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The integration paradox: Does awareness of the extent of ethno-racial discrimination increase reports of discrimination?

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Abstract

The “integration paradox” posits that seemingly well-established immigrants and their descendants tend to report more discrimination compared to their more marginalized peers. This study investigates one potential mechanism for this paradox, namely, the increasing awareness of their group's enduring ethno-racial minority status. Through a survey experiment with approximately 1000 randomly sampled immigrants and their descendants in Germany, this study provides the first causal evidence for this awareness mechanism. Participants were randomly assigned to read either a news article highlighting ethno-racial hiring discrimination in the German labor market or an unrelated news article on astrophysics. Our findings demonstrate that exposure to the discrimination-related article elicits a significant increase in reports of discrimination experienced by members of the groups with whom minorities identify, but also in self-reported personal experiences of discrimination. This suggests that increased awareness can alter how minorities frame their personal experiences or encourage them to disclose instances of discrimination that they would have previously kept private. The study further reveals that heightened awareness does not translate into a corresponding increase in political demands for improved antidiscrimination policy. Finally, a third experimental condition dispels concerns that news reports downplaying ethno-racial labor market penalties could stifle minorities' propensity to report discrimination experiences.

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INTRODUCTION

Ethno-racial discrimination, the unjust disadvantaging of persons or groups because of their ascribed racial or ethnic background, has a range of adverse consequences for immigrants and their descendants (Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009). Classic assimilation theory posits that acculturation, characterized by enhanced language proficiency and adoption of cultural customs, can bridge social divisions and thereby diminish experiences of discrimination (Gordon, 1964). However, research has revealed an “integration paradox” whereby immigrants and their descendants who are better established in mainstream middle-class society tend to report higher levels of discrimination than those on the fringes of society (Steinmann, 2019; Verkuyten, 2016). The integration paradox challenges simplistic notions of immigrant incorporation as a monotonic pathway to inclusion.

Four decades ago, Portes et al. (1980) put forth a possible explanation for this counterintuitive phenomenon. Their argument posits that as immigrants and their descendants become more established in mainstream middle-class society, they gain greater awareness of their groups' persistent status as an ethno-racial minority and therefore report instances of discrimination more frequently. A recent meta-analysis confirms that integration indicators that proxy greater awareness, such as improved education and language proficiency and greater exposure to news media, are the strongest and most consistent predictors of heightened levels of perceived discrimination (Schaeffer and Kas, 2023).

This study is the first to provide a causal test of the awareness mechanism through a pre-registered survey experiment involving approximately 1000 randomly selected immigrants, descendants of immigrants, and racial and religious minorities residing in one of Germany's five largest cities. Participants were randomly assigned to read either a news article that explicitly addressed the findings of a study on ethno-racial hiring discrimination in the German labor market or an unrelated news article on astrophysics. This experimental design allows us to gauge the impact of induced awareness of ethno-racial discrimination on minority participants' perceptions of the prevalence of discrimination against their group, self-reported personal experiences of discrimination prior to their study participation, and political demands for an antidiscrimination policy.

A noteworthy feature of our experimental design is the inclusion of two treatment conditions which enabled us to comprehensively assess the impact of altered awareness of ethno-racial discrimination. In the first treatment, participants were subjected to a news article recounting a social science study on systematic ethno-racial discrimination in the hiring practices of German employers. In contrast, the second treatment presented participants with a news article on a social science study demonstrating the lack of ethno-racial employment disparities among well-accultured Muslim immigrants and their descendants.

Our findings indicate that the experimental intervention resulted in heightened perception of the level of discrimination experienced by members of one's group, but more importantly also an increase in self-reported incidents of personal discrimination experienced prior to their study participation. This indicates that increased awareness of the prevalence of ethno-racial discrimination can influence how minorities reframe their personal experiences or encourage them to disclose instances of personal discrimination that they would have previously kept private. However, this heightened awareness did not translate into increased political demands for antidiscrimination policies. Furthermore, our results refute concerns that news reports downplaying ethno-racial labor market penalties suppress minorities' inclination to report personal experiences of discrimination or their perceptions of the extent of discrimination experienced by members of their group. In essence, these findings indicate that while heightened awareness of the prevalence of ethno-racial discrimination does not directly translate into increased political demands, it does influence how minorities perceive and report discrimination against members of their group but also their personal experiences of discrimination.

