Ethnic Prejudice in Disguise:

Exploring the Psychological Mechanisms Underlying the Persistence of Subtle Forms of Ethnic Prejudice in the Majority Society

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Part I: Summary and Overview

Summary

Social-psychological approaches to contemporary forms of ethnic prejudice have argued that in light of prevailing egalitarian norms in today's societies, which generally condemn racism, animosities towards ethnic minority groups tend to become manifest in subtler ways, whose xenophobic nature is not immediately apparent and which are hence not perceived to be in conflict with egalitarian principles (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay, 1986; McConahay, Hardee, & Batts, 1981; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). Previous research following these approaches has importantly revealed the prevalence of such subtler ethnically prejudicial tendencies as well as their negative impact on intergroup relations (see e.g., Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2010, for an overview). However, earlier studies have only insufficiently disentangled the underlying mechanisms that can explain how exactly subtle ethnic prejudice operates and manages to linger.

The current work addresses this matter, in focusing in particular on subtler forms of ethnically prejudicial *beliefs*. Taking up yet unresolved issues from prior research, three distinct processes are investigated that can illuminate how the subtlety of ethnic prejudice might contribute to and allow for its persistence in the majority society. These encompass the perception of ethnically prejudicial opinions (Manuscript #1), their adoption (Manuscript #2) as well as individuals' reactions to them (Manuscript #3). Additionally, Manuscript #1 and Manuscript #2 also consider the impact of individuals' personal egalitarian standards. Thereby, it is taken into account that people can differ in the degree to which they actually condemn racism and are committed to being unprejudiced in general terms. Targeting the process of *perception*, Manuscript #1 first examines which variations of ethnically prejudicial beliefs are particularly subtle, i.e., less readily perceived as xenophobic and thus not regarded as in conflict with egalitarian principles. Results from a survey experiment ($N = 895$) show that the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial opinions systematically varies along three dimensions, i.e., (i) the topic that is referred to, (ii) the (essentialist) language employed, and

(iii) the target group towards which the statement is directed. Thereby, prejudicial statements that refer to culture, are phrased weakly essentialistically, and target Muslims prove to be subtlest, in being evaluated as least xenophobic by the respondents. Moreover, individuals with stronger internalized, self-determined egalitarian standards were more sensitive to the specific subtle and blatant manner in which ethnic prejudice can be communicated. They increased their xenophobia ratings more strongly in response to those item variations along linguistic phrasing and topic that were found to be more blatant. In contrast, individuals with lower internalized egalitarian standards appeared to be less responsive to the features determining subtler and more blatant ways of expressing ethnic prejudice. In a second step, Manuscript #2 takes an intra-individual perspective and investigates to what extent the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial beliefs is associated with their *adoption* into individuals' belief systems. Findings from two studies (total $N = 2{,}120$), one correlational and one experimental, indicate that people indeed generally tend to endorse ethnic prejudice only in subtler ways, which they do not recognize as xenophobic. This was particularly true for individuals with stronger (self-related) egalitarian standards, condemning personal prejudice (Study 1 and 2), or for whom these were experimentally made salient (Study 2): They more strongly tended to endorse prejudicial beliefs only in subtler ways and to the extent that they were unaware of their xenophobic nature, while—vice versa—rejecting blatantly prejudicial opinions, which they clearly perceive as xenophobic. In contrast, individuals with lower egalitarian standards (or for whom these were not made salient) appeared to care less whether they endorsed prejudicial beliefs in subtle or also in blatant ways, which they did perceive as xenophobic. Third and addressing the process of *reaction*, Manuscript #3 examines whether subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice might, in remaining unnoticed as xenophobic, be more likely to evade negative social sanctions. Two experimental studies (total $N = 1{,}630$) reveal that subtle (compared to blatant) ethnically prejudicial statements indeed elicited lower negative affective reactions. These, in turn, translated into decreased intentions to oppose

their proponents, i.e., lower confrontation intentions (Study 1 and 2) and a lower refusal to vote for a politician (Study 2), as well as decreased intentions to engage in collective action against racism (Study 1 and 2). The overall effects from both studies indicate that subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice particularly undermine the perceivers' willingness to engage in direct oppositional acts addressing the proponents of such statements.

Taken together, the processes outlined in the manuscripts, which might also be conceptualized as components within a potentially self-perpetuating mechanism, can illuminate how the subtlety of ethnic prejudice can generally contribute to its persistence in a more egalitarian, prejudice-condemning normative climate. Additionally, the individual differences findings from Manuscript #1 and #2 reveal that the depicted processes of subtlety are more pivotal for explaining the persistence of prejudicial beliefs among people with higher internalized, self-determined egalitarian standards, who are generally strongly committed to being unprejudiced. Overall, the current work advances our understanding of how subtle ethnic prejudice manages to clandestinely linger in the majority society and even among individuals who strongly subscribe to principles of egalitarianism and anti-discrimination and are actually important allies against racism. In that way, subtler manifestations of ethnic prejudice compromise the democratic promise of equality in more surreptitious ways, in covertly perpetuating negative beliefs about ethnic minority groups and thereby potentially reinforcing ethnic inequalities. The current findings can contribute not only to our theoretical knowledge of the psychological mechanisms underlying the persistence of subtler forms of ethnic animosities. As will be discussed, they can also shed light on expressions of ethnic prejudice in current discourses on migration and integration, provide implications of anti-prejudice interventions in practice, and serve to pinpoint avenues for future research.

Overview

Apart from the synopsis, this dissertation comprises the following manuscripts, which have been published in peer-reviewed scientific journals or are submitted for publication.

Manuscript #1

Fetz, K., & Kroh, M. (2021). Prejudice in disguise: Which features determine the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial statements? *Journal of Social and Political Psychology, 9*(1), 187-206. doi: 10.5964/jspp.6381

Manuscript #2

Fetz, K., & Müller, T.S. (2020). Is one's own ethnic prejudice always subtle? The inconsistency of prejudice endorsement and prejudice awareness depends on self-related egalitarian standards and motivations. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 42*(1), 1-28. doi: 10.1080/01973533.2019.1689362

Manuscript #3

Fetz, K., & Müller, T.S. (2021). *When unnoticed means unchallenged? Negative affect and oppositional intentions of non-target perceivers in response to subtle and blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice.* Manuscript submitted for publication to the Journal of Applied Social Psychology (Submission date: May 11th, 2021).

Part II: Synopsis

Introduction and Theoretical Background

An ample body of social-psychological research documents that, over the last decades, there has been a general normative trend in many Western societies towards more egalitarianism[1], incorporating an increasing condemnation of racism and xenophobia (e.g., Crandall, Ferguson, & Bahns, 2013; McConahay, 1986; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). This societal trend has been mirrored, for instance, by a decline of self-reported ethnic prejudice[2] in public opinion polls that include old-fashioned, overtly prejudicial statements (as referred to by e.g., McConahay, 1986; McConahay et al., 1981; see also Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986). Moreover, it is reflected on a structural and institutional level by the implementation of anti-discrimination laws and policies throughout many countries in the world and also in Europe. In Germany, such egalitarian principles are not only enshrined in the Basic Law (Grundgesetz), but also in the General Equal Treatment Act (Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz), introduced in 2006, which encompasses the prohibition of discrimination on, amongst others, ethnic grounds. Even though this general trend is

[1] In the current work, the term egalitarianism is used in a broader sense to refer to the general principle that humans have equal value and to the democratic ideals of equality and social justice, as the term is commonly employed in the social-psychological literature on racism and prejudice (e.g., Katz & Hass, 1988). In this sense, egalitarian principles also encompass a general condemnation of (or are fundamentally at odds with) ethnic prejudice or discrimination (as well as prejudice or discrimination based on (ascribed) memberships in other social groups). Yet, beyond this rather general understanding employed in the current research, there are more complex ongoing discussions as well as more differentiated perspectives on the concept of egalitarianism, also across different disciplines (see e.g., Arneson, 2012, for an overview).

[2] Along with the social-psychological research tradition, the current work employs the terms racism, ethnic prejudice, xenophobia, and ethnic animosities to refer to individuals' negative attitudes towards (ascribed) members of minority groups along (socially constructed) ethnic, national, and also ethno-religious categorizations. However, it should to be noted that racism is, in general, a more encompassing term (as for instance also conceptualized in social science), referring to a societal system of disadvantage (and privilege) along ethnic categories, being deeply ingrained in social structures, institutions, policies, and laws—and hence also being reflected in individuals' prejudice and discriminatory behaviors as they are the focus of (social-)psychological research (see e.g., Dovidio et al., 2010, for this discussion). Also, it needs to be emphasized that the English term 'xenophobia' (German: 'Fremdenfeindlichkeit') should not be understood as referring to a 'phobia' in a psychopathological sense, but as a negative attitude or antipathy. The prefix 'xeno' ('foreign'/ 'fremd') should hereby not imply that people targeted by it are actually 'foreign', but are often socially constructed as such and are therefore affected by prejudice and discrimination. The term xenophobic ('fremdenfeindlich') was used in the current studies as an empirical operationalization for the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial statements, as it proved to be closest to people's everyday language and thus most suitable to assess to what extent they regard a statement as being reflective of a negative attitude towards migrants or members of ethnic minority groups.

indisputably a positive one, the bad news is that ethnic prejudice and anti-immigrant resentments have not vanished, but are still reality all over the world, compromising these principles of equality and non-discrimination. This becomes painfully evident in the face of horrific racist attacks and hate crimes, such as recently in Hanau (Germany) in 2020, or racist police violence, which has sparked the international Black Lives Matter movement, having originated in the USA and having soon spread globally. Furthermore, experiences of ethnic discrimination persist, as they were documented in empirical research (see e.g., Beigang, Fetz, Kalkum, & Otto, 2017, for findings from Germany) as well as reported by People of Color and members of ethnic minority groups under several hashtags that went viral on Twitter in Germany in the last years, such as #schauhin, #metwo, or #vonhier. Further, current research and public opinion surveys disclose that people still do endorse ethnically prejudicial beliefs (e.g., Murray & Marx, 2013; Schneider, 2007; Strabac & Listhaug, 2008; Zick, Küpper, & Hövermann, 2011). These also become evident in current public and political discourses in Western societies as well as in Germany, in which immigration represents one of the most controversial issues (e.g., Berry, Garcia-Blanco, & Moore, 2015).

Hence, we have been faced with the paradox that animosities against ethnic minority groups apparently still prevail alongside general norms of egalitarianism and anti-discrimination. However, when taking a closer look at the nature of current manifestations of ethnic prejudice, the manner in which they come to the surface seems to vary substantially, as does the degree to which they are actually perceived as a violation of these egalitarian principles. On the one hand, there are still blatant instances of ethnic discrimination and expressions of ethnic prejudice, which are very outrightly xenophobic and in conflict with egalitarian standards, with their harmful consequences for the targeted individuals being immediately evident. These are often not only legally punishable, but also seem to be more

widely despised by the general public. On the other hand, and as it has also been argued in social-psychological research (e.g., McConahay, 1986; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), ethnic prejudice seems to frequently appear in more disguised ways, whose xenophobic nature is not immediately apparent and which are therefore not perceived as contradicting principles of anti-discrimination. Even though maybe in less obvious ways, also such subtler forms of ethnic prejudice are a menace to the democratic promise of equality in contemporary societies. They might be harmful in more surreptitious ways, in covertly perpetuating negative beliefs about ethnic minority groups as well as potentially reinforcing ethnic inequalities and discrimination. Thus, it is of course necessary to rigorously combat blatant instances of racism. Yet, it is also crucial to uncover subtler manifestations of ethnic prejudice, which might clandestinely linger in even larger parts of society, supposedly in 'peaceful coexistence' with egalitarian, anti-prejudice standards.

A variety of frameworks in social psychology have contributed to this quest, in providing theoretical conceptualizations as well as empirical operationalizations of such subtler ethnically prejudicial tendencies (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay, 1986; McConahay, et al., 1981; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). Research based on these approaches has importantly revealed that ethnic prejudice, as an individual-level attitude, indeed tends to become manifest in subtler ways and has documented its societal prevalence. Also, it has been shown that these subtler ethnic animosities can foster discriminatory behaviors and have substantial negative consequences for individuals targeted by them (e.g., Rabinowitz, Sears, Sidanius, & Krosnick, 2009; see also Dovidio, 2001, and Dovidio et al., 2010, for overviews). Hence, based on this previous body of research, we know that ethnic prejudice indeed tends to linger in a subtler manner in contemporary

societies and negatively affects intergroup relations. Yet, we still know too little about the underlying mechanisms that can explain *how* exactly it manages to persist.

The present work addresses this matter in focusing specifically on subtle forms of ethnically prejudicial *beliefs*, i.e., consciously uttered opinions reflecting a negative attitude towards ethnic minority groups, as they will also come to light in current discourses as well as in self-report measures of prejudice. Thereby, the current research seeks to investigate those processes more in depth that can depict how the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial beliefs can contribute to their persistence in the majority society. To this end, three different processes are targeted, encompassing the perception of prejudicial beliefs (Manuscript #1), their adoption (Manuscript #2), as well as individuals' reactions to them (Manuscript #3). Addressing the process of *perception*, Manuscript #1 first systematically examines which variations of ethnically prejudicial beliefs are especially subtle, i.e., less readily perceived as xenophobic and thus less clearly noticed as in conflict with principles of egalitarianism and anti-discrimination. Manuscript #2 then investigates to what extent the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial beliefs is associated with their *adoption* into individuals' belief systems, such that individuals tend to endorse prejudicial opinions only in subtler ways, which they do not recognize as xenophobic. Focusing on perceivers' oppositional *reactions*, Manuscript #3 examines whether subtler expressions of ethnic prejudice are less likely to elicit negative social sanctions. As will be argued, these three processes, addressed separately in the manuscripts, might be conceptualized as components of a potentially self-perpetuating mechanism that can illustrate how subtle ethnic prejudice is allowed to linger and how its very subtlety might thereby be maintained. Further, Manuscript #1 and Manuscript #2, targeting the processes of perception and adoption, respectively, will also consider the role of individuals' personal, internalized egalitarian standards. Thereby, it will be explored whether

processes of subtlety are particularly pivotal for explaining the persistence of ethnically prejudicial beliefs among people who generally strongly despise racism and are committed to being unprejudiced. Overall, the present research seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how subtle ethnic prejudice manages to covertly persist in larger parts of the majority society and even among individuals who strongly subscribe to general principles of egalitarianism and anti-discrimination and are thus actually important allies against racism. Thereby, the current work does not only aspire to extend research on subtle ethnic prejudice on a theoretical level. Also, it aims to shed light on expressions of ethnic prejudice in current migration and integration discourses as well as to inform us on how anti-prejudice interventions in practice should be tailored to different target groups.

Before presenting the three manuscripts as well as their empirical results, the overarching rationale of the present research will first be unfolded more in detail. On a meta-theoretical level, the current work has—across all manuscripts—its primary roots in social-psychological frameworks on contemporary forms of racism (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay, 1986; McConahay et al., 1981; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), particularly those that focus on explicit, i.e., self-reported, ethnic prejudice. Yet, it also derives from and seeks to integrate findings and theorizing from other lines of social-psychological research. In the first section, we will review the aforementioned social-psychological frameworks on subtle ethnic prejudice and locate the current research in this field. With regard to Manuscript #3, which investigates individuals' reactions to expressions of ethnic prejudice, a very brief look will be taken at applied social-psychological research on opposition to prejudicial incidents (e.g., Ashburn-Nardo, Morris, & Goodwin, 2008; Stangor et al., 2003). In the second section, we will consider the role of people's personal egalitarian standards, as they are examined in Manuscript #1 and Manuscript #2, in reviewing previous

research on the impact of individual's commitment to egalitarian principles and to being unprejudiced (e.g., Butz & Plant, 2009; Plant & Devine, 1998). Also, and specifically related to Manuscript #2, we will hereby briefly refer to cognitive consistency approaches to prejudice-related belief systems (e.g., Festinger, 1957; Gawronski, 2012). Building upon these ideas, the last theoretical section addresses intervention approaches employed to combat subtler forms of ethnic prejudice. Thereby, we will also review applied research on confrontation or awareness-raising as a means to reduce (ethnic) prejudice (e.g., Fehr & Sassenberg, 2010; Monteith & Mark, 2005).

Social-Psychological Approaches to Subtle Forms of Ethnic Prejudice

In social psychology, representing the main disciplinary anchor point of the current work, a variety of theoretical frameworks have been developed that propose that ethnic prejudice nowadays rather manifests in subtler ways, with research efforts in this area having accelerated roughly within the last four decades (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay, 1986; McConahay, et al., 1981; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). Although these approaches differ with regard to several aspects, they are based on a common rationale. They all assume that there is a (generally positive) normative trend in societies towards more egalitarianism, prescribing basic principles of equality and anti-discrimination and consequently also condemning racism or ethnic prejudice in general terms (i.e., 'Racism is not acceptable'). This trend was indeed empirically mirrored by a decline in the endorsement of blatant or old-fashioned, overtly xenophobic prejudicial beliefs, which were until then commonly employed in public opinion polls (as referred to by e.g., McConahay, 1986; McConahay et al., 1981; see also Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986). However, researchers were skeptical that ethnic prejudice was really completely vanishing. This skepticism derived from the assumption that negative attitudes and feelings towards ethnic minority groups are

acquired early in the socialization process (Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay, 1986; McConahay et al., 1981) or that ethnic prejudice is rooted in 'ordinary' human cognition and basic social categorization processes (e.g., Dovidio, 2001; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986), with longstanding negative evaluations of racial and ethnic categories being learned throughout history and deeply ingrained in societal structures of inequality. Consequently, these approaches advanced the idea that although people might rather not endorse overtly prejudicial beliefs or exhibit outrightly discriminatory behaviors anymore, ethnic animosities are nevertheless lingering. Yet, these animosities would surface in subtler ways, which are not clearly recognized as xenophobic and thus appear to be in line with egalitarian, anti-prejudice standards. Against the backdrop of this reasoning, these approaches thus faced the challenge of examining ethnic prejudice in times when ethnic prejudice is actually—in general terms—largely despised. On a theoretical level, the main question was how ethnic prejudice can be conceptualized more appropriately as an individual-level attitude. This was on a methodological level intertwined with the question of how it can be adequately operationalized and empirically assessed. While sharing the aforementioned premises as well as the goal to make individual levels of ethnic prejudice and its impact on intergroup relations still measurable and visible, the approaches differed with regard to their specific conceptualizations of contemporary ethnic prejudice, their notion of 'subtlety', and hence also their operationalizations.

One way to broadly distinguish these frameworks, which is most relevant for locating the present work, is whether they target ethnic prejudice more in terms of an implicit or explicit attitude. On the one hand, approaches such as aversive racism (e.g., Dovidio, 2001; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Pearson, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2009) and also implicit racism conceptualize contemporary ethnic prejudice as a negative bias or an implicit attitude. This

can become manifest, for instance, in negative (automatic) behavioral tendencies towards out-group members, as examined in behavioral studies on discrimination (see e.g., Dovidio, 2001, for an overview), or in research employing response-latency procedures (e.g., Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, & Williams, 1995; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). This form of ethnic prejudice is considered subtle because the negative bias itself—and thus its xenophobic nature and contradiction to egalitarian standards—often operates beyond the conscious awareness of the individuals holding them. On the other hand, frameworks such as modern racism (McConahay, 1986; McConahay et al., 1981), symbolic racism (Kinder & Sears, 1981), developed in the USA, and subtle prejudice (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), originating from the European context, target contemporary ethnic prejudice in terms of an explicit negative attitude towards ethnic minority groups, reflected by consciously accessible and utterable prejudicial opinions as assessed by self-report measures. These approaches provided different theoretical conceptualizations regarding the content of this subtle form of ethnic prejudice, i.e., the specific sets of beliefs identified as central to this attitude. Modern racism, for instance, is conceptualized as being reflected by a denial of continuing discrimination and the idea that ethnic minorities push too far in striving for equality (e.g., McConahay, 1986; McConahay et al., 1981). Subtle prejudice is, for example, conceived as encompassing beliefs referring to the defense of traditional values, an exaggeration of cultural differences, and a denial of positive emotions (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). Despite such conceptual differences, these approaches shared the goal to develop new self-report scales that could more adequately assess ethnic prejudice in larger parts of society and a more egalitarian normative climate. These scales should therefore encompass items that better reflect contemporary, subtler prejudicial beliefs, which are less readily perceived to be actually reflective of racism. Hence, within this perspective, these contemporary forms of explicit

ethnic prejudice are considered subtle, since the underlying beliefs or opinions, as conscious expressions of the prejudicial attitude, are deemed to be less strongly regarded as racist or xenophobic and hence less strongly perceived to be in conflict with general anti-prejudice norms (e.g., McConahay, 1986; McConahay et al., 1981).[3] Incorporating both perspectives, the more recent framework of microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007) includes subtler manifestations of ethnic prejudice in terms of both implicit biases, which are subtle because they largely operate beyond the conscious awareness of the individual holding them, as well as explicit opinions, i.e., consciously uttered, statements or remarks, which are subtle in not being recognized as prejudicial.

A very important outcome of these two lines of approaches and the research deriving from them is that even in a more egalitarian normative climate, people still harbor ethnically prejudicial attitudes. However, these tend to surface in subtler ways, which do not appear to be perceived as xenophobic and thus as conflicting with egalitarian standards or an individual's egalitarian self-image (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay, 1986; McConahay et al., 1981; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). The subtle ethnic prejudice scale, for instance, has been widely employed to assess prejudicial attitudes in Germany as well as a variety of European countries (see e.g., Zick, Pettigrew, & Wagner, 2008, for an overview). Also, research following these approaches has shown that subtle ethnic prejudice, as an individual-level attitude assessed by these newer measures, can negatively impact intergroup relations, foster discriminatory behaviors, and have negative

[3] A slightly different approach has been developed by Katz and Hass (1988) in the US-context. Within their framework of ambivalent racism, they conceptualized contemporary ethnic attitudes to be reflected by concurrently existing positive and negative attitudes towards, in this case, African-Americans, which were also assessed as explicit attitudes using self-report measures.

consequences for those individuals who are targeted by them (e.g., Rabinowitz et al., 2009; see also Dovidio, 2001, and Dovidio et al., 2010, for overviews).

When locating the present research within this theoretical landscape, it is more closely related to those approaches that conceptualize contemporary ethnic prejudice in terms of an explicit (i.e., self-reported) attitude. Similar to these frameworks, the current work is also concerned with the subtlety of (consciously expressed) beliefs or opinions that are reflective of ethnic prejudice. Ethnic prejudice is hereby defined as a negative attitude toward a group or an individual based on a group membership (for a similar definition, see e.g., Crandall, Eshleman, & O'Brien, 2002) along (socially constructed) ethnic, national, and also ethno-religious categorizations. Taking a closer look at such subtler forms of ethnically prejudicial beliefs is vital in order to illuminate how negative opinions about ethnic minority groups might be covertly perpetuated in current migration and integration discourses. Moreover, such an investigation can shed light on those expressions of prejudice that members of ethnic minority groups face in their daily lives, without others or their proponents grasping their xenophobic nature and perceiving them as problematic. Drawing on the previously delineated reasoning, the present research derives from the general premise that prevailing egalitarian principles condemn racism or ethnic prejudice in general terms. Further it is suggested that although, of course, all manifestations of ethnic prejudice (i.e., those corresponding to its social-psychological definition) constitute from a theoretical point of view a violation of these egalitarian standards, not all of them are readily *perceived* as such, which represents their degree of subtlety. Subtler ethnically prejudicial beliefs hence fulfill the scientific definition of prejudice, yet they are largely not recognized as xenophobic and are thus not regarded as contradicting principles of egalitarianism or anti-discrimination.

Following this general rationale, the current work seeks to complement and extend previous research on subtle forms of explicit, i.e., self-reported, ethnic prejudice (e.g., McConahay, 1986; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), in shifting the focus away from examining subtle ethnic prejudice as an individual-level attitude and from investigating its prevalence or its negative impact on intergroup relations. Rather than exploring the degree to which individuals are prejudiced, e.g., exhibit subtle ethnic prejudice on self-report measures, and to what extent this relates to discriminatory behaviors, the present research focuses more in depth on the underlying processes that can illuminate how exactly subtle prejudicial beliefs manage to linger in the majority society and how their very subtlety is maintained. To this end, the current work follows the small number of studies that have actually put their empirical focus on the subtlety of prejudicial opinions and directly assessed how different scale items are evaluated as reflective of racist attitudes (McConahay, 1986; McConahay et al., 1981). Likewise, the current research straightforwardly examines the degree to which ethnically prejudicial beliefs are perceived as (not) xenophobic. In addition, it introduces new analytical perspectives and targets propositions and unresolved issues emanating from social-psychological research on subtle forms of (explicit) ethnic prejudice that have not yet undergone empirical scrutiny. First, it has, until now, remained unclear why exactly some ethnically prejudicial statements are subtler than others and which features are particularly 'effective' in camouflaging their xenophobic content, making them less readily recognizable as xenophobic. This issue will be addressed in Manuscript #1, focusing on the *perception* of prejudicial statements. Second, it has not been fully disentangled to what extent the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial opinions is related to their *adoption* into individuals' belief systems. Indeed, the previously delineated rationale underlying contemporary forms of explicit ethnic prejudice (e.g., McConahay, 1986; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995) suggests that individuals

nowadays tend to endorse prejudicial beliefs only in subtler ways, which they do not recognize as xenophobic and hence deem to be in line with egalitarian or anti-prejudice standards. However, this theoretical assumption has so far only been insufficiently buttressed by empirical evidence and will be attended to in Manuscript #2. Third, another important, yet under-investigated aspect potentially explaining how subtle ethnic prejudice manages to persist might be its ability to evade negative social sanctions. In fact, this issue has not been thoroughly addressed within previous empirical research, even though it is implicit to the very idea of a 'subtlety' of current manifestations of ethnic prejudice (e.g., McConahay, 1986; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). Also, the idea that prejudice needs to be recognized as such before it can be challenged has been emphasized within a related line of social-psychological research that has focused on individuals' opposition to prejudice and discrimination. In this context, theoretical models have proposed that the awareness of the prejudicial nature of an incident is indeed a prerequisite for an observer's eventual decision to confront a discriminating actor (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008; Stangor et al., 2003). Empirical evidence regarding oppositional reactions to subtle ethnic prejudice is, however, rather scarce (e.g., Dickson, 2012, Study 2; Dickter & Newton, 2013). Addressing this gap in the literature, Manuscript #3 examines whether subtler expressions of ethnic prejudice, which are not readily perceived as xenophobic, are less likely to elicit negative affective as well as oppositional *reactions*. As will be argued, these three perspectives can—taken together—advance our understanding of the processes underlying the persistence of subtle ethnic prejudice in the majority society and current discourses on migration and integration.

The Role of Individuals' Personal Egalitarian Standards

As it has already become evident throughout, the rationale underlying social-psychological approaches to subtle ethnic prejudice is inherently intertwined with the assumption of a—generally welcome and positive—normative trend towards egalitarianism, encompassing an increasing condemnation of racism (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay, 1986; McConahay et al., 1981; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). Overall, these frameworks have thus assumed that many people nowadays (genuinely) subscribe to general egalitarian principles as well as the idea that racism is despicable and hence reject old-fashioned, blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice, they clearly perceive as racist (see e.g., Dovidio et al., 2010, for an overview). Yet, they suppose that the general acceptance of egalitarian principles does not automatically imply that people are free of ethnic prejudice. Rather, it has been suggested that these animosities will surface in subtler ways, which are not readily recognized as xenophobic and are thus not regarded as a violation of egalitarian, anti-prejudice standards.

Based on this rationale, subtler ethnically prejudicial beliefs, representing the focus of the current work, can be regarded as opinions revealing still lingering ethnic animosities that 'slip under people's radar', with individuals being unaware of their xenophobic nature. At the same time, particularly subtler (conscious) expressions of ethnic prejudice also have a 'strategic' element to them. They might serve as a (potentially also deliberately employed) disguised outlet for people's ethnic animosities, allowing them to simultaneously maintain an egalitarian self-image (in front of themselves, or—in more public settings—also in front of others). In either way (and we will return to the potentially strategic aspect of subtler expressions of ethnic prejudice in the discussion), the notion that ethnic prejudice is nowadays mostly endorsed in subtler (rather than blatant) ways is inextricably linked to the

assumption that people are generally committed to adhere to egalitarian principles and to be unprejudiced—or to at least behave in a way that allows them to perceive themselves (or be perceived by others in public contexts) as such. This idea generally implies that people monitor or regulate their responses towards or, in the current context, their beliefs about ethnic minority groups as potentially prejudiced, measuring them against principles of egalitarianism and anti-discrimination.

These egalitarian standards and the associated condemnation of racism that underlie the notion of subtle ethnic prejudice have, on the one hand, been conceptualized in more general terms as a societal normative climate that proscribes racist behaviors or opinions (see e.g., McConahay, 1986; McConahay et al., 1981; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). On the other hand, egalitarian standards have also been conceptualized on an individual level. Hereby, (social-)psychological research has developed a variety of concepts grasping individuals' egalitarian (and also anti-egalitarian) value orientations, standards, and motivations, which condemn (or condone) ethnic prejudice. One could hereby think of humanitarianism-egalitarianism (Katz & Hass, 1988), as an example for a general egalitarian value orientation, emphasizing equality and social justice, while social dominance orientation (e.g., Ho et al., 2015; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994), as an ideological preference for group-based social hierarchies, would represent a general anti-egalitarian value orientation. More self-related egalitarian standards concerning people's own prejudicial tendencies would, for instance, be reflected by internal and external motivations to respond without prejudice (Plant & Devine, 1998). The former refers to individuals' motivation to avoid (ethnically) prejudicial responses due to one's personal values, and the latter represents the motivation to avoid prejudice to prevent external disapproval from others. In line with self-determination theory (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2000; see also Legault, Green-Demers, Grant, & Chung, 2007), a

higher internal and a lower external motivation to respond without ethnic prejudice have been considered to reflect a particularly self-determined motivation to behave in egalitarian and (ethnically) unprejudiced ways (see e.g., Butz & Plant, 2009; Devine, Plant, Amodio, Harmon-Jones, & Vance, 2002). Individuals with such a motivational profile were found to generally engage in a more active regulation of their prejudiced responses, also in more private contexts, such as anonymous research settings (e.g., Butz & Plant, 2009; Devine et al., 2002).

