

Influences of Discriminatory Incidents on Immigrants' Attitudes Toward German Society

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Influences of Discriminatory Incidents on Immigrants' Attitudes Toward German Society

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This article presents findings from a quantitative survey to evaluate the impact discriminatory incidents have on the attitudes of immigrants towards the majority society in Germany. The findings show that there is a strong relationship between experiences of discrimination and a hostile or alienated attitude towards German society. As an attempt to explain this generalization from single incidents to the macro relation between immigrants and autochthonous Germans in general a theory of framing, taken from developments in the field of rational choice theory, is applied. The reasoning is that a generalizing and rather hostile framing in terms of the attitude towards Germans can minimize psychic, emotional and social costs resulting from acts of discrimination.

Introduction

The treatment of the issue of “discrimination” by German sociologists of migration is usually restricted to the investigation of theories that explain the genesis of prejudices or that deal with the anticipated profit that discrimination may bring for particular groups or society as a whole. There is a dearth of quantitative research examining the phenomenon from the perspective of those affected, the immigrants. Taking that as its starting point, this article presents the results of a standardized survey that might contribute a number of insights to the scanty existing research and indicates some interesting fields that are yet to be explored. The focus is on the attitude changes brought about by the experience of discrimination rather than on delivering descriptive material.

The main thesis is that experiencing discrimination leads immigrants to reinterpret the the issue of discrimination itself, abandoning the idea that they are facing isolated incidents only. A generalization of the expectation of discrimination will take place, accompanied by loss of trust

in institutions, a perception of meager opportunities for social advancement, perception of economic exploitation, and the idea that the larger part of German society is xenophobic: a general hostility towards the majority population will arise. Put into the context of public discussion on failed integration and “parallel societies” in Germany, this thesis has political relevance insofar as at least a part of the burden of integration is shifted back onto the German majority.

In this essay the term “discrimination” is used to denote negative and unequal treatment caused by the belief of the discriminating person (or several of them) to belong to a superior group than the person that is being discriminated against. This definition excludes unequal treatment that results solely from laws that ascribe unequal rights to citizens and foreigners. For example, the fact that individuals without German citizenship cannot become civil servants in Germany can be considered to be discriminatory under some definitions of the term. Such institutional aspects are excluded here. Under the definition used here the act

¹ For an insightful German study that explicitly includes institutional discrimination see Terkes-sidis 2004.

of discrimination has to be located on the level of interaction. This requires that the discriminating person has the choice to select from several options of action. If this is not the case, the discrimination is institutionalized and not the result of individual choice in the situation, and not the interaction but institutions like the law would have to be investigated. That is not the intention of this study, although I would not wish to deny the necessity of such research.¹

The empirical data that will be analyzed in the empirical part of this essay was collected using a standardized questionnaire. Only immigrants were interviewed. The interpretation and classification of the incidents of discrimination is based exclusively on the interviewees' own assessments. Since I cannot evaluate whether these assessments are correct and complete, I am dealing only with the phenomenon of "perceived discrimination." In the following, the terms "discrimination", "experienced discrimination" and "discriminatory experiences/incidences" are all used in the sense of "perceived discrimination" unless specifically stated otherwise.

Research on Discrimination in Germany

Kühnel and Leibold (2000) analyze the ALLBUS data of 1996 to present findings on discrimination and related attitudes among immigrants.² They state that there is a general lack of empirical data in this field of research (pp. 111, 145). Taking rational choice theory as a starting point, they derive hypotheses concerning the perception and evaluation of discrimination among Germans and several immigrant groups, including *Aussiedler*.³ The dataset does not offer any variables that directly measure discriminatory incidents, but it does include a number of variables for which the respondents were asked to say how often several types of discrimination generally occurred (p. 122). Kühnel and Leibold come to the surprising conclusion that Germans believe incidents of discrimination to occur more frequently than immigrants do (p. 125). When the interviewees were asked to evaluate the sever-

ity of such acts, immigrants regarded them more seriously than western Germans, who in turn regarded them more seriously than eastern Germans. Among the groups of immigrants, the authors find the Turkish subgroup to be the most critical: Turkish immigrants perceive a greater number of discriminatory incidents and they are also more critical of them (p. 131). The authors do not investigate relationships between these assessments and general attitudes, probably because personal experiences were not available.

The DJI 1997 survey on foreigners (Weidacher 2000a; summary: Weidacher 2000b) is another study that explores immigrants' attitudes to Germany.⁴ Here, individual experiences of discrimination were measured by asking the immigrants how much they felt disadvantaged in various social fields and subsystems (Weidacher 2000a, p. 109). Additionally, a large amount of data was collected to measure political attitudes and trust in institutions. Weidacher points out that the experience of disadvantage has strong negative effects on satisfaction with individual rights and opportunities. Also, Turkish teenagers were generally far more dissatisfied than Italian or Greek teenagers (p. 111).

