

# Inequality and Prejudice. German Social Scientist as Producers of Feeling Rules

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## Abstract

This article is about how sociological research in Germany addresses issues that first seem to be unconnected: young new Fascists and migrants. We will present research in these two areas to show how social scientists contribute to feelings about their respective objects of research. We will argue that although both have cultural disorientation of their study objects as their point of departure, they offer differing explanations for it and as a consequence construct contrasting emotions towards the new Fascists and migrants: they portray new Fascists as disoriented victims of modernization in need of sympathy, while they blame migrants for their disorientation resulting from migration and thus call for indifference or antipathy towards this group. Comparing both research fields we can show that both sets of emotions interconnect and thus form a dichotomous emotional regime. Sociological research helps to sustain lines of inclusion and exclusion from the German society.

**Keywords:** *New Fascists, Extremism, Social Sciences, Discourse, Migration, Integration, Emotions*

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## Introduction

- 1.1 The ethos of science embraces the ideal of rationality and objectivity. By taking recourse to this ideal, science lays claim to producing truth. At the same time, rationality and objectivity are constructed in sharp opposition to emotionality. The claim about the absence of emotions in scholarly reasoning constitutes a fundamental precondition for its legitimacy and impact. This postulate seems so taken for granted that it is kept implicit and thus in no need of any further proof. As for the social sciences, the Weberian ideal of value neutrality has loomed large. Value neutrality implies the postulate of emotional neutrality.<sup>[1]</sup> Both still constitute a basic premise of social research.
- 1.2 However, the postulates of emotional and value neutrality remain unrealized if we take a closer look. This becomes evident when we analyze different fields of social inquiry for their implicit emotional content. If we, moreover, treat normally separate research fields as interlinked and thus forming one discursive field, the neutrality of the allegedly value-free research turns out to be illusory. We want to show here how two different social scientific discourses construct—implicitly through their research frame and research questions—contrasting sets of valuations and emotions with regard to the objects of their research. These research frames and questions foster empathy or sympathy for the objects of research in one case, while they generate indifference and antipathy in the other. Since values and emotions are implicit, the necessity to explicate or to legitimate them is by-passed. The salient point is that quite different implicit value judgments and emotions are transported by these scholarly discourses because, although they share the same master frame and questions, they differ with respect to the middle range theorizing or specification which is present in one but not in the other case. Some of the consequences of this will be explored at the end of this article.
- 1.3 Arlie Hochschild's (1979) concept of feeling rules assumes that socio-cultural norms about emotions, which she calls feeling rules, tell members of any given society when to feel which emotion(s), and also with

what intensity and duration. Social actors usually know that certain emotions are appropriate and desirable in contrast to others in a given situation. They will also make an effort to conform, unless they can justify to themselves why they should or need not conform. Feeling rules are embedded in ideologies and more generally in specific takes on reality, known as 'frames' in sociology: 'It follows that when an individual changes an ideological stance, he or she drops old rules and assumes new ones for reacting to situations, cognitively and emotively' (Hochschild 1979: 567). Framing rules and feeling rules imply each other mutually—if not unconditionally.

1.4 Scholarly discourses, too, can be understood in this way: as specific interpretations of reality with implied or explicit corresponding emotions. If so, we can ask which emotions are transported or conveyed along with specific sociological interpretations of reality.

1.5 Also from a linguistic perspective, the emotional neutrality of scholarly texts is fictional and illusory. Linguists have shown that these seemingly neutral texts are in fact structured by emotions. Besides their linguistic form, their contents is equally relevant in this respect. Jahr (2000: 79, our transl.) remarks that

'matters are described in seemingly neutral ways, while the selection of information and the way of presenting them suggests certain conclusions and certain value judgments to the reader. This is to say that emotions are communicated through the content.'

1.6 While we do not employ a full linguistic text analysis here, this further buttresses our point that scholarly texts are structured by emotions.

1.7 Even more specifically, scientific theories and discourses can be understood as narratives about social reality (e.g. Kuzmics 2009). As such they construct actors and their agency, propose how these relate to each other and suggest how this relates to which contexts. In these multifaceted ways, narratives construct emotions. From a narrative perspective, 'the gestalt of actors, events, conditions, thoughts, feelings, etc. constitutes an emotion' (Kleres 2011: 185). In other words, narratives tell their recipients how they are to feel about what these narratives construct. Both the structure and the contents of a discourse then are a conveyer belt of emotions. Sociological theories or commentaries constitute no exception. They construct actors independently of whether they rely on quantitative or qualitative methods—they equip actors with specific attributes, more or less agency and contextualize their attributes, attitudes and (inter)actions.

1.8 This will become evident here when we juxtapose two different fields of sociological theorizing: this on the new Fascists and that on pupils with a migrant background in the German schools. We will use a few publications by prominent German sociologists in both fields to buttress our argument. These are representative of the mainstream theorizing in both research fields. To adumbrate: we will show that these sociologists cast new Fascists in the role of the helpless victims of a modernization process, thus invoking empathy or sympathy as appropriate feelings. In contrast, mainstream sociology frames migrants and their (grand)children as deficient and backward modernization laggards (see also O'Brian 1996: 19-21; Flam & Kleres 2004). This frame evokes indifference, reluctance and even antipathy as appropriate feelings towards them. We close with a claim that the same ideas which sociologists—naively perhaps—help spread, contribute to the indifference and prejudice of teachers towards (grand)children of migrants in German schools.

1.9 The choice of these two research fields may on first sight appear somewhat arbitrary. Our own interest in them emerged through a project on institutional discrimination against migrants (Flam et al. 2007). It was only because of this that we became aware of how both fields constitute *related* systems of feeling rules as we will show in this article. The common denominator between both is their function for the construction of a dominant German national identity, which becomes questioned by both the existence of racialized social inequalities and the new Fascists' push towards greater racialization and attendant policies.