THEORETICAL MOTIVATION

Forty years ago, Portes et al. (1980) challenged a core assumption of classic assimilation theory, suggesting that enhanced acculturation, as measured by language proficiency or education, does not automatically dissolve group boundaries or guarantee access to mainstream society. Instead, it may counterintuitively heighten awareness of one's group's enduring ethno-racial minority status within society, despite indicators of integration suggesting successful integration into middle-class mainstream society.

More recently, scholars have built upon these ideas and introduced the concept of the “integration paradox,” providing various explanations for this phenomenon (Diehl et al., 2021; Steinmann, 2019; Verkuyten, 2016). These explanations can be reduced into two primary mechanisms (van Doorn et al., 2013; Maxwell, 2015; Schaeffer, 2019). The first mechanism underscores the increased *social exposure to mainstream majority members* that accompanies integration into mainstream society, thereby elevating the likelihood of encountering discrimination. In line with Allport's (1954) early warning about the dangers of superficial contact, Steinmann (2019) qualifies that discrimination is more likely to be reported when social exposure is incidental and shallow, such as when living in neighborhoods with a high proportion of mainstream members. Several studies support the idea that immigrants and their descendants who have more exposure to mainstream members in their workplaces, schools, or neighborhoods report higher levels of perceived discrimination (van Doorn et al., 2013; McGinnity & Gijsberts, 2018; Steinmann, 2019).

The second mechanism suggests that improved integration may also change immigrant minorities' cognitive susceptibility to frame experiences in terms of discrimination (Lajevardi et al., 2020). For instance, limited language skills may prevent less integrated immigrants from fully comprehending verbal attacks (Pierre et al., 2015). At a more general level, this mechanism was first introduced by Portes et al. (1980), who argued that as immigrants and their descendants become better integrated into mainstream society, their *awareness of their group's persisting marginalized ethno-racial status in society* increases, leading to more reports of discrimination. Flores (2015) asserts that this is particularly relevant for immigrants and their offspring, who are more readily identifiable as minorities due to factors such as skin color (see also Diehl et al., 2021; Tuppatt & Gerhards, 2021). Recent studies confirm that increased exposure to local news media, which reflects familiarity with public discourse and knowledge of one's group's ethno-racial status in society, is associated with higher reports of discrimination (Alanya et al., 2017; van Doorn et al., 2013; Holtz et al., 2013; Steinmann, 2019). Qualitative research adds to this mechanism by suggesting that improved integration may also raise awareness of precarious legal status (Tsegay, 2021). Given its focus on familiarity with public discourse and knowledge of one's group's ethno-racial status in society, the awareness mechanism presents an opportunity for a randomized controlled trial to test the following hypothesis:

H1. Experimentally increasing minorities' awareness of ethno-racial discrimination in society heightens their perceptions of discrimination faced by members of the minority groups with whom they identify.

A second question to address is whether heightened awareness of the pervasiveness of ethno-racial discrimination in society also leads to an increase in minority participants' self-reported personal experiences of discrimination. From a theoretical standpoint, the awareness mechanism indeed implies this possibility, as it posits that increased awareness also amplifies minority members' susceptibility to frame personal experiences in terms of discrimination (Lajevardi et al., 2020; Runfors, 2016; Waters, 1994). Framing refers to the fundamental process by which individuals use socially constructed schema of

interpretation to organize and comprehend their experiences or events (Goffman, 1974). Enhanced awareness of the prevalence of ethno-racial discrimination in society provides minority members with a heightened opportunity to interpret and understand the disadvantages they encounter as arising from discriminatory practices rather than attributing them to personal failings, misfortune, or other potential explanations. However, it is less clear whether this argument exclusively applies to new experiences encountered after the heightened awareness or extends to previously experienced events. We propose and empirically test the hypothesis that elevated awareness can also induce minority members to reframe previous experiences that took place prior to their increased sensitization. It is crucial to acknowledge, however, that a closely related but conceptually distinct process could also lead to the same prediction. Heightened awareness of the general prevalence of ethno-racial discrimination could encourage minority members to disclose their personal experiences that they had already framed as discrimination but may have previously kept private, prior to learning how common a phenomenon their personal experience is. Both mechanisms suggest the following:

H2. Experimentally increasing minorities' awareness of ethno-racial discrimination in society increases their self-reports of personal experiences of discrimination prior to their study participation.