A study by Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (2001/2002), funded by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, concentrates on Turkish immigrants (summary: Häußler 2002). It also included German citizens of Turkish origin, whereas for the two former studies only immigrants without German citizenship were interviewed. Concerning discriminatory incidents, the author concludes that Turkish immigrants have strong trust in German democracy and German institutions but still perceive a large amount of discrimination (p. 9). With respect to a causal relationship between experienced discrimination and attitudes of trust, Häußler makes the following statement: "Apparently, a clear distinction is drawn between the level of individual behavior and the level of society. Experiences on the individual level do not impact negatively on attitudes on the level of the society" (p. 9).⁵ This would

² ALLBUS is a national representative survey carried out by the Zentralarchiv für Sozialforschung (Cologne) and the Zentrum für Umfragen, Methoden und Analysen (Mannheim) with varying focuses. ALLBUS 1996 focused on immigration and integration.

³ *Aussiedler* are people of German ancestry who have moved back to Germany from eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, where their families have been living for generations.

⁴ The DJI survey is carried out by the Deutsches Jugendinstitut (Munich).

⁵ All quotes from German studies translated by the author.

contradict the hypothesis outlined above, and will be challenged in the empirical section below. The results of Salentin and Wilkening (2003) also contradict Häußler's assertion. Their results demonstrate that discriminatory incidents erode trust attitudes. They asked about experiences of racist insults, threats and attacks in the past twelve months (p. 89) and related this data to trust in the police and the court system. A regression of 20 percent was found; furthermore the feeling of safety in public places was reduced by 15 to 30 percent: "Apparently, trust in the provision of safety by the state is severely damaged among victims of xenophobic violence" (p. 93). The same edition of the same journal also contains two articles with a qualitative methodology that prove loss of trust due to discrimination (Strobl, Lobermeier, and Böttger 2003; Wendel 2003).

Altogether there is not an abundance of quantitative material on the issue in Germany; the essays that have been quoted investigate survey data in which discrimination is treated as just one issue among others. Specialized survey data does not exist.

An exemplary study on the issue of discrimination was carried out in Sweden at the initiative of the government (Lange 1997). It seems noteworthy that interviewees were asked about eighteen types of discriminatory incidents. This allows a much more detailed picture than we so far have of the German situation. Lange constructs a scale of discrimination that is used to examine relationships involving many different attitudes. This is done with great care, and space does not permit the results to be discussed in detail here. A negative relationship is found between discrimination and trust in the system (p. 47). Furthermore, Lange claims that low trust in the system in turn has negative effects on immigrants' "identificational assimilation" (Esser 1980): "The following – very cautious – conclusion can be formulated: to some extent experienced discrimination causes reduced trust in authorities, etc. and contributes to the view that Sweden is (to some ex-

tent) a xenophobic society. These attitudes in turn cause a weaker feeling of belonging to Sweden" (p. 76–77).

Hypothesis: Generalized Attitudes Function as Stress-Neutralizing Framing

The attempts to expand the system of rational choice theory have produced a model for social theory that can explain the circumstances under which individuals will abstain from thorough analysis of situations. Adaptation to a situation is called framing when an individual activates a mental program that includes patterns of interpretation and action that are employed without exhaustive reflection and attention (Esser 1996a, Esser 1996b). A frame is a model that can be used to deal with situations in a cost-saving way. When an individual faces situations for which they have a model that fits well and has proved adequate, they will activate this model without much thinking. "The learned situational models with their 'chronic attitude accessibility' reflect 'evolutionarily' successful and therefore habitualized procedures of problem solving in the past" (Esser 1996a, 14).

My hypothesis is that immigrants who have experienced discrimination will frequently frame interactions with Germans in a way that will minimize psychic, emotional, and social costs. When an individual is affected by discrimination for the first time he/she will normally be seriously disturbed by the incident, because he/she has no rationale for such incidents that could help to neutralize the negative effects for the immigrant.⁶ These effects can include: doubts about personal identification and group membership due to exclusion and the construction of group frontiers that become apparent through the act of the discrimination; doubts arising about the sincerity and stability of existing relations to Germans; the necessity to reinterpret past situations in the light of the experience (these might have also been discriminations when seen from a new point of view). Under such circumstances, most individuals will not be able to absorb the negative effects with a strain-relieving rationale even

