

# Responses to Stigmatization and Boundary Making Destigmatization Strategies of Turks in Germany\*

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## Abstract

This article combines the concept of responses to stigmatization with the boundary making approach. It differentiates situational and discursive destigmatization strategies of ethnic minority members. The analysis of in-depth interviews with Turkish residents of Germany yields four dominant response types at the level of action: (1) confronting, (2) deemphasizing, (3) and ignoring / avoiding. While these responses vary situationally, the fourth category of (4) boundary work subsumes discursive strategies of boundary making and boundary blurring. This is the first systematic analysis of Turkish minority members' destigmatization strategies. The analysis reveals personal and situational prerequisites of particular destigmatization strategies. The article discusses commonalities and differences between Turks in Germany and ethnic minorities elsewhere.

**Keywords:** ethnic boundaries, Turkish migrants, qualitative interviews, everyday racism

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# 1 Introduction

Students of ethnic relations have rediscovered the concept of symbolic boundaries after decades of neglect by mainstream sociology. Zolberg and Woon's (1999) analogy of Islam in Europe and Spanish in the U.S., and milestones of theoretical development (Alba, 2005; Lamont and Molnár, 2002; Lamont, 2000; Wimmer, 2008a; Wimmer, 2008b) have spurred dissemination of the concept in the field of ethnic studies. In parallel, Michèle Lamont and her colleagues developed and promoted the study of 'responses to stigmatization' (Lamont, Silva, et al., 2016; Lamont and Mizrachi, 2012). The potential for dialogue and inspiration of both approaches at the conceptual level has not remained unnoticed but tentative (Lamont, 2014). This article proposes a combination of both approaches. The responses perspective emphasizes situational destigmatization strategies of ethnic minority members. The conception of 'ideal responses' put forward by Lamont, Silva, et al. (2016) broadens the scope of their approach, but the potential stigmatization of other groups through minority members remains a blind spot. The theory of ethnic boundary making (Wimmer, 2013; Wimmer, 2008a) provides the analytical tools that are necessary to account for minority members' strategies in a comprehensive way. However, Wimmer's taxonomy is not designed to account for situational variations of destigmatization strategies, since rather coherent actor strategies are presupposed. Thus, both approaches complement each other. The 'responses perspective' has the necessary flexibility to analyze varying context dependent responses by minority members, while the 'boundary making perspective' is more suited for analyzing how they make boundaries. Therefore, this article endeavors to integrate the perspective on discursive boundary work with the one that enables studying situationally variant responses. Empirically, data from in-depth interviews with Turkish residents of Germany support the integrated approach. The study of a recent country of immigration contributes to a literature that has paid more attention to former colonial countries and classic countries of immigration. The case of Turks in Germany is intriguing for two reasons. For once, destigmatization strategies of this group have received scant attention although researchers have

repeatedly emphasized the fertility of the approach for studying Muslims in Europe more generally (Koenig, 2017) and Turks in Germany in particular (Lamont, Silva, et al., 2016, p. 288). Second, the group's heterogeneity makes for a sensible test case, since destigmatization strategies can be expected to vary between individuals. The heterogeneity results from labor migration after WWII and subsequent family reunification, political refugees, and ongoing marriage migration. Today, Turks represent not only the largest immigrant group, but also the most despised (Alba, Schmidt, and Wasmer, 2003; Steinbach, 2004; Schaeffer, 2013) and least assimilated one regarding several realms, including intermarriage (González-Ferrer, 2006), employment (Kalter, 2006), education (Kristen and Granato, 2007), and interethnic friendship (Schacht, Kristen, and Tucci, 2014). At the same time, Turkish migrants and their offspring often feel discriminated against (Çelik, 2015; Skrobanek, 2009) and there is evidence for actual discrimination on the labor market (Kaas and Manger, 2012). Overall, Turks represent the largest and one of the least assimilated groups. The interviews aimed at exploring Turkish residents' perceived symbolic exclusion and their strategies of response. Four broader categories of responses are identified: (1) confronting, (2) deemphasizing, (3) ignoring / avoiding, (4) and boundary work. Whereas (1)-(3) are literal responses to stigmatization referring to reactions in specific situations, boundary work (4) refers to discursive strategies that represent general interpretations of the relationship between Turkish migrants and Germans. These general interpretations draw boundaries between ethnic or social (sub)-groups and potentially serve as preventive destigmatization strategies. I first provide a short review of destigmatization strategies of ethnic minorities in other countries. Then I describe the sampling procedure and interview method. Next, I give an account of the method of analysis and develop the typology of destigmatization strategies. In the discussion, I consider its complementarities and differences with Wimmer's approach of boundary making and Lamont's responses to stigmatization, and argue for a combination of both approaches. Finally, I show how my findings relate to the literature concerned with responses to stigmatization.

## 2 Destigmatization in Other Countries

The exploration of varieties of responses to stigmatization in different contexts has progressed quickly. This review focuses on cases that seem most relevant for a comparison with Turks in Germany. Israel is a particularly relevant case because it shares with Germany rather stable ethnic conceptions of membership and the resulting disjunction of citizenship and cultural membership. Studies in the Israeli context compare three groups and come to similar conclusions (Guetzkow and Fast, 2016; Lamont, Silva, et al., 2016; Mizrachi and Herzog, 2012). The three studied groups include Arab citizens, Ethiopian Jews, and Mizrachi Jews. Only Arab citizens admit discrimination. They respond with individual strategies through positive identification as Arabs, by demonstrating decency through norm compliance, and by reference to universal norms. Instead, both Jewish groups relativize stigmatization by describing ethnic tensions as unavoidable in diverse societies and by drawing on the cultural repertoire of Zionism to argue for equality of Jews. Ethiopian Jews are found to emphasize personal responsibility for their recognition (Guetzkow and Fast, 2016). North African French make for another relevant comparative case, since they share with Turkish migrants their Muslim religion and both groups face countries where Christians predominate. (Lamont, Morning, and Mooney, 2002) identify strategies of North African immigrants in France, who often draw on Islam to argue for universal equality of human beings. Alternative strategies include arguing for collective equality of North Africans and French, or personal equality to French. The authors summarize these strategies as ‘particular universalisms’. However, some individuals argue for collective superiority of North Africans to French, or they argue that racism is rooted in the characteristics of racist persons. Notably, they do not draw on the dominant cultural repertoires of Republicanism and Enlightenment to rebut racism. Bickerstaff (2012) contributes in her study of French Black by drawing attention to the context dependence of responses. She differentiates three broader categories of avoiding or preventing stigmatization, conflict-deflation, and confrontation and analyzes how responses vary depending on the relationship (personal vs. impersonal) and the context (public vs. private). Potentially,