Several scholars have further hypothesized that, due to heightened experiences of discrimination, more established immigrants and their descendants may dissociate themselves from identifying with mainstream society (Geurts et al., 2021; ten Teije et al., 2013). Our focus here is on a different implication, namely that an increased awareness of ethno-racial discrimination also implies a stronger demand for improved antidiscrimination policies. Nevertheless, as Oskooii (2016, 2020) observes, experiences of discrimination may also lead to a lack of political efficacy and interest. While discriminatory policies or political campaigns can evoke discontent and consequently political involvement, experiences of being disadvantaged at the hands of employers or other gatekeepers can result in feelings of powerlessness and thereby erode self-esteem, fostering feelings of inferiority, hindering the motivation to advocate for political change. These proposed counteracting pathways motivate us to explore the following:

H3. Experimentally increasing minorities' awareness of ethno-racial discrimination in society elevates their support for antidiscrimination policies.

Finally, we extend the integration paradox by investigating whether reports that downplay the prevalence of ethno-racial discrimination dampen minorities' propensity to report such experiences. In light of our previous arguments, it is plausible that such evidence may instill doubt in the validity of their personal experiences of discrimination, rendering them as isolated or even illegitimate, and thereby maybe also diminishing minorities' willingness to come forward with reports. Nonetheless, it is crucial to recognize that the alternative to a report downplaying ethno-racial discrimination is either a report on an unrelated topic or no report at all, rather than a report on the existence and pervasiveness of ethno-racial discrimination. As a result, we explore the following:

H4. Experimentally downplaying ethno-racial discrimination in society diminishes minorities' reports of personal and group discrimination and their support for antidiscrimination policy to the same extent as increasing their awareness of the existence of such discrimination would increase them.

DATA AND METHODS

To test our hypotheses, we developed an online survey experiment wherein participants were instructed to read one of three news articles, selected from Deutschlandfunk's public news channel homepage. This study is part of a larger project, for which 3000 individuals were randomly selected from the official population registers of Germany's five most populous cities (Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Cologne, and Frankfurt) and requested to participate in an online survey through mail (Schaeffer et al., 2023). For this study, we focus on the subset of 1137 minority participants, who we define as immigrants, native-born children of immigrants, or native-born individuals who identified as Jews, Muslims, or persons of color in the survey. The survey company KANTAR produced poststratification weights to ensure that the resulting sample accurately represents the population's education, age, gender, and immigrant origin. The survey took place in May and June 2021. The study's design and statistical analysis were preregistered on the Open Science Framework prior to data collection: <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/PR6EX>. This article deviates from the preregistration in two ways. First, for the sake of brevity, a summarized and stylized version of the hypotheses is discussed, and some of the original hypotheses are only tested in the online supporting information. Second, an additive scale was used to summarize personal experiences of discrimination instead of factor analysis. This was done because it can handle missing values that result from respondents not having been in certain situations, without leading to an overall missing outcome. The correlation between an additive scale and one based on principal-component factor analysis is 0.99, but the former has eight missing values where the latter has 232. Our collected data and analysis code are available along with this article.

Experimental design

One segment of the online survey was dedicated to examining news media consumption. Within this section, we informed participants that we were interested in understanding why some individuals are dissatisfied with traditional public news media reporting and instructed them to read a news article with the following introduction: "Some people are dissatisfied with the reporting in traditional public news media. We are interested in what you think. Below is a news article about recent research. Please read the text carefully. We then have a few questions for you." Participants were then randomly assigned to one of three news articles, all obtained from the public news agency Deutschlandfunk to maintain consistency in both source and design. Screenshots of the treatments can be found in Appendix G in the online supporting information. Table S1 shows that the number of observations and the distributions of all pre-treatment control variables are well balanced across the three experimental conditions.

The first news article served as our primary treatment and aimed to raise awareness about ethno-racial discrimination in the German labor market. This approximately 200-word article, titled "Ethno-racial discrimination during job search," reported on a study conducted by the WZB Berlin Social Science Center that highlighted how employers discriminate against applicants of immigrant origin, despite having similar qualifications.