When following this latter perspective and acknowledging that even in a generally more egalitarian normative climate people can differ in their actual commitment to principles of egalitarianism and the degree to which they condemn racism, it seems intuitive that processes of subtlety should be particularly pivotal to the persistence of ethnic prejudice among individuals with stronger self-determined, internalized egalitarian standards. In generally caring about being (or perceiving oneself as) unprejudiced, these individuals might be more vigilant in monitoring the potentially prejudicial nature of (their own) beliefs regarding ethnic minority groups. To date, however, this issue has not been directly empirically scrutinized in previous research. Manuscript #1 and Manuscript #2 therefore also consider the impact of individuals' personal egalitarian standards within the processes targeted there, i.e., the *perception* and *adoption* of prejudicial beliefs, respectively. Manuscript #1 first explores whether individuals with higher internalized egalitarian standards might be more sensitive to the specific subtle (and blatant) ways in which ethnic prejudice can be communicated, whereas people with lower internalized egalitarian standards might be less responsive to such variations. Second, Manuscript #2 examines whether particularly individuals with stronger internalized egalitarian standards tend to endorse prejudicial beliefs only in subtler ways, which they do not perceive as xenophobic. Thereby,

Manuscript #2 applies a cognitive consistency perspective to prejudice-related belief systems (e.g., Festinger, 1957; Gawronski, 2012) in recognizing that it is not equally important to all individuals to be or to perceive oneself as unprejudiced. Especially people with higher internalized egalitarian standards might more strongly refrain from endorsing ethnically prejudicial beliefs in blatant ways, which they identify as xenophobic, as this would lead to an inconsistency with their standards and thus the emotionally aversive state of cognitive dissonance. They might—vice versa—tend to adopt ethnic prejudice only in subtler ways, to the extent that they are unaware of its xenophobic nature. In contrast, individuals with lower egalitarian standards might care less whether they hold prejudicial opinions and whether they endorse ethnically prejudicial beliefs in a subtle or also in blatant manner, which they do perceive as xenophobic. In that vein, the harmful potential of subtle ethnic prejudice might lie in the fact that it can, in not being noticed as xenophobic and hence not compromising people's egalitarian, unprejudiced self-image, clandestinely linger in larger parts of society and even among individuals who strongly subscribe to egalitarian principles and are thus actually potential allies against racism.

In addressing the delineated individual differences, the current work seeks to not only provide a more nuanced understanding of how the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial beliefs can contribute to their persistence in the society. Also, as we will get to in the following section, it aims to inform us how anti-prejudice interventions should be tailored to specific target groups and for which individuals anti-prejudice measures encompassing the antidote to subtlety, i.e., awareness-raising, might work most effectively.

The Other Side of the Coin: 'Awareness-Raising' as the Antidote to Subtler Forms of Ethnic Prejudice

The notion that, in light of prevailing egalitarian standards, ethnic prejudice nowadays tends to linger in a subtler manner has also been influential for considerations on how one could best counter such attitudes. In fact, when assuming that prejudicial tendencies—or prejudicial beliefs in the current case—tend to persist in subtler ways, which are less readily recognized as xenophobic, then the flipside of this reasoning and a very plausible antidote to such beliefs might be to raise people's awareness of their xenophobic nature.

This is what has indeed been done in practice as well as in applied social-psychological research. In practice, various diversity trainings, anti-bias trainings, or public campaigns contain elements aimed at raising individuals' awareness of (their own) ethnic prejudice.[4] A recent example for such a public campaign in Germany is one that was launched in 2020 by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (and ended in spring 2021). It was called "Vorsicht, Vorurteile!" ("Attention, prejudice!") and aimed to motivate people to address (their own) ethnically prejudicial tendencies in everyday life.[5] As it becomes evident in the campaign description as well as in campaign slogans—such as „Vorurteile sind wie dieses Plakat. Nicht immer auf den ersten Blick zu erkennen" („Prejudice is like this poster. Not always easy to detect"), which was written in a difficult to read manner—, this public effort also incorporated the idea that today's ethnic prejudice is often subtler and that making people aware of its xenophobic nature might be a useful strategy to combat such attitudes.

[4] Two examples for German organizations for civic education that also provide anti-bias or diversity trainings that explicitly entail components to increase people's awareness of their own prejudice and biases can be found here: https://www.ewdv-diversity.de/angebote/diversity-trainings; https://www.anti-bias-netz.org/angebote/fortbildungen-trainings.

[5] https://www.vorsicht-vorurteile.de

A very similar reasoning has been pursued by an ample body of applied social-psychological research on anti-prejudice interventions. Even though mostly not explicitly referring to the previously outlined approaches to subtle ethnic prejudice, this line of research also derives from the premise that in a more egalitarian societal climate it is rather aversive to perceive oneself as prejudiced, that people therefore often exhibit prejudicial tendencies in subtler ways, which they do not recognize as xenophobic, and that making them aware of this fact is hence an effective means to tackle these attitudes (e.g., Fehr & Sassenberg, 2010; Monteith, 1993; see also Monteith & Mark, 2005 for a review). Overall, these studies have revealed that being confronted with one's own (supposed) prejudicial tendencies can indeed lead to negative self-directed affect and, in turn, to a reduction of prejudiced responses. However, in line with the basic tenets of cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957)—as well as related frameworks such as self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) or symbolic self-completion theory (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981, 1982)—this was only or more strongly the case among low-prejudiced individuals and people with strong personal egalitarian standards (e.g., Fehr & Sassenberg, 2010; Monteith, 1993; see also Monteith & Mark, 2005 for a review), for whom being prejudiced actually represented an inconsistency with their personal values.

Even though these findings generally corroborate the fruitfulness of awareness-raising components of anti-prejudice interventions, the assumed underlying processes of how (ethnic) prejudice is currently upheld have only been insufficiently disentangled. In fact, a question that has hitherto and with regard to ethnically prejudicial beliefs, as the focus of the current work, not been targeted, is one that touches upon the very premise of such awareness-raising measures and relates to a core proposition emanating from approaches to subtle forms of explicit ethnic prejudice (e.g., McConahay, 1986; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995): To what

extent do individuals tend to endorse ethnic prejudice only in subtler ways, so that they are actually unaware of the xenophobic nature of their own prejudicial opinions, in the first place? This issue will be addressed in Manuscript #2. Further, and as outlined in the previous section, Manuscript #2 also considers the role of people's personal egalitarian standards. Drawing on a cognitive consistency perspective (e.g., Festinger, 1957; Gawronski, 2012) in recognizing that it is more important for individuals with stronger internalized egalitarian standards to be and perceive oneself as unprejudiced, and hence more emotionally aversive to become aware of their own ethnic prejudice (e.g., Fehr & Sassenberg, 2010; Monteith & Mark, 2005), it scrutinizes whether particularly these individuals tend to endorse prejudicial beliefs only in subtler ways, which they do not recognize as xenophobic. This would imply that particularly highly egalitarian individuals are more suitable targets for awareness-raising components of anti-prejudice interventions. Vice versa, such measures would be less effective among individuals with lower personal egalitarian standards, for whom it is less important to be unprejudiced: They might care less whether they endorse ethnic prejudice also in blatant ways, which they do recognize as xenophobic, and might hence not be that unaware of the xenophobic nature of those prejudicial opinions that they personally endorse (Manuscript #2). Complementary, Manuscript #1 can, in systematically investigating the perception of ethnically prejudicial beliefs as (not) xenophobic and those features that contribute to a concealment of their xenophobic nature, provide information on which prejudicial beliefs are particularly subtle and should thus be targeted within awareness-raising interventions. In sharpening individuals' sensitivity for subtler prejudicial beliefs, such interventions might indirectly also contribute to people's ability to act as 'multipliers' in expressing opposition to such manifestations of ethnic prejudice (Manuscript #3).

Hence, overall and in seeking to provide a more detailed picture of the processes of subtlety underlying the persistence of ethnic prejudice in the majority society, the present research aims to provide implications for anti-prejudice interventions in practice, particularly awareness-raising measures, and how they might be tailored most appropriately to different target groups. This ambition is based on the assumption that if we have a better understanding of how exactly ethnic prejudice is currently upheld, this also equips us with a better understanding of how it can be combated.

The Present Research

Based on the delineated rationale, it was the overarching aim of the current research to investigate more in depth, how the subtlety of ethnic prejudice contributes to and allows for its persistence in the majority society and within a generally more egalitarian normative climate, where racism has become despicable. Within three manuscripts, with each introducing a distinct analytical perspective, different processes are explored in order to illuminate how subtle manifestations of ethnic prejudice operate and manage to linger. Focusing on the process of *perception*, Manuscript #1 systematically examines which variations of ethnically prejudicial beliefs are particularly subtle, i.e., less readily perceived as xenophobic. Taking an intra-individual perspective, Manuscript #2 investigates within two studies to what extent the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial beliefs is associated with their *adoption* into individuals' belief systems, illuminating whether individuals tend to endorse prejudicial beliefs only in subtler ways, which they do not recognize as xenophobic. Addressing individuals' affective as well as oppositional *reactions*, Manuscript #3 explores, based on two studies, whether subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice are, in remaining unnoticed as xenophobic, more likely to evade negative social sanctions. Further, Manuscript #1 and #2 also consider the role of individuals' internalized egalitarian standards in order to scrutinize whether processes of subtlety are more pivotal for explaining the persistence of ethnic prejudice among people who are generally more committed to egalitarian principles and to being unprejudiced. After briefly summarizing each manuscript, their findings will be integrated into a tentative model intended to illustrate how the different processes targeted separately in the three manuscripts might potentially interlock within a self-perpetuating mechanism, depicting how subtle ethnic prejudice manages to linger and how its very subtlety is upheld. In combining correlational as well as experimental study

designs, which also allow for causal conclusions, and employing data from a large random population sample as well samples that are age-and-gender representative of the German population throughout all three manuscripts, we also sought to gain a more representative picture of these processes. This might be considered especially important in light of current debates regarding the generalizability and contextualization of social-psychological research findings (Pettigrew, 2018).

Perception: Exploring Features Determining the Subtlety of Ethnically Prejudicial Beliefs (Manuscript #1)

When seeking to uncover how subtler ethnically prejudicial beliefs manage to persist in current societies, it is essential to initially get a better understanding of the nature of these beliefs. We thus first address the question of what exactly makes certain ethnically prejudicial statements subtler than others and which specific characteristics disguise their prejudicial nature more strongly, so that they are less readily perceived as xenophobic and hence not recognized as a violation of egalitarian standards. With previous research having predominantly focused on examining subtle ethnic prejudice as an individual-level attitude and only a limited number of studies having actually empirically assessed the subtlety of different prejudicial beliefs (e.g., Manganelli Rattazzi & Volpato, 2003; McConahay, 1986; McConahay et al., 1981; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1996), this question has until now only been insufficiently targeted.

Addressing this gap in the literature, Manuscript #1 switches the analytical perspective to the level of the particular ethnically prejudicial statement itself and systematically examines to what extent different prejudicial beliefs are perceived as (not) xenophobic. Adapting the logic of factorial survey experiments, which are particularly popular in social science (e.g., Auspurg & Hinz, 2015; Wallander, 2009), we explored three dimensions as

potential determinants of the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial statements along which such utterances can be varied: (i) the topic to which is referred, (ii) the (essentialist) language employed, and (iii) the target group towards which the statement is directed. First, deriving from qualitative social science research that has pinpointed culture, economic utility, and danger/ inner security as the most recurrent themes in migration and integration discourses (e.g., Bauder, 2008; Holzberg, Kolbe & Zaborowski, 2018), it was examined whether the subtlety of prejudicial statements depended on whether they refer to these three topics. Second, we drew on social-psychological research emphasizing the role of the linguistic phrasing and essentialist, abstract ways of describing group behaviors for the perpetuation of (ethnic) prejudice (e.g., Assilaméhou, Lepastourel, & Testé, 2013; Beukeboom, 2014; Wigboldus, Semin, & Spears, 2000), as well as on findings suggesting that people are sensitive to this linguistic feature, in more strongly perceiving communicators who use highly abstract, essentialist language as being biased or having a communicative agenda (Douglas & Sutton, 2006, 2010). Based on these findings, it was examined whether the subtlety of prejudicial statements depended on the essentialist linguistic phrasing employed, ranging from statements suggesting that the target group's inferiority is potentially alterable (using a weakly essentialist phrasing) to statements ascribing completely immutable and naturally fixed negative attributes to the target group (using strongly essentialist language). Third, previous research has demonstrated that people vary in the degree to which they evaluate prejudices against different social groups, in general, as acceptable (e.g., Crandall et al., 2002; West & Hewstone, 2012) and also form hierarchies of ethnic and immigrant groups (e.g., Hagendoorn, 1995; Snellman & Ekehammar, 2005). Based on these findings, we investigated whether the subtlety of prejudicial statements varied depending on whether they were directed

against Muslims[6] or Turks, representing the largest immigrant group in Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2020) and the predominantly and most controversially discussed group in the German migration discourse (e.g., Hierl, 2012; Spielhaus, 2013), respectively. Additionally, we considered the impact of individuals' internal and external motivation to respond without prejudice (Plant & Devine, 1998), i.e., individuals' self-related egalitarian standards, on their responsiveness to these variations of prejudicial statements.

Results, based on experimental data from a telephone survey with a German random population sample ($N = 895$), indicate that the degree of subtlety of different ethnically prejudicial statements, i.e., their perception as (not) xenophobic, indeed systematically varies along the three dimensions of topic (i.e., culture, economic utility, and danger/ inner security), language (ranging from a weakly to a strongly essentialist phrasing), and target group (i.e., Muslims and Turks). Prejudicial statements that refer to culture, are phrased weakly essentialistically, and target Muslims were subtlest, in being evaluated as least xenophobic by the respondents. Moreover, individuals with a higher internal and a lower external motivation to respond without prejudice, i.e., an increasing self-determined motivation to respond in egalitarian, unprejudiced ways (Butz & Plant, 2009; Devine et al., 2002; see also Legault et al., 2007), reacted more strongly to these variations of the prejudicial statements. They increased their xenophobia ratings more strongly in response to those item variations along linguistic phrasing and topic that were found to be more blatant, identifying them more readily as xenophobic.

These findings indicate that ethnically prejudicial beliefs are not uniformly perceived as xenophobic and thus as a violation of egalitarian principles and that certain characteristics

[6] The term 'Muslim' might be best described as an ethno-religious group label, as it has been suggested that it has become 'ethnicized', referring to people with roots in Muslim-majority countries rather than an actual religious affiliation (Hierl, 2012; Spielhaus, 2013).

of such prejudicial statements—such as topic, linguistic phrasing, and target group—can contribute to a concealment of their xenophobic nature. Individuals with stronger self-determined egalitarian standards, who are more strongly personally committed to live up to principles of anti-discrimination and rooting out (ethnic) prejudice, appeared to be more eager to devote vigilance to the identification of prejudice and to engage in a conscientious processing of potentially prejudicial statements. These individuals proved to be more sensitive to the specific way in which ethnic prejudice is communicated and thus to the features determining subtler and blatant variations of ethnically prejudicial statements.

Adoption: Exploring the Role of Subtlety for the Endorsement of Ethnically Prejudicial Beliefs (Manuscript #2)

Having established in Manuscript #1 that certain expressions of ethnic prejudice are able to disguise their prejudicial nature more strongly and are hence less readily perceived as xenophobic, a second question of interest is how the subtlety of prejudicial opinions might be associated with their adoption into individuals' belief systems. As pointed out before, social-psychological approaches to contemporary forms of explicit ethnic prejudice (e.g., McConahay, 1986; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995) have indeed suggested that in light of prevailing egalitarian, prejudice-condemning standards, people would generally rather refrain from endorsing opinions that they clearly perceive as racist. Thus, they would rather endorse prejudicial beliefs only in subtler ways, which they do not recognize as xenophobic. Empirically, however, this intra-individual rationale has only been indirectly corroborated by studies operating at higher levels of aggregation, which show that prejudice items that receive higher average endorsement levels are also rated as more socially acceptable or less reflective of racism (e.g., Manganelli Rattazzi & Volpato, 2003; McConahay, 1986; McConahay et al., 1981; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1996).

Taking up this issue, Manuscript #2 thus explicitly takes an intra-individual perspective and investigates whether individuals tend to adopt ethnically prejudicial beliefs only to the extent that they are unaware of their xenophobic nature. Also, it considers the role of individuals' personal egalitarian standards, thereby applying a cognitive consistency perspective to prejudice-related belief systems (e.g., Festinger, 1957; Gawronski, 2012; Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2014; Gawronski & Brannon, 2019; Gawronski, Peters, Brochu, & Strack, 2008; Gawronski & Strack, 2004). More specifically, we scrutinized whether particularly individuals with higher internalized egalitarian principles, for whom being or perceiving oneself as prejudiced would represent a discrepancy with their personal standards leading to the emotionally aversive state of cognitive dissonance (e.g., Fehr & Sassenberg, 2010; Monteith & Mark, 2005), would more strongly endorse prejudicial beliefs only in subtler ways, which they do not recognize as xenophobic.

Results from a correlational and an experimental study, drawing on data from a telephone survey with a German random population sample and an online survey with an age- and gender representative German sample (total $N = 2{,}120$), overall indeed revealed a negative intra-individual association between the endorsement of a prejudicial belief and its evaluation as xenophobic: The more individuals endorsed an ethnically prejudicial statement, the less they tended to perceive this statement as xenophobic. Further, the strength of this negative intra-individual association depended on people's personal egalitarian standards. It was more pronounced for individuals with stronger internalized and self-determined egalitarian standards, i.e., a higher internal and a lower external motivation to respond without prejudice (Plant & Devine, 1998) and a higher egalitarian self-perception. Also, this negative intra-individual association was more pronounced for individuals with higher levels of humanitarianism-egalitarianism (Katz & Hass, 1988) and lower levels of social dominance

orientation (e.g., Ho et al., 2015; Pratto et al., 1994). However, the moderating role of these latter more general (anti-)egalitarian value orientations became negligible, when considering all interaction effects simultaneously. This suggests that self-related egalitarian standards and motivations that more directly reflect one's general commitment to personally be unprejudiced were more important in the current context. Results from the second study replicated the correlational main findings from the first study. Additionally, they showed that the experimental induction of egalitarian standards salience also led to a stronger negative intra-individual association between the endorsement of a prejudicial belief and its evaluation as xenophobic.

Overall, the findings from Manuscript #2 reveal that the subtlety of ethnic prejudice is indeed related to its adoption, in showing that people tend to endorse prejudicial opinions only to the extent that they are unaware of their xenophobic nature. Yet, corroborating a cognitive consistency perspective, this was particularly true for individuals with stronger (self-related) egalitarian standards (Study 1 and 2) or for whom these were made salient (Study 2). In being more strongly committed to being (or perceiving oneself as) unprejudiced (or being reminded of these standards), these individuals appeared to more strongly critically monitor their own opinions concerning ethnic minority groups as potentially prejudicial. They more strongly tended to endorse prejudicial beliefs only in subtler ways, which they did not recognize as xenophobic, and, vice versa, to more strongly reject blatantly prejudicial beliefs, they clearly identified as xenophobic, thereby maintaining a consistency with these egalitarian standards. In contrast, individuals with lower (self-related) egalitarian standards, for whom being prejudiced does not represent a similar violation of their personal values,—or people for whom these standards had not been made salient—appeared to care less whether they also held blatantly prejudicial beliefs, which they did recognize as xenophobic.

Reaction: Exploring Oppositional Responses to Subtle Expressions of Ethnic Prejudice (Manuscript #3)

A further aspect potentially explaining the persistence of subtle ethnic prejudice might be that it slips under the radar of its recipients, remaining unnoticed as xenophobic and as a violation of egalitarian principles, and hence manages to escape negative social sanctions. Targeting this issue, Manuscript #3 therefore examines individuals' negative affective as well as oppositional reactions to subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice. Indeed, as delineated before, the general idea that (ethnic) prejudice needs to be identified as such before it can be opposed has been put forward within previous research and theorizing (e.g., Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008; Barreto & Ellemers, 2005a; Stangor et al., 2003). However, empirical studies regarding oppositional reactions to subtle forms of ethnic prejudice are rather scarce (e.g., Dickson, 2012, Study 2; Dickter & Newton, 2013) and evidence can currently mostly be derived only from research on sexism and homophobia (e.g., Barreto & Ellemers, 2005a, 2005b; Krolikowski, Rinella, & Ratcliff, 2016). These studies provide indeed initial support for the idea that subtle prejudice elicits lower oppositional responses. However, earlier research is not completely conclusive, as it refers to different forms of prejudice, examines very different forms of oppositional reactions, and draws on samples of individuals who are and who are not themselves the targets of the respective prejudice. Also, particularly experimental studies that assess the causal impact of expressions of ethnic prejudice on their perceivers are lacking.

Manuscript #3 addresses this matter within two experimental online surveys with samples that are age- and gender-representative of the German population (total $N = 1{,}630$). Specifically, it examines to what extent subtle compared to blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice or neutral migration-related communications—which had been evaluated on a pretest as slightly, strongly, or not xenophobic, respectively—elicit negative affect among

their recipients as well as intentions to engage in various forms of opposition. Data from both studies provide support for an indirect mechanism, whereby subtle (compared to blatant) ethnically prejudicial statements—supposedly endorsed by others (Study 1) or a politician (Study 2)—indeed triggered lower negative affective reactions. These, in turn, translated into decreased intentions to engage in direct opposition against the proponents of these statements, i.e., lower confrontation intentions (Study 1 and 2) and a lower refusal to vote for a politician (Study 2), as well as decreased intentions to engage in more large-scale acts of opposition, i.e., intentions to participate in (solidarity-based) collective action against racism (Study 1 and 2). In light of the overall effects regarding the different outcome measures under investigation, subtle (compared to blatant) expressions of ethnic prejudice seemed to particularly undermine individuals' willingness to engage in oppositional acts directly addressing the proponents of subtle prejudicial statements themselves, i.e., lower confrontation intentions and a lower refusal to vote for the politician. Remarkably, subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice did not increase (Study 1) or only slightly increased (Study 2) the different oppositional intentions indirectly through anger and did, overall, not (or only slightly) evoke higher oppositional intentions compared to the neutral migration-related communications.

These findings clearly highlight another aspect of how subtle ethnic prejudice manages to persist in the current society, namely by circumventing negative social sanctions.

Putting the Pieces Together: Tracing a Self-Perpetuating Mechanism Underlying the Persistence of Subtle Forms of Ethnic Prejudice

What is the overarching story told by the findings derived from the three manuscripts, when looking at them simultaneously and from a broader perspective? In the following an attempt will be made to integrate their findings and to illustrate, also in light of findings from other previous research, how the three processes—conceptualized as perception (Manuscript #1), adoption (Manuscript #2), and reaction (Manuscript #3)—might be conceived as potentially interlocking within a self-perpetuating mechanism (see Figure 1). This mechanism might depict how subtle ethnic prejudice manages to persist in the majority society and how its very subtlety is upheld.

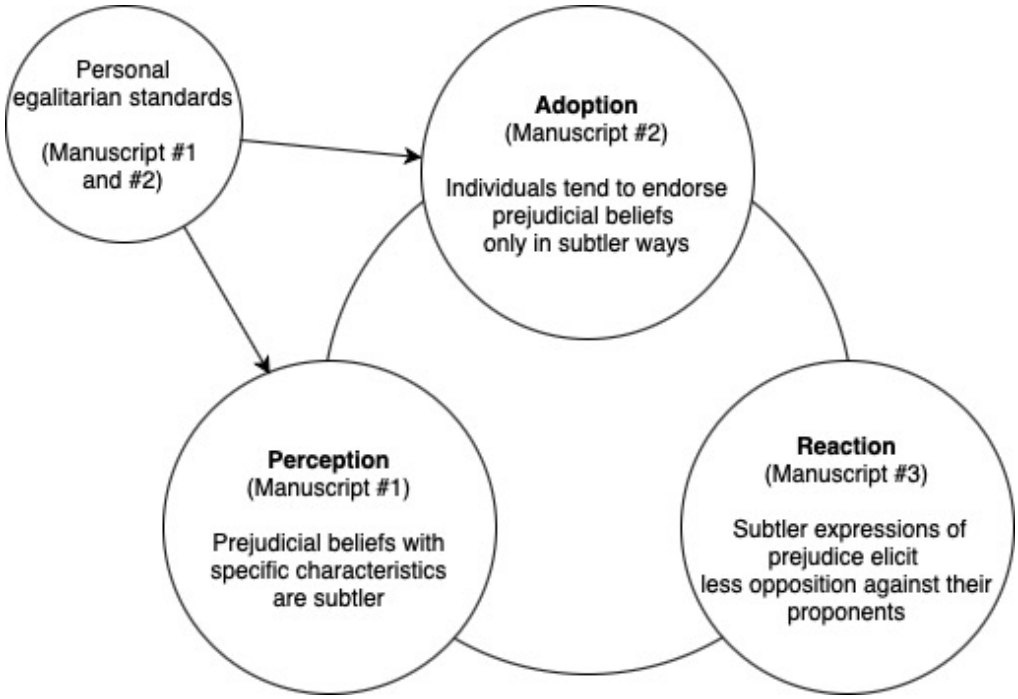

Figure 1. Schematic representation of the processes investigated in the three manuscripts

Manuscript #1 reveals that certain features can disguise the xenophobic nature of ethnically prejudicial beliefs more strongly, so that they are subtler, i.e., less readily recognized as xenophobic and hence less clearly noticed as a violation of egalitarian standards. Both Manuscript #2 and Manuscript #3 can illuminate how this subtlety allows for

the perpetuation of such opinions. First, subtler prejudicial beliefs might be more likely to be adopted into individuals' belief system, as people tend to endorse prejudicial opinions only to the degree that they are unaware of their xenophobic nature (Manuscript #2). Second, subtler expressions of ethnic prejudice tend to trigger lower indignation and lower intentions to oppose their proponents compared to more blatant communications of ethnic prejudice and not even uniformly higher oppositional reactions than neutral statements (Manuscript #3). This absence of direct negative social sanctions might then again—and to the extent that these lower oppositional intentions would also proportionately translate into lower actual oppositional behaviors—feed back into the processes of perception (Manuscript #1) and adoption (Manuscript #2). Indeed, previous research suggests that opposition can be crucial for decreasing further expressions of prejudice and acts of discrimination (see e.g., Nelson, Dunn, & Paradies, 2011, for a review). On the one hand, opposition against (ethnically) prejudicial responses can decrease subsequent expressions of prejudice or acts of discrimination among witnesses of such negative sanctioning (e.g., Blanchard, Crandall, Brigham, & Vaughn, 1994). On the other hand, earlier results indicate that opposition to and being confronted with one's own (ethnic) prejudice might be crucial for motivating people—particularly those with higher egalitarian standards—to initiate prejudice-related self-regulation mechanisms (e.g., Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006; Fehr & Sassenberg, 2010; Monteith, 1993; Monteith & Mark, 2005) and hence potentially revise their beliefs. Against the backdrop of these findings, a lack of direct oppositional reactions in response to subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice might thus signal to both their proponents as well as other witnesses that these beliefs are not problematic, thereby further perpetuating their very subtlety, i.e., the perception that these opinions are allegedly not xenophobic and thus not in conflict with egalitarian standards (Manuscript #1). This might then again further encourage

other people's adoption of such prejudicial beliefs (Manuscript #2). Moreover, the absence of negative social sanctions might directly bolster the proponents of subtler prejudicial opinions in their perception that their own beliefs are supposedly not xenophobic (Manuscript #2), allowing them to maintain an egalitarian self-image and preventing them from perceiving any need to reconsider their beliefs.

When now integrating the findings concerning the impact of individuals' personal egalitarian standards with regard to the perception (Manuscript #1) and adoption (Manuscript #2) of prejudicial opinions, it becomes evident that processes of subtlety play a larger role for explaining the persistence of ethnic prejudice among individuals with stronger internalized and self-determined egalitarian standards, particularly self-related standards condemning personal prejudice. These individuals, who are more strongly committed to general principles of anti-discrimination as well as to being (or perceiving themselves as) unprejudiced and for whom endorsing ethnic prejudice should actually represent an (emotionally aversive) deviation from their personal standards, seemed to engage in a more critical monitoring of beliefs related to ethnic minority groups as potentially prejudicial (Manuscript #1 and Manuscript #2). In turn, they were more attentive and sensitive to features determining subtler and more blatant ways of expressing ethnic prejudice. They reacted more strongly to those variations of prejudicial statements that were found to be more blatant, in identifying them more readily as xenophobic (Manuscript #1). Further, these highly egalitarian individuals appeared to more strongly reject blatant ethnically prejudicial beliefs, which they clearly perceived as xenophobic, and thus (vice versa) endorsed prejudicial opinions only in subtler ways, which they did not recognize as xenophobic (Manuscript #2). In contrast, for individuals with lower egalitarian standards, who do not generally despise racism that strongly and for whom being unprejudiced is personally less important, appeared

to engage less in a monitoring of beliefs related to ethnic minority groups as potentially prejudicial (Manuscript #1 and Manuscript #2). On the one hand, they were less sensitive to the specific way in which ethnic prejudice is communicated and thus to the features determining subtler and more blatant ways of expressing ethnic prejudice (Manuscript #1). At the same time, whether or not they perceived a belief as xenophobic appeared to be of less importance for its adoption among these individuals: As this does not imply a violation of their personal standards, they seemed to care less whether they endorse prejudicial beliefs in a subtle manner or also in blatant ways, which they do recognize as prejudicial (Manuscript #2).

Overall, this tentative conceptualization of the three processes outlined in the manuscripts as interrelated components—encompassing perception (Manuscript #1), adoption (Manuscript #2), and reaction (Manuscript #3)—within a self-perpetuating mechanism can illustrate how the subtlety of prejudicial beliefs against ethnic minority groups, i.e., the fact that they are not recognized as xenophobic, can contribute to and allow for their persistence in the majority society and is thereby potentially further upheld itself. Additionally, the individual differences results suggest that the depicted processes of subtlety are more pivotal to the persistence of ethnic prejudice among people with higher internalized, self-determined egalitarian standards, who strongly condemn racism in general terms and to whom being unprejudiced is actually personally important. In contrast, individuals with lower internalized egalitarian standards appeared to care less about the subtle and blatant manner, in which ethnic prejudice can be expressed, and whether they personally hold opinions that they recognize as xenophobic.

General Discussion and Outlook

In light of a general normative trend towards more egalitarianism in current societies and hence an increased condemnation of racism (e.g., Crandall, et al., 2013; McConahay, 1986; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), various social-psychological approaches have supposed that ethnic prejudice tends to come to the surface in more disguised forms, which are not readily recognized as xenophobic and are thus perceived to be allegedly in line with principles of anti-discrimination (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay, 1986; McConahay et al., 1981; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). Earlier studies deriving from these approaches have primarily focused on conceptualizing and examining subtle ethnic prejudice as an individual-level attitude and have importantly revealed its prevalence in society as well its negative impact on intergroup relations (e.g., Rabinowitz et al., 2009; see also Dovidio, 2001, and Dovidio et al., 2010, for overviews). What had remained rather unclear, however, are the underlying mechanisms that can explain how exactly subtler animosities against ethnic minority groups manage to linger in the majority society.