1.10 If our argument is right, the widespread scholarly ideal of value-neutrality is not upheld in these two research fields. On the contrary, even if this is not their intention, sociologists a) offer theories whose very contrasting structures encourage their audiences to follow differing values and feel specific emotions regarding their objects of inquiry and b) in this manner help to reinforce ethno-nationalist or even racist ideas. This is then their very special contribution to a vicious circle.

1.11 The mainstream social science theories do not emerge from a vacuum but instead are intertwined with popular, ethno-nationalist and racist discourses—are both informed by and feed back into them. Under the auspices of 'scientific objectivity and neutrality', sociologists portraying new Fascists as victims and migrants as

both deficient and backward reinforce these discourses. They bestow on populism, ethno-nationalism and racism scientific legitimacy. They build on the taken for granted elements of everyday knowledge, scientize these and feed them back into the loop of a larger discursive field.

1.12 As already mentioned, our thesis and arguments emerged within a comparative EU-research project about discrimination and xenophobia (see [Flam & Kleres 2008](#); [Flam et al. 2007](#)). As newcomers to this field we felt like Alice in Wonderland—everything seemed to be turned upside down: new Fascists and even their acts of violence are treated with much interpretive understanding [*verstehen*]. The same sociological gift of *verstehen* is not offered to migrants and their (grand)children. While, as we already emphasized, the first group receives much sympathy, despite the violence it resorts to, the second group, although a frequent victim of this violence, is treated with indifference, reluctance and even hostility. We were in for even more surprises. In the following some examples causing the sense of unreal will be presented.

1.13 We will start out with a discussion of sociological theorizing on new Fascists and show how these theories convey in subtle ways a feeling rule of sympathy for them. Next we will outline the feeling rules constituted by how sociologists explain social inequality faced by migrants in the educational system. A separate section details how the same discourses and their feeling rules affect key stake holders in this context: teachers and members of the migrant civil society who both often think and feel along the same lines drawn by dominant discourses. In the concluding section we will argue how both fields contribute to the retention of a positive sense of national German identity.

## Sociology and the New Fascists

2.1 When one starts reading dominant theories on the right-wing extremism one first finds out that new Fascists are not perpetrators but victims. To be sure this does not hold for the entirety of research on right-wing extremism which includes a number of different approaches. However, the approaches casting new Fascists as victims receive almost exclusive attention—we therefore focus on these. This goes in particular for modernization and partly for deprivation approaches which dominate discourses both in sociology and in the media (for criticism, see [Pfahl-Traugber 1999](#): 101; [Stöss 2005](#): 51-52; [Jaschke 2001](#): 111-113; [Rippl 2003](#): 232; [Rippl & Baier 2005](#): 647).

2.2 Authors focusing on right-wing extremism highlight the ambivalence and dark aspects of modernization and individualization ([Heitmeyer et al. 1992](#); see also e.g. [Heitmeyer 2005](#); for overviews see also [Wahl 1995](#); [Winkler 2001](#)). In their rather speculative theorizing, it is not the rightist ideology which turns people into right-wing extremists. The role of ideology is limited to bestowing specific meaning on violence that is already produced in everyday life. Rather, what is decisive is the individual experience of modernization. Modernization stands here for social disintegration and status inconsistencies which make the social position of the individual ambivalent. This ambivalence, but also the resulting insecurity, lead to or interweave with the feelings of exclusion and powerlessness, intensifying the fears of downward social mobility. Individualization entails erosion of social relations and thus isolation. At the same time, values and norms become increasingly contingent and lose their obligatory hold. All this lowers thresholds of violence.

2.3 This perspective further argues that the right-wing extremists project their experience of the modernization process onto migrants and that migrants are seen as an undifferentiated mass because of their own feeling of being replaceable in the labor sphere<sup>[2]</sup> (see [Heitmeyer et al. 1992](#): 596). Right-wing extremists take the central imperative of modernization to heart—self-assertion—when they turn migrants into objects of self-assertion. Ubiquitous competition encourages striving for supremacy. To quote one example:

'Own uneasiness about the position at the labor market is transformed into uneasiness about foreign behavior; anxiety about alienation in the labor sphere is transformed into over-alienation anxiety in the cultural sphere.'  
([Heitmeyer et al. 1992](#): 478; our transl.)

2.4 With subtlety and empathy right-wing extremists are portrayed as losers of modernization, as those who fail to properly come to terms with the incongruities and insecurities it generates. Anxious and confused in times of pervasive social change they are unable to make use of the new freedoms, responding with violence instead.

2.5 Responsibility for right-wing extremism is thus not with the extremists themselves. Rather it must be sought in social change that is driven by the capitalist economy ([Heitmeyer 1994](#): 51). Social institutions are made responsible, too. These are charged with inadequately picking up on and failing to process insecurities and anxieties of the modernization victims, thus letting these emotions become the very source of violent right-wing

extremism (Heitmeyer 1994; for a newer statement see 2005).