⁶ It is likely that there are also neutralizing rationales within the discourses of the immigrant groups and in the media. Therefore most immigrants will have a rationale for discrimination even if they have not themselves suffered it. I leave

this out of consideration in order to keep the hypotheses as simple as possible. Nevertheless, the discourses on discrimination are an important field for future research.

if they have one. The effective employment of a rationale requires a high degree of matter-of-factness, which is inhibited by the strain that follows the discriminatory act. Therefore, the first experiences of discrimination will cause high emotional, psychological, and possibly social costs. The latter might occur when the discriminating person is a member of a group of which the immigrant is also in some way a part. The result would then be a re-evaluation of their position in this group and of their relationship to some, if not all, of the other members of the group. Some forms of interaction might become suspicious of containing degrading elements that had not been noticed before and that might have been rather common in everyday life. Jokes about ethnicity can be considered an example: they can be harmless and funny for a person who feels safe in a group, but this can change rapidly when a person no longer feels secure.

When discriminatory incidents become more frequent the individual will have to develop situational models that keep the costs of the incidents as low as possible. I assume that a suspicious, skeptical stance towards the majority can be such a situational model in the sense of Esser's approach: first of all it has the advantage that the occurrence of incidents does not surprise the individual very much, as they are included in the model. Secondly, the model enables the individual to shift at least a part of the effect of discrimination from the self to the ethnic group: the target of the aggression is not really the individual but rather the group that he/she is considered to belong to (for the theoretical concept of "representative victimization" see Strobl, Lobermeier and Böttger 2003). The person is being discriminated against as a representative of the group. With this model, the individual can at least avert the very dangerous situation of starting to explain acts of discrimination as resulting from personal "inferiorities" such as poor German language skills, deviant behavior, or strange appearance. It could be said that this model is an ethnic definition of the situation: the major cause for discrimination is the conflict between the ethnic groups.

Conservative commentators, in particular, often claim that one "function" of the attitude that one might be subjected to ethnic discrimination at any time is that it

prevents the individual from taking personal responsibility for individual failure, for example in schools or labor markets. While I would not deny that situations are sometimes falsely defined as discriminatory, I would dispute that such definitions are frequently chosen although the individual actually "knows better".

Which elements will be involved in an ethnic framing that develops after a series of discriminatory incidents? Future interactions with Germans that resemble the situations in which the degrading events occurred will be watched very carefully. When the number and the heterogeneity of the experiences increase, this skepticism will begin to encompass the whole range of interactions with the majority. It will become harder and harder (and will seem less reasonable) to ring-fence the phenomenon to certain places, persons/position-holders, or organizations/subsystems. During all interactions with the majority, the mental model will supply the individual with the cognitive option to interpret the interaction as "discrimination." With this increasing skepticism, attitudes toward the German majority society will become negative. As the individual assumes that discrimination may happen at any time when interacting with Germans, the institutions of German society will be regarded more critically. Framing will cause a loss of trust in the system and a growing feeling of systematic economic disadvantage or even exploitation.

All other things being equal, the ethnic framing will also increase the number of subjective experiences of discrimination: when the stance becomes more critical but the number of contingent interactions stays constant, the number of interpretations identifying discrimination increases. This suggests that a "build-up process" may be set in motion. This does not necessarily imply that there will also be an increasing number of false-positive interpretations (though this is possible and not unlikely, of course). A growth in perceived discrimination can also arise when intensified awareness makes the individuals notice degrading treatment where they did not feel any before: the threshold value has changed.

On the basis of these arguments the following thesis can be postulated: immigrants who frequently experience discrimination will be more negative in their attitudes

than will be immigrants who do not feel themselves to be greatly affected by discrimination. The greater the number of personally experienced discriminatory incidents, the greater the generalized suspicion that Germans are xenophobic, the greater the feeling of economic disadvantage and perceived constraints to social advancement, the greater the perception of xenophobia in public institutions and the smaller the trust in public institutions. Following Lange (1997), I additionally assume that discrimination will affect identification with the German society as transmitted through the above attitudes. I do not expect a direct relationship between discrimination and identification with Germany when the effects of the attitudes are controlled.

Description of the Survey

The empirical data analyzed in the following chapter was collected in the summer and winter of 2004 in Bielefeld, a German town with about 330,000 inhabitants. The instrument was a standardized questionnaire that contained questions to measure experienced discrimination, socio-demographic factors, personal migration history, political attitudes, social networks, leisure activities, self-identification, household size, language skills, education, vocational training, and income. The interviewees were randomly sampled from the group of second-generation Turkish and Greek immigrants aged between 18 and 35 (so all these interviewees were born in Germany). Additionally first-generation Aussiedler of the same age group were randomly sampled. Details on the survey concept and sampling and interview procedures are included in the methodological report of the survey (Salentin 2005). Most of the interviews were carried out face-to-face with the help of address lists provided by the town administration. At the end of the survey phase some of the remaining interviews were carried out using an accumulative “snowball” process. Table 1 presents the gender and group distribution of the sample.