strategies like confronting, avoiding, and deflating stigmatization are responses of the same person in various situations. African Americans prefer the strategies of confronting and deflecting racism through management of the self citepFleming2012, Lamont2016. Their favorite tools include conveying a positive picture of themselves through ‘managing the self’ and ‘teaching the ignorant’ who stigmatize because they are unaware of African American history and culture (Fleming, Lamont, and Welburn, 2012). African Americans’ self-esteem is bolstered by the cultural repertoire of the Civil Rights movement. Yet, (Lamont, Silva, et al., 2016) identify not responding as a third prominent response among this group. Bursell (2012) describes an exceptional strategy of destigmatization for ‘Middle Eastern’ immigrants in Sweden. Thanks to a Swedish Law that encourages the diversification of names, migrants can change their names into Swedish-sounding ones. Minority members describe that as a strategy to find more recognition and enhance their chances of finding a job. To sum up, minority members’ destigmatization strategies are shown to depend on contextual features (e.g. personal/impersonal), available cultural repertoires (e.g. Zionism, Civil Rights), and occasionally on legal provisions as illustrated by the Swedish study. In addition, Lamont, Silva, et al. (2016) suggest that it is sensitive to differentiate between actual responses and responses described as ideal.

### **3 Methods and Sample**

Interview participants were selected purposefully from respondents of the survey Attitudes towards Citizenship and Naturalization (ACN2012) (Witte, 2014). The sample has been drawn from a population of Turkish citizens with permanent residency in the German city of Hamburg. One hundred and nine survey respondents (44%) provided contact information and agreed to participate in personal interviews. Interviews were conducted in 2013 and 2014 with 16 participants from ACN2012 who had consented to the follow-up. The interviewees were 27 to 60 years old and were either born in Germany (second generation), or they arrived

in early childhood (1.5 generation) or later (1st generation). They include skilled, low-skilled, and self-dependent workers, some of them unemployed, and a homemaker. Twelve out of 16 participants are male who were more often willing to participate (see Table 1).

Table 1: Sample Information

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Generation	Occupational Class
Serkan Demiroglu	m	30	2	unskilled manual worker
Tayfun Akgün	m	39	1.5	unskilled manual worker
Murat Öztürk	m	43	1.5	skilled manual worker
Enes Demir	m	48	1.5	semiskilled manual worker
Ibrahim Kaya	m	49	1.5	skilled manual worker
Ali Bilgic	m	59	1.5	non-manual service/unemployed
Yakup Karadeniz	m	60	1.5	self-employed
Recep Dogan	m	27	1	student/unemployed
Hüseyin Topcu	m	35	1	unskilled manual worker
Emre Güner	m	39	1	self-employed
Ümit Okay	m	39	1	self-employed
Erkan Yildirim	m	50	1	unskilled manual worker/unempl.
Hatice Yilmaz	w	40	2	housemaker
Zelif Arslan	w	40	1.5	unemployed/housemaker
Lale Yildirim	w	51	1.5	unemployed
Zuhal Özcan	w	40	1	manager

Note: Some but not all interviewees adapted the orthography of their names. In pseudonyms the orthography is adapted. Generation 1.5: migrated before age 6.

The interviews followed the Problem-Centred Interview (PCI) approach (Witzel and Reiter, 2012) which takes the middle course between standardized non-reactive interviewing and narrative non-intervening interviewing. The central purpose is to involve the interviewee into a process of active understanding by starting with an open question that ideally provokes a long opening account by the respondent. In the course of the interview, the interviewer follows up on relevant topics that the interviewee mentions in the sequence they come up. In order to analyze the interviews in a systematic way, I transcribed them, and then organized them following a twofold strategy of ‘subsumptive’ and ‘abductive’ coding (Kelle and Kluge, 2010, p. 61) using a coding software. Subsumptive coding starts with some basic categories that are refined and changed in the process of coding by comparison among cases. Abductive

codes are developed from the interview material. The aim is to find categories that abstract from individual cases, while remaining strait enough to be informative. Initial categories were given by the interview issues: Discrimination, accommodation, and motives for and against naturalization.<sup>1</sup> Hence, there were some initial ideas that guided the interview analysis. They followed both from theory and empirical findings. To uphold the strength of openness, I treat the guiding theoretical concepts as ‘sensitizing’ as opposed to defined and testable (cf. Kelle and Kluge, 2010, pp. 28–30). Instead of addressing symbolic exclusion explicitly, the interviews aim at understanding how individuals relate to their country of residence. Codes are introduced only for boundary aspects mentioned by respondents. The identification of particular responses to exclusion follows Kelle and Kluge’s (2010, Kluge 2000) approach of empirically guided construction of types. They propose a four step procedure for the development of ‘empirically grounded types’. The process starts with the identification of relevant dimensions. Second, cases are grouped according to their similarity to arrive at internally homogeneous categories. Third, it is analyzed whether there are meaningful relationships between cases. This aims for identification of common attributes that make for the definition of types. Finally, the resulting types are described in detail by means of their attributes and by meaningful relationships with other types. This is an iterative procedure that is repeated until a coherent typology results. The final step is implemented once types have passed systematic tests of the preceding steps.