- 2.6 Even though this argument can be interpreted as a laudable attempt to demand appropriate reactions from politicians and social institutions, the approach as such releases right-wing extremists from responsibility and instead casts them as victims. Rommelspacher (1992: 93; our transl.) views it as a discursive exoneration and exculpation of the 'perpetrators': 'In reality they have so many problems that their behavior may be condemnable, but at the same time understandable.' As far as these discourses succeed in shaping the construction of right-wing extremists as victims, they convey empathy if not sympathy as the appropriate emotion.
- 2.7 A similar argumentation can be found in the work of other authors, such as Marek Fuchs (2003). Besides the disintegration-insecurity-theory, he discusses also other theories, which, however, also cast new Fascists as victims: he finds explanatory power in Adorno's theory of authoritarian personality which helps him identify (domestic) violence as a causal factor. He also suggests that new Fascists suffer from relative deprivation and are willing to breach social norms, and explains both with socio-economic disadvantages. Here, too, extreme rightists are ultimately passive victims of the social conditions they are embedded into. This becomes particularly evident in the conclusion in which Fuchs argues that another theory would have to be tested as well: juvenile disintegration as well as the loss of orientation and insecurity about one's actions should be combined with familial failure to explain the forms of 'adaptation' found among the extreme rightists. Their form of adaptation, he argues, consists in an over-valuation of the own personality and—as a means towards the over-valuation—in the devaluation of anything alien, to pick just one of many similar arguments (Fuchs 2003: 670-671).
- 2.8 Finally, Rippl & Baier (2005) focus on deprivation theory as an explanation of right-wing extremism and, like Fuchs, include Heitmeyer's modernization-disorientation-insecurity theory. The authors stress lacking economic welfare, employment, income and education as determinants of right-wing extremism, but also pinpoint to political participation. Right-wing extremists appear as victims of social change—also in this case understood as socio-economic shifts and relative deprivation. Generally, right-wing extremists figure as victims of modernization also within the frame of deprivation theories (see Winkler 2001: 54).
- 2.9 The attribution of responsibility to migrants themselves for the violence they face follows similar discursive paths. This is because it takes a point of departure in how (this time 'regular') Germans see the world, in how they feel deprived relative to others. In a prestigious journal some years ago a prominent German scholar—an expert on social movements and the public (Neidhardt 2002)—in fact argued that we should check out whether migrants do something to make Germans prejudiced and feeling deprived. He suggested that research should focus on how migrants contribute to right-wing violence. He asked to investigate distributional structures in employment, taxes and women:
- 'Are they doing something that nourishes prejudice? Are they really taking away something from the Germans which (...) could be scandalized? Is that employment, tax money, women - or what else? With what kind of being different are they disturbing what kind of 'common sense' of those who feel disturbed in Alfred Schütz's sense of the word? Are their prejudices pure inventions?' (Neidhardt 2002: 785; our transl.)
- 2.10 Sociologists focusing on migrants are no exception but instead follow a more general rule. German sociologists as a rule feel indifferent about migrants and their offspring. Those who work in this area have yet to address or do empirical research on the institutional discrimination of migrants in Germany—a task they inadvertently have left to critical pedagogues (e.g. Gogolin 1994; Gomolla 1998; Dietrich 2002; Quehl 2002), while they instead have devoted their research to (i) the cultural or resource deficits as well as (ii) the poor acculturation, assimilation and integration of migrants and (iii) the resulting disadvantages (see Flam *et al.* 2007 for an overview of the mainstream literature and, for a few sociologists addressing institutional discrimination, Beck-Gernsheim 2004; Gomolla & Radtke 2002; Hormel & Scherr 2010, 2004; Faist 1993; Pioch 2008; Scherr 2008).
- 2.11 Despite this much skewed research, a recent call for abstracts for a conference to be organized in May 2015 by the research network of the German Sociological Association devoted to Migration and Ethnic Minorities asserts that sociologists and sociology have hitherto stressed disadvantages, discrimination and exclusion of migrants, but have left their status- and power-gains unnoticed. To fill in this research gap, the conference organizers propose *inter alia* to discuss how upward mobility and power gains by migrants can be theoretically conceptualized and empirically investigated from the point of view of assimilation and integration theories. They also wish to discuss the responses of the 'status-irritated' natives (i) to the status and power gains of migrants and (ii) to the arrival and formation of migrant elites (Treibel & Söhn 2014).<sup>[3]</sup> In particular these two scientific concerns are in line with those proposed by Neidhardt with respect to migrants (what do they take?) and new

Fascists (how do they react?) in 2002.

**2.12** To wrap up this part of the text, dominant theorizing about right-wing extremism usually takes a point of departure in structures or structural changes—modernization, socio-economic shifts—to argue that these generate socio-psychological preconditions, such as relative deprivation, family disintegration or family dysfunctionality, for intensified propensity to political extremism and violence. Strikingly, this type of theorizing, best exemplified by Heitmeyer's texts, enjoys continuous popularity despite persistent scholarly critique (for criticism, see [Butterwegge 2001](#): 24-28; [Wahl 1995](#); [Winkler 2001](#): 56-58; [Pfahl-Traughber 1999](#): 101-104).

**2.13** To be sure, contextualizing by resorting to structural analyses is quite common in sociology. Quite likely also in other sociological research fields contextualizing has the effect of activating empathy or even sympathy for the social groups subject to socio-economic shifts or the ambivalences of modernization. However, a comparison with the second social scientific discourse—on migrants, to which we turn shortly—will show that this type of contextualizing, resorting to structural conditions to explain individual conduct and/or beliefs, does not constitute a standard procedure in sociology. Indeed, we will show that the sociological research on migrants in Germany in fact has as its very characteristic de-contextualization, and that its consequence is to evoke different feelings—that of prescribed indifference or even hostility. We take up the school system as an example, but the same applies to the labor market.

### Sociologist on Migrants' Children in the German School System

**3.1** Turning towards research about the position of children with migrant history or with migrant (grand)parents in German schools, both available literature and our expert interviews have led us to the conclusion that quantitative research focuses narrowly and exclusively on the characteristics of migrants. The debate revolves around the question which of their characteristics—socio-economic status or their descent, culture or orientation towards the future—is to be made responsible for their lack of educational successes relative to Germans without a migration background.<sup>[4]</sup>

**3.2** A classic and in many respects typical example is the study by Richard D. Alba, Johann Handl and Walter Müller from 1994 which focuses on the situation of children with migration history and migrants' children in the German school system. These authors admit at the end of their text to the theoretical possibility of discrimination but at the same time argue that researching it would be too difficult and therefore it was not even considered in the research design stage. Instead they test a range of other variables in order to explain why children of migrants or children with own migrant history fare less well in the German school system than their German counterparts. Apart from the socio-economic background of their parents and the duration of their own school attendance in Germany, the researchers use various indicators of the migrant parents' rootedness in their culture of national origin which—they argue—decides about the educational careers of the (grand)children of migrants. They make a number of assumptions, only the most extreme of which are listed below ([Alba et al. 1994](#): 214-215):