Table 1: Distribution of gender and group membership

| Gender | Aussiedler | Greek | Turkish | Total |
|--------|------------|-------|---------|-------|
| Male | 30 | 38 | 45 | 113 |
| Female | 57 | 39 | 51 | 147 |
| Total | 87 | 77 | 96 | 260 |

Scale Construction

Experienced discrimination ($\alpha = 0.782$): for this scale several types of personal experiences of discrimination were measured directly. The items cover a wide range of social interactions in which discrimination can occur. These were added together to form an unweighted scale.⁷ All items (including the ones for the following scales) are listed in the appendix.

A certain degree of unreliability in the data stems from the point that this instrument can measure only perceived discrimination. The objective fact of discrimination, according to the definition given at the beginning of the essay, cannot be measured. The theoretical perspective of an ethnic framing that supplies individuals with the cognitive option of interpreting an act as discrimination supports the assumption that there will be a relationship between the sensitivity of the individual and the frequency of incidents of discrimination they will report. Some respondents will be less critical than others and might not report rather subtle incidents. They might report fewer experiences than they actually experienced according to the definition. The data is polarized by this measurement problem: rather “tolerant” persons report fewer incidents than they have “objectively” been “victims” of, while skeptical persons report more incidents, maybe including some false-positives. Therefore the scale has to be interpreted carefully. In particular, descriptive values should not lead to false conclusions. Anyway, this problem does not affect the explanatory power that the scale might have (very forthright on the issue: Lange 1997, p. 21; more critical: Salentin and Wilkening 2003; p. 95). As the subjectivity of the interpretations is included in the theory

⁷ Unweighted addition can be considered to be a theoretical problem, as equal severity of the incidents has to be presupposed. For a rational weighting procedure, however, there was no adequate criterion.

of ethnic framing (in the form I have developed), polarization represents no problem for testing the hypotheses: all incidents that are interpreted as discrimination affect attitudes toward the majority society. All other incidents have no such influence.

For the measurement, respondents were first asked if a particular type of situation had already been experienced, not yet considering motives. If the answer was positive, the interviewee was also asked whether they thought that the incident had occurred because of their immigration background. Time ranges such as “in the last 12 months” were not used, in order to produce more variance in the data. One disadvantage of this method is that a possible reduction of the effect of an incident on attitudes with growing distance in time cannot be controlled.

Table 2: “Perceived discrimination” scale

| Group | N | min. | max. | mean | median | std. dev. |
|------------|-----|------|------|------|--------|-----------|
| Aussiedler | 87 | 0 | 13 | 3.01 | 2 | 3.25 |
| Greek | 77 | 0 | 27 | 3.47 | 2 | 4.13 |
| Turkish | 96 | 0 | 26 | 7.10 | 6 | 5.15 |
| Total | 260 | 0 | 27 | 4.66 | 4 | 4.67 |

In all three groups there are individuals who have not experienced any of the discriminatory incidents that we asked about. Figures larger than 1 cannot be interpreted as the number of incidents, since several incidents of the same type have always been counted as two incidents.⁸ If all types of discrimination had been experienced at least twice, the maximum value of the scale would have been reached (30). Luckily there was no such case, although the maximum values for persons of Greek and Turkish descent are only slightly lower (27 and 26 respectively). It is striking that the mean value of the Turkish subgroup is twice as large as those of the other groups.

Generalization of xenophobia ($\alpha = 0.711$) measures how strongly “the Germans” are suspected to be xenophobic.

The questionnaire asked respondents about their willingness to generalize xenophobia and ignorance among the German majority. A strong tendency to do this can be interpreted as an indication for the adoption of an ethnic framing.

Economic discrimination ($\alpha = 0.829$) contains questions that asked about systematic hindrance of social advancement. Here the term “economic” should be understood in a wider sense, because it intentionally includes immigrants’ perceived chances of advancement within the social structure. In this case the term “discrimination” deviates from the definition that was given at the outset, since it measures general attitudes rather than specific experiences. Furthermore, the scale includes social phenomena that could be called “institutional discrimination.”