## **4 Perceived Boundaries Between**

The observation of destigmatization strategies is only sensitive if there is the potential for stigmatization. Such stigmatization would lead to the perception of symbolic boundaries and provoke the development of destigmatization strategies. Since responses to stigmatization are the main focus, I give only a short summary of main findings and refer readers to Witte (2015) for a detailed account. Turkish minority members feel most often stigmatized

or discriminated against based on ethnic and religious otherness. Deviations from the cultural mainstream are taken as grounds for exclusion. Concretely, interviewees experience stigmatization and discrimination based on their phenotype, their language, their names, and their habits. They are variously defined as others by labeling them Turks or foreigners. In addition, minority members are stigmatized for being Muslim. Their religion is a particularly sticky stigma for women who wear the headscarf. However, other family members suffer too when Muslim women are the target of everyday racisms. If men experience personal stigmatization based on religion, it is most often at their workplace in the form of jokes about their customs and superiors' intolerance towards work breaks for prayer. Those who make experiences of discrimination are also more likely to attribute unfair treatment to their ethnicity or religion, and to interpret ambiguous encounters as stigmatization.

## **5 Situational and Discursive Destigmatization Strategies**

When it comes to destigmatization strategies, I draw on existing classifications where they fit (Bickerstaff, 2012; Fleming, Lamont, and Welburn, 2012; Lamont, Silva, et al., 2016; Lamont, Morning, and Mooney, 2002; Wimmer, 2008a). In this way, commonalities and differences between ethnic minorities in different countries are more easily identified and different relational taxonomies of responses to symbolic exclusion can be compared. The only response type added is the one of helplessness in the category of ignoring and avoiding, but it resembles the one of 'shock/passivity' in Lamont, Silva, et al. (2016). The broader categories of responses include (1) confronting, (2) deemphasizing, (3) ignoring / avoiding, (4) and boundary work (see Table 2). Whereas (1)-(3) refer to situational reactions, the fourth category of boundary work summarizes discursive strategies that can be understood as more general approaches to the relationship between ethnic groups. The former refer to the description of concrete situations and specific destigmatization strategies. The latter



expose personal attitudes that shape the relationship between ethnic and social groups and often include evaluations of a relevant in-group in relation to other groups. The category of boundary work thereby allows the possible finding that minority members stigmatize other groups. Single response strategies are not mutually exclusive. The selection of a strategy in a particular situation depends on available resources and experiences with similar situations, an aspect I discuss below. In line with the boundary making approach, I assume that making ‘the other’ is performed in common, often harmless interactions, like asking a person of dark phenotype where she comes from, or by labelling her Turkish because of visual features. In the remainder of the section, I describe the four response categories and their subtypes.

Table 2: Destigmatization Strategies

	N	Employed by % interviewees
<b>Situational</b>		
(1) Confronting		
Teaching the ignorant	13	25%
Striking back	21	25%
Total	34	38%
(2) Deemphasizing		
Assuming individual responsibility	46	69%
Blaming the perpetrator	7	19%
Excusing/relativizing stigmatization	33	69%
Total	86	94%
(3) Avoiding/Ignoring		
Ignoring	11	31%
Avoiding	10	31%
Helplessness	21	31%
Total	42	63%
<b>Discursive</b>		
(4) Boundary Work		
Making boundaries within	24	56%
Making boundaries between	41	75%
Blurring boundaries between	28	56%
Total	93	81%

Note: The use of destigmatization strategies is non-exclusive.

## (1) Confronting

The broader category of confronting subsumes the modalities of ‘teaching the ignorant’ and ‘striking back’. Both responses rebuff attempts of exclusion, but the former is the more patient reaction often to everyday racism or exclusion. The category of ‘striking back’ subsumes severe reactions like legal action against racist mobbing and more harmless ones like talking back to colleagues’ racist jokes. Tayfun Akgün simply questions his colleague’s presumption that non-Germans take Germans’ jobs. ‘If someone says, for example, the foreigners take our jobs, then I reply, what about the German? He takes your job too, right?’ However, persons that are regularly confronted with stigmatization, tend to stop opposing it at some point. Among those who frequently experience discrimination, Hatice Yilmaz and Tayfun Akgün who came to Germany during early childhood stick out in their awareness of symbolic exclusion and their unabated efforts to strike back. Both are motivated by their religious belief in equality of all human beings and an interest in reciprocal recognition of minority and mainstream members. Both of them were victims of mobbing and fought cases at court and these are the only examples of striking back through litigation. Hatice Yilmaz’ apartment leasing contract was cancelled after she had been accused of a death threat against her neighbor’s children. Tayfun Akgün was fired for alleged anti-Semitic remarks at work.<sup>2</sup> The woman lost her case and her apartment but he won the trial and got back his job. In addition, two of his colleagues who had given false testimony were replaced. Both migrants decided to confront racist mobbing, and respond similarly to the stigmatization they experience. The risk of defeat is inherent in the strategy of confronting. Tayfun Akgün was not successful in realizing his wish to interrupt work for prayers. He reports how his request was rejected and his objections were dismissed: ‘Well, you are free to do something else, but no prayer. I said, but people smoke, they are supposed to clock out [ . . . ] but nobody does it. I said, I want to clock out and use this time for prayer instead of smoking.’ Serkan Demiroglu, a young member of the second generation, describes the failure of his application for German citizenship. The officer informed him about his ineligibility for naturalization due