1. if parents with a migration history speak no or only insufficient German, their children will be unable to learn it and thus do poorly in school
2. if the head of the household has at least three friends from their own national group, the children will fare less well in school
3. if parents with migration history consume 'ethnic' food, listen to 'ethnic' music, and read 'ethnic' newspapers, their children will show deficits in school
4. if parents with migration history do not identify with Germany, their children will score poorly in school<sup>[4]</sup>

**3.3** The problem with assumptions of this kind is that they hardly differ from those of the man on the street and that particularly the first is an example of everyday racism. As research shows, German everyday racists believe that

1. knowing German is to be German - you suck it out with the milk of your mother
2. thus foreigners are incapable of learning German - this is also proven time and again, since an everyday racist fails to understand foreigners' German, no matter how good it is
3. if migrant parents do not speak German, it will surely be impossible for their children to learn it ([Jäger 1992](#): 138; [Graumann 1994](#); see also [Flam et al. 2007](#): 10-11, 93-96)
4. as illogical as it may appear, German everyday racists believe that migrants should learn German and that if they do not, they only prove their presumed unwillingness to integrate and to identify with Germany. Foreigners

deserve to be rejected (Jäger 1992: 135).

3.4 The basic ideas in Alba *et al.* (1994) are very similar: the parents with their 'wrong' mentality, culture, friends and orientations are held responsible for the educational failure of their children (see Alba *et al.* 1994: 229). Parents are blamed for their (i) 'cultural distance' to the host country, (ii) cultural orientation towards their country of origin, (iii) unwillingness to re-orient and to integrate (via eating, reading, and music-listening habits as well as friendships) in the culture of their country of migration, and, consequently, for (iv) their limited German language skills and, finally, (v) the poor educational achievements of their children. The researchers acknowledge neither the capacity of schools to teach nor the ability of children to learn languages. Neither is accorded any agency. It should perhaps be mentioned that the research results were a great disappointment to its authors, since they mostly falsified their hypotheses. This should have provided food for thought for their followers. But it did not. One study after another still today takes a point of departure in this or similar research assumptions.

3.5 Relying on censuses or surveys, such research does not raise the question whether discrimination by central gate-keepers or the assessment criteria in the schools influence how (grand)children of migrants do in schools. But even the research which takes place directly in schools remains silent about discriminating school laws, procedures and expectations. To quote Gomolla and Radtke—two known critics of the silence about discrimination and of the scholarly biases and blind spots regarding discrimination:

There is even less attention devoted to the idea that migrants and their children are locked in, or discriminated against, by organizations of the welfare state, ranging from kindergarten to the employment mediation office, schools, employers, hospitals and the police. Statistically evident inequalities regarding educational success, employment or wages are accepted or consensually 'explained away.' Where they are not attributed to individual failure of migrants or their lacking willingness to integrate, their social position or their 'cultural alienness' is identified as the cause [of failure]. In the best case, the assumption is made that problems will dissipate after three or four generations.' (Gomolla & Radtke 2002: 9; our transl.)

3.6 This statement is no less valid if we turn towards subsequent research. Kristen (2003; 2006), too, starts out with the diagnosis of educational failures of pupils with a migrant background. She makes a brief reference to the PISA-study (see below) and its finding that migration background has a negative influence on educational careers in Germany. However, there is no causal analysis of this datum. In particular, this does not lead to new research questions nor to a shift away from the pupils' characteristics and towards the institutional factors which possibly affect how they fare in school. Instead, we find—however refined and differentiated—the same explanatory patterns, which, much like Alba *et al.* (1994), highlight the characteristics of children and their parents with a migrant background. This includes mainly the age at which migration took place or the time spent in the German school system as well as the age at which the parents migrated to Germany (not allowing for the possibility that these were born in Germany). Secondly, Kristen argues that parents with migration background often lack the knowledge necessary to support and to influence the school careers of their children. Kristen's parents are not guilty anymore of insufficient will to assimilate, as was the case with Alba *et al.* (1994), but they figure as indifferent and deficient parents because they fail to or are inept at taking care of the education of their children.[5]

3.7 There is also the early, so-called PISA-study, which was conducted in Germany and 40 other countries. We see here that the study tested chiefly the socio-economic background of the parents, national origin and German language skills in search for the best explanations for the career of children with a migrant background in the German schools. Much like Alba *et al.* (1994), the researchers behind the study scrutinized mainly the parents and children with a migrant background. They concluded, without delivering any evidence, that these children do not need to fear any disadvantage in school, provided they acquire German language skills (Baumert & Deutsches PISA-Konsortium 2002: 199). They thus placed the burden of attaining the necessary qualifications on the children and possibly their parents. They did not mention with one word the conditions that would help children with a migrant background to take the German language hurdle. Nor did they offer any discussion of strongly differing barriers to learning German in the contrasting school systems of various German regional states.

3.8 Institutional conditions blocking school careers of children with migration histories or migrant (grand)parents are not even considered, let alone researched, quite in contrast to the research about new Fascists. As we have seen, in the case of new Fascists their institutional failure—in the educational system and in the labor market—is made into an issue, and used to explain and to '*verstehen*' why they turn into right-wing extremists. The same courtesy is not shown with respect to migrants' children, even though what some of them

make themselves guilty of is not violence directed against others but 'just' a series of bad grades.

**3.9** Not all studies invoke simply negative emotions about migrants and their children. The PISA-study, whose authors demand equal chances for children of lower socio-economic status, propagate sympathy for the disadvantaged as a feeling (*Die Zeit*, 43, 12 August 2004). But even this study offers no separate argument that would incite sympathy for the (grand)children of migrants.

**3.10** Another study, the primary school test IGLU, comparing primary schools in Germany with those in 34 other countries, is more open about its sympathy for the (grand)children of migrants. Rather than blaming parents with a migrant background or their children for the educational failures of the children, the study argues that social class and migration background play an important role in whether or not teachers' recommend students for secondary schools leading up to higher education. In the fourth grade, when in most German schools this decision is announced, the likelihood to get a good recommendation for the highest secondary track (*Gymnasium*) is 4.69 time higher for Germans than for (grand)children of migrants. Thus, it is much harder for the daughter of a Turkish cleaning lady with good grades to be recommended for *Gymnasium* than for the son of a German physician who has average grades. This study propagates sympathy for migrants' children by pointing at discrimination as the cause of their educational disadvantage.