The second news article was an additional treatment used to assess the impact of increasing awareness of the lack of ethno-racial penalties. This approximately 250-word article, titled "Cultural isolation has its price," discussed a study conducted by some of the same researchers at the WZB Berlin Social Science Center, which found that well acculturated Muslim migrants indicated by strong German language skills, liberal views about the role of women in society, and frequent contact with mainstream majority members, experienced low unemployment rates similar to those of mainstream majority members.

The third news article served as the control condition. This approximately 200-word article, titled “Phosphine and life on Venus,” reported on a study conducted by researchers at the University of Cardiff that identified the presence of phosphine on Venus, potentially indicating the presence of life.

Following exposure to one of the treatments, participants were asked to complete a manipulation check to assess their understanding of the main message conveyed in the news article. Roughly 86% of participants accurately comprehended the article, with no significant differences found among the three experimental conditions (see Appendix A in the online supporting information). Participants were then asked to rate their level of confidence in the accuracy of the reported results.

Outcomes

Overall, we examine the impact of our interventions on four primary outcomes in this study. Three of these outcomes measure reports of discrimination, and the fourth measures support for antidiscrimination policies. All outcomes were assessed subsequent to participants' exposure to one of the three treatments, resulting in a between-subjects design that allows for comparisons between responses from participants subjected to the different treatments. The outcomes were measured in two separate sections of the survey: One focused specifically on discrimination and the other addressed general attitudes towards various topics. These sections followed the section on media consumption, during which participants were exposed to one of the treatments.

We introduced respondents to the topic of discrimination with the following statement: “Now we are discussing discrimination in Germany. Discrimination means that a person is treated worse than others for certain reasons, without any reasonable justification. Discrimination can take many forms, such as insults, exclusion, or sexual harassment. It is also discrimination when people are disadvantaged by rules and laws.” Thereafter, we asked, “How often have you personally experienced discrimination in the following situations?” and specified the situations in randomized order:

- If you have been looking for a job or training position
- During work / in professional life
- While attending school or university
- If you have been looking for an apartment
- If you had contact with offices or authorities
- If you were out in public in your free time.

For each situation, respondents were asked to provide their answer on a scale ranging from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Very often*), unless they had never been in that situation. If respondents indicated that they had experienced discrimination in at least one of these areas, we asked them to identify the primary and secondary reasons for their discrimination and offered a list of options in alphabetical order: “My accent”; “My dialect”; “My age”; “A bodily impairment”; “My education and income level”; “My gender”; “My skin color”; “My body weight”; “My religion”; “My sexual orientation”; “My ethno-racial group”; or an open prompt.

Based on this information, we generated two outcome variables indicating *self-reported personal experiences of discrimination*. First, we summarized all information about the reported personal experiences of discrimination in the different situations with an additive scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$). Additive scales have the advantage of ignoring missing values that arise from the fact that some respondents have not been in certain situations in Germany without leading to an overall missing outcome, unlike factor analysis or PCA. Second, we generated a

binary variable indicating whether the respondent regarded their accent, skin color, religion, ethno-racial group, or an openly stated ethno-racial marker as the primary or secondary most important reason for their discrimination.

The next question surveyed participants' *perceptions of discrimination faced by members of the minority groups they identify with (perceived group discrimination)*: "In general, in your opinion, to what extent are the following groups of people discriminated against in Germany?" Depending on their answers to the survey's initial sociodemographic questions, respondents were asked to rate the extent of discrimination faced by: (1) "People from [their or their parent's country of origin]"; (2) "[Religious denomination such as Muslims]"; and (3) either "People who look [Arabic or North African / Asian / Black / South European]" or "Black people or people of color." Respondents were asked to rate the extent of discrimination faced by members of each minority group they identify with on a scale running from 1 (*Not at all discriminated*) to 5 (*Very discriminated*).

Finally, we measured *support for antidiscrimination policy* using a question taken from the European Social Survey: "How good or bad is it for a country to have a law against discrimination of members of certain ethno-racial or racial groups in the workplace?" The answer scale ranged from 1 (*Very bad*) to 5 (*Very good*).

