

Perceptions of Everyday Interpersonal Discrimination among Young Men of Turkish Background in Cologne

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Perceptions of Everyday Interpersonal Discrimination among Young Men of Turkish Background in Cologne

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This small-scale, qualitative study examines how five young male second-generation Turkish immigrants perceive racial discrimination by ethnic Germans and to what extent this perception influences their collective identities. The typology of interactional patterns the interviewees describe as racial discrimination has four elements: a perception of distrust, a distancing gaze, denial of belonging and rule enforcement by members of the German majority. The interviewees, particularly those who are highly educated and socially mobile, identify with a common *Ausländer* (foreigner) identity in response to experiences of discrimination. This identity is regarded a shared identity marker by immigrants of different backgrounds. It appears as a positive and affirmative identity of difference, which creates a unique type of social capital.

1. Research Objectives and Theoretical Basis

The research question that guides this study is how the interviewees, as second generation Turkish immigrants in Germany, perceive discrimination against them on the institutional, structural and interpersonal level. Additionally, the research is guided by the question of how this perception influences their social categorization and membership in collective identity groups. In order to develop a response, it is necessary to first outline the theoretical foundation that the research questions are based upon. I therefore begin by defining racial discrimination and its dimensions and briefly sketching out processes of collective identity formations of Turkish immigrants in Germany. Some theoretical perspectives are also given on how subjective experiences of discrimination may influence collective identities of immigrants and ethnic minorities.

Discrimination can be defined as “otherism” on the basis of categories such as ethnicity, religion, gender or “race” and by means of “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or

preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life” (International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965). Kamali (2009) divides the concept of discrimination into three categories: individual, institutional, and structural. While individual discrimination addresses individual and everyday actions based on personal prejudices, institutional discrimination is based on the formal and informal institutional routines and norms that govern human interaction in any society. Markets, government agencies, education and health systems, political parties, associations and NGOs are examples of such institutions. The norms, ideologies, category systems and stereotypes that cut across institutions of a society and restrict the opportunity structures of its “others” can be captured with the term “structural discrimination”. However, since the category of

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institutional discrimination often includes structural aspects, no clear theoretical differentiation between the terms can be made, and researchers therefore often choose to combine the two (Kamali 2009, 5–9).

Peucker (2010, 10–13) adds a further distinction between interpersonal, institutional and structural discrimination as “objective” categories on the one hand, and “subjective” experiences of discrimination on the other. He also offers mechanisms for each category. In this model, interpersonal discrimination may be motivated by resentment, projection of statistical information about a group onto an individual, avoidance of anticipated negative reactions by others, or opportunistic reasons. Structural forms of discrimination work through legal arrangements, conflicting political goals, past-in-present effects, interdependences of different forms of discrimination, or institutional arrangements. Although, according to Peucker, subjective experiences of discrimination, are not classifiable and quantifiable like objective categories, they are of central importance because the feeling of exclusion is real for the individual (Peucker 2010, 12; also Salentin 2007). Structural discrimination is inherently connected to interpersonal discrimination and perceived discrimination. This is because discriminatory structures in a society are often reflected in unconscious negative attitudes of majority members toward members of minorities (Quillian 2006, 314ff.). Discriminatory structures are then “actualized and reinforced through these routine or familiar practices”, which members of marginalized groups regard as “part of the expected, the unquestionable, and what is seen as normal by the dominant group” (Essed 1991, 52). Qualitative research on discrimination in the school sector shows, for example, that negative attitudes of teachers toward immigrant pupils have a direct impact on their performance and may thus serve as an explanation of their lower attainment (Flam 2007, 87ff.).