Trust in the system ($\alpha = 0.843$) is comprised of factors that a “vital” democracy should make available. Besides general trust in the system, the questionnaire also asked about perceptions of the commitment of the police and the institutions of the political system to fight against xenophobia. While this may not be an important aspect of trust in the system for the majority, for immigrants it can be considered to be a major part of their trust in the system (Weidacher 2000 a; Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 2001 and 2002).

Xenophobia in public institutions ($\alpha = 0.704$) can be understood as a kind of reversal of the trust in the system scale. It contains questions in which the respondents assessed the extent of xenophobia in three public institutions.

Identification with Germany ($\alpha = 0.719$) allows to examine what impact experienced discrimination and the above attitudes had on self-identification with Germany; this scale measures “identificational assimilation” (Esser 1980).

Testing the Hypotheses

Multivariate analysis was used to investigate the influence of selected variables on the attitudes towards the majority

⁸ The response scale in the questionnaire offered only a rough division into “yes, in one case,” “yes, in all cases,” and “yes, in several cases.” The two latter answers were treated as identical information.

Apart from the information that more than one incident had occurred, the two responses contain no information that could be implemented in the scale. Overall, the scale is therefore a cautious esti-

mate that will be too small rather than too large. It is possible that the data polarization mentioned above was diminished by this fact.

society, all of which were described in the previous section. In the following regressions the dependent variables are the attitudes. “Perceived discrimination” is one of the independent variables and also the one of greatest interest. In the last regression with the target variable “identification with Germany,” the attitudes of the proceeding regressions are also included as independent variables, as I assume that the effect of discrimination on identification with Germany is predominantly mediated through the attitudes towards the majority society. Other variables included in the regressions are gender, ethnic origin, citizenship, age, education,⁹ and weighted household income per person.¹⁰ For reasons of space, tables 3 and 4 both show two regressions each. Table 3 presents the results of multivariate regressions for the target variables “economic discrimination” and “generalization of xenophobia.”

The discrimination scale is the best predictor for both attitudes. The beta coefficients are around 0.5 in both cases and highly significant. Respondents who reported more discriminatory incidents are more negative in their attitudes towards the majority society. They feel economically exploited and feel that Germans are generally xenophobic. The coefficients are also equal in size for the gender variable. For women the average scale values are almost 0.1 higher than for men (B-value). When we take into account that the range of the attitude scales is from 0 to 1 this is a very strong effect. Interesting are also the variables that relate to ethnic origin. The Turkish interviewees feel more strongly discriminated against economically than do the Aussiedler or the Greeks; the latter have the lowest average values. The Turks and the Aussiedler have coefficients of comparable size for generalization of xenophobia, while Greek respondents seem to see German society as not being very xenophobic. This is a strong and highly significant negative correlation. The other variables are small and insignificant, and are therefore not discussed in

any further detail. Spontaneously, one might expect that people with more education or higher income would not see German society as largely xenophobic. The data clearly shows that this is not the case.

Table 3: Regressions for “economic discrimination” and “generalization of xenophobia”

| | Economic discrimination | | Generalization of xenophobia | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------|------------------------------|-----------|
| | B | Beta | B | Beta |
| Constant | 0.29 | | 0.32 | |
| Perceived discrimination | 0.02 | 0.51**** | 0.02 | 0.47**** |
| Female | 0.09 | 0.23**** | 0.08 | 0.23*** |
| Turkish origin | 0.06 | 0.15* | -0.03 | -0.09 |
| Greek origin | -0.05 | -0.11 | -0.17 | -0.44**** |
| German citizenship | 0.00 | -0.01 | 0.01 | 0.02 |
| Age | 0.00 | -0.03 | 0.00 | 0.03 |
| Post-16 education | 0.00 | 0.01 | 0.00 | -0.01 |
| Income | 0.00 | 0.01 | 0.00 | 0.03 |

* $p < 0.1$

** $p < 0.05$

*** $p < 0.01$

**** $p < 0.001$

$R^2 = 0.354$

$R^2 = 0.386$

Comparative group: male Aussiedler without post-16 education

In the same way, Table 4 presents the results for “trust in the system” and “xenophobia in public institutions.” For both equations the total explained variance is lower than in the equations of table 3. This manifests itself in a lower number of significant factors. Perceived discrimination strongly lowers trust in the system, about to the same extent that it increases the perception of xenophobia in public institutions. Female respondents had less trust in the system than male respondents. Just like in Table 3, neither the German citizenship nor post-16 education have a significant effect. In this case, the ethnic group is not of importance either.