The present research sought to advance our knowledge with regard to this matter, in specifically focusing on subtle forms of ethnically prejudicial beliefs. In doing so, it was particularly rooted in social-psychological frameworks on contemporary forms of explicit, i.e., self-reported, ethnic prejudice (e.g., McConahay, 1986; McConahay et al., 1981; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). Also, it aimed to integrate and contribute to related lines of social-psychological research, i.e., most importantly, applied research on individuals' opposition to (ethnically) prejudicial incidents (e.g., Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008; Stangor et al., 2003), research on the impact of individual's commitment to egalitarian principles and to being unprejudiced (e.g., Butz & Plant, 2009; Plant & Devine, 1998), cognitive consistency approaches to prejudice-related belief systems (e.g., Festinger, 1957; Gawronski, 2012), as

well as applied research on confrontation as a means to combat (ethnic) prejudice (e.g., Fehr & Sassenberg, 2010; see also Monteith & Mark, 2005, for a review). In combining correlational and experimental research designs, using data from large population samples, and in introducing three new analytical perspectives, the studies presented throughout the manuscripts were able to shed light on the detailed processes along which one can trace how subtle ethnic prejudice manages to persist in the majority society: Ethnically prejudicial beliefs with certain features—that refer to culture, are phrased weakly essentialistically, and target Muslims— are subtler, in being less readily *perceived* as xenophobic and thus less readily recognized as conflicting with principles of egalitarianism and anti-discrimination (Manuscript #1). The subtlety of ethnically prejudicial beliefs is also associated with their *adoption* into people's belief systems: Individuals generally tend to endorse prejudicial opinions mostly in subtler ways, which they do not recognize as prejudicial, and to the extent that they are unaware of their xenophobic nature (Manuscript #2). Also, subtler expressions of ethnic prejudice are less likely to elicit oppositional *reactions* against their proponents (Manuscript #3). This absence of negative social sanctions in response to subtle ethnic prejudice might then again—in the sense of a vicious cycle—potentially further perpetuate its very subtlety, i.e., the perception that it is supposedly not xenophobic, and further allow its proponents to maintain an egalitarian self-image.

Additionally, results from Manuscript #1 and Manuscript #2 corroborate the general rationale underlying social-psychological frameworks on subtle ethnic prejudice, which relies on the assumption of a normative trend towards egalitarianism and that it has become aversive to be or to perceive oneself (or be perceived by others in public contexts) as prejudiced (see e.g., Dovidio et al., 2010, for an overview). In taking into account that individuals can, in fact, differ in the degree to which they personally subscribe to principles of egalitarianism, the

current findings indicate that the depicted processes of subtlety particularly underlie the persistence of ethnic prejudice among individuals with higher internalized egalitarian standards—especially with stronger self-related and self-determined egalitarian standards that condemn personal prejudicial responses. These individuals, who were also found to generally engage in a more active regulation of their prejudiced responses, also in more private contexts such as anonymous research settings (see e.g., Butz & Plant, 2009; Devine et al., 2002; Plant & Devine, 1998), appeared to engage in a stronger monitoring of (their own) beliefs as potentially prejudiced (Manuscript #1 and Manuscript #2). They were more sensitive to features determining subtler and more blatant ways of expressing ethnic prejudice, in more strongly reacting to and recognizing those prejudicial statements as xenophobic that were found to be more blatant (Manuscript #1). Also, they tended to reject blatant prejudicial opinions, which they perceived as xenophobic, while endorsing ethnically prejudicial beliefs only in subtler ways, which they did not recognize as xenophobic (Manuscript #2). In contrast, people with lower internalized egalitarian standards appeared to be less sensitive to the features determining subtler and more blatant ways of expressing ethnic prejudice (Manuscript #1). Also, they appeared to care less whether they endorsed prejudicial beliefs in subtler or also blatant ways, which they did perceive as xenophobic (Manuscript #2).

Overall, the current findings serve to illuminate more in depth how exactly subtle ethnic prejudice operates and manages to linger. Thereby, the processes depicted throughout the three manuscripts can, when being tentatively conceptualized as interrelated components within a self-perpetuating mechanism, illustrate how the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial beliefs allows for their persistence and is thereby potentially reinforced itself. In not being noticed as xenophobic and hence not regarded as a violation of anti-prejudice standards, the harmful potential of subtle ethnic prejudice thereby lies in the fact that it can linger in larger

parts of society and even among individuals who strongly subscribe to general principles of egalitarianism and anti-discrimination and are thus actually important allies against racism. In that way, subtler expressions of ethnic prejudice might exert their negative impact in more surreptitious ways, in clandestinely perpetuating negative beliefs concerning ethnic minority groups and without compromising the egalitarian self-image of their proponents.

Implications for Understanding Expressions of Ethnic Prejudice in Current Discourses on Migration and Integration

The current findings can also contribute to our understanding of how ethnic prejudice is expressed in current discourses on migration and integration. In doing so, the present work shares some overlap with and can also shed light on issues that are discussed in neighboring (sub-)disciplines of social psychology.

Indeed, the idea that ethnic prejudice tends to nowadays become manifest in subtler ways has, for instance, also been put forward in discourse-psychological and social science approaches to racism. Similar to social-psychological frameworks on contemporary forms of explicit, i.e., self-reported, ethnic prejudice (e.g., McConahay, 1986; McConahay et al., 1981; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), these have proposed that, in light of prevailing egalitarian norms, ethnic prejudice is in social interactions and public debates often expressed in a more veiled manner or rhetorically camouflaged ways, which remain unrecognized as xenophobic (e.g., Augoustinos & Every, 2007a, 2007b; Bonilla-Silva, 2002; Condor, Figgou, Abell, Gibson, & Stevenson, 2006; van Dijk, 1992, 2002). In that vein, it has been suggested that "Race talk has effectively adapted to a social and moral taboo against overt expressions of prejudice" (Augoustinos & Every, 2007a, p. 251). Contributing to this discourse perspective, the current findings might also be interpreted as a reflection of a discursive, social-normative setting in which two norms are concurrently at work: A superordinate egalitarian norm,

condemning racism and ethnic prejudice in general or abstract terms; and a subordinate, second norm (or a pattern of social acceptability), specifying which ethnically prejudicial beliefs are actually regarded or not regarded as xenophobic and hence to be in conflict or in congruence with the superordinate egalitarian principles, being relatively blatant or subtle, respectively. The processes targeted within the three manuscripts can shed light on how exactly this second norm might be discursively constructed and perpetuated. Specifically, and with the special focus of the current work being directed at *subtle* ethnic prejudice, the current findings illuminate how a social understanding is upheld that certain ethnically prejudicial beliefs are supposedly not xenophobic, allowing for their persistence in current discourses under the umbrella of general principles of egalitarianism and anti-discrimination. When taking into account individual differences within this discursive setting, those people who more strongly personally internalized the (superordinate) egalitarian, prejudice-condemning principles also appeared to be more sensitive and adherent to the second (subordinate) norm: They more strongly recognized those prejudicial statements as xenophobic that were found to be more blatant (Manuscript #1). Also, they rejected blatant prejudicial opinions, which they perceived as xenophobic, while endorsing ethnically prejudicial beliefs only in subtle ways, which they did not recognize as xenophobic (Manuscript #2). Those subtler prejudicial beliefs that remain largely unnoticed as xenophobic and are thus potentially perpetuated by individuals with higher personal egalitarian standards might play a decisive role in serving as the upper 'normative guideline' for ethnic prejudice expression. This guideline might specify 'what is sayable' and which expressions of ethnic prejudice are regarded as 'not xenophobic'—also for those people who have only less internalized the (superordinate) egalitarian principles. These latter individuals, who thus personally condemn ethnic prejudice only to a lower degree, appeared to be privately (such as in the current anonymous research

setting) less sensitive or adhesive to this second norm and appeared to care less whether they endorsed ethnic prejudice in subtle or blatant ways (Manuscript #1 and Manuscript #2). In more public communications or conversations, some of these individuals might, in fact, also voice their prejudicial opinions in a blatant manner, which they recognize as xenophobic, without caring about receiving opposition and potentially being labeled as racist. Yet, one might suppose that, depending on the context and audience, also people with lower self-determined personal egalitarian standards, particularly those with a higher external motivation to respond without prejudice, who are motivated to control prejudiced responses in order to avoid external disapproval (e.g., Butz & Plant, 2009; Plant & Devine, 1998), might refrain from publicly uttering more blatant prejudicial beliefs that they might privately hold. They might then strategically switch to subtler ways of expressing negative beliefs concerning ethnic minority groups in order to maintain a socially desirable egalitarian self-image in front of others and to avoid controversy or opposition.

This strategic aspect of subtlety might not only be exploited in everyday conversations but also by politicians or other professional communicators (see e.g., Haney-López, 2014; Kinder, 2013, for this discussion). Also for these individuals the subtlety of certain ways of verbalizing ethnic prejudice—as they have been shed light on in Manuscript #1—might have a 'functional value'. These might be deliberately employed to perpetuate negative views of ethnic minority groups (and hence potentially also specific policies towards them), yet without openly violating egalitarian standards and without sparking indignation or opposition. Manuscript #1 suggests that such rhetorical strategies might be particularly 'effective' in passing over ethnically prejudicial statements to and avoiding to repel individuals with stronger self-determined egalitarian standards, as they more strongly reacted to and identified those variations of ethnically prejudicial statements as xenophobic that were found to be more

blatant. Vice versa, these results suggest that for audiences with lower personal egalitarian standards, who do not generally despise racism that strongly, it would matter less whether (professional) communicators express ethnic prejudice in subtle or blatant ways. Additionally, Manuscript #3 reveals that, overall, the rhetorical strategy of using subtler communications of ethnic prejudice might indeed be 'effective' to evade direct negative social sanctions. This idea of a potentially deliberate employment of subtler expressions of ethnic prejudice in strategic political communication also bears similarities with what is discussed in political and social science or legal studies as 'dog whistle racism' or 'dog whistle politics' (see e.g., Haney-López, 2014). This term broadly refers to the use of prejudicial expressions intended to appeal to or agitate potential voters' ethnic animosities or fears, yet strategically uttered in a camouflaged or coded way, which is not readily recognized (or 'inaudible') as xenophobic and thus not noticed as a violation of egalitarian principles. Thereby, the communicators (as well as their supporters) are protected against allegations of racism.

Overall, the current findings can shed light on how subtler expressions of ethnic prejudice are allowed to persist in current discourses on migration and integration. Also, they can illuminate how subtler prejudicial beliefs might serve as a strategic resort—for 'ordinary' as well as professional communicators—to express negative beliefs concerning ethnic minority groups, while avoiding negative social sanctions.

Implications for Anti-Prejudice Interventions in Practice

The present findings cannot only illuminate how subtle ethnic prejudice manages to linger in the majority society as well as in current discourses. Also, and this is the more positive side of the coin, they carry important implications for the tailoring of anti-prejudice interventions in practice.

Generally, the processes of subtlety underlying the persistence of prejudicial beliefs that have been uncovered in the current work intuitively call for their antidote, i.e., anti-prejudice measures that seek to raise people's awareness of their xenophobic nature. Such intervention efforts can—directly and indirectly—address all three of the processes targeted within the manuscripts. First, findings from Manuscript #1 can draw attention to those characteristics of prejudicial statements that are especially influential in disguising their xenophobic content. They can hence inform anti-prejudice interventions regarding those prejudicial beliefs that should be particularly addressed within awareness-raising measures. Thereby, one might not only decrease individuals' likelihood to adopt such opinions for themselves (Manuscript #2). Also, one might increase people's likelihood to oppose proponents of such views, acting as 'multipliers' against subtle forms of prejudice (Manuscript #3). Moreover, if such anti-prejudice measures serve to make people aware of the xenophobic nature of beliefs that they already personally hold, this might be a motivator for them to reconsider their opinions (Manuscript #2).

The current findings can also reveal for which individuals such awareness-raising components of anti-prejudice interventions might be particularly suitable to combat prejudicial attitudes. Indeed, such measures should naturally be most applicable for individuals who are actually unaware of the xenophobic nature of their own prejudicial opinions. The present individual differences results suggest that such interventions that are based on awareness-raising are more suitable for individuals with higher internalized and self-determined egalitarian standards, i.e., those people who will exhibit generally lower average levels of (self-reported) prejudice (Butz & Plant, 2009; Devine et al., 2002; Plant & Devine, 1998). Particularly these individuals, who generally more strongly support principles of egalitarianism and anti-discrimination and who are more committed to being (or perceiving

oneself) as unprejudiced, appeared to more strongly critically monitor (their own) beliefs as potentially prejudiced (Manuscript #1 and Manuscript #2). Also, they tended to endorse ethnic prejudice only in subtler ways, which they did not recognize as xenophobic (Manuscript #2). For these individuals, who are thus, in the first place, more strongly unaware of the xenophobic nature of those prejudicial beliefs that they do endorse themselves (and hence probably convinced that they are not prejudiced at all), awareness-raising components of anti-prejudice measures might be most effective. Their task would be to induce a general appreciation of the possibility among these individuals that they might actually harbor ethnic prejudice themselves. Also, informed by findings from Manuscript #1, they can particularly raise awareness of the xenophobic nature of those subtler prejudicial beliefs that these individuals might indeed endorse. This conclusion is in accordance with findings by Plant and Devine (2009) that reveal that individuals with stronger internalized and self-determined egalitarian standards were, by default, not that interested in participating in prejudice reduction programs, presumably reflecting their conviction that they do not need such an assistance. Yet, they appeared to be even more motivated to take part in such programs after being made aware of their own ethnic biases. The current findings and conclusions are also in line with a cognitive consistency perspective (e.g., Festinger, 1957; Gawronski, 2012) as well as with earlier results that indicate that becoming aware of their own ethnic prejudice especially induces negative self-directed affect (i.e., cognitive dissonance) and afterwards an active regulation of prejudiced responses among low-prejudiced individuals or people with higher personal egalitarian standards (e.g., Fehr & Sassenberg, 2010; Monteith & Mark, 2005), for whom this should represent a violation of their personal standards. Of course, one cannot rule out the possibility that also among these highly egalitarian individuals such awareness-raising interventions could result in a motivated denial of the xenophobic nature of

their own prejudicial beliefs, as a means to alleviate the resulting cognitive dissonance, and might thus not straightforwardly lead to the desired rejection of such opinions. Nevertheless, these people—in generally condemning racism and being committed to being or perceiving oneself as unprejudiced—at least exhibit standards as a foundation to which awareness-raising interventions can generally appeal.

In contrast, individuals with lower self-determined egalitarian standards appeared to care less whether they endorsed ethnic prejudice in subtler or also blatant ways, which they did recognize as xenophobic (Manuscript #2). Hence, they were thus not that unaware of the xenophobic nature of those prejudicial beliefs that they personally held. This suggests that for these individuals anti-prejudice measures that aim to combat people's prejudicial beliefs by raising awareness of their xenophobic nature might be less fruitful. This conclusion again also complements conclusions from earlier research (e.g., Fehr & Sassenberg, 2010; Monteith & Mark, 2005) as well as a cognitive consistency perspective (e.g., Festinger, 1957; Gawronski, 2012). Indeed, a confrontation with one's own ethnic prejudice should not represent a discrepancy with their personal standards and hence not elicit cognitive dissonance and a subsequent regulation of their prejudicial tendencies for individuals with lower internalized egalitarian standards. In fact, such awareness-raising interventions, which confront individuals with their own prejudice, might—in representing an external normative pressure to be unprejudiced rather than an appeal to personal values—even bear the risk of eliciting backlash and reactance among these individuals (see e.g., Plant & Devine, 1998 for a detailed discussion of this issue; see e.g., Plant & Devine, 2001, for evidence of backlash among individuals who were externally, but not internally motivated to respond without prejudice). Thus, for these individuals it might be a more promising idea to first employ values education measures that aim to strengthen people's self-related egalitarian standards condemning

personal prejudicial tendencies, and that seek to more strongly establish principles of anti-discrimination as well as the general idea that ethnic prejudice is contemptible.

Taken together, the current findings carry important implications for anti-prejudice efforts in practice and indicate that awareness-raising measures can, in general, indeed be an effective means for tackling subtle ethnic prejudice in today's society. Yet, the current results also draw attention to the fact that a specific tailoring of such interventions to different target groups is important. They indicate that components of anti-prejudice measures that seek to combat ethnically prejudicial beliefs by raising people's awareness of their xenophobic nature are particularly suitable for individuals with higher internalized egalitarian standards, who generally despise ethnic prejudice in abstract terms.

What is Next? Limitations of the Present Work and Directions for Future Research

The current work also carries some limitations that can pinpoint promising avenues for further research.

First, the present work has been particularly concerned with processes of subtlety underlying the persistence of *ethnic* prejudice. However, the general rationale and the theoretical ideas put forward here should also be applicable to other forms of explicit, i.e., self-reported, prejudice. Indeed, general principles of egalitarianism are essentially in conflict with prejudicial beliefs against various social categories. Hence, it is plausible to assume that also with regard to other groups, subtler manifestations of prejudice have evolved, which largely remain unrecognized as discriminatory and hence unnoticed as in conflict with egalitarian standards. Indeed, an ample body of social-psychological research has already been conducted on subtler forms of sexism (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 1996; Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995) and homophobia (e.g., Krolikowski et al., 2016; Morrison & Morrison, 2003; Raja & Stokes, 1998), which followed a very similar reasoning as approaches to subtle ethnic

prejudice. Also, particularly with regard to oppositional reactions to subtle prejudice, as investigated in Manuscript #3, the majority of previous empirical evidence, in fact, existed with regard to sexism and homophobia (e.g., Barreto & Ellemers, 2005a, 2005b; Krolikowski, et al., 2016). Future studies could extend this line of research and could also focus on prejudice towards various other social groups (e.g., ableism, transphobia) in order to investigate to what extent subtle prejudicial beliefs against other groups might persist in the majority society through similar processes as those depicted in the three manuscripts presented here. For instance, with regard to the approach taken in Manuscript #1, it would be worthwhile to investigate along which dimensions the subtlety of prejudicial statements towards other social groups systematically varies. With regard to sexism, for example, one might suppose that the essentialist linguistic phrasing, i.e., the degree to which the inferiority of women and the characteristics ascribed to them are depicted as changeable or (naturally) fixed, would also be an important dimension determining whether a sexist statement is actually identified as such. Further, and in light of previous research on gender stereotypes (see e.g., Ellemers, 2018, for an overview) as well as benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996), it could also be interesting to investigate whether the subtlety of a sexist statement might vary based on whether women's (supposed) inferiority—in certain areas (e.g., a leadership position)—is attributed to a deficit in positive and stereotypically male attributes, suggesting competence or agency, or rather to the presence of positive stereotypically female attributes, suggesting warmth or communality.

Second, the current work focuses on ethnic prejudice in the majority society, i.e., among those people who are not personally targeted by it. Further research is warranted to explore the degree of subtlety of prejudicial beliefs from the perspective of ethnic minority groups themselves, i.e., to what extent they perceive them as (not) xenophobic (see e.g.,

Stanke, Fetz, & Echterhoff, 2021, for research in progress regarding that question). Also, it could be investigated how this relates to their inclination to oppose proponents of such beliefs. Moreover, it would be interesting to scrutinize whether systematic differences exist between people who are and who are not personally targeted by ethnic prejudice (see e.g., Barretto & Ellemers, 2005a, for results on perceptions of and reactions to benevolent and hostile sexism among men and women).

Third, some limitations that potentially give rise to future research are worth mentioning here that concern only one of the manuscripts. Manuscript #1 sought to introduce a new analytical perspective in providing a first exploration of characteristics along which the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial beliefs might systematically vary. However, these dimensions are not exhaustive and additional research is needed to identify further features that might contribute to the concealment of the xenophobic nature of prejudicial statements. Further, Manuscript #3 examined individuals' oppositional intentions in response to subtle communications of ethnic prejudice. However, especially in light of previous findings pointing to discrepancies between actual and imagined reactions to witnessing prejudice and discrimination (e.g., Crosby & Wilson, 2015; Kawakami, Dunn, Karmali, & Dovidio, 2009), further studies are needed to examine whether lower intentions to oppose proponents of subtle (compared to more blatant) expressions of ethnic prejudice would also proportionately translate into lower actual oppositional behaviors. Thereby, future research could also investigate other factors potentially enhancing or hindering individuals' actual opposition to subtle and blatant communications of ethnic prejudice.

Fourth, the present results revealed that particularly individuals with higher personal, self-determined egalitarian standards (or for whom these were made salient) appeared to engage in a stronger monitoring of their own beliefs as potentially prejudicial. They tended to

endorse ethnic prejudice only in subtler ways, which they did not recognize as xenophobic (Manuscript #2). Two interpretations of these findings would be possible, which, however, cannot be ultimately disentangled based on the current data. On the one hand, those subtle prejudicial beliefs that are potentially also endorsed by highly egalitarian individuals might really 'sneak' under their radar, with people being truly and 'naïvely' unaware of their xenophobic content. On the other hand, the endorsement of subtler prejudicial beliefs might also reflect an internal self-presentational strategy, whereby people (maybe even somewhat deliberately) seek an outlet for their lingering negative attitudes towards ethnic minority groups, while maintaining an egalitarian self-image in their own eyes. Generally, self-determined personal egalitarian standards to be unprejudiced have been regarded as reflecting a 'genuine' commitment to these principles and as resulting in 'genuine' efforts to regulate one's prejudicial responses (Plant & Devine, 1998). Yet, one might also argue that the previously discussed potentially strategic switch to subtler prejudicial opinions is not only applicable to public expressions of ethnic prejudice, but might—for individuals with higher self-determined and internalized egalitarian standards—also pertain to their private endorsement of prejudicial beliefs. We would tentatively suggest that both (moral) interpretations of individuals' self-determined egalitarian standards—reflecting the motivation to be and to perceive oneself as unprejudiced—and the resulting expressions of prejudice contain a grain of truth. Irrespective of which perspective one might emphasize, these personal egalitarian standards would evoke similar response patterns. Thus, they would lead to a generally more active regulation of one's prejudiced responses (Butz & Plant, 2009; Devine et al., 2002; Plant & Devine, 1998). Also, they would—in line with the current findings and conclusions—result in a stronger rejection of blatant forms of ethnic prejudice, with potentially lingering ethnic animosities surfacing mostly in subtler ways, which are not

perceived as xenophobic. Nevertheless, it would be worthwhile for future research to further explore potential self-presentational mechanisms 'within oneself' among individuals with higher personal egalitarian standards, e.g., by experimentally manipulating social norms regarding the perception of different prejudicial statements. Also, one might invest in developing new individual difference measures that might potentially be better able than, for instance, the widely used 'internal motivation to respond without prejudice'-scale (Plant & Devine, 1998), which was also employed in the current studies, to tap individuals' egalitarian standards or motivations in the sense of a willingness to engage in an effortful and also self-critical regulation of one's prejudice.

Fifth, it has to be emphasized that the processes targeted in the three manuscripts were examined in a private context, i.e., an anonymous survey setting. Further research is hence needed to substantiate whether individuals would show the same response patterns in other contexts and in front of others, when their answers are identifiable. Indeed, and as discussed before, one might for instance suppose that also individuals with lower self-determined egalitarian standards, particularly those with a higher external motivation to respond without (ethnic) prejudice (Butz & Plant, 2009; Plant & Devine, 1998), might adapt their public evaluations and expressions of ethnic prejudice (as assessed in Manuscript #1 and Manuscript #2) to the particular normative context. For instance, in settings, where they feel that appearing prejudiced would be particularly undesirable, they might also tend to utter ethnic prejudice only in subtler ways, which they perceive to be commonly regarded as not xenophobic, while, vice versa, avoiding to express more blatant prejudicial beliefs, which they might privately endorse. However, also the reverse would be possible, such that these individuals might also publicly express more blatant prejudicial opinions, which they recognize as xenophobic, in case the normative context allows for it, e.g., within social media

or messenger groups where even anti-egalitarian norms might be at work. Future research should hence explore the processes and individual differences investigated here in different, i.e., public and private, contexts and might thereby also consider the role of perceived social norms, which might vary depending on the setting. Thereby, one could gain a more comprehensive picture of how ethnic prejudice is perpetuated also in more public discourses. Nevertheless, the current results derived from anonymous assessments of ethnic prejudice—which are influenced to a lower extent by outward-oriented presentational concerns—might be better able to illuminate how processes of subtlety are underlying the persistence of individuals' actual, privately endorsed prejudicial beliefs. They should hence also be particularly instructive for the tailoring of anti-prejudice interventions.

Lastly and maybe most importantly, the current research examined the processes that illustrate how the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial beliefs, i.e., their perception as supposedly not being xenophobic, can contribute to their persistence in the society and might thereby—in the sense of a 'self-perpetuating mechanism of subtlety'—be further reinforced itself. Thus, the focus of the current work rather lay on processes explaining the maintenance of a status-quo, depicting how subtle ethnic prejudice manages to persist and stay under the radar. However, despite this potentially self-perpetuating nature of the mechanism, it is also evident (and of course the hope of awareness-raising efforts and anti-prejudice interventions) that the social perception of prejudicial beliefs as (not) xenophobic is not eternally fixed (see also Crandall et al., 2013, for a similar discussion). Following this perspective, it would be crucial to investigate within longitudinal research and/ or in experimental studies how changes occur within that 'system', either naturally or being externally induced by interventions. Such changes or trends in the perception of ethnically prejudicial beliefs could possibly go in two opposing directions—both of which are also currently publicly discussed or emanate from

research. On the one hand, and in parallel with the aforementioned general trend towards more egalitarianism, reflecting the very starting point for social-psychological approaches to subtler forms of racism (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay, 1986; McConahay et al., 1981; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), one could assume that societies will over time become generally stricter with regard to what is let pass as 'not xenophobic'. Hence, one could suppose that those subtle ethnically prejudicial beliefs that are regarded as 'not xenophobic' today will be blatant, i.e., clearly perceived as xenophobic, tomorrow. In fact, such a trend has been anticipated by McConahay (1986), who already supposed along with the first provision of the modern racism scale that it will prospectively need a revision, with its items presumably not being so subtle anymore in the future. This idea would be corroborated by current (often heated) debates regarding 'political correctness', where discussions appear to push forward towards rooting out continuously more fine-grained aspects of discriminatory language use and expressions of prejudice. On the other hand, one could also argue that the trend might be going in the opposite direction, when looking at the globally observed rise of right-wing populist and extremist parties, which have attracted their voters with a strong immigrant profile (e.g., Ivarsflaten, 2008) and have shaped public and political debates with a strong and very overt anti-immigrant rhetoric. On the one hand, such a public rhetoric seems to still have been strongly perceived and called out as xenophobic, generally sparking a lot of indignation and opposition (similar to the process examined in Manuscript #3). Yet, on the other hand, there have also been voices arguing that such taboo breaches and the (re-)introduction of blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice into the public discourse on part of right-wing populist or extremist actors still contribute to a (potentially planned) widening of or even a backward shift in the window of social acceptability regarding

which opinions are regarded as ‘sayable’.[7] In this regard, one might also presume that the tide is turning, such that society is currently becoming more lenient again concerning which utterances are regarded as ‘not xenophobic’. Yet, one could also suppose that—in the sense of a societal polarization—both developments are simultaneously at work, potentially invigorating each other, with certain parts of society moving towards more political correctness, whereas other parts of society are becoming more allowing again regarding which opinions they let pass as ‘not xenophobic’.

Against the backdrop of these considerations, longitudinal research is warranted that monitors trends and developments with regard to which ethnically prejudicial beliefs are generally perceived as (not) xenophobic and hence as in line or in conflict with general principles of egalitarianism. Also, it would be interesting to investigate how potential changes in the perception of prejudicial beliefs—as disruptions of the self-perpetuating cycle depicted in the current work—are brought about. For instance, it might be worthwhile to examine, also within experimental research, the consequences of the aforementioned public taboo breaches by right-wing actors for the perception of prejudicial statements. Might a continuous exposure to such blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice, even if these generate opposition, let other expressions of prejudice in comparison appear even less xenophobic, thereby contributing to a backward shift and a generally greater leniency among recipients with regard to which prejudicial statements are regarded as ‘not xenophobic’? Or might they, in contrast, rather evoke a counter-development among those individuals who feel repelled by such positions? Further, and in light of the current research, it would also be of particular interest how the xenophobic nature of formerly rather subtle ethnically prejudicial beliefs can be pushed into

[7] https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2018-07/overtone-fenster-diskussionen-debatten-diskurse-radikal/

the spotlight of public awareness. In that regard, the following questions could be pursued in longitudinal and experimental studies, to name only a few examples: How often would acts of opposition (Manuscript #3) need to occur to create a lasting shift in the social perception of prejudicial beliefs? What enables people to speak up against subtler expressions of ethnic prejudice, even in the knowledge that these might be commonly not regarded as xenophobic? Are members of the majority society more successful when calling out beliefs or statements as prejudicial that are commonly not perceived as such, as it would be suggested by earlier research (e.g., Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Eliezer & Major, 2012; Gulker, Mark, & Monteith, 2013; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010)? And what can be the impact of oppositional advances of ethnic minority members themselves, which are often at risk of being discounted as 'oversensitive complaints' (e.g., Kaiser & Miller, 2001)—for instance, in drawing attention to subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice as it has been done under the Twitter hashtags #metwo, #schauhin, or #vonhier? Complementary to these questions, it is also important to investigate the potential of anti-prejudice interventions, particularly awareness-raising measures, in creating enduring changes in the social perception of ethnic prejudice and a recognition of formerly subtle prejudicial beliefs as actually being xenophobic.

Conclusion

In current societies and a more egalitarian normative climate, ethnic prejudice tends to emerge in subtler ways, which are not recognized as xenophobic and hence not perceived as a violation of general principles of egalitarianism and anti-discrimination. In not compromising peoples' unprejudiced self-image, the harmful potential of subtle ethnically prejudicial beliefs thereby lies in the fact that they might even be perpetuated by individuals who strongly subscribe to egalitarian standards and are thus actually important allies against racism. Even though maybe in a less obvious manner, also subtler manifestations of ethnic prejudice

compromise the democratic promise of equality for ethnic minorities. They might exert their negative impact in more surreptitious ways, in clandestinely reinforcing negative beliefs concerning ethnic minority groups and thereby potentially also fostering ethnic discrimination and inequalities. The present work sought to advance our knowledge concerning the detailed psychological mechanisms that can explain how exactly subtler animosities against ethnic minority groups manage to persist in the majority society. Also, and on a more optimistic note, it aimed to equip us with a better understanding of how subtle ethnic prejudice might be effectively combated.