to unemployment. He conceived of her communication as disrespectful and confronted her by calling for the person in charge: ‘I say, what’s that supposed to mean, unemployed foreigners are not naturalized? What choice of words is that? I am not some random refugee who came in a boat.’ Still, his application for German citizenship was rejected on the legal grounds mentioned by the officer. The emotional costs of a defeat make ‘striking back’ a more risky response than ‘teaching the ignorant’. ‘Teaching the ignorant’ is a more conciliatory, but still confronting, response mode. Recep Dogan, a young married migrant with prospect of a long future in Germany, reacts to his classmate’s complaint about immigration by explaining the country’s demographic predicament. In his view, migrants solve the problem by having more offspring than Germans, who are unwilling to establish families. A recurrent issue that provokes teaching the ignorant is prejudice. Persons are judged as unintelligent by their accent or simply by their appearance. Serkan Demiroglu was born in Germany and describes himself as *Deuschtürke* (German-Turk). Being a temporary agency worker, he is regularly given new assignments where he meets new co-workers. He describes a recurring issue.

[...] many situations where they treat me as if I was an asylum-seeker, who immigrated to Germany just a few years ago. Once they hear me talk, after some minutes, they are like, ehm. [...] I’m like, well, you haven’t had German lessons at school, have you?

His teaching the ignorant is less patient and conciliatory than in the previous example. However, confronting does not necessarily imply an aggressive defense involving litigation in court. More often, it means dialogue over common misunderstandings and everyday racisms. Responses of the confronting kind aim at changing the state of affairs instead of accepting stigmatization as given. Minority members typically choose confronting strategies in one-on-one interactions in situations where they feel sufficiently safe. If the context involves more persons or stigmatization is obscure, confrontation would be too costly. Recourse to legal resources is reserved to situations where not responding in this way would imply high opportunity costs.

## (2) Deemphasizing

The three deemphasizing responses include ‘assuming individual responsibility’, ‘relativizing stigmatization’, and ‘blaming the perpetrator’. Those who assume individual responsibility imply individual control over stigmatization, and thereby indirectly blame the victims. Those who blame the perpetrator claim indifference and attribute respective incidences to lack of knowledge on the perpetrator’s part. Finally, racial stigmatization is often relativized by being presented as either normal (‘exists everywhere’), as individual but not general (‘some are racist, some are not’), or as represented by the ‘older generation’. In addition, respondents express understanding for xenophobia (‘if I were in his place’) or take a pragmatic stance by laughing about colleagues’ racist jokes. In those instances, the problem of racial stigmatization is deemphasized. Different from confronting, deemphasizing responses do not aim at eliminating stigmatization. Those who assume individual responsibility claim to control stigmatization by their own behavior. Respondents who follow this strategy would often maintain they have ‘no problems’ thanks to personal virtues, like language-skills, honesty, friendliness, and decent work. For example, Lale and Erkan Yildirim, underline that they have had no issues with German society. They explain this with their decent conduct and suggest that those who encounter aggression are responsible. Ibrahim Kaya, a second generation migrant and car mechanic, mentions his language adaptation and his decent work as reasons for having ‘no problems’. ‘If you’re foreigner or not, when your performance is good, you can achieve something.’ His friends’ experience of racial discrimination is taken as evidence for his assumption that he can control racism.

Well, I know people, acquaintances, who made negative experiences, like racism.

Personally, I haven’t had that, because I know how to talk to people. They don’t get close to racism. For example, I have colleagues, I know they are racist, but I get along just wonderfully with them, cause I am sure that language is essential here in Germany. If your language is right, everything’s easier.

His conviction about the internal locus of control also shows in his stance towards his wife's headscarf. Instead of accusing those who discriminate against her, he expresses dissatisfaction with her refusal to drop the veil. 'But you don't get them women to drop the veil either. Cause they say, my religion.' 'Blaming the perpetrator' is a rather different strategy to deemphasize conflict. Since it is believed that racial stigmatization is the perpetrator's fault, there is no need to confront it. Those who blame the perpetrator doubt that confronting would change his mindset. Sometimes this strategy draws on former experience with perpetrators' reaction to confrontation. Ibrahim Kaya explains why he ignores persons who yell at him in the street: 'I am convinced that such people, you talk to them, eventually you have a beer together, you say, great, we get along after all, that this guy smashes your face next day.' In the case of Tayfun Akgün, the strategy is similar, but his tone speaks of frustration with symbolic exclusion. He does not experience stigmatization as coming from a radical minority, but as lurking behind many corners in his everyday life. He refuses to deal with those who make racist remarks, branding them as idiots.

You're adapting [orig. *sich integrieren*], you're trying to stay on both tracks [German and Turkish culture] and hope that, when you go shopping, that you don't get fierce looks or elbows and that you don't experience anything dire. [...]  
We don't care anymore, when we get that. We say, aha, another idiot and we walk on.

Finally, 'relativizing stigmatization' downplays the problem through re-interpretation. Ali Bilgic, an unemployed fitness coach of the first generation, confronts the common claim that immigrants have to adapt to German culture with his personal experience. He generalizes the adaptation of his son and his friends. They originate from various countries and speak fluent German with each other. In his view, politicians unfairly present a pessimist interpretation, but he suggests non-xenophobic motives.

[...] probably that's why, when politicians are bored, or media and whatnot, they put things on the agenda randomly, well integration and this and that, and

this discussion is like, that is how they distract the people, media-wise at least.

Maybe that's why.