Pretreatment control variables

Pretreatment control variables can enhance the statistical analysis of experiments by increasing the precision of estimates (Angrist & Pischke, 2009). Accordingly, we incorporate several sociodemographic control variables into our analysis. In particular, we take into account the age of the respondents (in year), their gender (male, female, diverse), education (measured as ISCED 2011), city of residence, religious denomination (Not religious, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Eastern religion, Other), immigrant generation (immigrant, descendant of immigrant, no immigrant origin), family status (single or cohabiting), and world region of origin (Western, Central and Eastern Europe, Middle and South America, Africa, Asia, Middle East and North Africa). In Appendix B of the online supporting information, we present results based on models without control variables, which mirror the effect estimates presented in this article. All continuous predictor variables are z-standardized, and all outcomes are standardized with reference to the mean and standard deviation of the control group. Table 1 displays descriptive statistics of all variables by experimental condition.

Multiple imputation

With a missing value rate of 3.2%, the outcome variable capturing perceived discrimination faced by people from the same country of origin has the largest proportion of missing data, followed by support for antidiscrimination policy with a missing value rate of 2.9%. We impute the missing values using chained equations with predictive mean matching for continuous variables and multiple logit models for categorical variables. To ensure the imputation models are adequate, we include all the variables mentioned above as well as those used in additional analyses and the poststratification weight as an auxiliary variable. The imputation is carried out separately for each treatment condition to account for potential interaction effects. We generate 30 imputations for each missing value after a burn-in of 10 imputations. In Appendix C of the online supporting information, we present results based on models with case-wise deletion, which confirm the findings of the analyses presented in this article.

TABLE 1 Descriptive statistics and balance across experimental conditions.

	Employer Discrimination		Cultural Isolation		Control	
	Mean/%	SD	Mean/%	SD	Mean/%	SD
Outcomes						
Perceived group discrimination:						
Origin	2.52	1.07	2.45	1.07	2.45	1.00
Religion	2.53	1.13	2.46	1.35	2.33	1.34
Race	3.69	1.09	3.38	.86	3.00	.99
Self-reports of personal discrimination	2.16	.89	2.08	.89	1.96	.87
Main reason: Ethno-racial	.60		.47		.51	
Second reason: Ethno-racial	.30		.28		.32	
Support for antidiscrimination policy	3.99	1.14	4.21	.90	4.00	1.15
Control variables						
Age	42.5	13.9	43.5	16.6	42.0	15.8
ISCED 2011	5.06	2.01	4.98	2.04	5.09	2.01
Gender						
Men	47.2		49.5		50.9	
Women	51.6		50.5		48.8	
Diverse	1.21		0		.30	
Family status						
Cohabiting	65.0		68.0		69.2	
Single	35.0		32.0		30.8	
Religious denomination						
Not religious	51.3		47.5		52.1	
Christian	31.4		28.7		28.7	
Muslim	14.9		15.1		14.5	
Jewish	.62		1.31		.36	
Eastern religion	1.10		3.13		1.88	
Other	.78		4.35		2.50	
World region of origin						
Western	36.9		32.3		28.9	
Eastern Europe	21.5		18.8		24.0	
Latin America	8.39		3.03		9.15	
Africa	4.40		4.20		4.31	
Asia	5.53		13.1		7.50	
MENA	23.0		26.1		24.8	
Observations	389		375		373	

Note: This table displays descriptive statics before z-standardization.

Statistical models

We test the effect of our interventions on all outcomes using poststratification weighted OLS regression with robust standard errors. For binary outcomes, this implies a linear probability model. Because the models for perceptions of discrimination faced by members of the minority groups respondents identify with entail between one and three “repeated” measures per respondent, we cluster standard errors on the respondent level—the level of treatment assignment. Moreover, we add a categorical control variable that indicates the type of minority group discriminated against to these models to capture level differences between discrimination based on origin, religion, and race.

RESULTS

Does awareness of the extent of ethno-racial discrimination in society increase minorities reports of discrimination and their political demands for antidiscrimination policy? [Figure 1](#) presents the main results of our experiment, in which a random sample of minority respondents from Germany were exposed to either a news article about research on ethno-racial hiring discrimination, research demonstrating the absence of ethno-racial unemployment penalties among well-accultured Muslims of immigrant origin, or research about phosphene and the potential for life on Venus. The figure displays the standardized effects of the two treatment conditions on five distinct outcomes.