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Part III: Appendices

Appendix A | Manuscript #1

Prejudice in Disguise:
Which Features Determine the Subtlety of Ethnically Prejudicial Statements?

Karolina Fetz and Martin Kroh

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Prejudice in Disguise: Which Features Determine the Subtlety of Ethnically Prejudicial Statements?

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Supplementary Materials: Materials [see Index of Supplementary Materials]

Abstract

In current immigration debates ethnic prejudice is often expressed in a subtle manner, which conceals its xenophobic content. However, previous research has only insufficiently examined the specific features that make certain ethnically prejudicial statements subtler, i.e., less readily identifiable as xenophobic, than others. The current study employs an experimental factorial survey design and assesses the subtlety of systematically manipulated prejudicial statements. Our data from a German random population sample (N = 895) indicate that the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial statements is manipulable along the dimensions of topic, linguistic (essentialist) phrasing, and target group: Prejudicial statements that refer to culture, that are phrased weakly essentialistically, and that target Muslims were subtlest, in being evaluated as least xenophobic by the respondents. Moreover, with an increasing internal and a decreasing external motivation to respond without prejudice, individuals reacted more strongly to the variation of the statements' topic and linguistic phrasing and were thus more sensitive to features determining subtler and more blatant ways of ethnic prejudice expression. These findings contribute to a better understanding of current migration discourses, in demonstrating that the specific manner in which ethnic prejudice is communicated can camouflage the xenophobic nature of a statement, so that it is less readily recognized as prejudicial.

Keywords

subtle prejudice, ethnic prejudice, survey experiment, internal motivation to respond without prejudice, external motivation to respond without prejudice

Against the backdrop of a constant increase of international movements of people (McAuliffe & Ruhs, 2017), immigration has become one of the most controversial issues in current public and political debates in Europe and a lot of Western countries (e.g., Berry, Garcia-Blanco, & Moore, 2015). Even though it has been argued that egalitarianism and the condemnation of racism have become a dominant norm in many societies (e.g., Crandall, Ferguson, & Bahns, 2013; McConahay, 1986; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), these public migration discourses frequently disclose ethnic prejudice.[1] However, whereas some prejudicial opinions seem to cause rather widespread indignation in openly violating

1) We employ the term 'ethnic prejudice' to refer to negative attitudes directed at ethnic, national and ethno-religious minority groups, emphasizing that (ethnic) prejudice is directed towards socially constructed categories, not necessarily congruent with the identity of the individuals targeted by the prejudice.

anti-prejudice norms, ethnic prejudice is often voiced in a subtler manner, which camouflages its xenophobic content, thereby slipping under the radar of the public eye.

When aiming to uncover such subtle manifestations of ethnic prejudice, a crucial question to be answered is which features actually make certain prejudicial statements subtler than others, so that they are less readily identified as xenophobic. Although the trend towards more covert expressions of ethnic prejudice has been widely acknowledged within various social-psychological approaches (e.g., Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay, 1986; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), these have primarily focused on examining subtle prejudice in terms of an individual-level attitude. In doing so, the specific nature of subtle ethnically prejudicial statements has only been insufficiently investigated and it has remained unanswered which characteristics of single ethnically prejudicial utterances make them subtler, contributing to a concealment of their xenophobic content.

Approaching this matter, it is the goal of the present paper to investigate whether the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial statements, i.e., the extent to which they are perceived as (not) xenophobic, is manipulable and determined by specific features of these statements. For this purpose, we conducted a survey experiment, in which expressions of ethnic prejudice were systematically varied along three dimensions—topic, language (i.e., the essentialist phrasing), and target group—in order to examine the effect of this variation on the degree to which these statements are evaluated as (not) xenophobic by their recipients. Also, we investigate whether the impact of the manipulation of the ethnically prejudicial statements and hence the responsiveness to features determining subtle and more blatant ways of ethnic prejudice expression depend on individuals' motivations to respond without ethnic prejudice (Plant & Devine, 1998). Overall, our research seeks to shed light on dynamics in current migration discourses in illuminating the nature of subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice and those characteristics that disguise their prejudicial content, making them less recognizable as xenophobic.

The Subtlety of Contemporary Forms of Ethnic Prejudice

Over the last decades a variety of approaches have examined the emergence of contemporary forms of ethnic prejudice. They share—which is in line with the basic tenets of the group norm theory (Sherif & Sherif, 1953; see also e.g., Crandall, Eshleman, & O'Brien, 2002; Crandall et al., 2013)—the assumption that social norms influence the expression of ethnic prejudice and argue that a general normative trend towards egalitarianism has brought about a decline of endorsement levels of old-fashioned forms of ethnic prejudice in public opinion polls, which are clearly perceived as xenophobic. Yet they suppose that racism has not vanished, but appears in subtler guises, which circumvent predominant anti-prejudice norms (e.g., Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay, 1986; McConahay, Hardee, & Batts, 1981; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). These approaches diverge, however, in their specific conceptualization of this new 'subtlety', which might be broadly distinguished based on whether contemporary ethnic prejudice is targeted more in terms of an implicit or explicit attitude.

On the one hand, approaches such as aversive racism (e.g., Dovidio, 2001; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Pearson, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2009) and also implicit racism conceptualize contemporary ethnic prejudice as a negative bias or implicit attitude, becoming manifest, for instance, in negative behavioral tendencies towards minority group members or within response-latency procedures. This form of ethnic prejudice is considered subtle, since the negative bias itself—and hence its harmful consequences as well as its prejudicial nature and contradiction to egalitarian norms—are often automatic and beyond the conscious awareness on the part of those holding them. On the other hand, frameworks such as modern racism (McConahay, 1986; McConahay et al., 1981), symbolic racism (Kinder & Sears, 1981), developed in the USA, and subtle prejudice (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), originating from the European context, target contemporary, subtle ethnic prejudice as an explicit, i.e., self-reported, negative attitude towards ethnic minority groups. Although taking somewhat different theoretical stances concerning the specific sets of beliefs considered to reflect this subtle form of ethnic prejudice, such as the denial of continuing discrimination (e.g., McConahay, 1986) or the exaggeration of cultural differences (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), they all focus on the subtlety of consciously accessible and utterable opinions. Assuming that in an increasingly egalitarian normative climate ethnic prejudice is no longer expressed in overtly xenophobic ways, their shared goal was to develop new, more adequate ethnic prejudice scales, encompassing items or statements that better reflect contemporary ethnically prejudicial opinions, which are less readily perceived

to be reflective of racism and hence in conflict with general anti-prejudice norms. Thus, within this conceptualization, these contemporary forms of explicit ethnic prejudice are considered subtle, since the underlying beliefs or opinions, as conscious expressions of the prejudicial attitude, are deemed to be less strongly regarded as racist or xenophobic (e.g., McConahay, 1986; McConahay et al., 1981).[2]

When locating the research of this article in this field, it is more closely related to the latter approaches examining contemporary ethnic prejudice in terms of an explicit attitude, since we also investigate the subtlety of single prejudicial statements, i.e., consciously expressed utterances reflecting negative attitudes towards ethnic or national minority groups. However, this study differs from and extends this line of research regarding two aspects.

First, the theoretically assumed subtlety of explicit contemporary prejudice has often been approached rather indirectly (e.g., Henry & Sears, 2002; Kinder & Sears, 1981; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), being inferred from higher endorsement levels for the new self-report measures compared to more old-fashioned scales. Only a limited number of studies have directly assessed this subtlety, asking respondents whether they judge different social prejudices in general as socially acceptable (Crandall et al., 2002), or evaluate different scale items as socially acceptable (Manganelli Rattazzi & Volpato, 2003; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1996) or reflective of racist attitudes (Dickson, 2012; McConahay, 1986; McConahay et al., 1981). Following these few studies, we also directly empirically investigate the subtlety of different ethnically prejudicial statements in assessing the degree to which they are evaluated as (not) xenophobic, with those prejudicial statements that are less strongly perceived as xenophobic being relatively subtle and those that are more readily identified as xenophobic being relatively blatant.

Second, it is important to note that in contrast to previous research on subtle forms of explicit ethnic prejudice, we take an analytically different stance. Earlier research has been primarily concerned with examining subtle ethnic prejudice as an individual-level attitude (i.e., assessing individual average scores on the new self-report measures; see e.g., Zick, Pettigrew, & Wagner, 2008, for an overview on the use of the subtle ethnic prejudice scale in Germany and other European countries) and its role in shaping intergroup relations (e.g., Rabinowitz, Sears, Sidanius, & Krosnick, 2009). However, the specific nature of subtle prejudicial statements themselves has only been insufficiently explored and it has remained undisclosed why certain ethnically prejudicial statements are subtler than others and which characteristics might specifically determine their subtlety. The current study seeks to address this issue in switching the focus to the level of the particular ethnically prejudicial statement itself and systematically examining how different prejudicial statements are socially perceived as (not) xenophobic. This analytical shift is crucial, especially in light of current anti-immigrant discourses, in order to reveal those aspects that camouflage the xenophobic content of a prejudicial statement.

Features Determining the Subtlety of Ethnically Prejudicial Statements

Discourse-psychological and socio-scientific approaches have emphasized that ethnic prejudice is often expressed in rhetorically camouflaged ways in social interactions and public debates (e.g., Augoustinos & Every, 2007a, 2007b; Billig, 1988; Bonilla-Silva, 2002; Condor, Figgou, Abell, Gibson, & Stevenson, 2006; van Dijk, 1992, 2002), and other previous work suggests on a more general level that certain forms of prejudice are less readily recognized as such than others (e.g., Baron, Burgess, & Kao, 1991; Crandall et al., 2002; Inman & Baron, 1996; Marti, Bobier, & Baron, 2000; Swim, Scott, Sechrist, Campbell, & Stangor, 2003; West & Hewstone, 2012). However, there is a lack of research that systematically assesses the specific characteristics of single ethnically prejudicial statements that might determine their subtlety, making them more or less readily identifiable as prejudicial by their recipients. To our knowledge only Mae and Carlston (2005) have approached this issue, revealing that negative statements are more readily perceived as prejudicial than positive ones.

The current study aims to address this gap in the literature and explores three dimensions as potential determinants of the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial statements along which such utterances reflecting negative attitudes towards ethnic or national minority groups can be varied, namely (i) the topic to which is referred, (ii) the (essentialist) language

2) Also the more recent framework of microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007) includes subtler manifestations of ethnic prejudice in terms of implicit biases as well as explicit, i.e., consciously uttered, statements or remarks.

employed, and (iii) the target group towards which the statement is directed. We thus seek to examine whether variations of ethnically prejudicial statements (or prejudice items) along these three dimensions might contribute to a concealment of their prejudicial nature and hence their potential to circumvent anti-prejudice norms, in determining the degree to which these statements are (not) recognized as xenophobic.

Topic

Public migration discourses are shaped by some core themes, around which the debates and thus also emerging ethnically prejudicial arguments evolve. One dimension along which the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial statements might thus conceivably vary is the specific topic they refer to, with particular themes potentially providing prejudicial messages with a subtler guise, which conceals their xenophobic content. Within his analysis of German newspaper articles on migration, Bauder (2008) identified four most recurring topics, three of which allowed for the expression of negative prejudicial arguments and are thus considered most relevant for this study: The culture topic, encompassing arguments on the cultural (dis)integration of different ethnic or immigrant groups; the economic utility topic, relating to the potential economic benefit or burden associated with migration (e.g., regarding the welfare state/ unemployment); and the danger topic, mostly concerned with the potential harm of migration to inner security (e.g., through terrorism/ increasing crime rates). Also with regard to more recent debates in the German media on the so-called refugee crisis, Holzberg, Kolbe, and Zaborowski (2018) pinpointed economy, state security and cultural integration, particularly gender relations, as the key themes. Comparable topics were extracted for migration discourses in other European or Western countries (e.g., Caviedes, 2015, p. 913; Eberl et al., 2018; van der Linden & Jacobs, 2017), suggesting a cross-national importance of these three themes. Thus, across different studies—although there is no complete unanimity regarding the frequency of these topics as well as other relevant subjects (see e.g., Quinsaat, 2014, for additional frames)—culture, economic utility and danger appeared as the most prevalent topics in migration and integration debates; yet, previous work is inconclusive with regard to their potentially differing subtlety. The current research thus exploratorily investigates these dominant themes as potential vehicles for the disguised expression of ethnic prejudice and examines to what extent the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial statements, as the degree to which they are perceived as (not) xenophobic, depends on whether they refer to culture, economic utility, or danger/ inner security.

Language – Essentialist Phrasing

Within current migration debates, the manner in which ethnic prejudice is expressed also strongly varies with respect to the specific wording employed by the speakers, potentially contributing to a stronger concealment of the xenophobic content of a prejudicial comment. The current study examines the linguistic phrasing of ethnically prejudicial statements as another dimension conceivably determining their subtlety and thereby specifically focuses on the essentialist language employed. Essentialism generally refers to the idea that social categories have a defining, fixed and immutable essence that is allegedly shared by all members ascribed to this social group, which can also facilitate stereotypical and prejudicial conceptions, with (negative) behaviors and attributes being generalized and attributed to the group's supposed underlying nature (e.g., Haslam, Rothschild, & Ernst, 2000; Prentice & Miller, 2007). Previous research has revealed that the linguistic phrasing is a powerful tool for transmitting essentialist beliefs about groups (e.g., Gelman, Ware, & Kleinberg, 2010; Rhodes, Leslie, & Tworek, 2012). Also, a variety of advances in social psychology, specifically research on the linguistic intergroup bias (Maass, Salvi, Arcuri, & Semin, 1989) and the linguistic category model (Semin & Fiedler, 1988), have stressed the importance of linguistic features for the perpetuation of (ethnic) prejudice, whereby linguistic abstraction has received considerable attention, serving as a 'tool' to create essentialist conceptions of out-groups by depicting negative behaviors and attributes as temporally stable, dispositional features of that group (e.g., Assilaméhou, Lepastourel, & Testé, 2013; Beukeboom, 2014; Geschke, Sassenberg, Ruhrmann, & Sommer, 2010; Wigboldus, Semin, & Spears, 2000). Although the use of abstract-essentialist language is generally regarded as a relatively covert feature, studies have also shown that recipients are sensitive to it, in perceiving communicators who employ highly abstract, essentialist language more strongly as having biased attitudes or a communicative agenda (Douglas & Sutton, 2006, 2010) and as less likeable when employing abstract language to describe negative behaviors (Douglas & Sutton, 2010). Based on these findings, one could thus suspect that the use of highly abstract, essentialist

language in negative descriptions of ethnic minorities might be more strongly regarded as derogatory to that group and thus as xenophobic than statements that are phrased less essentialistically. Exploring this idea, the current study thus investigates whether the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial statements, as the degree to which they are perceived as (not) xenophobic, depends on the essentialist language employed, ranging from statements suggesting that the target group's inferiority is potentially alterable (employing less abstract language) to statements ascribing completely immutable and naturally fixed negative attributes to the target group (using highly abstract language).

Target Group

The third dimension that the current study examines as a potential determinant of the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial statements is the group at which they are directed. Prior research has indeed demonstrated that people judge prejudices against certain social groups, in general, as more acceptable (e.g., Crandall et al., 2002; West & Hewstone, 2012), vary in their readiness to grant equality to different social groups (Abrams, Houston, van de Vyver, & Vasiljevic, 2015) and also form hierarchies of ethnic and immigrant groups (e.g., Hagendoorn, 1995; Snellman & Ekehammar, 2005). Additionally, several studies underline the impact of derogatory group labels (e.g., Carnaghi & Maass, 2007; Fasoli et al., 2016) and could show that stereotypes, prejudice, and evaluations regarding social groups vary depending on the specific label employed to refer to that group, even for different seemingly neutral labels (e.g., Hall, Phillips, & Townsend, 2015; Kotzur, Forsbach, & Wagner, 2017; Rios, 2013; Rios & Ingraffia, 2016). Against the backdrop of this research, it seems likely that the label employed for the target group within an ethnically prejudicial statement might also contribute to the concealment of its xenophobic nature: The same prejudicial statement against some groups might be perceived as less xenophobic than when being directed at other groups. In order to examine this potential impact of group labels, we employ two target groups: Turks, as the largest immigrant group in Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2020), and Muslims, as the predominantly discussed group in the current migration discourse in Germany (e.g., Hierl, 2012; Spielhaus, 2013). Thus, two overlapping labels are used, with the former being a somewhat narrower national group label, while the latter is broader and might be best described as an ethno-religious group label, as it has been suggested that the term 'Muslim' has become 'ethnicized', referring to people with roots in Muslim-majority countries rather than an actual religious affiliation (Hierl, 2012; Spielhaus, 2013). Both of these groups have been found to be negatively stereotyped in Germany (Asbrock, 2010), yet it has been argued that Muslims are especially problematized in the migration discourse (Hierl, 2012; Spielhaus, 2013). The current study investigates to what extent the specific label of the target group within an ethnically prejudicial statement, associated with different connotations, might affect its degree of subtlety, potentially camouflaging its prejudicial nature.

The Role of Prejudice-Related Motivations

In a second step, we seek to explore whether the impact of such a manipulation of prejudicial statements might depend on individual characteristics of the perceivers that are plausibly related to their sensitivity to features determining subtler or more blatant ways of communicating ethnic prejudice.

In this context, we consider individuals' internal motivation (IM) and external motivation (EM) to respond without prejudice (Plant & Devine, 1998) to be of particular interest, as they were shown to determine people's efforts to engage in an active regulation of prejudiced responses (e.g., Monteith, Lybarger, & Woodcock, 2009). Individuals with high IM attempt to avoid prejudiced responses due to internalized anti-prejudice standards as part of their personal value system. Individuals with high EM aim to control detectable prejudiced responses in order to prevent social sanctions or external disapproval. Previous research found that with increasing IM, individuals generally show lower levels of explicit, i.e., self-reported, ethnic prejudice (e.g., Devine, Plant, Amodio, Harmon-Jones, & Vance, 2002; Plant & Devine, 1998) and more strongly initiate self-regulatory mechanisms to reduce self-reported prejudiced responses after being made aware of own biases (e.g., Fehr & Sassenberg, 2010). With higher EM, individual efforts to control prejudiced responses become more context-dependent. Primarily externally motivated individuals, for instance, exhibited a reduction of their explicit prejudiced responses in public settings, i.e., when possibly being evaluated as prejudiced by others, but expressed—in the sense of a 'rebound' or 'backlash effect'—even higher levels of ethnic stereotypes in private contexts (Plant & Devine, 1998; see also Butz & Plant, 2009, for an overview). Also, EM was generally found to be

associated with slightly higher levels of self-reported (i.e., privately assessed) ethnic prejudice (e.g., Devine et al., 2002; Plant & Devine, 1998). Overall and in line with self-determination theory (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2000; see also Legault, Green-Demers, Grant, & Chung, 2007), previous studies indicate that especially individuals with higher IM and lower EM, i.e., a particularly self-determined motivational profile, successfully regulate their ethnically prejudicial responses across private and public contexts as well as different, i.e., explicit and implicit, measures of ethnic prejudice (Butz & Plant, 2009; Devine et al., 2002).

Transferring these findings to the current research, we deem these motivational constructs relevant, as they might also determine individual efforts to detect ethnically prejudicial comments and thus the scrutiny with which individuals process potentially prejudicial statements, when being asked to evaluate their xenophobic content. In that sense, these motivations might affect the individual responsiveness or sensitivity to specific variations of these ethnically prejudicial statements. We reason that with increasing IM, people would engage in a more careful processing of the potentially prejudicial statements, in being personally motivated to detect ethnic prejudice. In light of previous findings showing that EM actually undermines regulation efforts in the absence of external cues for control, we assume that individuals with higher EM would—in a private survey context—make less of an effort to engage in the detection of ethnic prejudice and scrutinize the potentially prejudicial statements less thoroughly. Hence, with higher IM and lower EM, i.e., an increasingly self-determined motivation to respond without prejudice, people might—in being more strongly committed to egalitarianism and rooting out (ethnic) prejudice—process potentially prejudicial statements more vigilantly and might thus be more attentive to the specific way in which ethnic prejudice is expressed. Based on these considerations, the current study explores whether individual levels of IM and EM influence the responsiveness to features determining subtler or more blatant ways of expressing ethnic prejudice, in assessing whether the impact of the systematic variation of the prejudicial statements along the three dimensions on the degree to which these are evaluated as (not) xenophobic depends on recipients' IM and EM.

Overview and Hypotheses

In sum, the current study explores the subtlety of single ethnically prejudicial statements and to what extent it is determined by specific features of these statements. We predict that the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial statements (or items), as the degree to which these are evaluated as (not) xenophobic, can be systematically manipulated along the dimensions of topic (i.e., culture, economic utility, and danger/ inner security), language (i.e., ranging from a weakly to a strongly essentialist phrasing), and target group (i.e., Muslims and Turks). As prior research remains inconclusive regarding the subtlety of different topics, the examination of this dimension is exploratory in nature, so we did not specify a hypothesis on which of the three topics we expect to be the subtlest, i.e., evaluated as least xenophobic by the recipients. Regarding the impact of the language on subtlety, we hypothesize that prejudicial statements that are phrased in a weakly essentialist manner are evaluated as least and those phrased in a strongly essentialist way as most xenophobic. Furthermore, we expect the same prejudicial statements referring to Muslims to be subtler, in being perceived as less xenophobic, than when being directed towards Turks. Moreover, we hypothesize that the responsiveness to features determining subtle and more blatant ways of ethnic prejudice expression and thus the impact of this systematic manipulation is moderated by recipients' motivations to respond without ethnic prejudice. Specifically, we predict that with increasing IM and decreasing EM, individuals would react more sensitively and adjust their xenophobia ratings more strongly in response to the variations of the prejudice items.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Data were collected as part of a larger telephone survey among adults in Germany, conducted by a professional survey institute.[3] The telephone survey mode drawing on a probability sample of the German population was chosen to get a more representative picture of the perception of prejudice in the general public.[4] In comparison to face-to-face-interviews that also permit probability sampling, telephone surveys were shown to be associated with lower social

desirability bias (e.g., Schwarz, Strack, Hippler, & Bishop, 1991). After excluding 28 individuals who are Muslim or have a Turkish background (i.e., being born in Turkey, or mother or father being born in Turkey) for theoretical reasons—since the prejudice items were directed towards Muslims and Turks—, and 57 participants with missing values on IM or EM, to keep the sample constant across all models in the main analyses, the final random population sample comprised 895 participants (456 women, 437 men, 2 diverse/ no indication; M_{age} = 50.01 years, *SD* = 16.32, age range: 18–87 years).[5]

Design and Materials

The current study adapted the logic of factorial survey experiments, especially popular in the social sciences (e.g., Auspurg & Hinz, 2015; Wallander, 2009), to social-psychological prejudice research. The basic idea of factorial survey (or vignette) studies is to construct evaluation objects (vignettes) that systematically vary along different dimensions (with several levels) and to randomly assign sub-sets of vignettes to respondents for evaluation. This experimental design allows to examine how these dimensions causally influence respondents' judgments.

Construction of Prejudice Items

Analogous to this rationale, we constructed ethnic prejudice items that systematically vary along the three dimensions, i.e., topic, language, and target group. The topic of the prejudicial statements was represented by the attribute supposedly characterizing the respective target group and specified with three levels: culture (referring to the value of gender equality), economic utility (referring to work ethic), and danger/ inner security (referring to the propensity to use violence). The language, i.e., the essentialist phrasing, was manipulated with four levels, varying the verb and the degree of linguistic abstraction used for the ascribed attribute: The 'weakly essentialist phrasing' suggested the target group's neediness for assistance to adapt to an allegedly superior standard set by the majority group, implying the potential alterability of the target group's inferiority. The 'rather weakly essentialist' phrasing implied difficulties of the target group in adapting to this standard, yet still suggesting that the target group could change. The 'rather strongly essentialist phrasing' translated these supposed difficulties into a negative attribute, suggesting the relative fixedness of the target group's inferiority. The 'strongly essentialist phrasing' implied the biological immutability of the attribute, supposedly characterizing the target group by nature. The target group was varied across two levels: The same prejudicial statements were either directed at Muslims or at Turks. Apart from these variations, the wording and the ethnically prejudicial core message, suggesting the inferiority of the respective target group compared to the German majority group, were held constant across all items. Multiplying all dimension levels (3 x 4 x 2), this resulted in a total number of 24 systematically varied prejudice items.[6] Three sample items are: "Muslims need particular assistance to adapt to the idea that men and women have equal rights in Germany" (Culture/ Weakly essentialist/ Muslims); "Turks are more workshy than Germans" (Economic utility/ Rather strongly essentialist/ Turks); and "Muslims are, by nature, more inclined to violence than Germans" (Danger, inner security/ Strongly essentialist/ Muslims; Table A2 in the Supplementary Materials documents the English translation of the complete item set).[7] Each participant evaluated a randomized set of four prejudice items.

3) Table A1 in the Supplementary Materials additionally documents an overview of all measures included in the larger survey.

4) This study is based on a dual-frame (i.e., landline and mobile phone) sample, drawn based on the Gabler-Häder procedure (Häder & Gabler, 1998), in which phone numbers are randomly generated and selected.

5) This study was conducted in accordance with local and institutional ethical standards and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments/ comparable ethical standards.

6) The number of levels specified per dimension was also based on methodological considerations. To achieve sufficient statistical power, we aimed to acquire 150 ratings per item with an aspired sample size of around 900 respondents, which could be attained with each participant rating four out of the 24 prejudice items. The manipulation of more item dimensions/ levels would have resulted in a higher number of items to be evaluated per respondent. We considered this undesirable regarding possible fatigue and learning effects.

7) We conducted an additional online survey with a convenience sample, which further validated that the systematic item variations were indeed effective in manipulating the intended levels of the topic and language (i.e., essentialist phrasing) dimension. More detailed results are presented in the Supplementary Materials (pp. 11-17).

Measures

Xenophobia Ratings

The subtlety of the systematically manipulated prejudicial statements was measured by asking participants whether they evaluate the four randomly selected items as xenophobic on a 1 *(not xenophobic at all)* to 5 *(very xenophobic)* scale. Xenophobia ratings were analyzed as separate observations clustered within individuals and thus not averaged per respondent.

Internal and External Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice

Participants' motivations to respond without prejudice were assessed with two items with high factor loadings (as indicated by Plant & Devine, 1998) selected from the IM (e.g., "I attempt to act in nonprejudiced ways toward migrants because it is personally important to me") and the EM scale (e.g., "I attempt to appear nonprejudiced toward migrants in order to avoid disapproval from others"), translated into German and rephrased to assess motivations to control prejudice towards migrants. Respondents indicated their agreement with these statements on a 1 *(completely disagree)* to 5 *(completely agree)* scale (IM: $M = 4.53$, $SD = 0.75$, $\alpha = .75$; $r = .61$, $p < .001$; and EM: $M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.25$, $\alpha = .55$; $r = .38$, $p < .001$).[8]

Data Structure and Analysis Strategy

Within this study, the prejudice items—not the individual participants—represented the units of analysis, with xenophobia ratings (as the indicator of subtlety) as the dependent variable and the manipulated item dimensions as the independent variables. With each respondent giving xenophobia ratings for four randomly assigned prejudice items, the data exhibited a hierarchical structure, as it is mostly the case in factorial survey experiments (see e.g., Auspurg & Hinz, 2015): After excluding missing values using listwise deletion, 3,555 xenophobia ratings (Level 1) were clustered within 895 respondents (Level 2). Within our analyses, we thus had to account for the violation of the statistical assumption of uncorrelated error terms, due to the lack of independence of xenophobia ratings given by the same respondent. We thus estimated the effect of the variation of item dimensions (Level 1 variables) on xenophobia ratings within individual respondents, in calculating fixed effects (FE) models that control for between-respondent (Level 2) differences in the evaluation of these statements. Respondent characteristics (Level 2 variables; i.e., IM and EM) were considered by calculating two separate FE models including cross-level interactions, in order to examine whether IM and EM moderated the effect of the item dimensions on xenophobia ratings.

Results

Impact of Item Dimensions on Xenophobia Ratings

First, we ran an unconditional model with xenophobia ratings for the prejudice items as the dependent variable and no independent variables in the model. The intraclass correlation (ICC) coefficient indicated that a high proportion of 60.3% of the variance in xenophobia ratings could be attributed to the respondent level (Level 2). Thus, individuals tended to evaluate the four items that they received in a similar manner. Then, a FE model was calculated with xenophobia ratings as the dependent variable and the three item dimensions (topic, language, target group) as categorical independent variables (see Table A3 in the Supplementary Materials for descriptive statistics for the 24 prejudice items).[9] The manipulation of the item dimensions accounted for approximately 13.4% of the within-variance, i.e., for the differences in xenophobia ratings within individual respondents. The model revealed significant main effects for all three manipulated

8) IM and EM showed a small positive association ($r = .11$, $p < .001$). Factor analyses confirmed that IM and EM items loaded on two distinct factors.

9) Since for categorical predictor variables, as included in the models, standardized regression coefficients are less appropriate measures of effect size, simple regression coefficients (b) are reported (see also Baguley, 2009).

item dimensions on xenophobia ratings in relation to the respective levels set as reference categories (see Table 1). The topic to which a prejudicial statement referred significantly influenced its degree of subtlety. Prejudice items relating to the topic of economic utility were judged as most xenophobic, followed by items referring to danger/ inner security. Items pertaining to culture were judged as least xenophobic. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons (using Bonferroni corrections) confirmed that all three topics differed significantly (ps < .001) from each other regarding their level of subtlety. Additionally, as expected, the language also significantly determined the subtlety of the prejudicial statements. Xenophobia ratings increased along the range of the linguistic phrasing: Weakly essentialist prejudicial statements were rated as least, and strongly essentialist items as most xenophobic. Pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni correction indicated that—except for the rather strongly and the strongly essentialist phrasing—all levels of the linguistic phrasing yielded significantly different xenophobia ratings (ps < .001). Regarding the variation of the target group, analyses revealed, as hypothesized, that the same prejudicial statements were evaluated as more xenophobic when being directed at Turks than when being directed towards Muslims.[10]

Table 1

Model of Fixed Effects of Item Dimensions on Xenophobia Ratings

			95% CI	
Predictors and parameters	***b***	***SE***	***LL***	***UL***
Item dimensions				
Topic				
Culture (ref.)				
Economic utility	0.431***	0.037	0.358	0.503
Danger	0.247***	0.037	0.174	0.320
Language				
Weakly essentialist (ref.)				
Rather weakly essentialist	0.334***	0.042	0.251	0.417
Rather strongly essentialist	0.564***	0.042	0.482	0.647
Strongly essentialist	0.618***	0.043	0.535	0.702
Target group				
Muslims (ref.)				
Turks	0.071*	0.030	0.012	0.129
Intercept	3.042***	0.039	2.966	3.118
R^2_{within}	.134			
$R^2_{between}$	.014			
$R^2_{overall}$	.054			

Note. $N_{Item\ ratings}$ = 3,555; $N_{Participants}$ = 895. Unstandardized coefficients. Standard error in parentheses. Reference categories are indicated by (ref.).
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Impact of Motivations to Respond Without Prejudice

In order to examine whether the impact of the item dimensions on xenophobia ratings depended on participants' motivations to respond without prejudice, the same FE models were calculated, now including cross-level interaction terms of the item dimensions and IM and EM, respectively. IM and EM were mean centered beforehand.