In Germany, immigrants of Turkish origin form the largest ethnic minority. They are regarded by the majority population as the “typical foreigner” (Ansbrock et al. 2009: 156)

and subjected to multiple forms of discrimination as immigrants and as Muslims (Schneider 2001, 240; Schiffauer 2007, 78; Peucker 2010, 13). Given the assumption that second-generation Turkish immigrants in Germany will suffer from structural as well as interpersonal discrimination, it is useful to study how they perceive their ethnicity as a relevant collective identity category and how this category is constructed in relation to perceptions of discrimination by the German majority society. It has been noted that the collective identities of people with a family history of migration are particularly precarious and socially contested: While they can build upon multiple bases for collective identities, they also encounter “otherism” and therefore experience a tension between self- and other-identification (Mecheril 2003). Their identity construction is thus a dynamic and pluriform process, which works actively with a network of various identity criteria (Hall 1994; Bhabha 1994; Bukow et al. 2001; Riegel 2004).

The minority group’s level of self-segregation and avoidance is usually strongly influenced by their assumptions about the dominant group’s intentions: When distrust leads to a lack of communication, processes of ascription create their own dynamics of insecurity, fear, stereotyping and cautiousness, which creates the perception of a “worst-case scenario” situation (Booth 1979). Therefore, the mere perception of discrimination must be considered an important element of the identity construction of immigrants and ethnic minorities. For a long time, few studies on discrimination in Germany took into account the immigrants’ own perspective on discrimination (Bjørge 2003, 785), but recent qualitative accounts show that immigrant youth regard subtle forms of exclusion as more burdensome than the possibility to encounter overt racist violence (Keim 2003) and identify a common *Ausländer* identity that immigrants relate to in reaction to experiences of discrimination, which encloses an inner heterogeneity with a common belonging that is based on the shared experience of growing up as a marginalized immigrant in Germany (Mannitz 2006).¹ Several quantitative studies examine how perceived discrimination correlates with a collective iden-

¹ *Ausländer* literally translates as foreigner. However, the word is widely used a collective term for all

immigrants, including subsequent generations (Schneider 2001, 233–34).

tity in opposition to the German ethnic group. Döring (2007) finds a strong correlation between perceived discrimination and negative attitude towards the German majority. Skrobanek (2007) demonstrates that the relationship between perceived discrimination and ethnic dissociation works both ways, where any one aspect may aggravate the other. While he confirms that immigrant youth who feel discriminated against tend to orient toward their original ethnic group, there is also evidence that individuals who hold the social capital of a minority ethnic group tend to subjectively perceive more discrimination.

2. Research Design and Methodology

The data presented in this article originates from a research project carried out in August and September 2008 in Cologne. The project included ethnographic fieldwork in a neighbourhood in the Mauenheim district and interviews with five young men who grew up there. The neighbourhood is almost exclusively inhabited by former guest workers and their families. Almost all the approximately eight hundred residents are low-income Turkish immigrants of the first, second and third generations. The interviewees who took part in this study are second-generation Turkish immigrants who grew up in the neighbourhood. Aslan (25, mail courier), Faruk (17, school student) and Cemil (23, unemployed) still live in the neighbourhood.² Aslan, Cemil and to some extent also Faruk are strongly integrated in their ethnically segregated community, which offers little upward mobility. Salih (23) and Hamit (23), are university students and have both moved to a different city to study. Their families left the neighbourhood when they were children and moved elsewhere in the city. Their peers are predominantly ethnic Germans and people from other ethnic backgrounds.

The interviewees were selected as a convenience sample through a social worker at a community centre. All interviews opened with a mention of the “Kalk revolt that had taken place in Cologne a few months beforehand: two weeks of public protests in the Kalk district by immigrants against their “unjust treatment in Germany” (Stinauer

2008), following the killing of a young man of Moroccan descent (for an overview of the incident and its aftermath see Bukow and Preißling 2010, 162ff.). The introductory questions asked whether the interviewees could emphasize with the protesters’ feelings. The interviews soon moved away from the protests toward personal experiences, following a semi-structured script that included topics like school and work, friendships, and personal experiences of “unjust” treatment in everyday life. The interview made no explicit reference to the term “discrimination” as that would be likely to activate negative attitudes and a heightened awareness of discrimination among interviewees (Salentin 2007). During analysis of the interviews, the researcher attempted to identify similarities and differences in patterns of definition and interpretation of perceived discriminatory incidents, to identify patterns of discrimination as the interviewees perceive them. In its methodology, the research process loosely followed the principles of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Cobin 1990).