Some interviewees experienced official discrimination against non-German citizens, e.g. preferential recruitment of German labor.<sup>3</sup> Some suspect discrimination by public officers, including police and researchers have argued that this group is particularly prone to xenophobic sentiment (Jaschke, 1998). However, the situations reported by interviewees are ambiguous resulting in varying interpretations. Serkan Demiroglu has been sent from one office to the next and attributes the treatment to bureaucratic idiocy, not discrimination: 'Well, that's one thing that Germany is really good at, too, bureaucracy, world champion [laughs].' Another common way to relativize xenophobia is pinpointing it in old persons who are said to have a WWII-mindset. Tayfun Akgün takes a young colleague's expertise in Kebab as welcome proof of the minor significance of xenophobia among the young generation. Some minority members argue that xenophobia is common in all societies and racial prejudice is a general human shortcoming. First generation immigrant Erkan Yildirim, for example, considers street violence normal, and attributes it to city size rather than to xenophobic sentiments although it was directed against a veiled woman in the example he recounts: 'So many people live here, three million people, that's normal. Istanbul has the same issues. [...] Such problems exist in all countries.' To summarize, deemphasizing strategies do not eliminate stigmatization. They support internal coping of minority members by providing relativizing narratives. However, those who deemphasize stigmatization also frame these situations as insignificant. Responses of the deemphasizing kind are regularly chosen to explain stigmatization and racism that has not been experienced personally.

### **(3) Ignoring / Avoiding**

The third kind of responses to stigmatization is summarized as ignoring or avoiding. Minority members sometimes ignore stigmatization because they feel unable to show visible reactions. Contexts, where stigmatization has happened on a regular basis, are sometimes

avoided altogether. Different from deemphasizing responses there is no reinterpretation of the situation. Instead, stigmatization is ignored or avoided. These responses often go together with a feeling of weakness and helplessness in minority members. The response of ignoring is illustrated by Zuhâl Özcan's reaction to everyday racism. She arrived in Germany as a student and is now franchisee of a gym. She simply does not frame respective remarks as stigmatization, but tends to ignore them and teaches the ignorant when necessary. '[...] and they always said, how can you live like that? We always thought they all wear headscarves in Turkey. Or – I smoked for 3-4 years – how can you smoke here? Well such, I said, I am a real Turk.' For other respondents, ignorance is a conscious decision. Instead of responding each time with confrontation, Recep Dogan, a recent marriage migrant, regularly prefers ignoring stigmatization. 'I don't talk much, someone laughs and insults and either I have to argue every day or, I don't know, not listen.' In his view, it is better to forget about some of the negative experiences if he wants to stay in Germany. For Tayfun Akgün, exchange with his Turkish friends confirms that his experiences are no exceptions. At the same time, his friends are a resort to the distress of recurrent stigmatization: 'And if you talk about it over a tea, they say, yes, I experienced something similar last week, and, yes, ignore it. You share your suffering with your own folks and they calm and support you.' Depending on the situation, Tayfun Akgün does not merely ignore stigmatization, but prefers to stay at home in order to avoid it. He describes hostile reactions when he is in company of his wife and children. He is gazed at while shopping and elbowed in the fast-food restaurant. His wife's and daughters' headscarves make a frame of stigmatization against religious otherness salient. As a consequence, such contexts of potential stigmatization are avoided.

[...] then you are eating Pizza at Pizzahut and if your wife is wearing the headscarf and your children, too, you are elbowed and these are things that make you reduce leaving home. Also while shopping, you hear, look, a whole family, and these are things that make you retract. You tell yourself, I prefer to remain in my milieu and you remain in the Turkish society.

Still, avoidance does not necessarily imply a general retreat. For example, Hatice Yilmaz reports her experiences in a society of parents (Elternschule). She once tried to make conversation at the ‘German table’, felt rejected, and therefore prefers to sit with Muslim women henceforth. However, she proudly reports that her conversations are interesting enough to attract German women. Similarly, Tayfun Akgün has some tolerance for his colleagues’ racist jokes, but is sensitive to the spirit they are made in. Eventually, he refrains from events with colleagues who make those jokes in an evil spirit, but joins meetings with more friendly ones.

And then you know, how he means it. I see, it’s not a malicious intent, he doesn’t mean it the nationalistic way, more as a joke. But if the gaze or gestures are out of line, then you become skeptical and next time you say, I won’t go there no more.

Respondents who employ the strategies of ignoring and avoiding often experience their position as weaker compared to the offender. Tayfun Akgün recounts a situation when his wife had just followed him to Germany. She had a bill but no change for the bus ticket, the driver alleged to protect her in a potential inspection, but denied that she had been willing to buy a ticket when there was an actual inspection: ‘This happened to me often. You are put in a situation on purpose, for their later amusement.’ Ignoring is a strategy for two groups of persons. First, those with strong self-esteem who are socio-structurally assimilated would ignore everyday racisms. Second, those who are less established would consciously ignore stigmatization to save resources and prevent discontent. Persons of the latter group who feel weak at the same time would avoid exposure to the risk of stigmatization altogether. Avoidance can be a sporadic or a permanent strategy.

#### **(4) Boundary Work**

The destigmatization strategies of boundary work are not connected to specific situations. They are general discursive strategies of situating oneself within or outside certain imag-