10) Before giving their xenophobia ratings, participants also indicated whether they (dis)agreed with the statements. Controlling for endorsement did not substantially change the main results; only the effect of the target group became insignificant. Interaction effects between item dimensions were also tested. Effects were uniform, except for significant interaction terms between linguistic phrasing and target group. Since interaction effects were not hypothesized a priori, they were not further discussed within this article.

Internal Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice

Results (see Table 2) revealed significant interaction effects between all levels of the item dimension language and IM, indicating that IM moderated the effect of the linguistic phrasing on xenophobia ratings. With heightened levels of IM, individuals more strongly increased their xenophobia ratings in response to the shifts in the linguistic phrasing of the prejudicial statements from the weakly essentialist (reference category) to the rather weakly essentialist (b = 0.168, p = .004), to the rather strongly essentialist (b = 0.125, p = .027), and to the strongly essentialist phrasing (b = 0.179, p = .002). Similarly, the effect of the manipulation of the prejudicial statements' topic on xenophobia ratings was significantly moderated by IM. With higher IM, participants more strongly increased their xenophobia ratings in response to changes in the topic of the prejudicial statement from culture (reference category) to economic utility (b = 0.143, p = .005), and to danger/ inner security (b = 0.120, p = .016). The interaction term between IM and the item dimension target group was not significant. Thus, largely in line with our hypothesis, the effect of the manipulation of the linguistic phrasing and topic on xenophobia ratings depended on respondents' IM.

Table 2

Model of Fixed Effects of Item Dimensions on Xenophobia Ratings With Cross-Level Interactions Between Item Dimensions and Respondents' Internal Motivation (IM) to Control Prejudice

			95% CI	
Predictors and parameters	***b***	***SE***	***LL***	***UL***
Main effects: Item dimensions				
Topic[a]				
Economic utility	0.428***	0.037	0.356	0.500
Danger	0.246***	0.037	0.173	0.319
Language[b]				
Rather weakly essentialist	0.336***	0.042	0.253	0.418
Rather strongly essentialist	0.560***	0.042	0.478	0.642
Strongly essentialist	0.617***	0.042	0.534	0.700
Target group[c]				
Turks	0.071*	0.030	0.013	0.129
Cross-level interactions: Item dimensions x IM				
Topic[a] **x IM**				
Economic utility	0.143**	0.050	0.044	0.241
Danger	0.120*	0.050	0.023	0.217
Language[b] **x IM**				
Rather weakly essentialist	0.168**	0.058	0.054	0.282
Rather strongly essentialist	0.125*	0.056	0.014	0.236
Strongly essentialist	0.179**	0.058	0.066	0.292
Target group[c] **x IM**				
Turks	-0.009	0.040	-0.087	0.070
Intercept	3.044***	0.039	2.968	3.120
R^2_{within}	.141			
$R^2_{between}$	.128			
$R^2_{overall}$	.122			

Note. $N_{Item\ ratings}$ = 3,555; $N_{Participants}$ = 895. Unstandardized coefficients. Standard error in parentheses. The variable IM was mean centered. The main effect of IM (Level 2 variable) as a trait of individuals is invariant across manipulations and thus omitted by the FE model.
[a]Reference category: Culture. [b]Reference category: Weakly essentialist. [c]Reference category: Muslims.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

External Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice

Results (see Table 3) further revealed significant interaction effects between all levels of the item dimension language and EM. With higher EM, individuals showed a weaker increase in their xenophobia ratings in response to the shifts in the linguistic phrasing of the prejudicial statements from the weakly essentialist (reference category) to the rather weakly essentialist (b = -0.120, p < .001), to the rather strongly essentialist (b = -0.070, p = .035), and to the strongly essentialist phrasing (b = -0.153, p < .001). Additionally, with increasing EM, participants raised their xenophobia ratings less strongly to the shift from the culture topic (reference category) to the economic utility topic (b = -0.121, p < .001). The interaction term between EM and the item dimension target group was not significant. Thus, mostly in line with our hypothesis, respondents' EM moderated the effects of the manipulation of the linguistic phrasing and specific levels of the topic dimension on xenophobia ratings.

Table 3

Model of Fixed Effects of Item Dimensions on Xenophobia Ratings With Cross-Level Interactions Between Item Dimensions and Respondents' External Motivation (EM) to Control Prejudice

			95% CI	
Predictors and parameters	***b***	***SE***	***LL***	***UL***
Main effects: Item dimensions				
Topic[a]				
Economic utility	0.432***	0.037	0.360	0.504
Danger	0.244***	0.037	0.171	0.317
Language[b]				
Rather weakly essentialist	0.329***	0.042	0.247	0.411
Rather strongly essentialist	0.564***	0.042	0.482	0.646
Strongly essentialist	0.622***	0.042	0.539	0.705
Target group[c]				
Turks	0.069*	0.030	0.011	0.127
Cross-level interactions: Item dimensions x EM				
Topic[a] **x EM**				
Economic utility	-0.121***	0.030	-0.179	-0.063
Danger	-0.052	0.030	-0.110	0.006
Language[b] **x EM**				
Rather weakly essentialist	-0.120***	0.034	-0.186	-0.053
Rather strongly essentialist	-0.070*	0.033	-0.135	-0.005
Strongly essentialist	-0.153***	0.035	-0.220	-0.085
Target group[c] **x EM**				
Turks	0.027	0.024	-0.020	0.073
Intercept	3.046***	0.039	2.971	3.122
R^2_{within}	.147			
$R^2_{between}$	.023			
$R^2_{overall}$	.064			

Note. $N_{Item\ ratings}$ = 3,555; $N_{Participants}$ = 895. Unstandardized coefficients. Standard error in parentheses. The variable EM was mean centered. The main effect of EM (Level 2 variable) as a trait of individuals is invariant across manipulations and thus omitted by the FE model.

[a]Reference category: Culture. [b]Reference category: Weakly essentialist. [c]Reference category: Muslims.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

We also ran an exploratory FE model with three-way cross-level interaction terms between item dimensions, IM and EM in predicting xenophobia ratings; none of them were significant. This indicates that the interaction effects of IM and EM with the item dimensions, respectively, work independently and in opposing directions, such that with higher IM and lower EM, respondents adjusted their xenophobia ratings more strongly to the item variations of the topic and linguistic phrasing.

Discussion

Current public debates, in which immigration has become one of the most controversial issues, are oftentimes characterized by ethnic prejudice. However, while some expressions of prejudice against ethnic groups seem to openly violate egalitarian norms, the xenophobic nature of other ethnically prejudicial comments seems to go rather unnoticed, apparently circumventing anti-prejudice norms. The current study sought to explore the nature of such subtle ways of ethnic prejudice expression and to examine which specific characteristics can disguise the prejudicial content of an utterance, making certain ethnically prejudicial statements subtler, i.e., less recognizable as xenophobic, than others. Adapting the logic of factorial survey experiments (e.g., Auspurg & Hinz, 2015; Wallander, 2009), our results based on data from a German probability sample show that the subtlety of different ethnically prejudicial statements, i.e. their social perception as (not) xenophobic, systematically varies along three dimensions, i.e., topic, language and target group.

Regarding the impact of the topic on subtlety, results indicate that ethnically prejudicial statements implying alleged cultural incompatibilities (in this case regarding gender relations) between the respective target group and the majority in-group are especially subtle, being judged as least xenophobic, while those relating to danger/ inner security and economic utility were judged as more xenophobic. Interpreting these exploratory findings, we would argue that the comparable presence of these topics in the public discourse might not be indicative of *how* they are discussed. Particularly the issue of the 'cultural fit' of migrant groups into society—especially with regard to Turks and Muslims and concerning gender relations—might be discussed most controversially in Germany (but probably in other countries as well) and prejudicial comments referring to supposed differences in cultural values might also be harder to grasp and therefore harder to refute, possibly leading to a higher subtlety of such statements. Contextualizing our findings in terms of integrated threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000) one could—even though all utterances refer to supposed differences in core attributes (or values)—conceptualize the statements within the 'culture' topic as rather alluding to symbolic threats arising from immigration and multiculturalism, and those within the 'economic utility' and 'danger' topic as alluding to realistic threats, tentatively concluding that prejudicial statements relating to symbolic threats are especially subtle. Generally, our results suggest that certain topics indeed serve as subtler vehicles for communicating ethnic prejudice than others.

In accordance with our hypothesis, we also found that the specific language, i.e., the essentialist phrasing, employed within ethnically prejudicial statements influences their subtlety: Prejudicial statements that were phrased in a weakly essentialist manner, suggesting the potential alterability of the target group, provided the subtlest disguise, in being evaluated as least xenophobic, while those using a strongly essentialist language, implying an immutable inferiority of an ethnic group, were more strongly perceived as xenophobic. These findings complement previous social-psychological research on the role of the linguistic phrasing—specifically essentialist, abstract manners of describing group behaviors—for the perpetuation of (ethnic) prejudice (Assilaméhou et al., 2013; Beukeboom, 2014; Wigboldus et al., 2000). As also suggested by Douglas and Sutton (2006, 2010), our results indicate that people are sensitive to the derogatory implications of this linguistic feature, in perceiving ethnically prejudicial statements that are phrased highly essentialistically more strongly as xenophobic, while those statements that are phrased less essentialistically might, in not being readily identified as xenophobic, rather slip under the radar.

Furthermore, our results extend previous work on ethnic hierarchies (e.g., Hagendoorn, 1995), the general perceived acceptability of prejudice against different social groups (Crandall et al., 2002) as well as the impact of group labels (e.g., Kotzur et al., 2017) in revealing that the degree to which the xenophobic nature of single ethnically prejudicial statements is or is not recognized also depends on the group against which these are directed. In line with our hypothe-

sis, prejudicial statements directed against Muslims were somewhat subtler than the same statements directed against Turks. This effect turned out to be small and it is likely, of course, that stronger differences would have been observed, if we had compared more dissimilar groups or employed obviously disparaging labels. However, it is noteworthy that the specific labels employed for the groups (rather than the fact they refer to completely distinct groups), without them being inherently derogatory, can indeed cause small differences in the subtlety of prejudicial statements. We would attribute this small target group difference to the fact that 'Muslims' represent the most controversially discussed group in the German migration discourse (e.g., Hierl, 2012) and are a broader ethno-religious group with blurrier boundaries, which might be harder to grasp, also as the target of racism. Thus, employing a broader, more negatively connoted minority group label seems to camouflage the xenophobic content of an ethnically prejudicial statement more strongly.

Moreover, largely corroborating our predictions, with increasing IM and decreasing EM, i.e., a stronger self-determined motivation to respond without prejudice (Butz & Plant, 2009; Devine et al., 2002; see also Legault et al., 2007), individuals were more sensitive to features determining subtler or more blatant ways of ethnic prejudice expression. They more strongly adapted their evaluation of ethnically prejudicial statements as (not) xenophobic to the specific manner in which these prejudicial beliefs were expressed, in more strongly increasing their xenophobia ratings in response to those item variations along linguistic phrasing and topic that were found to be more blatant, identifying them more readily as prejudicial. Based on previous research indicating that individuals with higher IM and lower EM more strongly regulate prejudiced responses also within private assessments of explicit ethnic prejudice (e.g., Devine et al., 2002; Plant & Devine, 1998), comparable to the current, anonymous survey setting, we interpret these individual differences in terms of the motivated efforts to devote—for one's self and in private—vigilance to the identification of prejudicial comments. We reason that these individuals, in being personally more committed to egalitarianism and rooting out (ethnic) prejudice, more strongly engaged in a conscientious processing of potentially prejudicial statements, increasing their responsiveness to the item variations. This interpretation might tentatively also be linked to theoretical models in the persuasion literature suggesting that motivations determine individuals' engagement in a deliberate, effortful processing of a message (e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; for an overview see Bohner & Dickel, 2011, pp. 403–405).

Taken together, the current findings add to research on the recognition of prejudice (e.g., Mae & Carlston, 2005; Marti et al., 2000) in revealing that the subtlety of single ethnically prejudicial statements, as the degree to which these are (not) readily identified as xenophobic, can be systematically manipulated along specific dimensions and that individuals differ in their sensitivity to respond to such a manipulation of prejudicial statements. Building upon existing approaches on subtle, contemporary forms of explicit ethnic prejudice (e.g., Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay, 1986; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), the current study extends this line of research in taking an analytically new perspective: It shifted away from examining subtle prejudice as an individual-level attitude shaping intergroup relations (e.g., Rabinowitz et al., 2009) and laid the focus on the nature of the subtle ethnically prejudicial statements, i.e., consciously uttered beliefs that disfavor certain minority groups, themselves and how certain characteristics determine their social perception as (not) xenophobic.

When looking at our findings from a group norm perspective (Sherif & Sherif, 1953; see also e.g., Crandall et al., 2002; Crandall et al., 2013), they show that expressions of ethnic prejudice are not uniformly perceived as xenophobic and hence a violation of dominant egalitarian norms. From this point of view, our results could be interpreted as a pattern of social acceptability (or a reflection of another social norm), mirroring which ethnically prejudicial beliefs are more or less strongly perceived as xenophobic, with this perception being crucially determined by characteristics of these statements, such as topic, target group and linguistic phrasing, that can contribute to a concealment of their prejudicial nature. Also, our findings indicate that especially individuals with higher self-determined motivations to avoid prejudice are more sensitive to these normative characteristics of subtler and blatant variations of ethnically prejudicial statements, identifying the latter more strongly as xenophobic. This social perception of ethnically prejudicial statements as (not) xenophobic should also be interpreted as a reflection of its political and social context, with the main study being conducted in Germany in the aftermath of the so-called refugee crisis, in which, after a period of welcoming, negative stereotypes of immigrants and refugees and controversies about immigration have been taking over again in news reporting (Hemmelmann & Wegner, 2016), and the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), a right-wing populist party, was shaping the public discourse, attracting continuously more voters with a strong anti-immigrant profile. Thus, the specific results on the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial statements, especially those relating to topics

and target groups, should not to be regarded as fixed, but rather as subject to contextual factors, such as specific events and political agenda setting, with norms of social acceptability concerning (ethnic) prejudice (e.g., Crandall et al., 2013) and the borders of 'what is sayable' and what is regarded as (not) xenophobic being continuously negotiated. Against the backdrop of the increasing global success of right-wing populist and extremist forces and their anti-immigrant rhetoric, one might also discuss whether social norms have been beginning to become more lenient again concerning which forms of prejudicial statements are regarded as 'not xenophobic'. Longitudinal research would be necessary to monitor such trends in social norms regarding the perception of ethnically prejudicial statements. Nevertheless, despite such a potential temporal and contextual volatility, the general mechanism behind the subtlety of explicit ethnic prejudice illuminated in this study, in being determined by features such as topic, target group and linguistic phrasing, should be less fluctuating and applicable to other contexts as well.

Also, the current findings provide valuable insights into the psychological underpinnings of the dynamics within the current public and political migration discourse. Certain variations of ethnically prejudicial beliefs are subtler, in being less readily perceived as xenophobic and hence in conflict with egalitarian norms. Thus, on the one hand, individuals might endorse and express such beliefs, without recognizing their prejudicial nature and hence without perceiving them to compromise anti-prejudice standards or an egalitarian self-image. On the other hand, recipients of such expressions of ethnic prejudice might, in not recognizing their xenophobic content, potentially be less inclined to oppose their proponents. Also, for (professional) communicators, the subtlety of certain ways of verbalizing ethnic prejudice might even have a 'functional value' and could be deliberately exploited to express ethnically prejudicial arguments without openly violating anti-prejudice norms. Such rhetorical strategies might be especially 'effective' in passing over prejudicial statements to or without repelling those people who have strongly self-determined motivations to avoid prejudice, as they were most sensitive to the features determining subtler and more blatant ways of expressing ethnic prejudice, reacting more strongly to those variations of the prejudicial statements that were found to be more blatant, in evaluating them more readily as xenophobic. In that way, subtler expressions of ethnic prejudice might surreptitiously contribute to a perpetuation of negative beliefs concerning ethnic minorities group in current migration discourses, thereby potentially reinforcing ethnic inequalities.

The current findings also have practical implications for interventions aimed at creating awareness for subtle forms of ethnic prejudice in the public discourse, in pointing out the need to identify those aspects of prejudicial statements that are especially effective in concealing their xenophobic nature.

From a methodological perspective, our results demonstrate the fruitfulness of adapting the rationale of factorial survey experiments to social-psychological prejudice research. Also, the fact that the manipulation of certain characteristics can affect the degree to which statements are perceived as (not) xenophobic emphasizes the need to consider even small changes when developing items aimed at tapping subtler forms of ethnic prejudice.

Limitations and Future Directions

Our study also carries some limitations and leaves open questions for future research.

First, our results based on a German probability sample may not be readily generalizable to other contexts, as national particularities might—as mentioned before—influence which features are especially important in shaping the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial statements, e.g., depending on the presence of different minority groups or the dominance of certain topics in migration debates. Nevertheless, we assume that the general mechanism of topic, linguistic phrasing, and target group determining the subtlety of prejudicial statements would also be applicable to other contexts.

Relating to this aspect, we do not regard the dimensions and respective levels manipulated here as exhaustive, but it was rather our aim to introduce a new analytical perspective and to provide a first investigation of characteristics contributing to the concealment of a statement's prejudicial nature. Further research is warranted to investigate other variations, such as the impact of different target group labels, e.g., similar and more distinct ones, or other dimensions, e.g., the source (and its credibility), of a prejudicial statement. Also, one could revise the essentialist linguistic phrasing employed here. The data from our additional survey[11] suggest that the perceived unchangeability of the target group's

11) See Footnote 7.

attribute particularly varied between the first and the three stronger levels of the language dimension, whereby the locus of that varying controllability was rather perceived to lie within others than the target group itself. This should be borne in mind when interpreting the results. Further research might more closely investigate variations of prejudicial statements that imply different loci of controllability of a group's negative attribute or behavior.

Moreover, although also other previous studies on prejudice employed interviewer-administered survey methods (e.g., Zick, Wolf, et al., 2008) and our analysis strategy (i.e., FE models) cancelled out individual differences in social desirability, we cannot completely rule out a socially desirable over-statement of xenophobia ratings within the sample as a whole (see e.g., Kreuter, Presser, & Tourangeau, 2008). However, this would have rather led to an underestimation of the experimental effects. Additionally, the response behavior of high-EM individuals suggests that the interview context was perceived as a rather anonymous setting. Nevertheless, future research might explore different survey modes when assessing the subtlety of prejudicial statements.

Also, due to the constraints within telephone interviews, we could only include a limited number of IM and EM items and the reliability of the shortened EM scale was not fully satisfactory. Results concerning EM should thus be interpreted with some caution, presumably reflecting a rather conservative, attenuated estimation of the moderating effect of EM (e.g., Henson, 2001). Yet, we think that the possibility of drawing a probability sample in a telephone survey strongly enhances the generalizability of the results compared to studies with convenience samples. Nevertheless, further studies employing the full IM and EM scales are needed to investigate whether these yield similar or larger effect sizes.

Furthermore, individual differences in the responsiveness to a systematic manipulation of prejudice items have to our knowledge not been investigated before. Hence, additional studies are needed to corroborate our theoretical conclusions regarding the impact of IM and EM on the scrutiny with which prejudicial statements are processed. Also, as discussed before, it is important to emphasize that the current results pertain to a private survey setting. It would be worthwhile to particularly investigate the moderating role of EM in public contexts, where answers are observable, in which one might EM even expect to work in the opposite direction. Moreover, rather than providing an extensive investigation of a variety of moderators, we primarily aimed to substantiate the theoretical value of our systematic manipulation of prejudicial statements and considered IM and EM as motivational constructs most plausibly affecting individuals' sensitivity to features determining subtler or more blatant ways of expressing ethnic prejudice. We post-hoc conducted exploratory analyses on the moderating role of other individual difference variables included in the larger telephone survey (see Tables A4–A8 in the Supplementary Materials), whereby the direction of the interaction effects of the item dimensions with social dominance orientation and egalitarian self-concept—although mostly not statistically significant—at least tentatively matches our theoretical considerations regarding individuals' responsiveness to the item variations. Further studies could examine other potential moderators, e.g., individuals' general bias awareness (Perry, Murphy, & Dovidio, 2015).

Conclusion

Notwithstanding these caveats, we believe that the current findings, based on a comparably large random population sample, contribute to research on subtle forms of explicit ethnic prejudice, by showing how even small changes in single ethnically prejudicial statements along their topic, language (i.e., essentialist phrasing), and target group can influence the degree to which these utterances are perceived as (not) xenophobic. The idea that the subtlety of prejudicial statements is systematically manipulable could also be extended to research on other social prejudices, such as sexism and homophobia. In the context of current anti-immigrant discourses, our results clearly demonstrate that attention should be devoted to the specific manner in which ethnic prejudice is communicated: In disguising their xenophobic nature and being less readily recognized as prejudicial, such subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice might act especially surreptitiously in perpetuating negative beliefs about ethnic minority groups and potentially reinforcing ethnic inequalities, while avoiding an open violation of egalitarian, anti-prejudice norms.

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Supplementary Materials

The Supplementary Materials contain an overview of all constructs included in the larger telephone survey, an English translation of the experimental materials used in the study, descriptive statistics, results from further exploratory analyses as well results from an additional online survey (for unrestricted access see Index of Supplementary Materials below).

Index of Supplementary Materials

Fetz, K., & Kroh, M. (2021). *Supplementary materials to "Prejudice in disguise: Which features determine the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial statements?"* [Additional information and analyses]. PsychOpen GOLD. https://doi.org/10.23668/psycharchives.4781

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Supplementary Materials

for

"Prejudice in Disguise: Which Features Determine the Subtlety of Ethnically Prejudicial Statements?"

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These Supplementary Materials contain an overview of all constructs included in the larger telephone survey (Table A1), an English translation of the experimental materials used in the study (Table A2), descriptive statistics (Table A3), results from further exploratory analyses (Tables A4–A8) as well results from an additional online survey (pp. 11-17; Tables A9–12).

Table A1

Overview of the Measures Included in the Full Telephone Survey Questionnaire

Construct	*Specification of measures*
Prejudice endorsement	2 items each of the Subtle and Blatant Prejudice Scale (Pettigrew & Meertens,1995; German translation following Zick, 1997); Random selection of 4 items per participant (set 1) from a pool of 24 self-developed items (factorial survey experiment; see Table A2 of the Supplementary Materials); 6 self-developed prejudice items (set 2); Indication of agreement on a 1 (*completely disagree)* to 5 *(completely agree)* scale.
Perceived prejudice endorsement of the general population and important referents	3 self-developed prejudice items (set 3); Indication of estimated agreement of the general population in Germany and of important referents on a 1 *(completely disagree)* to 5 *(completely agree)* scale.
Socio-demographic characteristics	Age, country of birth, German citizenship, parents' countries of birth, religious affiliation, education, employment status, political interest, party preference; postal code and household income (the two last constructs were asked at the end of the interview)
Xenophobia ratings	2 items each from the Subtle and Blatant Prejudice Scale (Pettigrew & Meertens,1995); 4 prejudice items (factorial survey experiment; set 1), 6 prejudice items (set 2); Two different instructions, one containing a definition of xenophobia, the other one not containing a definition of xenophobia; Rating on a 1 *(not xenophobic at all)* to 5 *(very xenophobic)* scale.
Affect	11 items; Indication of agreement with different emotional states (i.a. anger, joy, sadness, discomfort, negative self-directed emotions) on a 1 *(completely disagree*) to 5 *(completely agree)* scale.
Affective and behavioral reaction to overhearing prejudicial statements	3 self-developed prejudice items (set 3); Indication of whether overhearing such a statement would cause feelings of anger or encouragement or would lead to openly contradict the speaker on a 1 *(completely disagree)* to 5 *(completely agree)* scale.
Egalitarian self-concept	1 item, Indication of agreement on a 1 *(completely disagree)* to 5 *(completely agree)* scale.
Humanitarianism-egalitarianism	6 items of the humanitarianism-egalitarianism scale (Doll & Dick, 2000; Katz & Hass, 1988); Indication of agreement on a 1 *(completely disagree)* to 5 *(completely agree)* scale.
Protestant work ethic	4 items (Levin, Sidanius, Rabinowitz, & Federico, 1998); Indication of agreement on a 1 *(completely disagree)* to 5 *(completely agree)* scale.
Social dominance orientation	Full 8-item $SDO_{7(s)}$-Scale (Ho et al., 2015); Indication of agreement on a 1 *(completely disagree)* to 5 *(completely agree)* scale.
Internal and external motivation to respond without prejudice scale	2 items each of the Internal and External Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice Scale (Plant & Devine, 1998); Indication of agreement on a 1 *(completely disagree)* to 5 *(completely agree)* scale.
Preference for consistency	6 items of the Preference for Consistency Scale (Cialdini, Trost, & Newsom, 1995; German translation following Klocke, 2010); Indication of agreement on a 1 *(completely disagree)* to 5 *(completely agree)* scale.
Social desirability	Full 6-item KSE-G Scale (Kemper, Beierlein, Bensch, Kovaleva, & Rammstedt, 2012); Indication of agreement on a 1 *(completely disagree)* to 5 *(completely agree)* scale.

Contact with migrants/ non-migrants and contact valence	4 items, Frequency of contact with (non-)migrants among family and relatives, at work, in the neighborhood, and among friends (ALLBUS); Indication of frequency on a 1 *(never)* to 5 *(very often)* scale; 1 item, Indication of contact valence on a 1 *(very negative)* to 5 *(very positive)* scale
Worries	Worries about the general and own economic situation, peace, criminality, xenophobia, immigration (Socio-Economic Panel, SOEP), and the conservation of language and culture, and values in Germany, Response on a 1 (*no worries)* to 3 *(big worries)* scale.

Note. Constructs are presented in their order of appearance in the telephone survey. All items of English scales were translated into German.

Table A2

English Translation of Systematically Varied Prejudice Items

		Topic		
		Culture	*Economic Utility*	*Danger/ Inner Security*
	Language			
Target Group *Muslims*	*Weakly essentialist*	Muslims need particular assistance to adapt to the idea that men and women have equal rights in Germany.	Muslims need particular assistance to adapt to the strong work ethic in Germany.	Muslims need particular assistance to adapt to the norm that conflicts are solved without violence in Germany.
	Rather weakly essentialist	Muslims cannot adapt to the idea that men and women have equal rights in Germany.	Muslims cannot adapt to the strong work ethic in Germany.	Muslims cannot adapt to the norm that conflicts are solved without violence in Germany.
	Rather strongly essentialist	Muslims are more sexist than Germans.	Muslims are more workshy than Germans.	Muslims are more inclined to violence than Germans.
	Strongly essentialist	Muslims are, by nature, more sexist than Germans.	Muslims are, by nature, more workshy than Germans.	Muslims are, by nature, more inclined to violence than Germans.
Target Group *Turks*	*Weakly essentialist*	Turks need particular assistance to adapt to the idea that men and women have equal rights in Germany.	Turks need particular assistance to adapt to the strong work ethic in Germany.	Turks need particular assistance to adapt to the norm that conflicts are solved without violence in Germany.
	Rather weakly essentialist	Turks cannot adapt to the idea that men and women have equal rights in Germany.	Turks cannot adapt to the strong work ethic in Germany.	Turks cannot adapt to the norm that conflicts are solved without violence in Germany.
	Rather strongly essentialist	Turks are more sexist than Germans.	Turks are more workshy than Germans.	Turks are more inclined to violence than Germans.
	Strongly essentialist	Turks are, by nature, more sexist than Germans.	Turks are, by nature, more workshy than Germans.	Turks are, by nature, more inclined to violence than Germans.

Note. Original German items can be obtained from the authors upon request.

Table A3

Descriptive Statistics: Xenophobia Ratings for the Systematically Varied Prejudice Items

	Topic								
	Culture			Economic utility			Danger		
	N	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*
Target group: Muslims									
Language									
Weakly essentialist	148	3.05	1.24	157	3.17	1.36	155	3.11	1.32
Rather weakly essentialist	145	3.47	1.17	156	3.97	1.13	143	3.59	1.16
Rather strongly essentialist	151	3.63	1.29	142	4.04	1.24	170	3.94	1.29
Strongly essentialist	135	3.69	1.35	149	3.94	1.36	125	4.19	1.07
Target group: Turks									
Language									
Weakly essentialist	151	3.30	1.22	158	3.63	1.32	152	3.37	1.24
Rather weakly essentialist	162	3.47	1.21	136	3.87	1.17	154	3.77	1.14
Rather strongly essentialist	126	3.68	1.29	156	3.96	1.29	145	3.86	1.25
Strongly essentialist	144	3.50	1.30	150	4.25	1.06	145	3.97	1.24

Note. N = Observations per item; $N_{\text{Participants}}$ = 895. Each respondent rated four randomly selected items. Items were rated on a 5-point scale from 1 *(not xenophobic at all)* to 5 *(very xenophobic)*.

Table A4

Model of Fixed Effects of Item Dimensions on Xenophobia Ratings with Cross-Level Interactions Between Item Dimensions and Respondents' Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)

	b (SE)	*95% Confidence Interval*	
Main effects: Item dimensions			
Topic[a]			
Economic utility	0.427*** (0.037)	0.354	0.499
Danger	0.246*** (0.037)	0.173	0.319
Language[b]			
Rather weakly essentialist	0.332*** (0.042)	0.250	0.415
Rather strongly essentialist	0.561*** (0.042)	0.478	0.643
Strongly essentialist	0.613*** (0.043)	0.529	0.696
Target group[c]			
Turks	0.068* (0.030)	0.010	0.127
Cross-level interactions: Item dimensions x SDO			
Topic[a] x SDO			
Economic utility	-0.227*** (0.058)	-0.342	-0.113
Danger	-0.184** (0.058)	-0.298	-0.070
Language[b] x SDO			
Rather weakly essentialist	-0.085 (0.068)	-0.218	0.048
Rather strongly essentialist	-0.091 (0.066)	-0.220	0.038
Strongly essentialist	-0.072 (0.068)	-0.205	0.061
Target group[c] x SDO			
Turks	-0.008 (0.048)	-0.102	0.085
Intercept	3.048*** (0.039)	2.972	3.124
R^2_{within}	.140		
$R^2_{between}$	.116		
$R^2_{overall}$	.113		

Note. $N_{\text{Item ratings}}$ = 3,555; $N_{\text{Participants}}$ = 895. Unstandardized coefficients. Standard error in parentheses. The coefficient relates to a 5-point scale from 1 *(not xenophobic at all)* to 5 *(very xenophobic)*. The variable SDO was mean centered. The main effect of SDO (level 2 variable) as a trait of individuals is invariant across manipulations and thus omitted by the FE model.