3. The Perception of Discrimination: A Typology

Although each interviewee approached the subject differently and took very distinct perspectives, several types of experiences that came up in the interviews were common to all five. These very specific types of perceptions were of striking similarity in all five accounts. While the interviewees talked about their experiences in relation to institutions such as school or workplace, the experiences they shared were exclusively on the interpersonal level. The four types of perceived discrimination that were consistently brought up were negative stereotyping and distrust, a particular “gaze”, denial of belonging to German society, and the experience of ethnic Germans tending to explain rules and laws to them because of their ethnicity.

3.1. The Perception of Discrimination as an Individual Matter

During the interviews, it quickly became apparent that the interviewees did not report instances where they personally experienced discrimination that was directly linked to institutions. This is not to say that they did not identify

² The names of the interviewees have been changed.

structural differences between Turkish immigrants and ethnic Germans. In fact, this was brought up by most interviewees. Yet, institutions were generally not seen as the cause of these differences. Sometimes, they attributed differences to themselves. In the interview with Aslan, this perception became the theme of a dialogue:³

Aslan: Did you meet Faruk's brother? He comes here to the community centre sometimes.

Interviewer: Yes, I met him. I helped some kids with their homework in the afternoon. I met him there and talked to him.

Aslan: So, what do you think of the kids?

Interviewer: ...It was a bit surprising to see that almost all the kids attend *Hauptschule*.⁴

Aslan: Yes, that is sad. It has to do with their parents. They don't speak German and there are many Turks here. They are all in one place, very isolated. ... And when one of the kids wants to attend *Realschule*, they say "No, *Hauptschule* is better for him." They don't care about that, about the future. ... If I had known how important education is, I would have focused more on it as well.

From Aslan's perspective, social problems are not ascribed primarily to institutions – here the education system – but to people who fail to take the chances they are given. A similar perspective comes from Hamit at the beginning of the interview, when he describes himself as foreigner (*Ausländer*) even though he is a German citizen. When I ask him whether negative experiences with state institutions have anything to do with him not feeling like a proper German citizen, he responds:

That is not a problem. I know how stuff works, I can find out about things and I know the laws and rights here. ... The legal system is great, we have a working democracy, and ... no, I can't complain about that. ... Of course there are little stumbling blocks like in job applications, but the real problem is the human, interpersonal issues.

This statement points to "human, interpersonal issues", which emerged in all five interviews as the main issue interview partners wanted to talk about. Interpersonal in-

stances of discrimination were perceived as the most frustrating by all five interviewees, much time was dedicated to this topic.

3.2. Types of Interpersonal Discrimination

3.2.1. Negative Stereotyping and Distrust

The interviewees' perceptions of negative stereotypes based on their ethnicity and distrust from members of the German majority society are almost uniform. The immediate stereotypes they feel they include low social class, poor education and criminal intent. Cemil describes this bluntly: "Germans think that we [Turks] are loud and criminal." Some interviewees brought up concrete examples where they felt that native Germans did not consider them trustworthy on the basis of their Turkish ethnicity and the stereotypes ascribed to them. Hamit related how he was explicitly made aware of this on different occasions:

When people see me for the first time, black hair, bearded, they often think: "He's a scruff".⁵ I've heard it a thousand times before. They haven't even spoken to me! Sometimes a person comes to me a few days after they got to know me and says: "At first I really thought you were a scruff. But I got to know you, and you are not like that." ... Then I just think: now it has happened again.

Faruk – a tall, heavy man, with dark hair and a trimmed beard like Hamit – says: "when I'm on the bus, with my headphones on, with my looks, people think I am an *Ausländer*. They wouldn't believe I go to *Gymnasium*."