**3.11** To conclude this part, we propose that a positive link exists between how study objects are cast—whether their conduct is contextualized or attributed to their inner/inherited characteristics—and the emotions that are thus incited. This is summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The Emotional Regime generated by two Sociological Research Fields - From Theory to Emotion

<b>Argument</b>	<b>Object of Study</b>	<b>Ascribed Role</b>	<b>Emotion</b>
modernization, ambivalence	right-wing, extremist violence	victim	empathy, sympathy
interactive approach to social movements	right-wing extremists; migrants	victims culprits	empathy, sympathy antipathy
cultural difference	migrants' children, migrants' parents	failures, 'ethnos'	indifference, antipathy
socio-economic difference	migrants' children	failures	indifference
socio-economic difference	all children of the working class	victims of unequal chances	sympathy
Discrimination	(grand)children of migrants	victims of unfair assessments	sympathy

**3.12** There is a peculiar asymmetry between sociological arguments about new Fascists and children with migrant history or (grand)parents. While prominent German sociologists cast new Fascists in the role of victims and implicitly invoke empathy or even sympathy with these perpetrators of violence, quantitative sociology generates the view of parents and (grand)children with a migrant background as failures of their own making. As this attributes responsibility for educational failure to migrants themselves, indifference and antipathy emerge as the appropriate emotions. In this way, discourses produced by sociologists strengthen xenophobic attitudes and at the very least do little to counter them.

### Scholarly Arguments Among Teachers and Experts

**4.1** The significance of these results becomes evident when we analyze interviews with teachers and representatives of NGOs in the educational area. The interviews were part of a comparative EU-project. We conducted a total of 24 interviews with teachers and 12 interviews with parents- and private tutoring organizations in Berlin, Leipzig and Augsburg in 2004.<sup>[6]</sup>

- 4.2 In the interviews with teachers the same arguments that research generates are found (and vice versa). This is not surprising given the academic training of teachers in Germany. Even though this finding is in itself interesting, it is not the most significant.
- 4.3 The salient point is a different one: teachers' internalization of, among other things, indifference and antipathy induced by scholarly arguments is particularly significant as teachers function as gate keepers in the German school system. They have considerable say in deciding about the school careers of children—a decision that is made at the end of the primary school between grades 4 and 6. The arguments they fall back upon justify ignoring or explicitly discriminating children with a migrant background (see [Gomolla & Radtke 2002](#)). The consequences are shocking (see [Flam et al. 2007](#); and for similar up-dated findings, for example, [Diefenbach 2011](#)): in the school year 2002/2003 43.8% of all pupils with a migrant background attended the lowest school track (*Hauptschule*), but only 18.6% of their German counterparts. *Hauptschule* constitutes a social-occupational deadend for its graduates. Among German students almost one third (32.3%) made it into the highest school track (*Gymnasium*) leading up to institutions of higher education, but only 13.9% of their counterparts with a migrant background did. Of all German students 70% gain a medium or higher school degree, but only 40% of the youth with a migrant background. Steering migrants into the lowest educational track is paralleled by sending them in large numbers to schools for children with special needs—these are strictly separated from regular schools in Germany. The share of pupils with a migrant background in this school track was 14.7% in 1999, even though they made up only 9.4% of all pupils in Germany. Moreover, in 2003 20% of all youth with a migrant background left the German school system without any school degree, that is, with practically no chances on the labor market. This contrasts with only 8% of German pupils leaving the school system without any degree. These figures convey a coherent message of a systematic bias against children and youth with migration background in the German educational system: they are over-proportionally referred to the lowest school tracks, leaving them slim or no chances for further vocational or educational career; specific hurdles within this school system leave them without a qualifying school degree at all.
- 4.4 Here we can provide just a couple of examples to highlight how teachers—the key gatekeepers deciding about school tracks—think about 'migrant' children (for many more, similar examples see [Flam et al. 2007](#) or [Gomolla & Radtke 2002](#)). The important point is that the interview excerpts cited next show that teachers reason like the sociologists we have discussed at length to explain why children of migrants fare or should be expected to fare worse in school:
- 4.5 The first excerpt highlights the link between being foreign, coming from an 'illiterate' culture and allegedly lacking parental commitment to the children's education:
- 'this different mentality, this absolutely different mentality, yes, that that begins already with books, that they simply don't have any books at home, and that they are not read to either, uhm, and that one does not yes no reading and no playing culture at all, yes, there are no games in those households, and it, I simply say for myself, we always assume what goes for us Germans, yes, uhm, that the children are simply supported too little at home, uhm, of course unintentionally, they don't know it any differently, yes, and that there is much more information work and work on parents necessary' (Augsburg, primary school teacher)
- 4.6 The following quote illustrates the link being made between lacking German language skills and low intelligence. This is particularly significant as it comes from a very committed teacher who says she devotes much of her time to the pupils with a migrant background:
- 'or the parents just don't support the language at home or practice too little or what strikes me partly with foreign children is that at home they just run along at home, I can understand it, because there are often many children and that it is also not quite possible, but then you cannot expect, that well not the intelligence, but yes, that everything comes by itself, the knowledge' (Augsburg, primary school teacher)
- 4.7 At tutoring organizations findings are similar. Dominant scholarly arguments can be found among the representatives of those organizations, even if they themselves have a migrant background. Surprisingly, they have considerable difficulties in finding words for describing instances of explicit discrimination.
- 4.8 An Italian expert, for instance, vehemently blamed Italian parents for the poor performance of their children in the German schools. He referred to the unwillingness of these parents to integrate and learn the language together with their low socio-economic status. However, when he described the case of a 'quiet' Italian boy whom he tutored and who therefore managed to move from a school for children with special needs to *Hauptschule* and finally onto the intermediate track, *Realschule*, he literally was lost for words. He tried to say that teachers' assessments of children with a migrant background are often based on arbitrary and faulty



premises, but could not bring himself to make this point explicit. The word 'discrimination' did not even cross his mind. His reluctance to attribute blame to others than the 'silent' boy is visible in the use of impersonal pronouns, such as 'one' or 'nobody', when accounting for what to his mind until today remains vague, perhaps even unaccountable:

'but [he] was kept for nine years, eight years in a school for children with special needs, the guy, intelligent, is simply only, one has to say honestly, is a bit withdrawn, a bit peculiar, yes, more of an introvert, and quite taciturn, and yes those were about the reasons why he ended up in a special needs school, but that he is highly intelligent, no-one was interested in that, he simply sat there, didn't raise his hand, already when he was little, didn't raise his hand, was always silent, was very quiet and that was already enough to send him on to special needs school, until one somehow realized in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, hey, now let's try it one more time, yes, and now he is in a *Realschule*'

4.9 A Turkish expert, too, reproduced the scholarly arguments and explicitly denied discrimination in the school, while later in the interview she did in fact report examples of discrimination. For instance, she talked about pre-school tests for primary schools which put children with a migrant background at a disadvantage. The NGO she worked for, however, did not want to complain about it with the Ministry for Culture for fear of alienating it.

4.10 This is to say that surprisingly, hegemonic scholarly discourses are widespread among those who deal with children with a migrant background on a daily basis—not only teachers but equally NGOs. In our view, this prevents the formation of counter-discourses among migrants themselves—even where they are latent, they are suffocated by scientific, teachers' and public discourses. In Germany, discourses naming discrimination are mostly stillborn.

### Emotions in Context: Inter-Linkages and Functions

5.1 The effects and functions of the scholarly discourses discussed here go beyond their formative impact on institutional gate keepers and civil society, extending their reach into migrantic life-worlds. They also have a function within a larger discursive field. By juxtaposing scholarly discourses on the new Fascists and on the (grand)children of migrants in the German school system it becomes possible to argue that both undertake the construction of a national German identity. What our analysis highlights is that such construction processes are constituted by implicitly communicated emotions. In this final section we want to explore such discursive inter-linkages and how they constitute an intertwined *system* of emotions.

5.2 There is much research in Germany of the kind discussed here: it explains educational failure of migrants' (grand)children in terms of their language deficits and/or their disadvantaged family background and/or their descent from foreign cultures. This scholarly discourse stands in a mutually constitutive relationship to larger, public debates on migrantic 'others'. As we already stated at the outset, academic research is informed and shaped by wider social discourses. Given her critique of existing research, Diefenbach (2003: 250; our transl.) concludes:

'Much as with other questions of social relevance it applies here as well: that political processing precedes the production of knowledge. [She therefore demands research which] does not exhaust itself in the effort to (once more) confirm cherished theories, neglecting competing theories or legitimizing ideologically based prejudices.'

5.3 Sociologists whose work we presented in this text as stand-ins for a much larger group of (mostly quantitative) researchers take over the premises of dominant discourses and the feelings inscribed into them, converting them into theories about migrants and their descendants. Scholarly discourses not only take up wider discursive contexts and unwittingly draw inspiration from them. They also transform and feed back into more general debates as they frame issues in 'scientific' terms. This is essentially a claim to objective truth, covering up, as we have seen, its emotional politics. Migration and migrant background become turned into the 'natural' causes of misery. This reframing of political issues in 'scientific' terms, feeds back into broader migration discourse as it becomes a legitimating point of reference. They help legitimate and reinforce public renunciation of any responsibility for the disadvantages of the migrants and their (grand)children. As we showed, such scholarly discourses can be traced in the reasoning of key stake holders, who may be exposed to them through their professional training. In addition, both media and politicians draw on scholarly discourses (among other things) as they try to make sense of migrantic realities or in order to legitimate pre-existing stances. We will discuss one example for this shortly. The point is that in this manner 'science' buttresses patterns of general prejudice and conveys feelings of indifference, hostility and antipathy. This specific take on migrants and their (grand)children plays an important role in the production of knowledge and expertise about migrants more generally.