[a] Reference category: Culture. [b] Reference category: Weakly essentialist. [c] Reference category: Muslims

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table A5

Model of Fixed Effects of Item Dimensions on Xenophobia Ratings with Cross-Level Interactions Between Item Dimensions and Respondents' Humanitarianism-Egalitarianism (HE)

	b (SE)	*95% Confidence Interval*	
Main effects: Item dimensions			
Topic[a]			
Economic utility	0.431*** (0.037)	0.358	0.503
Danger	0.245*** (0.037)	0.172	0.318
Language[b]			
Rather weakly essentialist	0.333*** (0.042)	0.250	0.416
Rather strongly essentialist	0.564*** (0.042)	0.481	0.646
Strongly essentialist	0.616*** (0.043)	0.533	0.700
Target group[c]			
Turks	0.070* (0.030)	0.011	0.129
Cross-level interactions: Item dimensions x HE			
Topic[a] x HE			
Economic utility	0.011 (0.063)	-0.113	0.135
Danger	-0.110 (0.064)	-0.235	0.016
Language[b] x HE			
Rather weakly essentialist	0.006 (0.073)	-0.138	0.150
Rather strongly essentialist	-0.005 (0.073)	-0.148	0.138
Strongly essentialist	0.002 (0.075)	-0.145	0.149
Target group[c] x HE			
Turks	0.002 (0.051)	-0.097	0.101
Intercept	3.043*** (0.039)	2.967	3.119
R^2_{within}	.136		
$R^2_{between}$	.007		
$R^2_{overall}$	.048		

Note. $N_{\text{Item ratings}}$ = 3,555; $N_{\text{Participants}}$ = 895. Unstandardized coefficients. Standard error in parentheses. The coefficient relates to a 5-point scale from 1 *(not xenophobic at all)* to 5 *(very xenophobic)*. The variable HE was mean centered. The main effect of HE (level 2 variable) as a trait of individuals is invariant across manipulations and thus omitted by the FE model.

[a] Reference category: Culture. [b] Reference category: Weakly essentialist. [c] Reference category: Muslims

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table A6

Model of Fixed Effects of Item Dimensions on Xenophobia Ratings with Cross-Level Interactions Between Item Dimensions and Respondents' Egalitarian Self-Concept (ES)

	b (SE)	*95% Confidence Interval*	
Main effects: Item dimensions			
Topic[a]			
Economic utility	0.430*** (0.037)	0.357	0.502
Danger	0.248*** (0.037)	0.175	0.321
Language[b]			
Rather weakly essentialist	0.330*** (0.042)	0.247	0.412
Rather strongly essentialist	0.566*** (0.042)	0.484	0.649
Strongly essentialist	0.616*** (0.043)	0.532	0.699
Target group[c]			
Turks	0.071* (0.030)	0.013	0.130
Cross-level interactions: Item dimensions x ES			
Topic[a] x ES			
Economic utility	0.066 (0.047)	-0.025	0.158
Danger	-0.001 (0.047)	-0.093	0.091
Language[b] x ES			
Rather weakly essentialist	0.086 (0.053)	-0.019	0.190
Rather strongly essentialist	0.117* (0.052)	0.016	0.219
Strongly essentialist	0.072 (0.055)	-0.035	0.179
Target group[c] x ES			
Turks	0.029 (0.037)	-0.043	0.102
Intercept	3.043*** (0.039)	2.967	3.120
R^2_{within}	.137		
$R^2_{between}$	.071		
$R^2_{overall}$	.086		

Note. $N_{\text{Item ratings}}$ = 3,551; $N_{\text{Participants}}$ = 894. Unstandardized coefficients. Standard error in parentheses. The coefficient relates to a 5-point scale from 1 *(not xenophobic at all)* to 5 *(very xenophobic)*. The variable ES was mean centered. The main effect of ES (level 2 variable) as a trait of individuals is invariant across manipulations and thus omitted by the FE model.

[a] Reference category: Culture. [b] Reference category: Weakly essentialist. [c] Reference category: Muslims

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table A7

Model of Fixed Effects of Item Dimensions on Xenophobia Ratings with Cross-Level Interactions Between Item Dimensions and Respondents' Protestant Work Ethic (PWE)

	b (SE)	*95% Confidence Interval*	
Main effects: Item dimensions			
Topic[a]			
Economic utility	0.431*** (0.037)	0.358	0.503
Danger	0.245*** (0.037)	0.172	0.318
Language[b]			
Rather weakly essentialist	0.336*** (0.042)	0.253	0.419
Rather strongly essentialist	0.563*** (0.042)	0.481	0.645
Strongly essentialist	0.617*** (0.043)	0.534	0.701
Target group[c]			
Turks	0.072* (0.030)	0.013	0.131
Cross-level interactions: Item dimensions x PWE			
Topic[a] x PWE			
Economic utility	0.003 (0.049)	-0.094	0.099
Danger	0.084 (0.050)	-0.013	0.182
Language[b] x PWE			
Rather weakly essentialist	-0.006 (0.056)	-0.116	0.103
Rather strongly essentialist	-0.041 (0.056)	-0.151	0.069
Strongly essentialist	0.056 (0.057)	-0.056	0.169
Target group[c] x PWE			
Turks	-0.057 (0.039)	-0.134	0.021
Intercept	3.041*** (0.039)	2.965	3.117
R^2_{within}	.137		
$R^2_{between}$	.013		
$R^2_{overall}$	.054		

Note. $N_{\text{Item ratings}}$ = 3,555; $N_{\text{Participants}}$ = 895. Unstandardized coefficients. Standard error in parentheses. The coefficient relates to a 5-point scale from 1 *(not xenophobic at all)* to 5 *(very xenophobic)*. The variable PWE was mean centered. The main effect of PWE (level 2 variable) as a trait of individuals is invariant across manipulations and thus omitted by the FE model.

[a] Reference category: Culture. [b] Reference category: Weakly essentialist. [c] Reference category: Muslims

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table A8

Model of Fixed Effects of Item Dimensions on Xenophobia Ratings with Cross-Level Interactions Between Item Dimensions and Respondents' Social Desirability (SD)

	b (SE)	*95% Confidence Interval*	
Main effects: Item dimensions			
Topic[a]			
Economic utility	0.426*** (0.037)	0.354	0.498
Danger	0.251*** (0.037)	0.178	0.324
Language[b]			
Rather weakly essentialist	0.327*** (0.042)	0.244	0.410
Rather strongly essentialist	0.560*** (0.042)	0.478	0.643
Strongly essentialist	0.611*** (0.043)	0.528	0.695
Target group[c]			
Turks	0.070* (0.030)	0.011	0.129
Cross-level interactions: Item dimensions x SD			
Topic[a] x SD			
Economic utility	-0.150** (0.054)	-0.257	-0.044
Danger	-0.088 (0.055)	-0.196	0.020
Language[b] x SD			
Rather weakly essentialist	-0.037 (0.063)	-0.160	0.087
Rather strongly essentialist	-0.023 (0.063)	-0.147	0.101
Strongly essentialist	-0.027 (0.065)	-0.154	0.101
Target group[c] x SD			
Turks	-0.067 (0.045)	-0.154	0.021
Intercept	3.046*** (0.039)	2.970	3.122
R^2_{within}	.136		
$R^2_{between}$	.032		
$R^2_{overall}$	.066		

Note. $N_{\text{Item ratings}}$ = 3,539; $N_{\text{Participants}}$ = 891. Unstandardized coefficients. Standard error in parentheses. The coefficient relates to a 5-point scale from 1 *(not xenophobic at all)* to 5 *(very xenophobic)*. The variable SD was mean centered. The main effect of SD (level 2 variable) as a trait of individuals is invariant across manipulations and thus omitted by the FE model.

[a] Reference category: Culture. [b] Reference category: Weakly essentialist. [c] Reference category: Muslims

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Results from an Additional Online Survey

We conducted an additional online survey with a convenience sample in order to further validate the systematic variations of the topic and language dimension of the constructed prejudice items ($N_{\text{Item ratings}}$ = 886 from $N_{\text{Participants}}$ = 238, 124 women, 77 men, 37 diverse/ no indication, M_{age} = 35.69 years, SD = 13.87, age range 19–82 years). Participants were asked to evaluate a randomized set of four (out of 24) prejudice items with respect to their perception of these dimensions. Regarding the topic dimension, results from three one-way ANOVAs (across observations) with planned Bonferroni-corrected contrasts (see Table A9) confirm that items within the culture topic ($F(2, 883) = 276.10$, $p < .001$) were indeed perceived as relating to an attribute of the respective target group that threatens the culture (i.e., gender equality) in Germany (ps < .001), items within the economic utility topic ($F(2, 883) = 207.56$, $p < .001$) were more strongly perceived as relating to threats to the productivity in Germany (ps < .001), and items of the danger topic ($F(2, 883) = 244.58$, $p < .001$) were more strongly judged as relating to threats to security (ps < .001), compared to items of the two other topics, respectively. Additionally, we examined whether our systematic variation of the linguistic phrasing actually manipulated the degree of essentialism. To this end, participants rated the prejudice items on several sub-dimensions of essentialism (adapting seven items from Haslam, Rothschild, & Ernst, 2000), which were collapsed into an average measure of essentialism for each prejudice item rated per participant. Correlational results (across observations; see Table A10) indicate that along the range of the manipulated linguistic phrasing, participants indeed perceived the items to be more essentialist ($r = .129$, $p < .001$), whereby a closer look at the sub-dimensions revealed an increase especially for the perceived immutability (i.e., whether membership in the respective target group is regarded as fixed; $r = .150$, $p < .001$) and stability (i.e., whether the group and its characteristics is

perceived as stable over time; $r = .168$, $p < .001$). In addition, we also asked participants whether they perceived the target group's described attribute to be unchangeable (in general, by themselves, or by others), as an additional, more straightforward assessment of perceived essentialism. Indeed, along the range of the linguistic phrasing the attribute of the respective target group was increasingly perceived as unchangeable (or uncontrollable) in general ($r = .252$, $p < .001$) and more specifically as increasingly unchangeable by others ($r = .287$, $p < .001$), rather than by the respective target group itself ($r = .057$, $p = .092$). More detailed results from a one-way ANOVA (across observations; see Table A11) with Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons regarding the perceived unchangeability of the attribute in general ($F(3, 882) = 39.03$, $p < .001$) and by others ($F(3, 882) = 43.88$, $p < .001$) show that mainly items of the weakly essentialist phrasing differed from items of the three stronger levels of the essentialist linguistic phrasing (ps $< .001$). The locus for that perceived uncontrollability, varying between the first and other three levels of the language dimension, thus primarily lay in others, rather than the target group itself. Overall, these additional survey results validate that the systematic item variations were indeed effective in manipulating the intended levels of the topic and language, i.e., essentialist phrasing, dimension.

Table A9

Planned Contrasts after One-Way ANOVAs for the Perception of the Item Dimension Topic

	Contrast (SE)	*95% Confidence Interval*	
Items refer to threats to culture			
Culture (ref.)			
Economic utility	-2.341*** (0.102)	-2.569	-2.113
Danger	-1.644*** (0.102)	-1.874	-1.415
Items refer to threat to productivity			
Economic utility (ref.)			
Culture	-1.845*** (0.104)	-2.079	-1.611
Danger	-1.755*** (0.101)	-1.982	-1.528
Items refer to threat to security			
Danger (ref.)			
Culture	-1.344*** (0.103)	-1.575	-1.113
Economic utility	-2.177*** (0.099)	-2.400	-1.954

Note. One-way ANOVAs were conducted across observations, based on $N_{\text{Item ratings}} = 886$ from $N_{\text{Participants}} = 238$. Standard error in parentheses. Reference categories are indicated by (ref.). Significance levels are Bonferroni-corrected for two comparisons, respectively.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table A10

Pairwise Correlations between the Item Dimension Language with Perceived Essentialism and Its Subdimensions

	Language (Essentialist Phrasing)
Subdimensions of Essentialism	
Discreteness	.048
Naturalness	.076*
Immutability	.150***
Stability	.168***
Uniformity	.092**
Informativeness	.066*
Inherence	.074*
Essentialism (Sum-Score)	.129***

Note. Correlations were calculated across observations, based on $N_{\text{Item ratings}} = 886$ from $N_{\text{Participants}} = 238$. The item dimension language (essentialist phrasing) was entered as a continuous variable.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table A11

Pairwise Comparisons after One-Way ANOVAs for the Perceived Uncontrollability (General and by Others) for Different Levels of the Item Dimension Language

	Contrast (SE)	*95% Confidence Interval*	
Perceived general uncontrollability			
Rather weakly essentialist vs. weakly essentialist	1.103*** (0.117)	0.795	1.412
Rather strongly essentialist vs. weakly essentialist	0.915*** (0.117)	0.606	1.224
Strongly essentialist vs. weakly essentialist	1.050*** (0.117)	0.740	1.360
Rather strongly essentialist vs. rather weakly essentialist	-0.188 (0.116)	-0.495	0.119
Strongly essentialist vs. rather weakly essentialist	-0.053 (0.116)	-0.361	0.254
Strongly essentialist vs. rather strongly essentialist	0.135 (0.116)	-0.173	0.443
Perceived uncontrollability by others			
Rather weakly essentialist vs. weakly essentialist	1.134*** (0.122)	0.813	1.456
Rather strongly essentialist vs. weakly essentialist	1.102*** (0.122)	0.780	1.424
Strongly essentialist vs. weakly essentialist	1.190*** (0.122)	0.867	1.513
Rather strongly essentialist vs. rather weakly essentialist	-0.032 (0.121)	-0.352	0.288
Strongly essentialist vs. rather weakly essentialist	0.056 (0.121)	-0.265	0.377
Strongly essentialist vs. rather strongly essentialist	0.088 (0.121)	-0.233	0.409

Note. One-way ANOVAs were conducted across observations, based on $N_{\text{Item ratings}} = 886$ from $N_{\text{Participants}} = 238$. Standard error in parentheses. Significance levels are Bonferroni-corrected for six comparisons, respectively.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

In the additional online survey, we also tested the prejudice items for their perceived negativity and assessed whether this perceived negative valence of the prejudice items varied for the manipulated dimensions. Results from a one-way ANOVA (across observations) with Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons and an independent t-test (across observations), respectively, show that the perceived negative valence of the prejudice items neither differed by the topic ($F(2, 883) = 0.56$, $p = .571$), nor the target group ($t(884) = -0.631$, $p = .528$) they referred to. However, correlational results (across observations) indicate that the perceived negative valence increased along the range of the manipulated essentialist linguistic phrasing ($r = .119$, $p < .001$), which is in line with previous research suggesting that variations of abstract-essentialist language are often accompanied by variations in perceived valence (e.g., Douglas & Sutton, 2006, 2010). In order to make sure that the effect of our manipulation of the linguistic-essentialist phrasing on the degree to which the prejudicial statements are (not) perceived as xenophobic is independent of their perceived negativity, we entered the mean negativity ratings of the 24 prejudice from the additional survey into the dataset of the main study. We then assessed the effect of the linguistic-essentialist phrasing on the xenophobia ratings, while controlling for these mean negativity ratings. Results from this FE model showed that the effect of the language dimension remained robust (see Table A12), suggesting that the manipulation of the essentialist linguistic phrasing affected the subtlety of the prejudicial statements, i.e., the degree to which they are perceived as (not) xenophobic, beyond their perceived negativity.

Table A12

Model of Fixed Effects of the Item Dimension Language on Xenophobia Ratings Controlling for the Items' Average Perceived Negativity Ratings

	b (SE)	*95% Confidence Interval*	
Model 1			
Language			
Weakly essentialist (ref.)			
Rather weakly essentialist	0.332*** (0.043)	0.247	0.416
Rather strongly essentialist	0.566*** (0.043)	0.482	0.651
Strongly essentialist	0.619*** (0.044)	0.533	0.705
Intercept	3.306*** (0.029)	3.248	3.364
R^2_{within}	.088		
$R^2_{between}$	.013		
$R^2_{overall}$	.039		
Model 2			
Language			
Weakly essentialist (ref.)			
Rather weakly essentialist	0.277*** (0.055)	0.169	0.384
Rather strongly essentialist	0.522*** (0.051)	0.422	0.622
Strongly essentialist	0.561*** (0.056)	0.451	0.672
Perceived negativity	0.175 (0.108)	-0.037	0.386
Intercept	2.563*** (0.459)	1.662	3.463
R^2_{within}	.089		
$R^2_{between}$	.013		
$R^2_{overall}$	.039		

Note. $N_{\text{Item ratings}}$ = 3,555; $N_{\text{Participants}}$ = 895. Unstandardized coefficients. Standard error in parentheses. The coefficient relates to a 5-point scale from 1 *(not xenophobic at all)* to 5 *(very xenophobic)*. Reference category is indicated by (ref.). Model 2 controls for average perceived negativity ratings from the additional online survey for each prejudice item.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Appendix B | Manuscript #2

Is One's Own Ethnic Prejudice Always Subtle? The Inconsistency of Prejudice Endorsement and Prejudice Awareness Depends on Self-Related Egalitarian Standards and Motivations

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Appendix C | Manuscript #3

When Unnoticed Means Unchallenged? Negative Affect and Oppositional Intentions of Non-Target Perceivers in Response to Subtle and Blatant Expressions of Ethnic Prejudice

Karolina Fetz and Tim Sven Müller

2021

Manuscript submitted for publication

[Note: Please note that the layout/ formatting of this manuscript has been slightly adapted compared to the submitted version for reasons of standardization / in order to make it printable. No changes have been made to its content.]

When unnoticed means unchallenged?
Negative affect and oppositional intentions of non-target perceivers in response to subtle and blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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Abstract

In light of currently prevailing egalitarian norms, ethnic prejudice is often expressed in a subtler manner, which camouflages its xenophobic content. In being less readily recognized as prejudicial, such subtle forms of ethnic prejudice could possibly operate particularly stealthily because they might not elicit the same degree of indignation and opposition among non-target perceivers, thereby undermining their role as potential allies against racism. Two experimental studies (total N = 1,630) provide support for an indirect mechanism, revealing that subtle (compared to blatant) expressions of ethnic prejudice indeed elicited less negative affect in non-target perceivers, which indirectly translated into decreased intentions to engage in opposition against the proponents of the statements themselves, i.e., lower confrontation intentions (Study 1 and 2) and a lower refusal to vote for a politician (Study 2), as well as decreased intentions to engage in more large-scale acts of opposition, i.e., intentions to participate in collective action against racism (Study 1 and 2). The overall effects regarding the different outcome measures under investigation from both studies indicate that subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice particularly undermined the willingness of potential allies to engage in direct oppositional acts against the proponents of such statements. In being able to circumvent negative social sanctions, subtle forms of ethnic prejudice might contribute to a clandestine reinforcement of social inequalities.

Keywords: subtle prejudice, ethnic prejudice, confrontation intentions, collective action intentions, oppositional intentions

When unnoticed means unchallenged? Negative affect and oppositional intentions of non-target perceivers in response to subtle and blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice

Currently prevailing egalitarian norms in many of today's societies largely condemn racism and ethnic prejudice.[1] However, even though this general normative trend towards egalitarianism has brought about a decline in the endorsement of blatant forms of prejudice, which overtly communicate hostile attitudes towards ethnic minority groups, social-psychological approaches on contemporary ethnic prejudice have strongly argued that racism has not vanished (e.g., Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay, 1986; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). Rather they suggest that ethnic prejudice now often appears in subtler guises, which conceal its xenophobic or racist content. Exactly due to this covert nature, one could suspect that subtle (compared to more blatant) expressions of ethnic prejudice, which are less readily recognized as prejudicial, might act particularly stealthily, in triggering lower indignation and, in turn, weaker opposition. In that sense, subtle ethnically prejudicial statements might be far from harmless, with regard to their ability to slip "under the radar" and to circumvent negative social sanctioning. Yet, empirical and especially experimental studies directly investigating such a mechanism as well as observers' reactions to subtle ethnic prejudice are rather scarce (e.g., Dickson, 2012; Dickter & Newton, 2013), and evidence can currently mostly be derived only from related lines of research on sexism and homophobia (e.g., Barreto & Ellemers, 2005a, 2005b; Krolikowski, Rinella, & Ratcliff, 2016).

Seeking to close this gap in the literature, the current research thus examines the affective and oppositional reactions to subtle and blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice, based on two experimental studies with large German population samples. Specifically, we investigate whether subtle and more blatant forms of ethnic prejudice, which are less or more strongly recognized as xenophobic (i.e., elicit different levels of prejudice awareness),

respectively, might trigger varying levels of negative affect and might consequently elicit different degrees of various oppositional intentions. The focus of the current studies lies on reactions of non-target perceivers, who are not themselves affected by ethnic prejudice, yet might act as important allies against racism (e.g., Ashburn-Nardo, 2018; Gulker, Mark, & Monteith, 2013). Overall, we seek to illuminate whether subtle forms of ethnic prejudice might—in passing by unnoticed as xenophobic and unchallenged by members of the majority society—clandestinely reinforce social inequalities.

Prejudice Awareness and Opposition

The general assumption that prejudice needs to be identified as such before it can be challenged has indeed been put forward within previous research (e.g., Barreto & Ellemers, 2005a). Also theoretical models of opposition to prejudice and discrimination have proposed that awareness of the prejudicial nature of an incident is a prerequisite before an observer might eventually decide to confront a discriminating actor (Ashburn-Nardo, Morris, & Goodwin, 2008; Stangor et al., 2003). From this perspective, only individuals who are aware that an ethnically prejudicial statement is, in fact, racist (and hence in conflict with egalitarian standards) would be inclined to eventually express opposition against its xenophobic content.

If subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice, which are less likely to be recognized as xenophobic, would indeed more often remain unchallenged, this might have negative consequences, because opposition has proven crucial for decreasing further expressions of prejudice and acts of discrimination (see e.g., Nelson, Dunn, & Paradies, 2011, for a review). First, individuals confronted with their own (ethnically) prejudicial responses might afterwards more strongly initiate prejudice-related self-regulation mechanisms (e.g., Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006; Fehr & Sassenberg, 2010; Monteith, 1993; see also Monteith & Mark, 2005, for an overview). Second, previous studies indicate that opposition to (ethnically)

prejudicial responses might be crucial for establishing egalitarian norms that decrease further prejudicial responses among witnesses of such negative sanctioning (e.g., Blanchard, Crandall, Brigham, & Vaughn, 1994). Thus, on the one hand, a lack of opposition might leave proponents of subtle forms of ethnic prejudice convinced that their prejudicial opinions are, in fact, not xenophobic and supposedly in line with egalitarian standards, not perceiving any need to reconsider their beliefs. On the other hand, the absence of opposition in the face of subtle forms of prejudice might further perpetuate the social perception that these prejudicial expressions are allegedly not xenophobic. This might encourage the further adoption and transmission of such subtle prejudicial beliefs also by others.

Additionally, earlier research suggests that it might be particularly disadvantageous if individuals who are not personally targeted by it fail to oppose subtle forms of ethnic prejudice. Non-target individuals can, in fact, act as influential allies against racism, in expressing their opposition against prejudicial communications in a variety of ways (Ashburn-Nardo, 2018). These oppositional reactions might entail a negative sanctioning directly addressing the proponents of ethnically prejudicial statements themselves, such as an act of confrontation communicating one's disapproval or one's denial of support for the discriminating individual. Also, they might involve more large-scale acts of opposition in the face of ethnic prejudice, such as the engagement in collective action against racism in society (which might more precisely be labeled as solidarity-based collective action in the case of non-target individuals; Saab, Tausch, Spears, & Cheung, 2015). Indeed, earlier studies indicate that opposition to prejudice by non-target individuals might be especially effective. Whereas confrontations by targets themselves are often discounted as 'oversensitive complaints' (e.g., Kaiser & Miller, 2001), non-target individuals must not fear such social costs and might even be more positively evaluated after confronting prejudicial remarks (e.g.,

Dickter, Kittel, & Gyurovski, 2012). Also, opposition by non-target observers might be perceived as more persuasive (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Eliezer & Major, 2012; Gulker et al., 2013; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010; counterevidence: Czopp et al., 2006, find no differences in interpersonal settings).

Overall, this body of research emphasizes the importance of opposition by non-target perceivers against expressions of ethnic prejudice or discriminatory incidents. Opposition serves as a reminder for proponents of prejudicial statements as well as witnesses that these violate egalitarian principles and thereby represents a crucial form of allyship against racism. Also, this earlier theorizing provides general support for our rationale that opposition against ethnic prejudice might be impeded, when it is expressed in a subtler—rather than a blatant—manner, which is less readily recognized as xenophobic. Thus, this reasoning tentatively corroborates the idea pursued in the current research that subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice, eliciting lower prejudice awareness, would indeed cause weaker opposition in non-target observers, thereby potentially contributing to a covert perpetuation of ethnic inequalities. In the next section, we will review earlier empirical findings regarding the existence of subtle (and blatant) forms of ethnic prejudice as well as the affective and oppositional responses they evoke.

Subtle and Blatant Forms of Ethnic Prejudice, Negative Affect and Oppositional Reactions

The idea that there are, in fact, subtler forms of ethnic prejudice, which are less readily detected as racist and for which people thus exhibit a lower degree of prejudice awareness, has been advanced within various approaches on contemporary forms of explicit (i.e., self-reported) racism (e.g., Henry & Sears, 2002; Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay, 1986; McConahay, Hardee, & Batts, 1981; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). These approaches share

the notion that in light of current racism-condemning social norms, ethnic prejudice is often expressed in a more concealed manner, which is not readily perceived as xenophobic. Hence, they sought to develop self-report scales containing 'subtler' statements or beliefs, which are better suited to assess individual levels of ethnic prejudice in a more egalitarian normative climate.[2] Drawing on this rationale, a few studies have specifically investigated the actual subtlety of different expressions of ethnic prejudice. These were able to show that statements belonging to newer measures of contemporary ethnic prejudice were indeed subtler, in being rated as more socially acceptable or less racist than statements from old-fashioned prejudice scales (Dickson, 2012; Manganelli Rattazzi & Volpato, 2003; McConahay, 1986; McConahay et al., 1981; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1996). Also, Fetz and Kroh (2021) found in the German context that ethnically prejudicial statements that target Muslims, that are concerned with (supposed) cultural incompatibilities and that are phrased in a weakly essentialist manner were especially subtle, in being evaluated least xenophobic. These studies provide evidence for the existence of subtler expressions of ethnic prejudice, which are less readily identified as xenophobic by their perceivers. Starting from these findings, the focus of the current research is directed at the consequences of such a camouflaged communication of ethnic prejudice with regard to perceivers' affective and oppositional reactions. Based on the theoretical premise, as delineated before, that prejudice awareness is a prerequisite for opposition, one might suspect that such subtler forms of ethnic prejudice would indeed spark lower indignation and would, in turn, be less likely to be stood up to and negatively sanctioned.

Yet, only a limited body of research has explored such a mechanism, in assessing affective and oppositional reactions in response to subtle and blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice. Based on correlational data, Dickson (2012, Study 2) revealed that subtler items from the modern (compared to the more blatant items from the old-fashioned) racism scale,

which were perceived as less racist, overall elicited less hostility in mostly non-target perceivers (i.e., who self-identified as White) and were associated with lower intentions to confront individuals expressing such beliefs. Complementing these findings, a study by Dickter and Newton (2013) indicated that the strength of non-target individuals' self-reported verbal confrontations of racist comments they had witnessed was positively associated with the degree to which they perceived these comments as offensive and experienced negative affective reactions in response to them. Similarly, Woodzicka, Mallett, Hendricks and Pruitt (2015) found that the more racist jokes or statements were perceived as offensive, the more were they also evaluated as confrontation-worthy by mostly non-target participants.

Additional insights stem from related research on homophobia and sexism. In their experimental study, Krolikowski et al. (2016) revealed that heterosexual participants were less motivated to distance themselves from proponents of a subtle (compared to a blatant) homophobic statement. In a similar vein, the strength of heterosexual individuals' self-reported confrontations of anti-gay comments was positively predicted by the perceived offensiveness of these statements and the degree of experienced negative affect (Dickter, 2012). Also, Mallett, Ford and Woodzicka (2016) found that male proponents of sexist jokes (compared to statements), which were perceived as less sexist, were less likely to be challenged and confronted by female counterparts. Relying on a similar rationale as the current research, experimental findings by Barreto and Ellemers (2005a, 2005b) revealed for female and male participants that subtle (i.e., benevolent or modern) compared to blatant (i.e., hostile or old-fashioned) sexist statements, in general, elicited lower anger. However, in contrast to their predictions, Barreto and Ellemers (2005b) did overall not find differences regarding intentions to protest against proponents of modern compared to old-fashioned sexism. Yet, evidence from two other experimental studies on reactions to sexism —however

only with female (i.e., target) participants—provides support for such a mechanism and the reasoning proposed here. Modern (compared to old-fashioned) sexism, which was less likely to be recognized as sexist, was found to spark less anger, which, in turn, translated into lower collective action or protest intentions and behaviors (Ellemers & Barreto, 2009). Also, benevolent sexism was found to decrease, while hostile sexism increased women's collective action intentions and behaviors compared to a control condition (Becker & Wright, 2011, Study 1 and 2), which was (however only in Study 2) mediated by positive and negative affect, respectively.[3]

Overall, these previous studies provide first support for the general mechanism of interest here, suggesting that subtler forms of prejudice (i.e., racism, sexism or homophobia), which are less strongly perceived as discriminatory, can indeed elicit lower negative affective as well as oppositional responses among their perceivers. Yet, in relating to different forms of prejudice, rather different forms of oppositional reactions, and to responses from individuals who are and who are not themselves the targets of the respective prejudice, earlier research and empirical evidence are not completely conclusive with regard to the specific question pursued here. Also, especially experimental studies are lacking that assesses the causal impact of subtle and blatant forms of ethnic prejudice on their perceivers.