⁹ These variables are “dummy” variables: they can only be 1 or 0. The variable “education” was dichotomized after the data collection. The value 0 applies to respondents who hold a degree that is usually acquired after ten years of school by the age of 16 (including „mittlere Reife“). The value 1 identifies individuals who hold at least „Abitur“ or „Fachabitur“, degrees that are obtained after 12 or 13 years

of school and that are required for applying for university admission.

¹⁰ The weighted household income per person is calculated from the number of people in the household and the total income. Combining the two figures allows different sources of income to be combined and also takes into account the

lower per-person costs in larger households. The equation is: total income per household divided by the square root of the number of persons in the household. The total income was measured on an ordinal scale only. The variable “income” has to be seen as just a rough estimation.

In conclusion, it can be said that all four regressions yield relatively homogeneous results. In all cases perceived discrimination was a significant variable with the strongest influence in the equation, so it explains the attitudes of the respondents very well. Another constant result is that women are more critical in their attitudes towards the majority society.

Table 4: Regressions for “trust in the system” and “xenophobia in public institutions”

| | Trust in the system | | Xenophobia in public institutions | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|----------|
| | B | Beta | B | Beta |
| Constant | 0.55 | | 0.38 | |
| Perceived discrimination | -0.02 | -0.41**** | 0.01 | 0.36**** |
| Female | -0.07 | -0.19*** | 0.04 | 0.10 |
| Turkish origin | 0.00 | -0.01 | 0.02 | 0.05 |
| Greek origin | 0.01 | 0.02 | -0.03 | -0.07 |
| German citizenship | 0.00 | -0.01 | -0.05 | -0.14 |
| Age | 0.00 | -0.04 | 0.00 | -0.08 |
| Post-16 education | 0.04 | 0.10 | -0.03 | -0.09 |
| Income | 0.00 | 0.05 | 0.00 | -0.08 |
| | R ² = 0.160 | | R ² = 0.186 | |

Comparative group: male Aussiedler without post-16 education

Now let us turn to “identification with Germany” in Table 5. The left-hand column uses an equation that includes only those variables that were also used in the above regressions. Here, three significant factors can be found: perceived discrimination, Greek ethnic origin, and age. The more discriminatory incidents the immigrants have perceived, the less they identify themselves as Germans. Of course, the causality can be turned around, too. Persons of Greek origin identify less with Germany. As Greece is a member of the European Union, Greeks in Germany have similar rights like German citizens, although they are not allowed to vote or to be elected, besides in local elections. For this reason, they do not have to make the attempt to assimilate. It could be speculated that this is the cause of the low level of identification with Germany. The age variable is more difficult to interpret. It must be recalled that the dataset only includes people who were aged between 18 and 35 at the time of the interviews.

The factor indicates that the younger the immigrants, the less they identify with Germany in general. This could be an age effect where immigrants' identificational assimilation (with Germany) generally gets stronger as they become older. If this age effect does not apply here, then the coefficient implies that identification with Germany is generally weaker in the younger generation. Both explanations are plausible; this data cannot identify which one is correct. Another point to be considered in this equation is the rather low R². A large part of the variance could not be explained. Therefore identification with Germany is also subject to other strong influences.

Table 5: Regressions for “identification with Germany” (with and without attitudes as explanatory variables)

| | Equation without attitude variables | | Equation including attitude variables | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| | B | Beta | B | Beta |
| Constant | 0.48 | | 0.54 | |
| Economic discrimination | | | -0.29 | -0.30*** |
| Generalization of xenophobia | | | -0.12 | -0.11 |
| Trust in the system | | | 0.08 | 0.08 |
| Xenophobia in public institutions | | | 0.07 | 0.08 |
| Perceived discrimination | -0.01 | -0.28**** | 0.00 | -0.09 |
| Female | -0.04 | -0.10 | 0.00 | -0.01 |
| Turkish origin | -0.01 | -0.03 | 0.00 | 0.01 |
| Greek origin | -0.10 | -0.25** | -0.13 | -0.32*** |
| German citizenship | -0.01 | -0.02 | 0.00 | 0.01 |
| Age | 0.01 | 0.18*** | 0.01 | 0.19*** |
| Post-16 education | 0.02 | 0.04 | 0.01 | 0.03 |
| Income | 0.00 | -0.01 | 0.00 | -0.01 |
| | R ² = 0.111 | | R ² = 0.217 | |

Comparative group: male Aussiedler without post-16 education

The second equation in Table 5 additionally includes the attitude variables. Here the “perceived discrimination” variable loses virtually all of its explanatory power and becomes insignificant. Primarily, this seems to be the result of the strong effect of the “economic discrimination” variable. The close relationship between discriminatory incidents and

the feeling of economic discrimination has already been demonstrated in Table 3. Now there are two possible ways to interpret the results in combination, depending on which causality is assumed to be operating. These causalities are: discrimination leads to increased perception of economic discrimination which in turn negatively affects identification with Germany (the effect of discrimination is mediated through economic discrimination); or people define situations as discriminatory because they already have the feeling that they are economically disadvantaged. That cannot be judged here, but it is reasonable to assume that both are correct to some degree. Of course it would be very interesting to know the “explanatory shares” of each causality.