- 5.4 Social science discourses also shape official statistics—in part because quantitative sociologists become employees of statistical government offices. Just one example: a recently provided interpretation of why unemployment among 'foreigners' is doubly as high as that among 'Germans' (both very much contested categories in substantive and technical terms) unequivocally pinpoints their (allegedly) poorer qualifications (see [Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2014](#)).
- 5.5 In contrast to political or media discourses, scholarly discourses and their implicit valuation and feelings rest on the claim to scientific objectivity. As we have pinpointed several times in the text, feelings are conveyed in a seemingly neutral guise of mere rational, disinterested, in short, scientific truth. This is what lends the values and feelings they transport a particular weight in the larger public discourses that it feeds into. An important function of the academic discourses discussed here is to rationalize and to 'scientize' the feelings operating on a much broader scale in wider political debates.
- 5.6 It is striking that public debate on migrants and education in Germany is analogous to scholarly discourses (see [Flam et al. 2007](#)): with moralizing postures and demanding gestures migrants are called upon to adapt; with indignation their insufficient integration in the German society is criticized; their learning of the German language is demanded in harsh words. Parents with a migrant background are identified as the cause of their children's problems and turned into the targets of political hostility, appeals and interventions. Let us take one extreme, although not infrequent, example. Former federal banker, Thilo [Sarrazin, published a diatribe in 2010](#). His main thesis is that Germany by accepting migrants self-destructs. Although written as a contribution to a political debate, the book presents itself as informed by purely scientific arguments. It elaborately chastises immigrants and their descendants for their alleged lack of willingness to integrate, and it calls for increasing the assimilation pressure. What is at the heart of his writing is the attribution of blame to migrants. As elsewhere in theorizing and in public debates, the responsibilities of the 'host-society' (as it is still called in Germany) for integration are ignored.<sup>[7]</sup>
- 5.7 Saturated by scholarly research and by publications such as that by Sarrazin that make a claim to scientific expertise, a public debate of the discriminating institutional conditions as problems faced by the (grand)children of people with a migrant background remains wanting or occurs only on the far margins of public debates. This is an effect also of the feelings that scholarly publications convey.
- 5.8 Scholarly arguments putting responsibility on migrants and their (grand)children obviously lift responsibility off Germany, its education system, its teachers, publics and its politicians. By blaming the victims and their parents, the discursive construction of roles and the feelings inscribed into them allows for the neutralization of the apparent problem of unequal educational outcomes and its causes. Instead of raising the issue of racism and/or discrimination in German schools, most sociologists speak of the educational disadvantage and explain it by the characteristics of those suffering from the disadvantage. This leaves the German school system untouched by critical scrutiny. Essentially, these public and scholarly discourses, intertwined as they are, function to deflect from the responsibility of German institutions and, by extension, of the German state. They also leave German national identity untouched by the question of national responsibility for, or guilt about, yet another 'imported' and exploited labor force (cf. [Herbert 2001](#)). While this responsibility is fundamentally rooted in the existence of inequality,<sup>[8]</sup> the fact that it is (again!) racialized, created and sustained by German institutions and supported by the German society carries a particular weight in the context of a genocidal German past. It makes efforts to counter this exploitation and to make explicit the suppressed guilt particularly hard. Discourses sustaining institutional and societal blindness are in high demand. They help maintain a positive post-war German identity—one that claims it has successfully left the spectre of racism behind.
- 5.9 Similar claims can be made with respect to new Fascists as an object of study. Even more directly than the existence of racialized forms of social marginalization, the presence and actions of considerable numbers of German new Fascists could cast doubt on the claim that the German national 'we' has once and for all overcome the so-called 'legacies of the Third Reich'. Arguably, here, too, broader political discourses and scholarly discourses on the right-wing extremists reinforce each other and, together, dispel doubts.
- 5.10 As Butterwegge (2001) has argued, German official terms for the more glaring manifestations of racism or new Fascism, such as 'xenophobia' or 'right-wing extremism', individualize the phenomena and frame them as attributes of some aberrant fringes of society that have but little to do with its core segments. This covers up socio-historical connections with the fascist past and lifts responsibility from the 'core of the society' (see also [Decker et al. 2008](#)).<sup>[9]</sup> These concepts and convictions outline the contours of the public debates about new

Fascists in Germany. Therefore Butterwege argues that a political education which would remove the German blind spots is badly needed but wanting:

'Scholarly explanations are used to make politics and to steer societal debates. Because not reality (of right-wing extremism) is at stake but the perception of it, we must inquire about the interests that hide behind it. It would be a task of political education to create awareness of right-wing extremism, racism, and juvenile violence and to criticize them so that we gain the chance to create new and unbiased views.' (Butterwegge 2001: 13; our transl.)

- 5.11 The present continues the past trends (Herbert 2001; Funke 2002)—a complex history and politics around the ebb and flow of both migration and new fascist mobilization. A few brief remarks about this will have to suffice. For instance, the new Fascist mobilization was shaped by the politics of silence about the Nazi past and the Holocaust during the Adenauer era, attempts to break with this politics by Willy Brandt and the 1960s student protests, and the politics of 'normalization' of the German history under Kohl during the 1980s (Funke 2002). The way German institutions (laws, schools, employment mediation offices, labor markets, etc.) function to produce marginalized, ethnic others (Flam *et al.* 2007) who easily can be converted into objects of racism, has been conducive to the emergence of racism and new Fascists as well. The first electoral successes of a new Fascist party in the 1960s were the outcome of the 'guest worker' paradigm—keeping immigrants in a position of temporary visitors and in socio-economically marginal positions; conservative parties have for long framed immigrants and their descendants as problematic and threatening; throughout most of this history the 'otherness' of immigrants has been a staple of political migration discourse (Herbert 2001). But not just conservative or right-wing extremist parties frame migrants and migration as a problem or threat, stemming from an alienating culture or religion. Comparisons between programmatic discourses of the main and right-wing extreme parties reveal significant overlaps in their topoi and argumentation lines (Carius 2007).
- 5.12 The salient point is that social theories of right-wing radicalism, through their values and feelings, help to neutralize the potential for feelings of past-related national guilt or present-oriented shame about the new Fascists. In that sense, these theories and their feelings, too, function to protect an untarnished national identity.

## Conclusion

- 6.1 We argued that there are palpable parallels between dominant social science arguments about right-wing extremists and migrants. In both cases the assumption is made that the investigated group is disoriented, unable to cope with the dominant culture and the modernization demands. But because of middle-range theorizing/specifications the feelings that are communicated run into opposing directions. As we showed social science research is far from devoid of values and emotions, but instead configures emotions. The main part of this article picked up two contrasting examples to illustrate the emotional and moral consequences of this type of 'scientific' production. We showed that the research on 'migrant' children and new Fascists uncritically falls back on the two different emotional constructs: antipathy-indifference and empathy-care. It reproduces everyday and institutional racism—whether intentionally or not.
- 6.2 It is then our argument that it purports to be objective, rational, value- and emotion-free, yet it communicates both values and emotions. Since these are implicit, the necessity of reflecting or defending them is by-passed at the same time as they are turned into potent discursive weapons.
- 6.3 We showed that when new Fascists are the objects of study researchers introduce middle-range theories/specify with much differentiation and subtlety to reach '*verstehen*' which shades into empathy and even sympathy. A similar conceptual operation is missing in the case of children with migrant (grand)parents or history. Nothing is said about the specific societal or political context that led to immigration. Until very recently the longstanding view that migrants are only good for menial work prevailed. It both motivated and buttressed the silence about the failure to provide any institutional means of integration as well as about intense legal, procedural and gate-keeper discrimination. In this manner social science research has been embedded but also fed into a larger political context. The new Fascists, even if guilty of violent crimes and even if defined as the margins of the society, have belonged. In contrast, migrants and their children have been placed outside of its boundaries.
- 6.4 The juxtaposition of these two separate, yet related discourses shows that the contrasting ascriptions of roles and emotions intertwine and form a coherent discursive field. New Fascists appear as unfree in their actions and thus implicitly without responsibility for their doings, which evokes empathy and sympathy for them. Migrants in Germany do not receive either empathy or sympathy. On the contrary, they have themselves to blame for their fate, and therefore deserve indifference. Together both discourses form an emotional regime

which diffuses and mollifies the problem of new Fascists emotionally, while specific emotions produce ignorance and antipathy for the situation of migrants.