Aslan brought up an experience similar to Hamit's, where an ethnic German openly states their distrust of ethnic Turks. He described an incident a few days before our interview. It had been the leaving do for a colleague he had worked with for a long time and had grown to like. On departure, the colleague compliments him for being different from the negative image he has of Turks. Aslan explained:

All my colleagues are German. That's okay; I get along well with them. But today, it was [my colleague's] last day and he said to

³ All interview sequences quoted here were translated from German into English by the author.

⁴ Secondary schools in Germany are organised in a three-tier system. *Gymnasium* is the most academic

(university entrance qualification), *Hauptschule* the least academic. *Realschule* is the middle tier.

⁵ The German word used here was *Assi*.

me: “I am going to miss you. You are the only Turkish guy I get along with.” And I went: “What’s going on?” In this moment he had just ruined everything for me. . . . That has happened to me so often, people saying: “You’re a cool Turk, you are the only one I can talk to.” Then I always think: “Have you ever even tried to talk to a Turkish person apart from me?”

The two previous quotes depict incidents where the connection of trust and discrimination were made explicit. They are the most blatant examples in the interviews of how the interviewees perceive discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity. Apart from that, all interviewees reported that they constantly felt that they were not trusted in small day-to-day interactions with ethnic Germans. Hamit described this as a “friendly distance”: “There is always a distance first. They are friendly, they are nice – that is not the problem. But it takes time for them to open up.” Aslan also noticed this form of distance with ethnic Germans in his apartment building. He told me how he often overcomes situations where people act distantly by approaching them directly. He also did this with an old lady who lives next to his apartment: “She has lived next to me for twenty years but she doesn’t know who I am – while I know who she is, of course. So one day, I said to her: ‘Good morning, Madam.’ . . . And now, whenever I see her, she greets me as well. She is really nice – probably always has been. She just didn’t want to have anything to do with me. I think maybe she was a little scared. I don’t know, these people are, well, different.”

3.2.2. The Distancing Gaze

Another type of perceived discrimination that Cemil, Faruk and Hamit brought up with striking similarity is connected to the perception of distance and distrust. They described how they felt a certain suspicious gaze, which they found hard to interpret. Cemil said: “They don’t look me in the eye . . . Maybe they are scared of me.” Faruk described a similar feeling, but made out different reasons for it:

People look at me strangely, I don’t know why. It’s not that they are scared, it’s more that they think I can’t behave, that I’m a scruff or something like that. You can really feel it from the looks.

Hamit expresses it this way:

When I go to an office or something like that, people always look at me weirdly. Well, it’s not really a certain look, but you

can feel it. I cannot say what the person thinks, but I see how they look at me. . . . They have this stupid look on their faces, not warm or anything. They must think: Well, he’s surely a scruff and wants to annoy me. . . . And then I see someone else coming in and they are nice right from the start. I have to earn that first.

3.2.3. Denial of Belonging

All the interviewees voiced a perception that ethnic Germans tell them that they do not belong. All recounted instances where they were told that they could go home to the country they “really” come from. Aslan described an argument he had with a German colleague, discussing a recent media report about a Turkish immigrant who had beaten up an elderly person:

We discussed that at work. And then we talked about the possibility of deportation and this guy says: “yeah, he deserves to be deported.” And I say: “Okay, but where?” “Well, to Turkey, where he came from.” And I replied: “So if a German person does it, should they send him to Spain because he’s been there on vacation?”

Salih uses a story of this type to explain where he believes racism starts:

There was a fight at the *Neumarkt*. And of course an *Ausländer* was involved. When the fight was broken up and people left, a woman came up and yelled after the guy: “Why don’t you go back where you came from?” and the guy stopped, turned around and shouted: “But that’s here.” When you look at that situation, [the woman] wouldn’t call herself racist, not at all. But that is the weakest level of racism.”