Approaching this issue, the current research seeks to provide a clearer understanding of the role of non-target individuals in acting as potential allies against racism, in examining their negative affective reactions as well as their intentions to engage in different forms of opposition in response to subtle and blatant communications of ethnic prejudice. Specifically, we aim to disentangle whether subtler expressions of ethnic prejudice, which elicit a lower degree of prejudice awareness, might covertly reinforce social inequalities because they do not trigger as much indignation and negative social sanctioning.

Overview and Hypotheses

We examine within two experimental studies the affective and oppositional reactions of non-target perceivers to subtle and blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice, supposedly endorsed in a public poll (Study 1) or by a politician (Study 2). We predict that subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice would overall trigger somewhat more anger and stronger oppositional intentions, i.e., higher confrontation intentions and collective action intentions (Study 1 and 2), and a higher refusal to vote for a politician (Study 2), than the neutral statements, but would evoke less negative affect and weaker oppositional intentions compared to blatant communications of ethnic prejudice. Regarding the mechanism, we furthermore predict that the effect of the different prejudice expressions on oppositional intentions runs indirectly through anger. Most important with regard to the current research question, we assume that subtle (compared to blatant) ethnically prejudicial statements would spark less anger, which would consequently lead to weaker oppositional intentions among non-target perceivers.

Study 1

In Study 1, we investigate non-target individuals' affective and oppositional reactions to subtle or blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice as well as neutral statements relating to Muslim migrants, supposedly shared by many Germans according to a recent poll.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Data were collected as part of a larger online survey[4] by a professional survey institute, which distributed the survey among adult participants from a German online access panel. This approach allowed us to draw an age- and gender-representative sample of the general population in Germany. Individuals in the online access panel collect points for

participating in studies, which they can exchange for vouchers, money, or donations. Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary and could be quit at any time.

With regard to the measures relevant for the current study, the online survey procedure was as follows: In the first part, participants were randomly assigned to either the control group or one of the two experimental groups, i.e., the subtle or the blatant ethnic prejudice condition, in which they were asked to read neutral statements or subtle or blatant ethnically prejudicial statements, respectively. Afterwards, participants' prejudice awareness was measured, serving as a manipulation check, followed by the assessment of negative affective reactions, and—as oppositional intentions—confrontation intentions and collective action intentions.

After excluding 12 Muslim participants, because they were the targets of the prejudicial statements employed here, the final sample for our analyses comprised 813 participants (403 women, 410 men, 0 diverse/no indication; M_{age} = 44.54 years, SD = 14.63, age range: 18–69 years).

Experimental Design and Materials

We adapted an experimental procedure that has been widely employed within previous research (e.g., Barreto & Ellemers, 2005a, 2005b; Becker & Wright, 2011; Dickson, 2012). In all three conditions, participants were presented with statements related to Muslims and migration in Germany that many Germans supposedly agreed to in an ostensible opinion poll. Muslims were selected as the target group because they represent a negatively stereotyped (Asbrock, 2010) and especially problematized minority group (Hierl, 2012; Shooman, 2011; Spielhaus, 2013) in Germany. As it has been suggested that the term 'Muslim' has become 'ethnicized' in Germany, it might be best described as an ethno-religious group label, referring to individuals (perceived as) having their roots in Muslim-majority countries rather

than to people's actual religious identification (Hierl, 2012; Shooman, 2011; Spielhaus, 2013). The statements presented in the three conditions were selected based on pretest results[5] and were either self-developed or adapted from existing prejudice scales, i.e., the subtle and blatant prejudice scale (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995).

In the control condition, participants read seven neutral statements, which were indeed not judged as xenophobic in the pretest (e.g., "At the moment three to five million Muslims are living in Germany"). In the two experimental conditions, participants read seven ethnically prejudicial statements, which all conveyed the prejudicial core message that Muslims are distinct from and inferior to Germans. Statements presented in the subtle ethnic prejudice condition had been not or only slightly rated as xenophobic (e.g., "Many children of Muslim migrants fail in school, because their parents are not as interested in education as German parents."), while those selected for the blatant ethnic prejudice condition (e.g., "Muslims just don't have the cognitive skills to succeed in the German educational system.") had been evaluated as strongly xenophobic by pretest respondents. We ensured that the prejudicial statements covered the same topics in both conditions. The complete experimental materials are presented in Appendix A (Table A1).

Measures

For all measures, respondents indicated their agreement on a 1 *(not at all)* to 5 *(very)* scale.

Prejudice awareness. As a manipulation check, respondents' prejudice awareness was assessed with three items by asking them whether they thought that the statements they were exposed to in the three conditions were xenophobic, devaluing Muslims, or unfair to Muslims ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 1.27$, $\alpha = .96$).

Anger. Adapting selected items from previous research (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005a, 2005b; Becker & Wright, 2011; Ellemers & Barreto, 2009), participants indicated, to what extent the statements presented to them made them angry or indignant. The two items were averaged as an anger-index ($M = 2.39$, $SD = 1.21$, $\alpha = .86$, $r = 0.76$, $p < .001$).[6]

Confrontation intentions. Participants' intentions to confront proponents of the statements presented to them was assessed with two items (adapting one item from Barreto & Ellemers, 2005b), asking if they would like to speak up against, or would like to change the opinion of someone endorsing such beliefs. The two items were averaged to form a composite score for confrontation intentions ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 1.20$, $\alpha = .86$, $r = 0.76$, $p < .001$).[7]

Collective action intentions. The inclination to engage in collective action against racism was assessed with five items (adapting some items from Becker & Wright, 2011, and Ellemers & Barreto, 2009). Participants were asked if they would like to act in general against xenophobia and racism in Germany, to join an anti-racism demonstration, to sign a petition/ an online petition against racism, to do voluntary work in an organization or to vote for a party that fights xenophobia or racism ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 1.15$, $\alpha = .93$).

Results and Discussion

Manipulation check. Corroborating the effectiveness of our manipulation in line with the pretest results[5], analyses of variance revealed mean differences between the three conditions with regard to individuals' prejudice awareness (Table 1, left panel), $F(2, 810) = 216.20$, $p < 0.001$. Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons showed that respondents in the blatant ethnic prejudice condition exhibited higher prejudice awareness than individuals in the subtle ethnic prejudice as well as people in the control condition, perceiving the statements presented to them more strongly as xenophobic. Participants exposed to subtle ethnic

prejudice showed somewhat increased prejudice awareness compared to individuals in the control condition (all *p*s < .001).

Mean effects of the experimental conditions. We first overall examined the mean differences between the three conditions (Table 1, left panel), with analyses of variance indeed revealing differences with regard to anger, $F(2, 810) = 56.43$, $p < .001$, and confrontation intentions, $F(2, 810) = 28.00$, $p < .001$. Partially corroborating our predictions, Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons showed that respondents in the blatant (compared to the subtle) ethnic prejudice condition exhibited more anger (p <.001) and stronger confrontation intentions (p <.001), while respondents in the subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition did, however, overall not show differences with regard to anger (p = .323), and confrontation intentions (p = .714). Participants in the blatant ethnic prejudice condition had substantially higher values on anger and confrontation intentions compared to those in the control condition (all *p*s <.001). In contrast to our predictions, we did overall not find any mean differences between the three conditions regarding individuals' reported collective action intentions, $F(2, 810) = 0.02$, $p = .983$.

---------- Table 1 about here ----------

Primary mediation analysis[8]. Addressing our primary research question, we next investigated, whether the subtle and blatant ethnically prejudicial communications affected respondents' oppositional intentions indirectly through the anger experienced in response to these statements. Using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 4; Hayes, 2018), generating bootstrapped confidence intervals (5,000 bootstrap samples) for the indirect effects, we estimated two separate mediator models with the experimental condition as the focal multicategorical predictor variable, anger as the mediator, and confrontation intentions (Model 1, Figure 1) and collective action intentions (Model 2, Figure 2) as the outcome

variables. The experimental condition variable was sequentially dummy-coded, which was most suitable regarding our hypotheses.[9] Since for multicategorical predictor variables *relative* indirect, direct and total effects are calculated (Hayes, 2018), the coefficients for the sequentially-coded condition variable reflect the differences in the effects for the adjacent categories (i.e., subtle ethnic prejudice vs. control condition and blatant vs. subtle ethnic prejudice condition). All continuous measures were z-standardized beforehand, so coefficients are fully standardized for continuous variables and partially standardized for the categorical condition variable.

Overall, the total effects of the experimental manipulation revealed—in line with the analyses of variance—that respondents in the blatant (compared to the subtle) ethnic prejudice condition exhibited stronger confrontation intentions (Model 1, c_2: b = .475, SE = .082, $p < .001$), while respondents in the subtle ethnic prejudice and the control condition did overall not differ with regard to their confrontation intentions (Model 1, c_1: b = .100, SE = .085, p = .238). Contrary to predictions, respondents in the blatant (compared to the subtle) ethnic prejudice condition (Model 2, c_2: b = .009, SE = .085, p = .913) as well as those in the subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition (Model 2, c_1: b = .007, SE = .088, p = .938) did overall not differ with regard to their expressed collective action intentions.

Next, we proceeded with an examination of the indirect pathways via anger. For collective action intentions we did so even in the absence of an overall effect of the experimental conditions, as there is largely a consensus in the methodological literature on mediation analysis that a significant total effect is no longer considered as a prerequisite for the existence of indirect effects (e.g., Hayes, 2018; MacKinnon, Krull, & Lockwood, 2000). Inspection of the individual paths of the mediation models showed that the blatant (compared

to the subtle) ethnic prejudice condition increased anger (Model 1 and 2, a_2: b = .656, SE = .079, p <.001), while the subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition did not significantly affect anger (Model 1 and 2, a_1: b = .132, SE = .082, p =.108). Anger, in turn, significantly enhanced confrontation intentions (Model 1, *b:* b = .582, SE = .030, p <.001) as well as collective action intentions (Model 2, *b:* b = .344, SE = .036, p <.001). In line with our hypotheses, the examination of the indirect effects showed that blatant (compared to subtle) expressions of ethnic prejudice indeed increased respondents' confrontation intentions through anger (Model 1, a_2b: b = .382, SE = .056). This indirect effect was significant, since the 95% bootstrap confidence interval [.278, .495] did not include zero. The small positive indirect effect of the subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition on confrontation intentions through anger was not statistically significant (Model 1, a_1b: b = .077, SE = .044, 95% bootstrap CI [-.007, .166]). Similarly, blatant (compared to subtle) expressions of ethnic prejudice significantly increased respondents' collective action intentions indirectly through anger (Model 2, a_2b: b = .226, SE = .041, 95% bootstrap CI [.151, .310]). The small positive indirect effect of the subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition on collective action intentions through anger was not statistically significant (Model 2, a_1b: b = .046, SE = .027, 95% bootstrap CI [-.004, .102]). Thus, in line with our prediction of an indirect affective pathway and most important with regard to the current research question, subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice did indeed spark less anger, and thereby indirectly triggered weaker confrontation intentions as well as collective action intentions compared to blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice.

We then explored the direct effects of the experimental manipulation. For confrontation intentions, the direct effects of the blatant (compared to the subtle) ethnic prejudice condition (Model 1, c_2': b = .093, SE = .071, p = .190) and of the subtle ethnic

prejudice (compared to the control) condition (Model 1, c_1': b = .023, SE = .070, p = .743), when controlling for anger, were substantially smaller compared to the total effects and no longer significant. The exploration of the direct effects for collective action intentions yielded somewhat surprising results. The direct effect of the subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition (Model 2, c_1': b = -.039, SE = .083, p = .642) was negative, although not significant, and the direct effect of blatant (compared to subtle) expressions of ethnic prejudice, when controlling for anger, was significant and negative (Model 2, c_2': b = -.216, SE = .084, p = .010). This suggests that inconsistent mediation mechanisms (also referred to as competitive mediation; MacKinnon et al., 2000; Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010) are at work for individuals' general collective action intentions, with direct and indirect effects being opposite in direction and canceling each other out overall. Thus, while blatant (compared to subtle) ethnically prejudicial statements, as expected, indirectly increased collective action intentions through anger (indirect effect a_2b), respondents showed even weaker intentions to engage in collective action in response to blatant (compared to subtle) ethnically prejudicial statements when controlling for anger (direct effect c_2'), adding up to a nonsignificant overall effect of the blatant (compared to the subtle) ethnic prejudice condition on collective action intentions (total effect c_2). A trend for a similar pattern of opposing, yet not significant, indirect and direct effects was also observable for subtle ethnically prejudicial compared to neutral communications.

In sum, findings from Study 1 provide support for our main hypothesis regarding an indirect anger-opposition pathway in response to subtle compared to blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice: Subtle ethnically prejudicial statements, which are not as readily perceived as xenophobic as blatant communications of prejudice, elicit lower negative affect in non-target perceivers, which, in turn, triggers lower oppositional intentions, i.e. lower intentions to

confront proponents of such prejudicial statements and lower general intentions to engage in collective action against racism. Partially corroborating our predictions, this indirect effect is also reflected, overall, in lower average confrontation intentions expressed in reaction to subtle (compared to blatant) ethnic prejudice, while—due to opposing indirect and direct effects—the reported collective action intentions did overall not differ for individuals exposed to subtle (compared to blatant) ethnically prejudicial communications.

---------- Figure 1 about here ----------

---------- Figure 2 about here ----------

Study 2

Study 1 provided first support for the idea that subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice are more likely to pass by unchallenged and to circumvent negative social sanctions. Yet, one might argue that the experimental scenario we adapted from previous research for Study 1, presenting ostensible survey results, was not comparable to real-world communications of ethnic prejudice. Also, one could argue that this manipulation might have biased the effects, in also inducing a group norm by implying that many people share the presented opinions. To further corroborate our findings, we therefore conducted a second study, employing a more authentic communication scenario, and investigated the reactions of non-target respondents to a longer subtle or blatant ethnically prejudicial statement or a neutral statement related to Muslim migrants, allegedly made by a fictitious politician. Besides confrontation and collective action intentions, we also included people's refusal to vote for the politician as a third measure assessing oppositional intentions.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Data were again collected as part of a larger online survey[4] by a professional survey institute, allowing to draw an age- and gender-representative sample from a German online access panel. Again, respondents received points for their voluntary participation, which they can exchange for vouchers, money, or donations.

The survey procedure was identical to Study 1, except for the content of the experimental manipulation and the inclusion of the additional measure for oppositional intentions (see below).

After excluding 8 Muslim participants as targets of the prejudicial statements employed here, the final sample for our analyses comprised 817 participants (405 women, 412 men, 0 diverse/no indication; M_{age} = 44.20 years, SD = 14.81, age range: 18–69 years).

Experimental Design and Materials

For all three conditions, we developed one longer statement each, related to migration and Muslims in Germany and ostensibly put forward by a German local politician ("Mr. Schmitz"). The selection of the statements was again based on results from the separate pretest.[5] In the control condition, participants read a neutral statement, which was judged as not xenophobic in the pretest (excerpt: "A lower number of Muslims are living in Eastern than in Western Germany"). In the experimental conditions, participants read one of two ethnically prejudicial statements, covering the same topics. The statement presented in the subtle ethnic prejudice condition had been only slightly rated as xenophobic (excerpt: "We also have to talk about the fact that Muslims are often not that achievement-oriented and like to benefit from our welfare system."). In contrast, the statement presented in the blatant ethnic prejudice condition (excerpt: "Rather, Muslims just have an inherently bad work ethic and

like to rest in the 'welfare hammock' in Germany.") had been strongly evaluated as xenophobic by pretest respondents. The complete experimental materials are presented in Appendix A (Table A2).

Measures

If not stated otherwise, respondents indicated their agreement on a 1 *(not at all)* to 5 *(very)* scale.

Prejudice awareness. Prejudice awareness was again assessed by averaging respondents' ratings of their evaluations of the politician's statement as xenophobic, devaluing Muslims, or unfair to Muslims ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 1.31$, $\alpha = .96$).

Anger. Participants again indicated, to what extent the politician's statement made them angry or indignant ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.23$, $\alpha = .89$, $r = 0.81$, $p < .001$).[6]

Confrontation intentions. Participants indicated whether they would like to speak up to, or would like to change the opinion of Mr. Schmitz, which was averaged to form a composite score for intentions to confront the politician ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 1.21$, $\alpha = .89$, $r = 0.80$, $p < .001$).[7]

Refusal to vote for the politician. Then, respondents were asked whether they would be willing to vote for Mr. Schmitz in a local election on a 1 *(definitely not)* to 5 *(yes, absolutely)* scale. The item was reverse-coded, representing individuals' refusal to vote for the politician ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.22$).

Collective action intentions. Participants' intentions to engage in collective action against racism and xenophobia was assessed with the same five items as in Study 1 ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.14$, $\alpha = .93$).[10]

Results and Discussion

Manipulation check. Corroborating the effectiveness of our manipulation and in line with the pretest results[5], analyses of variance revealed mean differences between the conditions with regard to individuals' prejudice awareness (Table 1, right panel), $F(2, 814) = 120.24$, $p < 0.001$. Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons showed that respondents in the blatant ethnic prejudice condition exhibited higher prejudice awareness than individuals in the subtle ethnic prejudice and people in the control condition, perceiving the statements presented to them more strongly as xenophobic. Participants exposed to subtle ethnic prejudice showed somewhat increased prejudice awareness compared to individuals in the control condition (all ps $< .001$).

Mean effects of the experimental conditions. We first overall examined the mean differences between the three conditions (Table 1, right panel), with analyses of variance indeed revealing differences with regard to anger, $F(2, 814) = 36.80$, $p < 0.001$, intentions to confront, $F(2, 814) = 31.66$, $p < 0.001$, and refusal to vote for the politician, $F(2, 814) = 11.67$, $p < 0.001$. As hypothesized, Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons showed that respondents in the blatant (compared to the subtle) ethnic prejudice condition exhibited higher anger ($p < .001$), confrontation intentions ($p < .001$), as well as a stronger refusal to vote for the politician ($p = .006$). Respondents in the subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition exhibited higher anger ($p = .030$), and confrontation intentions ($p < .001$), but did—against our predictions—overall not report a stronger refusal to vote for the politician ($p = .220$). Participants in the blatant ethnic prejudice condition exhibited higher values on all three measures compared to those in the control condition (all ps $< .001$). In contrast to our predictions, we did overall not find any mean differences between the three conditions

regarding individuals' intentions to engage in collective action against racism, $F(2, 814) = 0.12$, $p = .887$.

Primary mediation analysis[8]. Next, we again investigated whether the subtle and blatant prejudicial communications affected respondents' oppositional intentions, i.e., confrontation intentions, refusal to vote for the politician, and collective action intentions, indirectly through anger. We again employed the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 4; Hayes, 2018), using the same analytic strategy and a similar model set-up as in Study 1 (i.e., 5,000 bootstrap samples, sequential dummy coding of the condition variable[9], z-standardization of continuous variables), to estimate three separate mediator models with the experimental condition as the multicategorical predictor variable, anger as the mediator, and confrontation intentions (Model 1, Figure 3), refusal to vote for the politician (Model 2, Figure 4) and collective action intentions (Model 3, Figure 5) as the outcome variables.

The total effects of the experimental manipulation indicate, in line with the analyses of variance, that respondents in the blatant (compared to the subtle) ethnic prejudice condition overall reported stronger confrontation intentions (Model 1, c_2: $b = .312$, $SE = .082$, $p < .001$) and a stronger refusal to vote for the politician (Model 2, c_2: $b = .261$, $SE = .084$, $p = .002$). The subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition overall increased confrontation intentions (Model 1, c_1: $b = .357$, $SE = .082$, $p < .001$), but did not significantly affect individuals' refusal to vote for the politician (Model 2, c_1: $b = .150$, $SE = .084$, $p = .073$). Respondents in the blatant (compared to the subtle) ethnic prejudice condition (Model 3, c_2: $b = .026$, $SE = .085$, $p = .757$) as well as those in the subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition (Model 3, c_1: $b = -.041$, $SE = .085$, $p = .630$) did overall not differ with regard to the collective action intentions they expressed.

Next, we examined the indirect pathways of the subtle and blatant prejudicial communications via anger on these three different forms of oppositional intentions. Again, we investigated this indirect effect for collective action intentions in the absence of an overall effect of the experimental conditions. Inspection of the individual paths showed that the blatant (compared to the subtle) ethnic prejudice condition (Model 1-3, a_2: b = .488, SE = .082, p <.001) and the subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition (Model 1-3, a_1: b = .211, SE = .081, p = .010) increased anger. Anger, in turn, increased confrontation intentions (Model 1, *b:* b = .676, SE = .026, p <.001), refusal to vote for the politician (Model 2, *b:* b = .604, SE = .029, p <.001) and collective action intentions (Model 3, *b:* b = .421, SE = .034, p <.001). In line with our hypotheses, the indirect effects showed that exposure to blatant (compared to subtle) ethnic prejudice indeed increased respondents' confrontation intentions through anger (Model 1, a_2b: b = .330, SE = .061, 95% bootstrap CI [.212, .449]), as did the subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition (Model 1, a_1b: b = .143, SE = .053, 95% bootstrap CI [.041, .247]). Also, blatant (compared to subtle) expressions of ethnic prejudice (Model 2, a_2b: b = .295, SE = .053, 95% bootstrap CI [.190, .401]) and the subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition (Model 2, a_1b: b = .127, SE = .047, 95% bootstrap CI [.036, .223]) increased individuals' refusal to vote for the politician indirectly through anger. Similarly, the blatant (compared to the subtle) ethnic prejudice condition (Model 3, a_2b: b = .206, SE = .041, 95% bootstrap CI [.127, .287]) indirectly increased collective action intentions through anger. The small positive indirect effect of the subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition (Model 3, a_1b: b = .089, SE = .034, 95% bootstrap CI [.024, .157]) on collective action intentions through anger was also significant.

We then explored the direct effects of the experimental manipulation. For confrontation intentions, the direct effect of the blatant (compared to the subtle) ethnic prejudice condition (Model 1, c_2': b = -.018, SE = .062, p = .773), when controlling for anger, was substantially reduced compared to the total effect and no longer significant. The direct effect of the subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition (Model 1, c_1': b = .214, SE = .061, p < .001) was also smaller than the total effect, yet still significant. The direct effects of the blatant (compared to the subtle) ethnic prejudice condition (Model 2, c_2': b = -.034 SE = .070, p = .626) and of the subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition (Model 2, c_1': b = .023, SE = .068, p = .736) on respondents' refusal to vote for the politician were both non-significant.

As in Study 1, the exploration of the direct effects for collective action intentions yielded somewhat surprising results. The direct effect of the subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition was negative, yet not significant (Model 3, c_1': b = -.130, SE = .078, p = .097), while blatant (compared to subtle) expressions of ethnic prejudice significantly negatively predicted collective action intentions, when controlling for anger (Model 3, c_2': b = -.179, SE = .080, p = .025). Again, this suggests that inconsistent mediation mechanisms (MacKinnon et al., 2000; Zhao et al., 2010) are at work with regard to general collective action intentions, with opposite direct and indirect effects canceling each other out overall: While blatant (compared to subtle) expressions of ethnic prejudice indirectly increase collective action intentions through anger (indirect effect a_2b), respondents reported, when controlling for anger, even weaker intentions to engage in collective action against racism in response to blatant (compared to subtle) ethnically prejudicial statements (direct effect c_2'), summing up to a non-significant total effect (c_2) of the blatant (compared to the subtle) ethnic prejudice condition on collective action intentions. A similar trend of opposing, yet not

uniformly significant indirect and direct effects was also found for subtle ethnically prejudicial compared to neutral communications.

In sum, Study 2 largely replicates findings from the first study. In using a more authentic communication scenario, it could further corroborate the idea that subtle (compared to blatant) ethnically prejudicial statements, which are not as readily perceived as xenophobic, elicit less negative affect in non-target perceivers, which, in turn, triggers lower oppositional reactions. Additionally, Study 2 could show that this mechanism also extends to a different kind of oppositional intention, i.e., individuals' refusal to vote for a politician. Similar to Study 1 and partially corroborating our predictions, this indirect mechanism is also overall reflected in respondents' lower average intentions to confront and a lower refusal to vote for the politician expressing subtle (compared to blatant) ethnic prejudice. Yet, respondents did overall not report different levels of collective action intentions in reaction to subtle (compared to blatant) communications of ethnic prejudice due to opposing indirect and direct effects.

---------- Figure 3 about here ----------

---------- Figure 4 about here ----------

---------- Figure 5 about here ----------

General Discussion

In light of current egalitarian norms, ethnic prejudice often appears in a subtler manner, which disguises its xenophobic content, making it less readily recognizable as prejudicial. The current research sought to investigate whether, exactly due to their covert nature, such subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice might be far from harmless because they can manage to circumvent negative social sanctioning. To this end, we examined to what extent subtle ethnically prejudicial communications might trigger lower indignation, and consequently evoke lower oppositional intentions among non-target perceivers, who are not themselves affected by ethnic prejudice, but might act as important allies against racism.

Findings from both our experimental studies provided support for such an indirect mechanism. Our analyses showed that subtle (compared to more blatant) expressions of ethnic prejudice indeed elicited lower anger in non-target respondents, which, in turn, translated into weaker intentions to engage in different forms of opposition, i.e., lower intentions to confront proponents of such prejudicial statements (Study 1 and 2), a lower refusal to vote for a politician expressing such prejudicial beliefs (Study 2), as well as lower intentions to engage in collective action against racism (Study 1 and 2).

Further in line with our expectations, this indirect effect was also overall reflected in lower average levels of negative affect, lower confrontation intentions, as well as a lower refusal to vote for the politician being reported in response to subtle (compared to blatant) communications of ethnic prejudice. Contrary to our predictions, the indirect effect on opposition through anger did, however, overall not translate into average differences in collective action intentions expressed by individuals in reaction to subtle (compared to blatant) communications of ethnic prejudice. A further exploration of these findings revealed that this could be attributed to inconsistent mediation mechanisms: When controlling for

individuals' negative affective reactions, blatant (compared to subtle) expressions of ethnic prejudice, unexpectedly, even decreased intentions to engage in collective action against racism, which overall canceled out the indirect effect.

Only partially in line with our predictions, subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice did not increase (Study 1) or only slightly increased (Study 2) the different oppositional intentions indirectly through anger in comparison to the neutral communications. Also overall, subtle ethnically prejudicial communications did not evoke or only slightly evoked higher average levels of anger and oppositional intentions than the neutral statements.

Taken together, with regard to intentions to engage in oppositional acts directly addressing the proponents of ethnically prejudicial statements themselves, such as an act of confrontation or one's refusal to support the discriminating individual, findings from both studies clearly indicate that subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice might indeed more often remain unchallenged than blatant communications of ethnic prejudice because they do not spark the same amount of indignation in their perceivers. This might have serious consequences, as opposition is crucial for decreasing further prejudiced responses (e.g., Blanchard et al., 1994; Czopp et al., 2006; Monteith & Mark, 2005; Nelson et al., 2011). The absence of opposition might signal to proponents of subtle ethnically prejudicial beliefs that these opinions are, in fact, not xenophobic and supposedly in line with egalitarian standards, allowing them to maintain an egalitarian self-image and leading them to not perceive any need to reconsider their beliefs. Also, such a lack of direct opposition might further perpetuate the general perception that these ethnically prejudicial expressions are allegedly not xenophobic (i.e., their very subtlety), potentially encouraging the further adoption and transmission of such subtle prejudicial beliefs also by witnesses of such communications. In both ways, subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice might be allowed to persist and to covertly

perpetuate negative beliefs concerning ethnic minorities in current societies, thereby potentially clandestinely reinforcing ethnic inequalities. Also, it might be particularly harmful if non-target perceivers fail to speak up against subtle forms of ethnic prejudice because they are important allies against racism (Ashburn-Nardo, 2018) and their opposition to prejudice might often be even more effective than by targets themselves (Gulker et al., 2013; Kaiser & Miller, 2001). In overall eliciting weaker intentions to oppose their proponents than blatant ethnically prejudicial communications and not even uniformly stronger oppositional reactions than neutral statements, subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice might even be strategically employed by professional communicators in the public and political migration discourse (see e.g., Haney-López, 2014; Kinder, 2013, for this discussion). Our findings indeed suggest that subtle ways of expressing ethnic prejudice might be less costly for politicians and also other public actors, allowing them to propagate xenophobic ideas, yet in a disguised manner, which feigns adherence to egalitarian norms and does not substantially repel individuals, who despise overt racism. This underlines the importance of anti-prejudice interventions (e.g., civic education campaigns) that raise awareness for subtle forms of explicit ethnic prejudice. These could sensitize members of the majority society to disguised communications of ethnic prejudice in current discourses and could increase their ability to speak up against them, thereby enabling them to act as ‘multipliers’ and allies against racism.

Regarding intentions to engage in more large-scale acts of opposition such as collective action against racism, our data suggest a more complicated picture, which we would tentatively attribute to the fact that solidarity-based collective action intentions (Saab et al., 2015) on the part of people who are not personally targeted by ethnic prejudice themselves require a general acknowledgment of racism and ethnic injustice as a problem in our society. On the one hand, subtle (compared to blatant) expressions of ethnic prejudice

indeed elicited—as expected—less anger, which indirectly translated into lower intentions to engage in collective action against racism in our society. This suggests that one's negative affective reactions might also signal a lower urgency to act against racism in our society in the face of subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice, yet a higher need to do so when being exposed to blatant ethnically prejudicial communications. However, at the same time, when controlling for anger, communications of blatant compared to subtler prejudicial beliefs appeared to actually decrease individuals' willingness to engage in collective action against racism. One tentative interpretation might be that, when partialling out the aversive emotional reactions in response to such blatant prejudicial statements, exposure to such beliefs that very overtly propagate negative beliefs concerning migrants and openly attribute negative characteristics to them can also undermine individuals' perception of racism as a problem as well as their perceived need to show solidarity with this group and to advance societal efforts against racism—for instance, by potentially increasing recipients' levels of implicit ethnic prejudice more strongly. This unexpected finding draws attention to the fact that it should not be concluded that blatant forms of ethnic prejudice are not harmful. In fact, these might also substantially contribute to a corrosion of egalitarian norms and the expansion of the window of social acceptability regarding 'what is sayable' (see e.g., Crandall, Ferguson, & Bahns, 2013, for a discussion of shifting perceptions of what constitutes prejudice). Also, numerous studies show that blatant ethnic prejudice has extremely negative consequences also for its targets (e.g., Boeckmann & Liew, 2002; Mullen & Leader, 2005).