Our initial focus is on the treatment that induced awareness of ethno-racial hiring discrimination. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, the top-left panel indicates that the article on employer discrimination heightened the respondents' perception of the level of discrimination experienced by members of the minority groups they identify with (perceived group discrimination). The effect is noteworthy, with a magnitude of 15% of a standard deviation and half the size of the difference in this outcome between minorities of Western and Asian origin. While the two-tailed test of significance suggests that this finding is only marginally significant ($p = .064$, two-tailed), it is worth noting that we test a preregistered directed hypothesis, which thus passes the conventional level of significance at 5%.

The top-right panel provides empirical support for Hypothesis 2. Raising the awareness of minority members regarding ethno-racial discrimination in society also increases their self-reported personal experiences of discrimination prior to their study participation. It is crucial to emphasize that our experimental intervention cannot alter the exposure to events that happened prior to it. Its impact lies solely in whether minorities reframe these experiences as discrimination and report them in a survey. This is precisely what the top-right panel reveals. Since randomization ensures equal past exposure to discriminatory events across treatment conditions, exposing minorities to evidence of ethno-racial discrimination in society rather than unrelated news on astrophysics increases the number of discriminatory experiences they report by approximately 20% of a standard deviation. The effect is statistically significant and substantial ($p = .044$, two-tailed). Notably, when considering both initial findings together, it appears that increasing awareness does not exert a significantly greater influence on perceptions of group discrimination compared to self-reports of personal discrimination. This contradicts the notion that shaping perceptions of group fate may be more readily altered than reframing personal experiences.

Hypothesis 2 is further supported in the second row of [Figure 1](#), which illustrates the treatment effects on the probability that minority members identify their ethno-racial background (as opposed to age, gender, physical disability, etc.) as the primary or secondary reason for the discrimination they encountered (conditional on reporting any discrimination). Experimentally inducing awareness of ethno-racial discrimination in society increases the probability that minorities report characteristics of their ethno-racial background as the primary reason for their personal