Cemil, talking about instances where people contest his belonging, said, “I was born here, and here in Germany is where I feel at home.” Yet, he is sure that “I don’t really belong here. I am an *Ausländer*.” He went on, describing this state of limbo and the lack of appreciation he feels:

Germans shouldn’t talk so negatively about the Turks. They’ve accomplished a lot here. My dad worked at the Ford factory for over thirty years. But still we are *Ausländer*. But we are looked at so negatively. They don’t want us here.

3.2.4. The Power to Define and Enforce Rules

All five interviewees mentioned frequent experiences of discrimination involving condescending behaviour where ethnic Germans would explain the formal and informal rules of social behaviour in Germany. This led Cemil to

mock ethnic Germans generally as *Justizmenschen*.⁶ “They always call the police. Even when I just throw away litter they start yelling: ‘I’m going to call the police!’” Hamit has had similar experiences, except that they concerned more subtle and informal rules: “If I talk to a German guy, the one thing he wants the most is to appear smart. ... He may have the lowest rank in the company, but still he’s cracking wise to me.” These rules, he says, are usually quite arbitrary and seem only to serve to emphasize that Hamit is the one who needs to learn and the native German person can explain the rules to him:

It might be really simple things, and it is actually quite ridiculous. At work I sometimes have to wash cars and people come to me and say: “That’s how we do it. First we wipe the windscreen, then the back window.” You know, it doesn’t matter what I do first! But they want to tell me how things are done!

Aslan recounts a similar experience at his job as a mail courier:

I was delivering boxes, heavy boxes. And I parked on the wrong side [of the street] so that I didn’t have to carry them across the whole street. It wasn’t a problem, it was a side street and there was enough space for other cars to pass by. Then someone started yelling: “You can’t stop here!” and I said: “I just want to unload, I’ll be gone in a second.” He replied: “Always the same with you foreigners. You don’t understand, do you? Why don’t you go home where you came from. Now take away your car or I’ll call the police.”

The interactions described by Cemil, Hamit and Aslan show their perception of how ethnic Germans individually claim to represent authority over formal and informal laws and regulations in Germany. It appears that they suggest that the interviewees, due to their ethnicity, do not know the rules or how to behave. It is up to ethnic Germans to supervise the actions of minorities. To Cemil, it seems to be in the nature of “Germans” to be *Justizmenschen*. In his stereotype of Germans, it is in their nature “to be quiet, orderly and pedantic.” Hamit and Aslan interpret their experiences rather as if this was a deliberate strategy by ethnic Germans to show their dominance.

4. Framing the Perceptions of Discrimination Theoretically

All interviewees were able to name different types of interpersonal discrimination. They all, independently, share a strong perception of discrimination on the interpersonal level. In fact, even the categories of discriminatory behaviour mentioned by the interviewees were comparable to a large extent: negative stereotyping and distrust, a distancing “gaze”, denial of belonging, and the assumed power to define and enforce rules. This shows that there is a strong awareness of interpersonal discrimination, creating an experience perceived as injurious. Since they could be confronted with such behaviour anywhere, they blame the German majority society as a whole. Still, the interviewees acknowledge differences: Cemil regards many but not all Germans as *Justizmenschen*, Hamit says that he also counts ethnic Germans among his friends but “they are Germans who are a bit more open than usual.” Yet, acts of interpersonal discrimination seem to be connected to an uncertainty: they can occur at any time and be carried out by anyone.

The forms of discriminatory behaviour that seem to be most frustrating and annoying are incidents which seem comparatively harmless and which might appear unproblematic or even irrelevant to an outsider. This perception is best captured with the concept of everyday racism, which argues that “otherism” is reflected in everyday interaction between individuals of majority and minority racial groups. For individuals who face everyday racism, such subtle daily discrimination represents “nagging, annoying, debilitating, seemingly small, injustices one comes to expect” (Essed 2002, 203). This is a succinct description of the experiences Aslan, Faruk, Cemil, Salin and Hamit describe in their accounts. Their frequent invocation of the term *Ausländer* to define difference to ethnic Germans reflects the complexities of the categories “race” and “citizenship” as the basis for discrimination. In the vernacular, the term *Ausländer* has ceased to be merely a legal definition for non-citizens. Instead it has become a term that native Germans use to describe all immigrant groups regarded as culturally different (Schneider 2001,

⁶ Meaning that rules are overly important to them.

