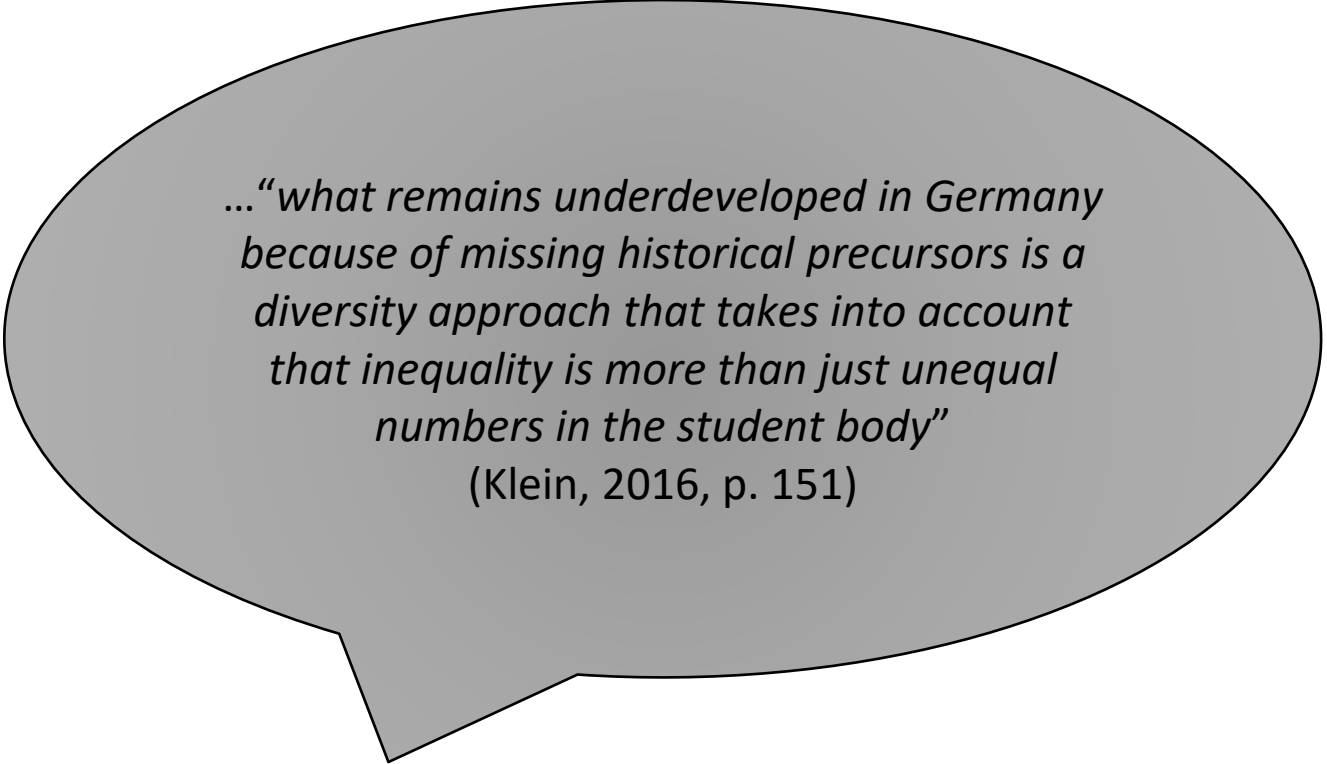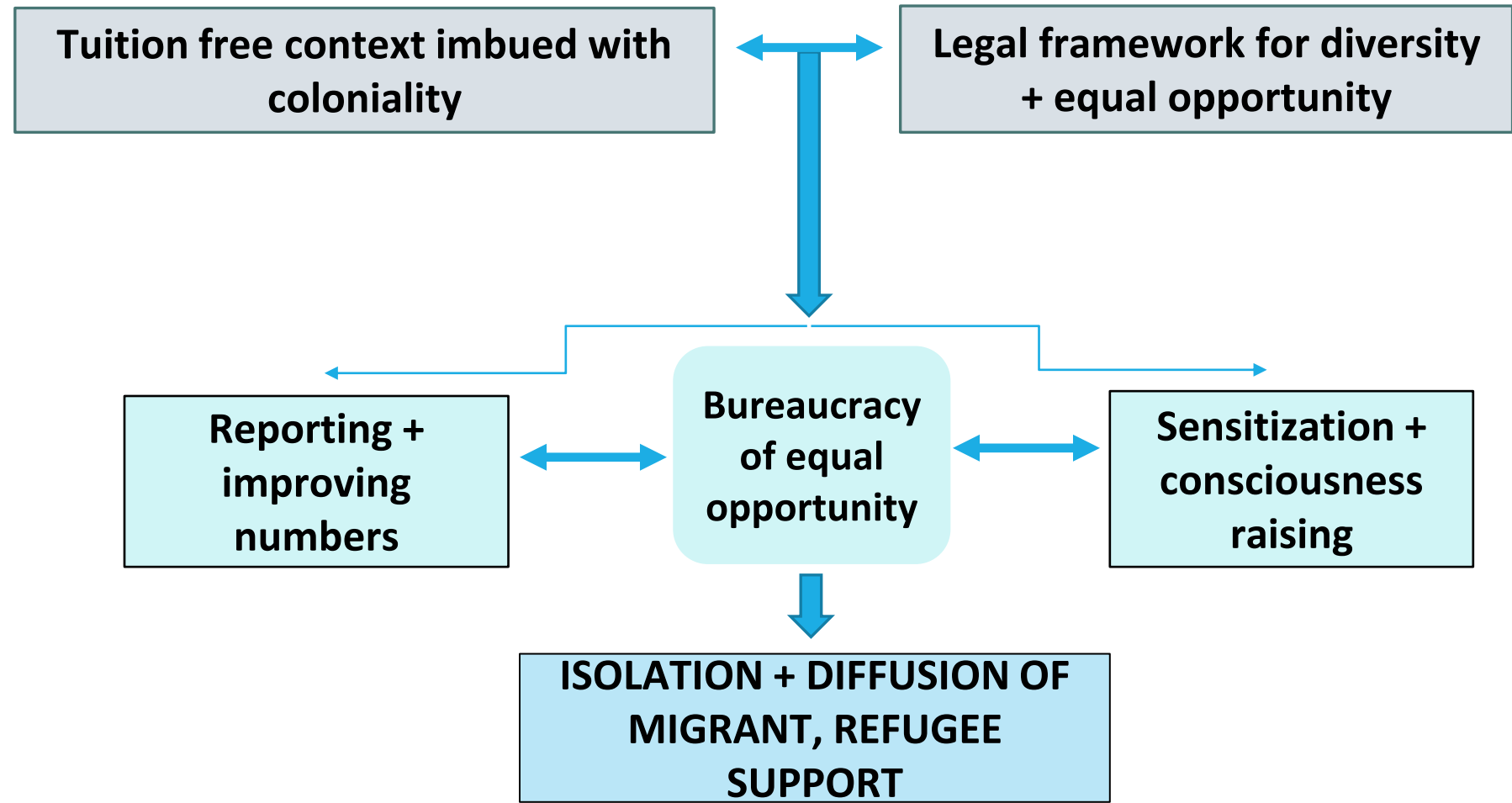
Theoretical model for equal opportunity at selected German HEIs

Discussion: the German paradox

Highest # migrants, refugees in Europe

+

Highest Euro GDP

?

HEI unit supporting 1 marginalized group

Discussion: moving beyond numerification

- Lack of attention/resources dedicated to postcolonial context, varied state demographics, HEI histories

- Focus on reporting numbers obscures emphasis on power and hierarchy

- Data privacy not an issue in this area?

- Supporting hybrid student identities through participatory approaches

- Is gender easier than race/migrant status (Bhopal, 2018)?

…*"what remains underdeveloped in Germany because of missing historical precursors is a diversity approach that takes into account that inequality is more than just unequal numbers in the student body"*
(Klein, 2016, p. 151)

Discussion: other national settings

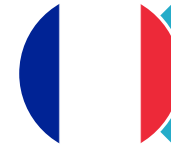Potentially transferable theoretical model, which may be relevant in:

- national contexts with increasingly diverse student populations
- histories of colonial possession or fantasy
- primarily public higher education systems

Colombia

Canada

France

Japan

Discussion: expanding procedures/programs in use

Central information point at national level

Prior Learning Assessment

HE staff training programs

Cross-national comparison of relevant work

Questions?

Thank you!

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