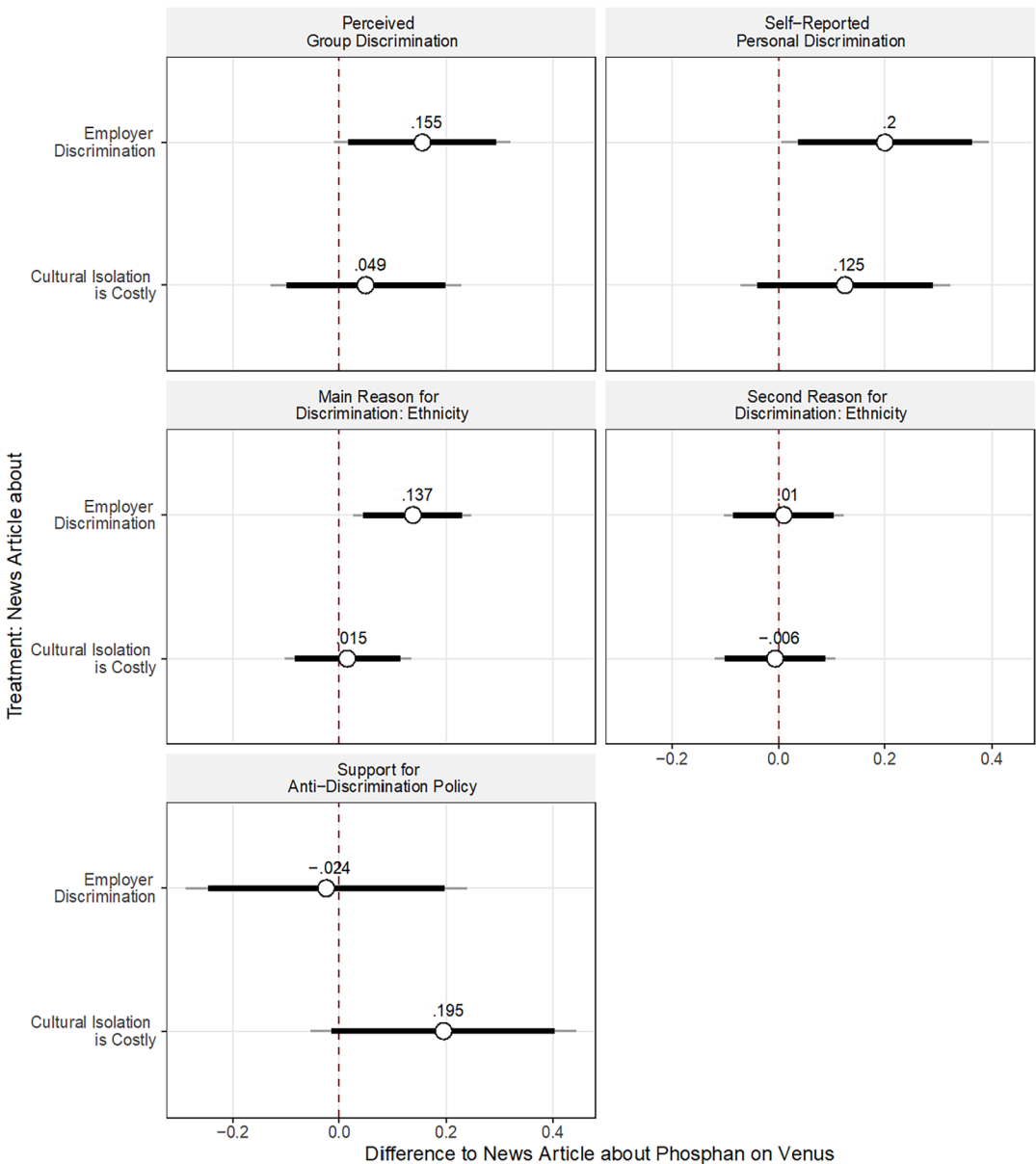


FIGURE 1 Effects of experimentally induced awareness of discrimination. Point estimates with 90 and 95% confidence intervals based on post-stratification weighted OLS regression with (cluster-)robust standard errors. $n = 1119$.

experiences of discrimination by roughly 14% ($p = .015$, two-tailed). Given this evident increase, it is unsurprising that we do not observe a similar effect for the second most important reason.

Finally, our study also refutes two of the proposed hypotheses. The third row of Figure 1 presents the findings related to Hypotheses 3. However, our findings do not support the notion that increasing awareness of ethno-racial discrimination in society directly translates to heightened political demands for antidiscrimination policies. Across all outcomes, Figure 1 further illustrates the impact of exposing minorities to a news article that downplays the extent of ethno-racial discrimination. Exposure to this article did not elicit significantly different outcomes compared

to those exposed to the astrophysics article and several imprecise estimates even point in the opposite direction. The single exception is a sizable but statistically insignificant increase in support for antidiscrimination policy, which may stem from the fact that current antidiscrimination legislation does not address the disadvantages faced by less-aculturated (Muslim) immigrants discussed in the news article. Nonetheless, the overall insignificance of all estimates alleviates concerns that reports downplaying ethno-racial discrimination will diminish minorities' reports of personal and group discrimination and their support for antidiscrimination policy.

Additional analyses

Oskooii (2016, 2020) asserts that experiences of discrimination impede motivation to demand political change since they have a negative impact on the self-esteem and self-efficacy of minorities. Does this same mechanism explain why our experimentally induced awareness does not affect support for policies promoting equal treatment? Further analysis presented in Appendix D of the online supporting information rebuts this notion. Our experimentally induced awareness does not appear to affect respondents' mental health, which we gauged by asking whether they felt energized and motivated or depressed.

The theory of motivated reasoning posits that evidence is viewed as less credible when it questions a prior-held belief, especially if it is closely tied to emotions (Kunda, 1990). Does this explain why the treatment downplaying the extent of ethno-racial discrimination does not diminish minorities' reports of discrimination? Additional analyses presented in the online supporting information indeed indicates that the treatment on the absence of ethno-racial penalties was considered significantly less credible than the report on ethno-racial hiring discrimination ($\beta = -.255, p = .008$). However, there is no consistent pattern of interaction effects with pretreatment measures of everyday microaggressions, sensitivity to subtle forms of discrimination, or news media consumption that would support the view that those whose prior experiences are contradicted by the treatments or who are more familiar with public discourse react more strongly to them. These results are available in Appendix E of the online supporting information.