233–34). In particular, incidents of contested belonging point to the relevance of ancestry and origin as markers of “otherization”. This highlights the racial dimension of the German concept of nationality, where “being white” and “being German” are so tightly intertwined (Walgenbach 2005). In terms of how the interviewees conceptualize their perception of discrimination, this study produced very similar results to recent research by Flam and Beauzamy (2008), which conceptualized different forms of everyday racism against immigrants on a European scale. In both studies, interviewees mentioned a certain gaze of scrutiny and rejection as a central dimension of perceived discrimination, as well as conditional and contested forms of acceptance.

Incidents of everyday discrimination should be understood as a complex of interpersonal behaviour and social structures, rather than simply as isolated interactions. As these structures change, so do the forms of everyday discrimination. Today, relations between majority society and immigrants in Germany are embedded in a context where immigrants “are increasingly becoming citizens who fight for their rights and seek to establish them by democratic means” (Schiffauer 2006, 98). One explanation for the predominant focus on everyday discrimination in the interviews might be related to these changing social structures. It seems that for the interviewees, everyday discrimination appear to be less unquestionable and less “normal” than theory often suggests. The way in which the interviewees describe instances of everyday discrimination and their reaction to them might instead indicate an increasing awareness of such forms of discrimination and an emergent social process that challenge discriminatory structures and their expression in the everyday life.

5. The *Ausländer* Concept as a Collective Identity

All interviewees stated that experiences of interpersonal discrimination on the basis of their Turkish ethnicity lead them to dissociate from the dominant group of ethnic Germans. However, this dissociation did not necessarily lead them to primarily seek peers with a Turkish background. The dissociation also became manifest in an *Ausländer* identity, which is not tied to any ethnic categories but consists mainly of a categorization of difference to ethnic Ger-

mans. In the interviews, the term *Ausländer* seems to be used as an identity shared by all ethnic minorities that face discrimination. Throughout the interview, Hamit explicitly emphasized being *Ausländer* as his primary source of identity (before Turkish): “While the Turks form a big group and the immigrants from other countries form smaller communities, they all face the same problems.” He explained how this is reflected in everyday life using an example from his student job at a car rental agency:

The *Ausländer* there, they formed a group. It wasn’t a Turkish group, it was everything: Poles, Croats, Iranians, whatever. It wasn’t as if we had actively built this group, it somehow just happened. Of course there were also some Germans in that circle but they were more open-minded. As for other Germans, well, you heard stupid comments from them about *Ausländer* and then you didn’t really feel like hanging out with them.

When asked on what basis he can identify with *Ausländer* better than with ethnic Germans, Hamit mentioned a certain way of communication: “The way you speak is different with other *Ausländer* from how you speak with Germans. It is mellower.” This mellowness, he believes, stems from the shared experience of becoming the “other” vis-à-vis the German majority and reflects a mutual understanding of these experiences. Like Hamit, Salih identifies the distinction between *German* and *Ausländer* as a major fault line he experiences. He remembers being sent to a *Gymnasium* where he was mostly among Germans. He recalls the time as one of racist bullying where he was “picked on for being Turkish and tormented with references to Hitler and the Nazis”. Things changed, he said, when he switched schools in grade eleven. It was the first time he “really felt alive and well at school”, he says, “because the class was extremely mixed. One half was German, while the others were *Ausländer*. There was everything: Palestinians, Ukrainians, Indians and many Turks.”