There are no significant coefficients among the other attitude variables. “Generalization of xenophobia” might turn out to be a significant factor if the sample size were larger. The importance of this attitude was stressed by Lange (1997). Lange’s conclusion that discrimination indirectly affects identification with the “host country” is confirmed, although most influence in my model seems to be transmitted through the “economic discrimination” attitude which Lange did not measure in his survey. The effects of the remaining variables are unchanged in comparison to the first regression in Table 5 and do not need further discussion.

Descriptive Results for “Generalization of Xenophobia”

If ethnic framing (as described above) provides individuals with the cognitive option of defining acts as discriminatory in many or all of their interactions with “ethnic” Germans, the scale for “generalization of xenophobia” can be considered as a measurement of the intensity of the framing. Only when xenophobia is ascribed to a large pro-

portion of Germans can this interpretation option be present enough in the mind to lead to an increased number of incidents of perceived discrimination.

The means of the Aussiedler and the interviewees of Turkish origin are comparable in size while the Greeks obviously ascribe much less xenophobia to the Germans.¹¹ The results show that Aussiedler and Turks generally chose the categories in the middle of the response scales (see the appendix for the scales). Since even these categories indicate rather negative attitudes, both groups can be said to ascribe xenophobia to a large part of the German society. Therefore many members of these groups should be very critical and sensitive in interactions with Germans.

Alarming, this measurement shows that each group contains respondents who believe that almost the whole of German society is xenophobic. This suggests intensive ethnic framing among these persons. When individuals have such an image of Germans they will strongly tend to interpret contingent situations of conflict as discrimination. Another result that has already been presented underpins this thesis: the people of Turkish origin who have the highest mean for “generalization of xenophobia” also reported the greatest frequency of experiences of discrimination.

Discussion and Summary of the Results

The preceding sections outlined the relationships between the scale measuring discrimination and several attitudes, also including some social demographic variables. In all equations – except (as predicted) the last one for identification with Germany – there was a strong relationship between discrimination and attitudes towards the majority society. Can it be said that such experiences lead to a shift in attitudes that could indicate an ethnic framing?

The hypothesis includes a directed causality that cannot be tested with this data, although the relationships that were found suggest that it does exist. Instead of assuming that discrimination erodes attitudes towards the majority society, one could insist that the causality operates in

Table 6: Scale “generalization of xenophobia”

| Group | N | min. | max. | mean | median | std. dev. |
|------------|-----|------|------|------|--------|-----------|
| Aussiedler | 86 | 0 | 0.81 | 0.47 | 0.48 | 0.15 |
| Greek | 77 | 0.04 | 0.79 | 0.32 | 0.33 | 0.16 |
| Turkish | 96 | 0.15 | 0.81 | 0.50 | 0.49 | 0.15 |
| Total | 259 | 0 | 0.81 | 0.44 | 0.44 | 0.17 |

¹¹ The scale ranges from 0 to 1.

the opposite direction. This may seem less plausible, but most probably there will be such an effect. To evaluate the strength of the two directions longitudinal data would be required. Of course discrimination is not a “social fact” but depends on the interpretations and definitions of the interacting individuals, even more so when the contingency of these interactions is rather high. It certainly makes sense to investigate the individual traits and factors that favor interpretations of contingent situations as discrimination. The discourse in the ethnic and social networks will be of salient importance, and on the other side the discourse of the German public sphere. But the hypothesis that the experience of discrimination leads to a more critical stance, encompassing rather negative attitudes and (interconnected with the latter) a higher individual likelihood of perceiving discrimination in the future, is theoretically plausible. It is strongly – although not conclusively – supported by the results of this study.

Although it is necessary to critically examine the respondents' interpretations, the results of the survey show that many immigrants have experienced very overt discriminatory behavior that is virtually independent of personal sensitivities. The reports included unambiguous racist insults and physical attacks. The overall level of perceived discrimination could never be explained by considering only the social and psychological traits of the affected individuals and of their social ecology.

Even if the veracity of the respondents' reports was questioned, the high level of perceived discrimination would still remain. It undoubtedly has social consequences, for instance weaker identification with Germany. In this sense, this study confirms the findings of Lange (1997) that the effect of discrimination on the identification is mediated through attitudes toward the majority society. The perception of economic discrimination is very important, here, while other attitudes played no significant role. This result requires further explanation and research.