ined groups. The discursive strategies include ‘making boundaries within’ the groups of ‘Germans’ and ‘Non-Germans’ respectively, ‘making boundaries between’ the two groups, and ‘blurring the boundaries between’ the two groups. Persons make boundaries within by drawing attention to subgroups’ deviance from perceived norms and contrasting it with their own norm compliance. I speak of boundary blurring where differences between the main-stream and particular minorities are relativized by reference to social categories or norms of equality. Boundaries are also blurred by two related strategies: deemphasizing national identity or claiming two national identities simultaneously. Both approaches deconstruct the exclusivity of cultural memberships. Those who want to underline their similarity with the dominant group sometimes draw boundaries between themselves and other groups that they present as inferior in some respect. I refer to this destigmatization strategy as ‘making boundaries within’. The groups they refer to include other Turks, other groups of foreigners, Eastern Germans, and persons with lower socio-economic status. This resembles Wimmer’s 2008 category of individual crossing, except that none of the respondents refutes a Turkish identity. Ali Bilgic is opposed to immigration and argues against it based on labor market considerations. New labor immigrants threaten his socio-economic status that is already precarious. Further, he introduces a distinction between Turks from Istanbul and Turks from the Anatolian countryside, a strategy that can be found in other interviews, too. In his view, Western Turks as opposed to Anatolian Turks can easily acculturate in Germany: ‘Well, I am from Turkey, but I am not like from Anatolia in the mountains. I don’t want to let down anybody, but I am from Istanbul.’ Serkan Demiroglu supports radicals’ demand to expel criminal alien residents. In this way, the boundary between Germans and non-criminal aliens like him becomes blurred: ‘You are free to have your opinion, you are free to be proud of your country, and you are free to say, obviously, criminal foreigners out. I say so, too.’ Similarly, Zuhale Özcan reflects on educated Turks like herself and uneducated Kurds unlike herself. ‘And [in the German embassy in Turkey] there were people who are from Turkey, but cannot even speak Turkish. They first had to make Turkish translations and then they

wanted to go to Germany. And I can totally understand that you don't want to have them.' In addition, she denounces some Turks of fraudulent asylum applications in Germany. A second strategy is to make boundaries within the dominant group. Murat Öztürk, a second generation migrant working as a plant mechanic, differentiates persons from Eastern and Western Germany drawing on his experience from work on construction sites. He finds Eastern Germans to be egoistic and Western Germans to be more similar to him and therefore easier to work with. This line of reasoning supports his stance that what people do is more relevant than where they come from. 'Well, I've got a lot more problems, if I work with East folks than with West folks. With West folks it doesn't really matter but with Eastern Germans it does.' Ibrahim Kaya has experienced xenophobic insults from persons that are economically worse off than he is. The fact that he has a job and they live on the streets vaccinates him against their racism. Similar to Murat Öztürk, he attempts to blur the ethnic boundary by emphasizing inner-German boundaries.

Well the low level, talking about racism, it's higher than that of, I wouldn't say rich, but average income people. Maybe it's because they are worse off and they say, okay the foreigners are fine, social spongers, but that is actually who they are. Such people I just pass by and say, alright man. I pass by.

These distinctions I label 'boundaries within' to differentiate them from the 'boundaries between' Turkish residents and German majority group. In a very narrow sense, the boundary between Germans and non-Germans is made every time that the respective designations are used. However, some explicitly defend an ethnic conception of nationality when reflecting on citizenship and belonging. They take a bright boundary between both groups for granted, as illustrated by the following statement of Yakup Karadeniz, a first generation migrant working as a taxi driver.

When I take up German citizenship, then I am German only on paper, but I am still a Turk. I am Turk, one cannot change that. One cannot change, you neither. You are German and remain so, no matter which documents you've got.

By making ‘boundaries between’, minority members question the social hierarchy, referring to specific qualities of ‘them’ and ‘us’; a strategy described as ‘transvaluation’ by (Wimmer, 2008a). Those respondents characterize ‘us’ as kind, helping, sharing food with neighbors, honest, loyal, fair, and family-loving. At the same time ‘they’ are portrayed as cold, individualist, aggressive, insidious, and friendly with pets but unfriendly with human beings. This kind of boundary making tends to oppose Germans with an amalgam category of Muslims, Turks and foreigners. Several interviewees mention having children and caring for family members as distinct qualities of Turks. Sometimes the distinction between groups is made by reference to the countries Germany and Turkey. Those who feel that they cannot adapt properly to ‘German life’ mention country characteristics as reasons. Another noteworthy aspect of boundary making is parents’ advice to their offspring not to play with Germans. This was reported in only one interview; however, the voluntariness of participation in the study will lead to underrepresentation of those who followed their parents’ advice. Serkan Demiroglu grew up in Germany and played with German kids against his parents’ expressed will.

Interviewer: Is that more of a childhood issue or is it still present? Talking about your parents... Actually, that is common practice. That is always common practice. Well, in Turkish families that is still the case. From the cradle to the grave you get the advice through sayings, through admonitions, to be loyal. Don’t adapt too much, right.

Finally, some respondents engage in boundary work by blurring boundaries between. They mainly do so by emphasizing social categories as opposed to national or ethnic ones, by reference to moral criteria of general equality, by relativizing their national identity, or by claiming simultaneous attachment to both national identities. Murat Öztürk’s reflections on belonging are noteworthy. By describing his identities as non-exclusive, he blurs boundaries between German and Turkish identities. However, he does not invoke a hyphenated identity as it is common in other countries of immigration. ‘What can you do? I am a Turk and will

always remain Turk. Maybe also in my head, I am Turkish, too, but German just as well. And I have to, politically spoken, find the right way.' Serkan Demiroglu claims a hyphenated identity but implies that a purely German identity is not feasible because of his phenotype. So boundary crossing is not an option.

Interviewer: How is it when somebody addresses you as German? I always say I am German-Turk. I add that. Cause I say honestly, look at me, when I enter a room and say I am German, they say of course, but you are sure born. I say, of course I am Turkish, that's that. Then I say German-Turk. I give this hint. Cause I use to say, you shouldn't deny your origin.

Ibrahim Kaya relates the question of identification to cultural practices. Thereby he separates legal and symbolic belonging. He claims symbolic membership in German society that is independent of his legal Turkish membership. In his view, cultural adaptation has generated eligibility for legal admission into membership. In fact, he is entitled to German citizenship but what he implies is an entitlement to hold both citizenships.

I am still Turkish citizen, although I am, I've been here since 1973, [...] since I was ten I've been here without interruption. Now the question is, what am I? [...] If you consider that I have a Christmas tree at home, that is decorated and windows with Christmas decoration, then you have somehow adopted this German tradition and then you could get German citizenship, right? After all you feel like a German.