In contrast to the multi-ethnic *Ausländer* identity that Salih and Hamit emphasize, Faruk, Aslan and Cemil, whose lives are centred in the Turkish immigrant community on Etzelstrasse, regard their peers in the neighbourhood as the group they identify most with, so being “Turkish” constitutes their primary collective identity. Yet, they also use the German/*Ausländer* dichotomy to emphasize their difference to ethnic Germans. Faruk pointed out that he him-

self – despite his German nationality – does not subscribe to this term. To him, “Germans” are the dominant majority that he does not identify with, which is why difference to ethnic Germans is actively maintained and reproduced in his peer group: “If someone acts differently, you say he acts German. Even if he is Turkish, he simply acts German.” Cemil explained how he regarded being “Turkish” as superior to other immigrant groups in Germany. At the same time, he saw an *Ausländer* identity as a commonality in opposition to ethnic Germans: “Many Turks here hate Germans. But not only Germans, also Poles, Russians, whatever. But mostly, I think, Germans hate *Ausländer*.”

As the interviews show, the *Ausländer* identity is used to construct an inclusive immigrant culture that extends beyond particular ethnic origins. It becomes a frame of reference only through the shared experience of being the “other”. As Aslan says: “A German passport or a Turkish passport, it doesn’t matter to me. . . . Even if you have a German passport, you are not really German.” Hamit makes a similar remark:

You think to yourself: OK, I have a German passport but they don’t really want me here. As an *Ausländer*, you just need to watch the news: every day they report something, *Ausländer* this *Ausländer* that.

For Aslan, Faruk and Cemil, who consider their Turkish immigrant peers in their neighbourhood their main collective group, being *Ausländer* is merely one categorization amongst many others. Their Turkish identity is more important. For Salih and Hamit, who do not attach as much value to their Turkish ethnicity and do not live in such a tightly knit community, *Ausländer* is a more important collective identity, one which enables them to form bonds with other individuals of different backgrounds. The difference to Aslan, Faruk and Hamit becomes evident when we consider how Salih and Hamit regard the *Ausländer* identity primarily as a form of social capital that allows them to bond with new people from different backgrounds. Aslan, Faruk and Cemil use the *Ausländer* identity if anything to emphasize their belonging to their peer group at Etzelstrasse and to the ethnic group of Turkish immigrants more generally, which reflects their primary social capital. The results from this study cannot confirm

the hypothesis that integrated immigrants are less sensitive to subtle discrimination than marginalized or segregated individuals (Strobl 1998). Rather, Salih and Hamit, the most integrated participants, were the most aware and reflexive of discrimination. This, too, might be an indication of a process of increasing awareness of structures of racial discrimination and their contestation by those who suffer under them. Since Salih and Hamit possess high social mobility, networks and resources, they are more likely to challenge discriminatory structures. The study does confirm previous findings that immigrants regard everyday discrimination as more problematic than overt racist violence, which results in an ambivalent relationship to the German majority society in general. The resulting categorization as *Ausländer* creates a positive and affirming element of their identity. This is congruent with the argument that immigrants create a common identity in reaction to discriminatory experiences. For Salih and Hamit especially, this takes the form of a positive alternative to a mainstream German identity.

6. Conclusion

The central finding emerging from the interviews is a differentiation of perceived mechanisms of everyday discrimination, which was surprisingly similar across the interviews. These may be classified as: a perception of distrust, a distancing gaze, the denial of belonging, and rule enforcement. A second key finding of this study is that the interviewees, particularly those who are highly educated and socially mobile, adopt a common *Ausländer* identity as a response to experiences of discrimination, which they regard as an identity marker shared by immigrants and minorities of all backgrounds. It appears as a positive and affirmative identity of difference and creates a unique type of social capital. Both the typology of perceived discrimination and the positive identification as *Ausländer* are congruent with findings of the earlier studies outlined above.

While the small scale of the study severely limits the possibility to generalize, the qualitative data presented here provide empirical confirmation of previous findings and may also offer points of departure for future research. In particular, the high level of awareness of everyday discrimination rather contradicts the notion that

discrimination is something that is internalised. One possible explanation is the changing socio-structural conditions in Germany, which lead to a process of increasing con-

testation of discriminatory practices and structures. Additional research is definitely merited to confirm the findings suggested by this small-scale study.

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