The strong relationship between perceived discrimination and negative attitudes speaks for the phenomenon of an ethnic framing. The experience of discrimination leads individuals to be more skeptical and cautious when dealing with the German majority society. From this we can

conclude that a generalizing and critical set of interpretations is constructed after a discriminatory incident. The expectation of xenophobia among the Germans could become established as a stable social institution, one that cannot be easily falsified or deconstructed once it is adopted. It probably has already been established as such among some immigrant groups. This is indicated by the high means on the “generalization of xenophobia” scale. The interpretations can have a stress-neutralizing effect for the individual, as discrimination no longer has to be experienced as a very disturbing personal incident. Instead, it validates the expectations as an everyday theory.

Group discourses will play an important role in the construction of such a framing, but it is unlikely that it will be adopted by an individual who has never experienced relatively overt discrimination. Although the ethnic framing can have a cost-saving function, it also produces its own costs. For example it becomes harder to establish the inter-ethnic ties that are inevitable for the overwhelming majority of immigrants living in Germany. From the means of “generalization of discrimination” and the discrimination scale, we can conclude that ethnic framing is generally unlikely to be found among Greek immigrants, and most likely to be present among Turkish immigrants where attitudes towards the majority society are more negative and a very high level of discrimination is perceived.

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Appendix

Scale: perceived discrimination

- "You were not allowed to enter a discotheque."
 "A club that you wanted to join refused to admit you."
 "You were turned away by an employer when searching for a job."
 "A colleague received better pay for worse performance."
 "You were not considered for promotion when others were."
 "You unfairly received a bad grade from a teacher."
 "You were treated badly by an instructor."
 "A landlord chose a different applicant."
 "When using public transportation your ticket was checked more thoroughly than normal."
 "You were asked by the police to show your identity card without apparent reason."
 "An insurance company refused to insure you."
 "You were insulted."
 "When entering a room you were scrutinized."
 "Have you ever been physically attacked in Germany?"

Response scales for the following questions

- scale 1: almost nobody / less than half / about half / more than half / almost all
 scale 2: not at all / partly / rather strongly / strongly / very strongly
 scale 3: totally agree / partly agree / partly disagree / strongly disagree

Scale: generalization of xenophobia

- What do you think, how many Germans ...
 "explicitly or tacitly accept extreme right-wing groups?"
 "are xenophobic?"
 "accept *Aussiedler*?¹²"
 "regard *Aussiedler* to be Germans?"
 "are respectful of *Aussiedler*?" (all scale 1)
 "Germans are interested in the culture of *Aussiedler*."
 "The Germans see *Aussiedler* as an enrichment of their culture."
 "Germans do not want to have contact with *Aussiedler*." (all scale 3)

Scale: economic discrimination

- "What do you think, how much is there a justified distribution of wealth for *Aussiedler* in Germany?" (scale 2)
 "Germans only want *Aussiedler* to do the work that the Germans do not want to do."
 "*Aussiedler* are only tolerated in Germany because their contribution to the workforce is required."
 "A German employer employs *Aussiedler* only for badly paid jobs."
 "In German schools children of *Aussiedler* receive worse grades for equal performance."
 "Germans do not want *Aussiedler* to climb up the social ladder."
 "*Aussiedler* in Germany have worse chances than Germans to climb the social ladder."
 "Where really important issues are concerned, *Aussiedler* in Germany will always be excluded from decision-making." (all scale 3)

¹² For reasons of simplicity only the *Aussiedler* are mentioned in the question here. The term can be replaced by "Greeks" or "Turks".

“Do Germans have better career opportunities than *Aussiedler* who are German citizens?” (yes/no scale)

Scale: *trust in the system*

“How strongly do the following institutions in Germany fight against xenophobic attitudes?” police; political institutions (both scale 2)

“How much trust do you have in the following institutions? Police; political institutions; courts.” (all scale 2)

“What do you think, how strongly are the following things provided for *Aussiedler* in Germany? Political participation; protection against crime; individual life choices.” (all scale 2)

Scale: *xenophobia in public institutions*

“How strongly are xenophobic attitudes present in the following institutions? Police; political institutions; courts.” (all scale 2)

Scale: *identification with Germany*

“I feel good in Germany.” “I want to stay in Germany.” “I have something in common with most Germans.” “Germans have typical traits that I have, too.” (all scale 3)

“How strongly do you feel ... “that you are German?” “connected to Germany?” (both scale 2)