6.5 Occasionally, research on new Fascists points out the necessity to focus also on the 'core of society' (e.g. [Fuchs 2003](#); [Decker et al. 2008](#)). But it is first when we contrast and relate both discourses with each other that it becomes clear that they constitute essential ways in which the non-violent majority of the German society deals with both 'problems' in its midst and how it manages to preserve the status quo: outsiders remain excluded and 'troublemakers' within the national community are emotionally, even though cautiously and weakly, embraced. The difference in the emotions between the two research areas shows where the lines of identification/inclusion and alienation/exclusion run from the perspective of the good, 'mainstream' society. We showed that this moral order is generated not only by political or public but also scientific discourses with their implicit values and emotions. The specific effect of the emotional regime we described is that it penetrates even how migrants working for the NGOs helping 'migrant' children understand themselves and the problems these children face. The emotional regime suppresses their critical counter-discourses.

6.6 Finally, and in closing, while we used two sociological research fields to argue that scholarly research is far from devoid of emotions, in so doing our own research, that is this very article, has evidently itself an emotional agenda and is motivated by our own feelings. By explicating and contrasting the covert emotional politics of the two fields in question here, it is our ambition to deconstruct taken-for-granted feeling rules towards migrants and new Fascists and open a new intellectual space for critical reflection about them. This ambition emerged among other things from our own emotions related to both fields, such as sympathy for and solidarity with marginalized and discriminated migrants; and antipathy, resentment and moral outrage against new Fascists, their ideology and activism. It is because of these feelings that we felt irritation when we learned about standard explanations of new Fascism; and compassion and solidarity when we set out to explore migrants' everyday and institutional experiences. This is to say that emotions are an inextricable element of any scholarly endeavor.

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## Notes

[1] Specific emotions are typical for careers in research and academe according to Weber. Suitable for such careers are only those who can cope with negative emotions, such as frustration, envy, bitterness or cynicism which emerge when one is by-passed by those less talented and hard-working. Passion for scientific work, occasional ecstatic joy over a scientific discovery and the hope to be able to further scholarly progress keeps one going (see [Flam 2002](#): 54-56).

[2] Migrants become depersonalized in this theory because of the advances of utilitarian thinking and the monetarization of social life as well as indifference felt towards others as a result of eroding social ties.

[3] The Call is, of course, more differentiated, but its main assertions and research questions illustrate well an illusory insider-conception of this particular research field. We should perhaps explain that migrants have little official or unquestioned presence in the German institutions compared to such countries, as, for example, Sweden. For instance, in the German mass media their share is estimated at 1-3% (see [Bax 2013](#)). In 2013 of 630 seats in the national parliament 34 went to parliamentarians to whom 'statistically speaking' migration history or at least one parent with migration history could be attributed, thus the official text of 'SWR International: Migration and Integration'. This was seen as a sign of change. In the previous legislative period, 21 out of 622 parliamentarians had such attributes (see [Migrants und Bundestag 2013](#)).

[4] The list of indicators of parental rootedness in the culture of origin includes three additional dimensions: parents' wish to return to the country of their or their parents' origin, monetary transfers to the country of origin, and a partial educational career of the child in the country of parents' origin. The validity of all of these indicators has been questioned ([Flam et al. 2007](#): 49-55)

[5] For a more detailed critique see [Flam \(2007: 58-61\)](#). Additional evidence for institutional discrimination as well as critical remarks about the (unjustified) focus on socio-economic status of the family and the command of German language by children with a migrant background can be found in [Diefenbach \(2003\)](#).

[6] The interviews followed an expert interview methodology ([Kleres 2007, 2015](#)). Teacher interviews

comprised teachers from primary schools and secondary schools (*Gymnasium*). The sample included schools with different shares of students with a migrant background, ranging from 20% to 80%. NGO representatives and other experts in the field included union activists, tutoring organizations for children with a migrant background, members of the public school administration, parents organizations and intercultural kindergarten, etc. All interviews were conducted in 2004. The authors translated all interview excerpts from German for this publication.

- [7] The focus on (failed) integration for which migrants and their offspring are to be blamed is a common denominator of much of contemporary public and official migration discourse in Germany. In recent years, theorizing has seen the rise of what some have called born-again assimilationism (Glick Schiller 2010: 24) and the re-introduction and affirmation of the once discredited concept of assimilation into migration research (e.g. Esser 2004, 2000: 285-306). This forms a wider current of both public and scholarly discourses on the matter, which, however, cannot be explored here. But see the call for the next conference of the section of the German Sociological Association devoted to Migration and Ethnic Minorities that refers explicitly only to assimilation and integration theories (see Treibel and Söhn 2014). In December this year (2014) the Bavarian conservative party CSU put into its electoral program the demand that foreigners speak German in public and at home. They re-phrased it as a suggestion after the head of German government—Merkel—remarked that multilinguality is both nice and desirable.
- [8] This guilt-inducing potential of inequalities has been at the heart of discussions of 'survivor guilt' and related concepts (Stolinski *et al.* 2004, Odets 1995, Demertzis 2009: 159-161).
- [9] Butterwegge (2001: 22-28) situates the use of modernization theories to explain the existence of new Fascists in a lineage of theorizing that has framed new Fascists as a small residual of the past that will soon be outgrown or constitutes a normal, yet minor or marginal, element of well-functioning democracies.

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