Nevertheless, in complementing previous theorizing (e.g., Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008) as well as findings from related lines of research on sexism and homophobia (e.g., Barreto & Ellemers, 2005a, 2005b; Krolikowski et al., 2016) and in extending the limited body of research on this matter regarding ethnic prejudice (Dickson, 2012; Dickter & Newton, 2013),

our experimental findings further corroborate the idea that the negative effects of subtle forms of ethnic prejudice with their ability to circumvent egalitarian norms and hence to evade negative social sanctioning by the majority society should not be underestimated. Across all different oppositional intentions investigated in our studies, we find support for the proposed indirect mechanism that subtle (compared to blatant) ethnically prejudicial communications elicit lower anger among their recipients, which, in turn, translates into a lower willingness to engage in opposition. In light of the overall effects, our findings indicate that subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice might particularly contribute to a clandestine reinforcement of social inequalities in undermining non-target perceivers' willingness to engage in direct oppositional acts against the proponents of such prejudicial beliefs and hence subverting their role as potential allies against racism.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current studies also carry some limitations and point to avenues for future research.

First, although mediation models are inherently intended to investigate causal mechanisms underlying the relationship of variables (e.g., Hayes, 2018; Mathieu, DeShon, & Bergh, 2008), we can, with the current research design, only firmly determine the causal effect of the experimentally manipulated exposure to subtle and blatant ethnic prejudice on individuals' negative affect and oppositional intentions, but not the causal link between negative affect, as the mediator, and the different oppositional intentions as the outcome variables. Yet, it should be noted that our results and the causal chain of the model proposed here are congruent with earlier theorizing and findings from related empirical research (e.g., Becker & Wright, 2011; Ellemers & Barreto, 2009; see also Saab et al., 2015) as well as with previous research and theory regarding the general role of emotions and anger, in particular,

in motivating behavior or behavioral tendencies (e.g., Frijda, 2004; Harmon-Jones, 2003; Roseman, Wiest, & Swartz, 1994). Nevertheless, it would be desirable to conduct further studies that experimentally manipulate individual levels of negative affect in order to examine its causal impact on oppositional reactions and hence the causality within the current mediational mechanism more thoroughly (see e.g., Spencer, Zanna, & Fong, 2005, for this discussion).

Second, our unexpected findings regarding the impact of subtle and blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice on individuals' collective action intentions call for further research into the potentially opposing effects of exposure to different (ethnically) prejudicial communications in increasing, yet also undermining individuals' willingness to engage in collective action. Future studies are needed to corroborate our results as well as our tentative interpretation that blatant (compared to subtle) prejudicial communications can trigger negative affect in light of its xenophobic content, which, in turn, elicits opposition, yet can at the same time—in propagating negative views regarding migrants—undermine individuals' perceived need as well as their willingness to support collective efforts to fight racism, when partialling out these negative affective responses. These studies could, for instance, employ implicit measures in order to explore whether this latter effect might potentially—as discussed before—be attributed to the fact that blatant compared to subtle ethnically prejudicial communications might more strongly increase recipients' levels of implicit ethnic prejudice. Also, further research should investigate whether our current findings on the opposing direct and indirect effects of blatant (compared to subtle) prejudicial communications might also extend to other variables of interest, such as individuals' explicit, i.e., self-reported, prejudicial attitudes. From a methodological point of view, our findings on opposing

pathways highlight the importance of exploring indirect effects even in the absence of an overall effect (e.g., Hayes, 2018; MacKinnon et al., 2000).

Additionally, future studies are warranted to get a more comprehensive picture of the effects of subtle and blatant ethnically prejudicial communications. First, future studies might use an experimental design that employs more concrete situational scenarios in order to investigate whether our findings are also applicable to reactions to ethnically prejudicial expressions in different everyday situations. Such scenarios could encompass situations that are more comparable to ordinary conversations, or could, with regard to political communication, comprise existing statements of politicians that have actually been uttered in a political context. Also, since we only examined oppositional intentions, it would be of interest whether the current mechanism also generalizes to actual oppositional behaviors.[10] In that regard, it would be especially valuable to conduct field experiments in order to examine more natural responses to subtle and blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice, especially in light of previous findings pointing to discrepancies between actual and imagined reactions to witnessing prejudice and discrimination (e.g., Crosby & Wilson, 2015; Kawakami, Dunn, Karmali, & Dovidio, 2009).

Conclusion

Taken together, the current findings from two large experimental studies clearly disclose that subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice, which communicate discriminatory ideas in a disguised manner feigning compliance with egalitarian norms, are far from harmless. In passing by unnoticed as xenophobic, subtle ethnically prejudicial statements spark lower indignation than blatant communications of ethnic prejudice and, in turn, particularly undermine the willingness of non-target perceivers to directly oppose proponents of such prejudicial opinions, thereby subverting their role as potential allies against racism. In being

able to slip under the radar of the public eye and to circumvent negative social sanctioning, subtle expressions of ethnic prejudice might covertly propagate xenophobic beliefs within society and contribute to a clandestine perpetuation of ethnic inequalities. The current findings highlight the importance of awareness-raising interventions that focus on the disclosure of subtle forms of ethnic prejudice in current migration discourses, in order to enable people to speak up against such ethnically prejudicial manifestations and to thereby thwart their stealthy mode of operation.

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Note

[1]We use the terms ethnic prejudice, racism, and xenophobia to refer to negative attitudes directed at minority out-groups along socially constructed ethnic, national, and ethno-religious categorizations.

[2]This article is concerned with subtle and blatant explicit manifestations of ethnic prejudice, i.e., consciously expressed beliefs, as they are also the focus of contemporary approaches on self-reported ethnic prejudice (e.g., McConahay, 1986; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). Approaches such as implicit or aversive racism (e.g., Dovidio, 2001; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Pearson, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2009) examine ethnic prejudice in terms of a negative automatic bias, which may also be considered subtle, yet is not the focus of the current research.

[3]Some of the studies referred to in this section included prejudice awareness (or prejudice recognition/ perceived prejudice) as a mediating variable in their analyses. As outlined in the methods- and results-sections, we employed prejudice awareness as a manipulation check in the current studies. We considered this most appropriate within our study design, as the selection of the ethnically prejudicial statements employed as the experimental stimuli was based on pretest data regarding the prejudice awareness they elicit, i.e., their evaluation as (not) xenophobic. Thus, the subtlety (or blatantness) of the prejudicial statements, reflected by the degree of prejudice awareness they evoke, represented the manipulated, independent variable of interest. Indeed, the methodological literature suggests that variables that merely serve to assess the successful manipulation of the independent variable should not be included as mediators (e.g., Tate, 2015).

[4]The complete list of measures included in the larger surveys are presented in Appendix B (Table B1).

[5]Pretest participants ($N = 174$) rated to what extent they perceived 10 randomly selected items out of 51 shorter (for Study 1) and 2 out of 10 longer statements (for Study 2) relating to migrants as (not) xenophobic.

[6]Factor analyses were conducted for several affect items included in the larger surveys, measuring anger, anxiety, and positive affect, which were partially adapted from studies by Barreto and Ellemers (2005a, 2005b), Becker and Wright (2011), and Ellemers and Barreto (2009). Rotated factor loadings indicated for both studies that the items 'angry' and 'indignant' loaded on the same factor representing anger.

[7]Factor analyses were conducted for several items adapted from Barreto and Ellemers (2005a, 2005b) and Dickson (2012), and one self-developed item, measuring the liking of and intentions to confront the source. Rotated factor loadings indicated a different factor structure as reported within earlier work (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005b; Dickson, 2012), with the items 'would like to speak up against' and 'would like to change the opinion' loading on the same factor representing confrontation intentions for both studies.

[8]As argued by Hayes (2018), mediation models are based on causal assumptions regarding mechanisms that underlie the relationship of variables, but whether causality can be established depends on the research design. In light of our hypotheses and for the sake of clarity, we employ causal language when presenting the mediation analyses, but of course critically discuss to what extent causality can be inferred based on our data.

[9]We also ran all mediation models with indicator dummy coding in order to compare the blatant ethnic prejudice and the control condition. For both studies, the significance levels of the relative effects of the blatant ethnic prejudice compared to the control condition were mostly equivalent to (or somewhat exceeded) those reported for the blatant compared to the subtle ethnic prejudice condition; the effect sizes approximately corresponded to the added relative

effects of the blatant (compared to the subtle) ethnic prejudice and the subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition.

[10]At the end of the survey in Study 2, we gave participants the opportunity to click on a link to a website providing more information on racism and xenophobia in Germany and how to combat it. This was intended as a behavioral measure for individuals' interest to take action against racism. Unfortunately, only 44 respondents (i.e., approximately 5% of the analysis sample) actually clicked on the link, so we could not include this measure in our analyses.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations by Experimental Condition for Study 1 and Study 2

	Study 1 (N = 813)				Study 2 (N = 817)				
	Prejudice awareness	Anger	Confrontation intentions	Collective action intentions	Prejudice awareness	Anger	Confrontation intentions	Collective action intentions	Refusal to vote for politician
	M (SD)	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
Control condition (Study 1: n = 253; Study 2: n = 264)	1.722 (0.768)	1.998 (0.972)	2.460 (1.028)	2.980 (1.167)	1.929 (0.948)	2.097 (1.038)	2.407 (1.008)	3.023 (1.168)	3.303 (1.050)
Subtle ethnic prejudice condition (Study 1: n = 268; Study 2: n = 292)	2.331 (1.026)	2.159 (1.111)	2.580 (1.162)	2.988 (1.128)	2.592 (1.162)	2.356 (1.166)	2.841 (1.154)	2.977 (1.116)	3.486 (1.206)
Blatant ethnic prejudice condition (Study 1: n = 292; Study 2: n = 261)	3.510 (1.206)	2.954 (1.284)	3.147 (1.255)	2.999 (1.153)	3.484 (1.319)	2.958 (1.326)	3.220 (1.333)	3.007 (1.471)	3.805 (1.340)

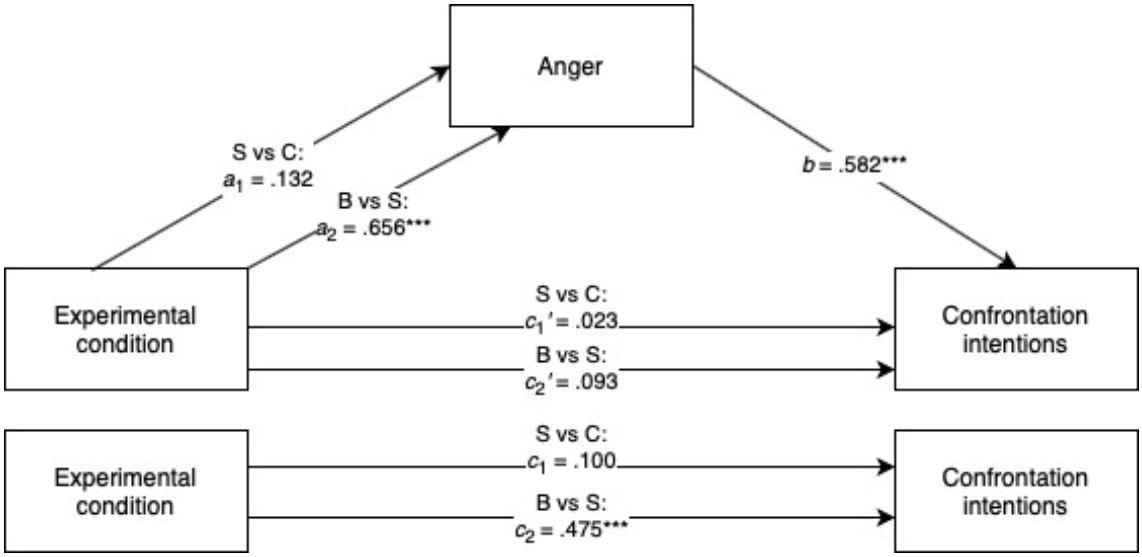

Figure 1. Mediation model of the effects of subtle and blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice on confrontation intentions through anger (Model 1, Study 1).

Note. 'S vs C' and 'B vs S' represent the relative effects of the subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition and the blatant (compared to the subtle) ethnic prejudice condition, respectively.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

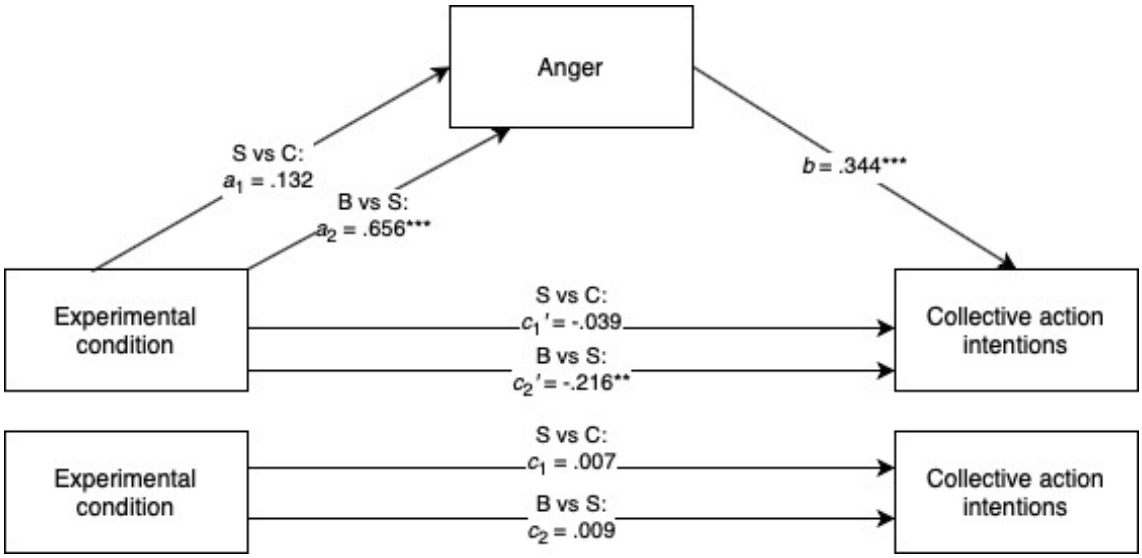

Figure 2. Mediation model of the effects of subtle and blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice on collective action intentions through anger (Model 2, Study 1).

Note. 'S vs C' and 'B vs S' represent the relative effects of the subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition and the blatant (compared to the subtle) ethnic prejudice condition, respectively.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

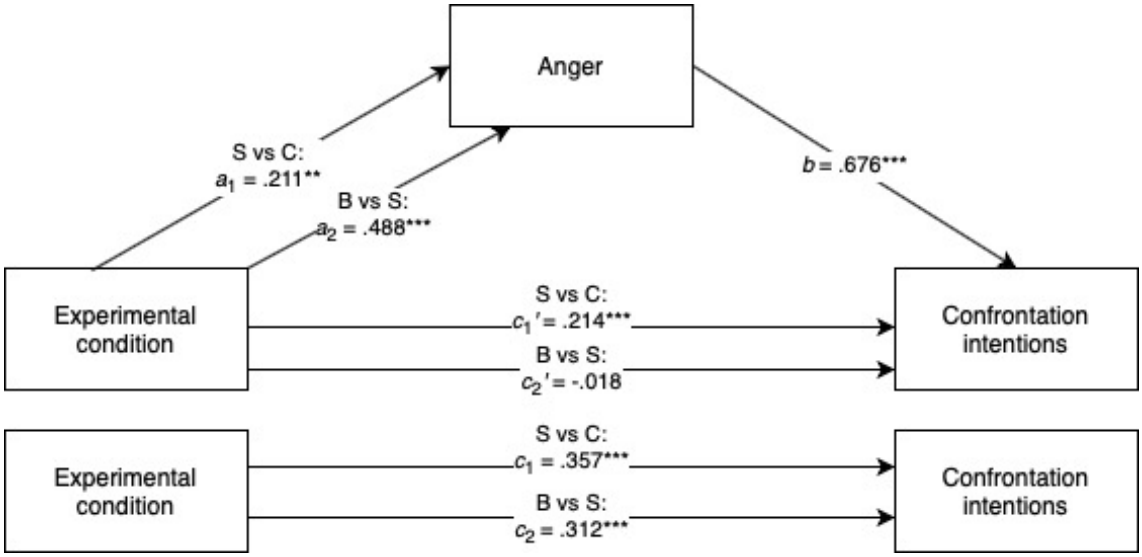

Figure 3. Mediation model of the effects of subtle and blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice on confrontation intentions through anger (Model 1, Study 2).

Note. 'S vs C' and 'B vs S' represent the relative effects of the subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition and the blatant (compared to the subtle) ethnic prejudice condition, respectively.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

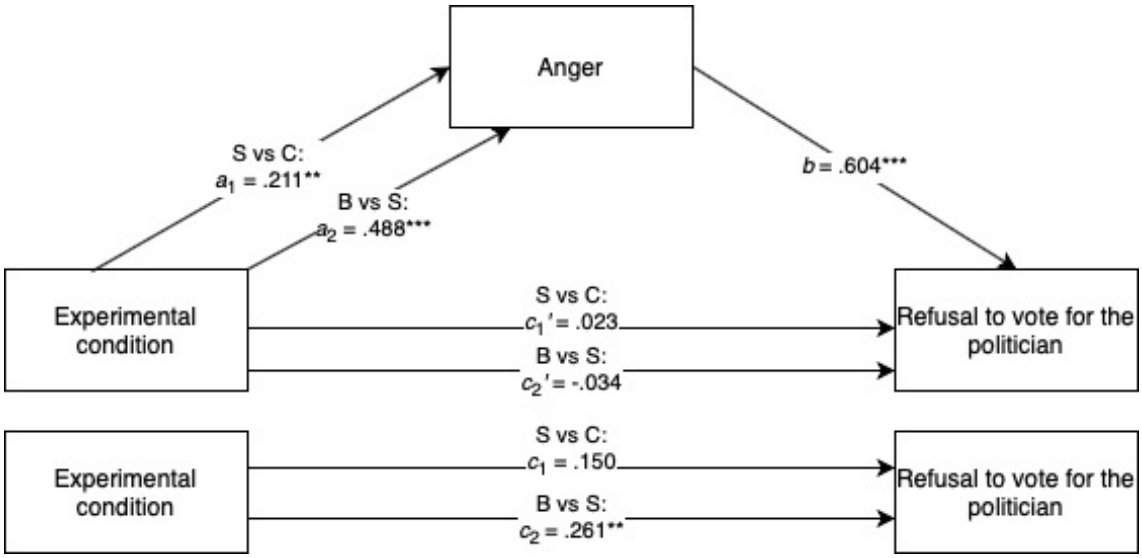

Figure 4. Mediation model of the effects of subtle and blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice on refusal to vote for the politician through anger (Model 2, Study 2).

Note. 'S vs C' and 'B vs S' represent the relative effects of the subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition and the blatant (compared to the subtle) ethnic prejudice condition, respectively.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

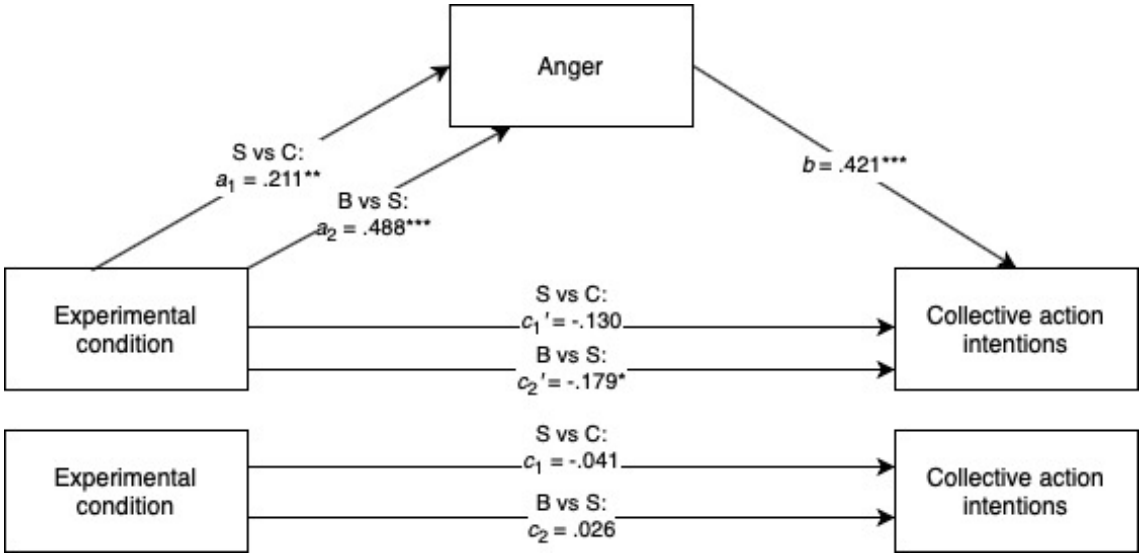

Figure 5. Mediation model of the effects of subtle and blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice on collective action intentions through anger (Model 3, Study 2).

Note. 'S vs C' and 'B vs S' represent the relative effects of the subtle ethnic prejudice (compared to the control) condition and the blatant (compared to the subtle) ethnic prejudice condition, respectively.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Appendices

for

"When unnoticed means unchallenged?

Negative affect and oppositional intentions of non-target perceivers in response to subtle and blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice"

Appendix A contains an English translation of the complete experimental materials used for Study 1 (Table A1) and Study 2 (Table A2); Appendix B contains an overview of all measures included in the larger online surveys for both studies (Table B1).

Appendix A

Table A1

Experimental Materials for Study 1 (English translation)

According to a recent poll, many Germans endorse the following statements related to Muslims. *Please take your time to read the statements one after another. Afterwards, we will ask some questions on how you evaluate these statements.*	
Subtle Ethnic Prejudice Condition	**Source**
Due to their different cultural background, many Muslims find it difficult to accept that men and women have equal rights in Germany.	Self-developed
Because many Muslims come from non-democratic countries, it is often difficult for them to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner.	Self-developed
Many other groups have come to Germany and overcome prejudice and worked their way up. Muslims should do the same without special favor.	Subtle Prejudice Scale (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995; German translation following Zick, 1997)
Muslims should not only claim that discrimination is responsible for their bad position on the labor market, but be a bit more proactive.	Self-developed
Due to their different cultural background, many Muslims have difficulties to accept the democratic values and rules in Germany.	Self-developed
Muslims living here teach their children values and skills different from those required to be successful in Germany.	Subtle Prejudice Scale (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995; German translation following Zick, 1997)
Many children of Muslim migrants fail in school, because their parents are not as interested in education as German parents.	Self-developed
Blatant Ethnic Prejudice Condition	**Source**
Muslims raise their sons as misogynist machos.	Self-developed
Due to their tendency to endorse radical-Islamist ideologies, many Muslims pose a threat.	Self-developed
Muslims seek to clandestinely take over Germany.	Self-developed
Muslims have less well-paid jobs, simply because they are not as hard-working as Germans.	Self-developed
Muslims are enemies of democracy.	Self-developed
I think that Germans should stay among themselves and should not start relationships with Muslim migrants, because this only causes problems.	Self-developed item; idea adapted from the Blatant Prejudice Scale (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995)

Muslims just don't have the cognitive skills to succeed in the German educational system.	Self-developed

Control Condition	**Source**
Many Muslims are living in Germany.	Self-developed
Many Muslims, who are living in Germany, have a German citizenship.	Self-developed
The exact number of Muslims living in Germany is not known.	Self-developed
At the moment, about three to five million Muslims are living in Germany.	Self-developed
A lower number of Muslims are living in Eastern than in Western Germany.	Self-developed
Many Muslims are living in bigger cities.	Self-developed
Most Muslims living in Germany have a Turkish background.	Self-developed

Note. The original experimental materials in German language can be obtained from the authors upon request.

Table A2

Experimental Materials for Study 2 (English translation)

Please take your time to read the following short statement related to migration and Muslims. Please imagine that a local politician, Mr. Schmitz, has expressed this statement during an interview with a newspaper. *Afterwards, we will ask some questions on how you evaluate these statements.*
Subtle Ethnic Prejudice Condition
"The integration of migrants is a challenge for us in Germany. Especially Muslim migrants, for instance, still perform comparably worse on the labor market and in the educational system. In order to solve this problem, it is not helpful to refer to alleged discrimination. We also have to talk about the fact that Muslims are often not that achievement-oriented and like to benefit from our welfare system. And we have to talk about the fact that many Muslim parents are not that interested in education, which leads to disadvantages for their children. If we speak openly about such problems arising from cultural differences, I am convinced that it is possible to live together in Germany."
Blatant Ethnic Prejudice Condition
"The integration of migrants in German is an impossible task. Especially Muslim migrants, for instance, are just unable to perform as well as Germans on the labor market and in the educational system. And the reason is not discrimination, even though Muslims like to refer to it as an excuse for their own incompetence. Rather, Muslims just have an inherently bad work ethic and like to rest in the welfare hammock in Germany. Also, Muslims just don't have the cognitive skills to succeed in the German educational system. Therefore, Muslims will never be able to really integrate in Germany."
Control Condition
"Many migrants are living in Germany. At the moment, nearly a quarter of all individuals in Germany have a migration background, which means that they or their parents were not born with a German citizenship. It is difficult to specify the number of Muslims among the people with a migration background. According to current estimates, about three to five million Muslims are living in Germany. A lower number of Muslims are living in Eastern than in Western Germany and most Muslims have a Turkish background. Many Muslims have a German citizenship. Most Muslims without a German passport come from South-East Europe."

Note. The original experimental materials in German language can be obtained from the authors upon request.

Appendix B

Table B1

Complete list of measures included in the larger online surveys for Study 1 and Study 2

Study 1	
Construct	Specification
Socio-demographics (I)	Gender, age
Experimental manipulation	See Appendix A, Table A1
Prejudice awareness	Perception of the statements presented in the experimental manipulation as xenophobic
Prejudice endorsement	Agreement with/ perceived acceptability of the statements presented in the experimental manipulation
Affective reactions	Anger, fear/ anxiety, positive affect
Reactions to/ Perceptions of the source	Intentions to confront, or liking of proponents of the statements presented in the experimental manipulation
Collective action intentions	Intentions to engage in collective action against racism
Ethnic prejudice	Ethnic prejudice against Muslims (feeling thermometer, semantic differential, social distance)
Endorsement of group rights	Support for equal rights for Muslims
Personality characteristics	Social dominance orientation, internal and external motivation to respond without prejudice, empathy
Contact	Frequency/ Valence of contact with Muslims
Socio-demographics (II)	Migration background, religious affiliation, education level, employment status, political interest, party preference, left-right-identification, federal state, social class

Study 2	
Construct	Specification
Socio-demographics (I)	Gender, age
Experimental manipulation	See Appendix A, Table A2
Prejudice awareness	Perception of the statement of the politician Mr. Schmitz presented in the experimental manipulation as xenophobic
Prejudice endorsement	Agreement with/ perceived acceptability of the statement of the politician Mr. Schmitz presented in the experimental manipulation
Affective reactions	Anger, fear/ anxiety, positive affect
Reactions to/ Perceptions of the source	Intentions to confront the politician Mr. Schmitz, as the proponent of the statement presented in the experimental manipulation, liking of the politician Mr. Schmitz, intention to vote for the politician Mr. Schmitz

Collective action intentions	Intentions to engage in collective action against racism
Ethnic prejudice	Ethnic prejudice against Muslims (feeling thermometer, semantic differential, social distance)
Endorsement of group rights	Support for equal rights for Muslims
Personality characteristics	Social dominance orientation, internal and external motivation to respond without prejudice, empathy
Contact	Frequency/ Valence of contact with Muslims
Socio-demographics (II)	Migration background, religious affiliation, education level, employment status, political interest, party preference, left-right-identification, federal state, social class
Interest in information on racism	Clicking of a link for further information on how to combat racism in Germany

Note. Constructs are listed in the chronological order of their appearance in the surveys. All items of English scales were translated into German. Information on the exact scales/ items employed in the surveys can be obtained from the authors upon request.

Appendix D | Author contributions statement

Manuscript #1: Prejudice in disguise: Which features determine the subtlety of ethnically prejudicial statements?

Karolina Fetz designed the study and conducted the statistical analyses, advised by Martin Kroh. Karolina Fetz conducted the literature research for the manuscript and wrote the first draft. Martin Kroh revised and approved the final manuscript. Martin Kroh agrees to the submission of the manuscript as part of the cumulative dissertation „*Ethnic Prejudice in Disguise: Exploring the Psychological Mechanisms Underlying the Persistence of Subtle Forms of Ethnic Prejudice in the Majority Society*".

Manuscript #2: Is one's own ethnic prejudice always subtle? The inconsistency of prejudice endorsement and prejudice awareness depends on self-related egalitarian standards and motivations.

Karolina Fetz designed the two studies and conducted the statistical analyses, advised by Tim Müller. Karolina Fetz conducted the literature research for the manuscript and wrote the first draft. Tim Müller revised and approved the final manuscript. Tim Müller agrees to the submission of the manuscript as part of the cumulative dissertation „*Ethnic Prejudice in Disguise: Exploring the Psychological Mechanisms Underlying the Persistence of Subtle Forms of Ethnic Prejudice in the Majority Society*".

Manuscript #3: When unnoticed means unchallenged? Negative affect and oppositional intentions of non-target perceivers in response to subtle and blatant expressions of ethnic prejudice.

Karolina Fetz designed the two studies and conducted the statistical analyses, advised by Tim Müller. Karolina Fetz conducted the literature research for the manuscript and wrote the first draft. Tim Müller revised and approved the final manuscript. Tim Müller agrees to the submission of the manuscript as part of the cumulative dissertation „*Ethnic Prejudice in Disguise: Exploring the Psychological Mechanisms Underlying the Persistence of Subtle Forms of Ethnic Prejudice in the Majority Society*".

Appendix E | Eigenständigkeitserklärung

Hiermit erkläre ich, dass ich die vorliegende Dissertation „*Ethnic Prejudice in Disguise: Exploring the Psychological Mechanisms Underlying the Persistence of Subtle Forms of Ethnic Prejudice in the Majority Society*“ selbstständig und ohne unerlaubte Hilfe angefertigt habe und mich dabei keiner anderen als der von mir ausdrücklich bezeichneten Quellen und Hilfen bedient habe.

Die Dissertation wurde in der jetzigen oder einer ähnlichen Form noch bei keiner anderen Hochschule eingereicht und hat noch keinen Prüfungszwecken gedient.

Ferner bestätige ich, dass ich den federführenden Beitrag zu den unter gemeinschaftlicher Autorenschaft entstandenen Manuskripten geleistet habe.

Berlin, im Mai 2021

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Karolina Fetz

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