The emphasis of social categories, as opposed to national ones, represents an alternative blurring strategy. This strategy seems similar to making boundaries within. However, the aim here is not to define the own group by absence of negative characteristics. Several respondents note that, in public discourse, 'Turkish' is often associated with social problems. Murat Öztürk counteracts this tendency of scapegoating the Turks by questioning the relevance of ethnicity for those social problems.

The government, I do find that their action is anti-Turkish. And the German government can't change it, the folks are there. Either you expel them, like they've done it in WWII with the Jews, or you accept such things and try to fix also the difficult persons, cause – they aren't fixing it. They don't even fix it with Germans. Troublemaker remains troublemaker. Anyway, if he is a Turk or not, that's got nothing to do with nationality.

Those who make boundaries within have strong self-esteem and they regularly assume individual responsibility in response to stigmatization. Both strategies go together since they both destigmatize subgroups that comply with dominant norms. Those who make boundaries between Germans and Turkish minority ascribe positive qualities to their own group and negative ones to the German group in order to change the social hierarchy. The strategy of boundary making between is chosen by those who are reluctant to accept stigmatization as given. The strategy of boundary blurring is favored by those who refuse to conceive of symbolic membership as exclusive. They either identify with both countries or they question the significance of nationalities altogether. Blurring is often combined with the assumption of individual responsibility. These persons are confident that other qualities than their nationality are decisive for their accommodation in Germany.

## **6 Summary and Discussion**

This article makes three important contributions. First, it integrates the two recently developed concepts of boundary making and responses to stigmatization. Second, it applies the integrated model to the analysis of minority members' situational and discursive destigmatization strategies in a context that has not received due attention. Third, it relates Turkish migrants' destigmatization strategies to those of minorities in other contexts. The main strength of the integrated analytical tool lies in enabling hands-on analysis of minority members' destigmatization strategies while accounting for their stigmatization of others

down and up the social hierarchy. Four broad categories of responses to symbolic exclusion have been identified: Confronting stigmatization, deemphasizing stigmatization, avoiding or ignoring stigmatization, and boundary work. Responses of the deemphasizing kind are most frequent, followed by boundary work (see Table 2). About two in five respondents turn to confronting and three in five avoid and ignore stigmatization. Deemphasizing by assumption of individual responsibility is usually based on employment, or indicators of cultural assimilation. Minority members choose to confront stigmatization when much is at stake. However, confrontation also requires the availability of resources and the chance of success. Therefore, confrontation is most likely in one-on-one settings that are expected to continue in the future. Where less is at stake or the risk is too high, ignoring and relativizing responses are more likely. Boundary making strategies provide frames that ease coping with stigmatization where it cannot be changed. Successful structural and cultural integration often lends the self-esteem necessary for confrontation. At the same time, assimilated persons often make boundaries within to exempt themselves from the stigmatized group. To sum up, the choice of destigmatization strategies depends on personal resources and situational characteristics. Confronting requires more resources, whereas deemphasizing and ignoring/avoiding require less. The respective categories of boundary work provide frames for the general approach towards stigmatization. Confronting responses include teaching the ignorant and striking back. They aim at unmaking the stigma and are costly and therefore more seldom than alternative responses. Deemphasizing responses include the assumption of individual responsibility, blaming the perpetrator, and relativizing or excusing stigmatization, all of which leave the stigma unchanged. The assumption of individual responsibility and relativizing/excusing stigmatization are the predominant situational responses of interviewees. Occasionally, migrants prefer to ignore or avoid stigmatization. This is usually one of several strategies that are applied depending on the context. It often goes along with feelings of weakness and frustration. The responses summarized as boundary work represent general approaches to intergroup relations. The category of making boundaries within

refers to inner differentiations that aim at underlining similarities with the mainstream and thereby blur the boundary between a sub-minority and the majority, or a sub-group of the majority and the minority. Making boundaries between does the opposite by pronouncing differences between minority and mainstream. However, this is not necessarily strategic since ethnic differentiations are so common that even those who want to eliminate them may refer to them unconsciously. When responses directly aim at blurring, they do so by either making non-national categories salient, or by simultaneously claiming two national identities. None of the strategies of boundary work is clearly preferred over the others. My typology builds upon the literatures of responses to stigmatization and ethnic boundary making. I adopt the strategies of confronting and deemphasizing conflict and the one of ignoring and avoiding from prior studies. (Fleming, Lamont, and Welburn, 2012) applied them in a study of African Americans, Bickerstaff (2012) did so in her study of first generation French black, and (Lamont, Silva, et al., 2016) put forward a similar taxonomy in their latest comparative project. The strategies I summarized as ‘boundary work’ echo some of Wimmer’s elementary strategies of boundary making (Wimmer, 2008a). Although his book accounts for most boundary making strategies (2013), the concept of responses to stigmatization is more useful for the study of alternating responses. Here, the focus is on the process of boundary negotiation; the ways actors respond to exclusion while combining several strategies. For example, my categories of confronting and deemphasizing could both aim at boundary blurring in Wimmer’s taxonomy of boundary making. But additionally, confronting may aim at status equality of migrants and non-migrants and deemphasizing could aim at individual crossing. I would argue that the ‘responses perspective’ allows for a clearer look at the means employed by minority members, while Wimmer’s taxonomy is more suited for analyzing their strategies and boundary work. Lamont is interested in ‘how group formation is dependent on the quest for cultural citizenship and dignity, especially in the face of racialization and stigmatization’ (2014, p. 816). Wimmer considers the means of boundary making of dominated and dominant groups in his book as he remarks in reply to