Finally, Flores (2015) hypothesizes that enhanced integration elevates minorities' awareness of their enduring ethno-racial minority status in society, but only among those who exhibit visible differences from mainstream majority members. Their physical appearance consistently sets them apart, thereby eliciting systematic and persistent racism from mainstream members. Following the example of prior research (Diehl et al., 2021; Tuppatt & Gerhards, 2021), Appendix F online supporting information investigates this hypothesis by examining the interaction effect between the treatments and an indicator that distinguishes between the 45.3% of respondents who perceive their appearance as being White in Germany and the 54.7% who perceive their appearance as non-White. However, the overall findings reveal minimal differences in how these two groups respond to the treatments. One potential explanation for these findings lies in the experimental design, which exposed all participants to an equivalent level of awareness-raising information, regardless of their physical appearance. This is particularly evident given that the news article on discrimination highlighted the general experiences of disadvantage faced by immigrant descendants compared to the children of native-born parents. This suggests that the awareness mechanism operates in a similar manner for all participants, but in line with Flores (2015) original argument, nonvisible minorities are likely less exposed to it in real-world settings.

CONCLUSION

Previous research on the integration paradox has indicated that immigrants and their descendants who have successfully established themselves in mainstream middle-class society

tend to report higher levels of discrimination. A critical question is to what extent these well-established minorities report more discrimination because they face greater discrimination due to their closer interaction with mainstream members, or because their heightened awareness of the issue makes them more attuned to perceiving discrimination. Past correlational evidence suggests that both factors play a role, but it is unclear whether individuals with better language skills or greater exposure to news media are more aware or more exposed to actual discrimination.

Our preregistered survey experiment contributes three important insights to this debate. First, by design, our survey experiment ensures equal exposure to mainstream members and to actual discrimination across treatment conditions. This allows us to demonstrate that an increased awareness of the extent of ethno-racial discrimination in society leads to greater reports of discrimination. Thereby, this study provides the first causal evidence of Portes et al.'s (1980) original assertion.

Second, our experiment demonstrates that enhancing awareness through the survey intervention leads to a heightened perception of the pervasiveness of discrimination experienced by members of the groups with whom minorities identify, but also to increased self-reports of personal experiences of discrimination prior to their study participation. Since the intervention cannot alter past exposure to discriminatory events but instead ensures equal exposure to them across treatment conditions, this finding suggests that improved access to mainstream middle-class society increases minorities' tendency to interpret personal experiences through the lens of discrimination, including the reframing of past experiences, or encourages them to report instances of discrimination that they would have previously kept private. The current study cannot distinguish between these two mechanisms. The most critical distinction between the two is that the latter implies that less integrated minorities possess equal awareness of the marginalization they face in society but are less inclined to share their experiences and perspectives. Future research could employ list experiments or randomized response techniques, which facilitate disclosure of sensitive issues, to probe this question further.

Thirdly, our study reveals that increasing awareness of the extent of ethno-racial discrimination in society does not automatically translate into political demands or declines in mental well-being. Additionally, presenting evidence that downplays the extent of ethno-racial discrimination does not negatively influence minorities' reports of ethno-racial discrimination or their support for antidiscrimination policies. For researchers, these findings imply that we can disseminate the findings of discrimination studies without apprehension about adverse consequences for minorities. For instance, social psychologists have expressed concerns about the potential negative impact of intergroup contact on minorities' political engagement (Hässler et al., 2020; Saguy et al., 2009). Our results suggest that no comparable downside exists in communicating research evidence on discrimination or equal treatment.

The integration paradox has been the subject of scholarly debate for decades. While our survey experiment provides three crucial insights, we acknowledge that it has limitations. In particular, it cannot address the question of the extent to which the integration paradox is driven by the awareness mechanism versus actual exposure and discrimination. Secondly, the study cannot determine whether elevated awareness prompts minorities to reinterpret past personal experiences through the lens of discrimination or encourages them to report instances of discrimination that they would have previously kept private. Additionally, while the study uses a random sample drawn from the German population registers instead of an online access panel, the external validity of the findings is limited by the specific news articles used as treatments. Nonetheless, we maintain that our survey experimental approach represents a significant step forward. Future research can build on our findings and explore ways to further improve the approach, as well as examine the generalizability of our results to other minority groups, countries, and news articles.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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