Lamont (Wimmer, 2014). Although he stresses the heterogeneity of ethnic groups and their members' strategies, his taxonomy is based on the assumption of coherent actor strategies. When it comes to the analysis of immediate and context-dependent responses to symbolic exclusion the response approach is more helpful. However, subordinate group members' potential for making boundaries against others is somewhat neglected in this perspective. Therefore, I propose a combination of both approaches to study subordinate group members' strategies of dealing with symbolic exclusion and their striving for recognition. Since this is the first study of responses to stigmatization in the German context, findings are compared to research in other contexts building on the review above. Similar to other constellations they are the disadvantaged group facing a structurally empowered group. Visual and phonetic markers allow for distinguishing them from the mainstream (Witte, 2015). However, German history neither provides a narrative of racial mixing like Brazil that would ease recognition of Turks, nor a common religion that would support arguments of equality like Zionism does in Israel (Lamont, Welburn, and Fleming, 2013). Also, there is no equivalent to the Civil Rights movement in the United States. Turks in Germany most often rely on the (neo)-liberal narrative of meritocracy: Those who assume individual responsibility, work hard and behave decently will earn recognition. This resembles African American Middle class and Israeli Ethiopians who 'work harder' to refute stigma (Lamont, Silva, et al., 2016). Also, it resonates with North African immigrants in France (Lamont, 2000, pp. 202–203) and Arab Israelis (Mizrachi and Herzog, 2012) who describe themselves as 'the good Arabs'. Similar to African Americans, Turks claim to control racism by their own behavior. However, they do not mention dressing up as a means to reduce stigmatization. Similar to North Africans in France and Arab Israelis, hard work is a major way of assuming responsibility. They refer less often to religious scripts to respond to stigmatization, compared to minorities in other contexts. The responses of confronting, deemphasizing or deflating, and avoiding or ignoring conflict have been established in prior studies (Fleming, Lamont, and Welburn, 2012; Bickerstaff, 2012). Fleming, Lamont, and Welburn (2012) further identify the 'tools'



of dressing up, getting used to it, teaching the ignorant, and managing the self. Respective responses can be identified for the case of Turks in Germany for all but the first tool. Getting used to it echoes with my categories of deemphasizing, where racism is portrayed as normal, and ignoring, where persons are frustrated with racism. The assumption of individual responsibility is a mixture of what Lamont, Silva, et al. (2016) coin ‘acting against the stereotype’ and ‘competence/work’. The reason why the two cannot be separated in the German context lies in the particular narrative of the Gastarbeiter and public discourse on migrants in Germany. The assumption of individual responsibility picks up on the historical narrative of Turkish migrants as workers who participated in the so called ‘economic miracle’ and aims to debunk the allegation of welfare sponging through vaguely defined ‘foreigners’. Lamont et al.’s (2016) remaining ‘concrete response’ categories of ‘confronting’ and ‘not responding’ map onto the ‘situational’ ones of ‘confronting’ and ‘avoiding/ignoring’ in the taxonomy put forward here, although they propose a larger array of tools in these categories owed to their larger and more heterogeneous sample. The partial complementarity of my ‘situational’ with their ‘concrete’ responses does not extend to their ‘ideal’ responses and my category of ‘boundary work’. While their ideal responses refer to “collective strategies that our respondents perceive as fruitful” (2016, p. 9), boundary work refers to minority members’ attitudes towards intergroup relations that they convey either implicitly or explicitly, but not necessarily what they consider ideal. Bickerstaff (2012) provides a comprehensive taxonomy that differentiates which ‘tools’ are used in what kind of situation. Her taxonomy is very detailed and offers additional information on the situational variation of response strategies which may be helpful in some empirical cases. However, parsimonious taxonomies are more accessible and ease comparisons. There are some caveats regarding the sample of this study. It was restricted to Turkish citizens residing in Germany which excludes naturalized persons by definition. Related to that, few members of the second and none of the third generation are among the interviewees and the youngest one is 27 years old. The sample is not selective regarding professional success. There are unemployed, employees, and self-dependent, but

most interviewees have no vocational degree or are not active in their area of specialization. Maybe surprisingly, professional skills and employment status are not systematically related to particular destigmatization strategies. In particular, more costly strategies like confronting and less costly ones like avoiding are equally likely among respondents with various employment statuses. Still, the inclusion of naturalized persons and members of the third generation would likely reveal different issues connected to the eventual discrepancy of symbolic membership and legal entitlements of citizens (Koenig, 2017). If cultural contexts yield different repertoires for responses to stigmatization, as Lamont, Welburn, and Fleming (2013) argue, then Germany offers a meritocratic script of earning recognition by patience, civic duty, and labor market performance. However, the belief in meritocratic achievement leaves migrants frustrated when they have the impression that their struggles for recognition and cultural membership are in vain (Son Hing, 2012). The example of Turkish migrants in Germany illustrates how the unfulfilled wish for recognition may result in retraction and jeopardize socio-cultural integration. This study proposes a comprehensive perspective on minority members' role in the construction and deconstruction of ethnic boundaries. It does so by carving out the complementarities of two major theoretical perspectives: ethnic boundary making and responses to stigmatization. It remains for future research to assess this broadened perspective in other contexts. Furthermore, we need to better understand how destigmatization strategies mediate between symbolic exclusion and the socio-structural integration of ethnic minorities.

# Notes

<sup>1</sup>The example of the initial code ‘racial discrimination’ illustrates the flexibility of the coding scheme. It ended up as a sub-category to ‘evaluation of Germans / Germany’ and has further sub-categories of its own that specify the source or place of discrimination.

<sup>2</sup>Incitement to hatred (Volksverhetzung) is a criminal offence according to German Penal Law (StGB, §130).

<sup>3</sup>Preferential recruitment of German and EU-citizens for vacant positions is still relevant for non-German residents without work permit (see AufenthG, §39).

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