

Chapter 11

Intersectionalities and Perceived Discrimination in German Research Organizations: A Post-Soviet Migrant Women's Perspective

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Abstract

This chapter deals with the perception of (sensed) discrimination and the coping strategies of Russian-speaking female scholars in Germany and applies an intersectional approach between culture, migration, gender and social background. Based on telephone interviews, the study aims to contribute to the discussion on discrimination in research environments and individuals' professional integration by exploring narratives of migration and work in 13 women who migrated from the former Soviet Union (FSU) to Germany from 1990s to 2010s. Based on the findings, the author derives implications for policy and practice, such as a recommendation to implement introductory conversations with newcomers to reduce culture clash in competitive work contexts.

Keywords: Research organizations; perceived discrimination; intersectionality; gender and migration; post-Soviet migrant women scholars; German academia

Introduction

While the body of knowledge on discrimination and its perception in organizations has been growing over the past few decades (Czarniawska and Sevón, 2008;

Diversity and Discrimination in Research Organizations, 393–417



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Gewinner, 2017; Johansson and Śliwa, 2014; Śliwa and Johansson, 2010; Strauß and Boncori, 2020; Zikic, 2015), there is still a lack of understanding of discriminatory practices and processes in academic institutions. Research organizations are often deemed collaborative contexts where scholars benefit from interdisciplinary expertise. However, the entrepreneurial nature of universities and research institutes creates a natural competition between teams and single scholars, turning each of them into individual entrepreneurs who seek to achieve tenure and public recognition (Ranga and Etzkowitz, 2013; Steinþórsdóttir et al., 2017). This causes imbalances, patterns of protectionism and inequality, thus raising a question of the contextual and cultural factors that condition marginalization, exclusion and the perception of workplace discrimination. A clear dearth of research exists regarding critical reflection of social dynamics beyond the collaboration in research, and implementation of practical tools and measures against discrimination.

Previous research has successfully documented the kind of inequalities women face in academic contexts. Deficits in supervisor support and lack of networks (Zippel, 2020), tensions in reconciliation of work and private life (Gewinner, 2019; Thun, 2020), career stagnation and glass ceiling (Fernando and Prasad, 2019; Moratti, 2020; Skachkova, 2007) are some examples of the obstacles women are exposed to within research organizations with a hitherto male-dominant academic culture. However, the nub of research addresses native-born women, thus causing inequalities and lack of knowledge within the most prominent category of differentiation so far. Information on the interplay of several categories of difference, such as gender, socioeconomic and migration status, and how it is reflected in various academic cultures and adds to the perceptions of discrimination, remains extremely limited. Investigations of intersectionalities in academic organizations are a rare issue, especially in Germany. The social class reproduction in Germany is relatively high and largely contributes to the reproduction of elites, which gives an understanding of why a substantial proportion of professors in German research institutions have an academic parental background. The progress of the knowledge economy and competition for human resources urge diversification of the highly skilled workforce and internationalization of organizations involved in knowledge production.

Drawing upon original interviews with Russian-speaking female scholars in Germany, this study asks, whether and how migrant female scholars perceive discrimination, which factors support or counteract it, how women cope with it, and how this affects their continued participation in the German research sector. Highly skilled women from the FSU represent a particularly interesting case in German research organizations, since they not only outnumber migrant men from the post-Soviet space (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* (BAMF), 2018), but also constitute a considerable share in highly skilled migration flows (Gewinner and Salvino, 2021; Zaionchkovskaya, 2004). Delving into the explorations of organizational and individual, as well as cultural and contextual factors that result in the perceptions of workplace discrimination, might further conceptualize discrimination in research organizations and design (institutional) policies, and practices of inclusiveness. This, in turn, can largely affect the attractiveness

of the German academic system not only in terms of its further internationalization and social accountability, but also in terms of research excellence, diversity of researchers and reviewers, and research topics.

The German Academic and Cultural Context

Internationalization of German research organizations began as early as the 1990s and consisted of both cross-border education, i.e., mobility of students, scholars, ideas and services, and local internationalization, i.e., cultural opening of campus in terms of projects, activities as well as attitudes and actions of the campus members (Hahn, 2004; Knight, 2006). Under the pressure of realization of competitive advantage, higher education institutions aimed at building an international profile and reputation, which also entailed strategic facilitation of international careers, support of mobility actions, and hiring scholars with international career profiles. Previous studies have demonstrated that mobility and migration go hand in hand especially for scholars and other intellectual workers, which enables highly skilled people to enter Germany with either a scholarship or a work contract (Jöns, 2002; Wolfram, 2017). German universities became extremely attractive particularly for non-German women motivated to advance their careers and further research (Gewinner, 2019), driven by their career capital and passion for work (Zikic, 2015). Yet the proportion of scholars with foreign citizenship within professorial positions hardly exceeds 7% (*Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst* (DAAD), 2021; *HSI Monitor*, 2020).

In 2007, Germany launched the so-called Fixed-Term Research Contracts Act (*Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz*), which provides universities and research institutes with certain freedoms regarding fixed-term contracts. Aimed at shortening the qualification phase, i.e., the individual establishment phase in academia, to a maximum of 12 years, this law has had historic consequences in terms of unpredictability and impossibility of long-term job planning, and increased competition between scholars. Today, the German academic system is characterized by a high proportion of academics in temporary positions: only professors have permanent contracts, while 87% of staff below professor level have temporary contracts (*Deutsches Zentrum für Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung* (DZHW), 2020). Time-limited contracts can last from six months to three years, depending on the public or project funding. In international comparison, Germany is much less attractive in terms of contract duration (Kreckel, 2016), and solely quantitative indicators, such as the number of publications, measure the productivity of academics and the amounts of money received for project funding.

Established organizational structures in German research organizations have additional specificities. In contrast to the Anglo-Saxon system that features larger proportions of professors without their own staff, a single professor with a subordinated research staff heads chairs or working teams. The size of the single teams in subordination depends not only on the result of negotiations with the rectorate, but also on the professor's own activity in attracting external funding for projects. In this way, the German academic system resembles a pyramid, in which only 25% of junior scholars subsequently reach professor status (DZHW, 2020).

Moreover, success in a research career often depends on disciplinary cultures, i.e., a certain unwritten system of rules, publications, styles of argumentation, evaluations, etc., which form the cultural habitus and include the scientist in the scientific community of a particular scientific discipline. For instance, in social sciences it is common to publish a paper co-authored by two to three individuals, whereas in natural sciences the number of co-authors might be substantially higher. Similarly, chapters in edited volumes are still a broad practice in the humanities, while it is almost inconceivable in natural sciences.

Such socio-political conditions and institutional structures disadvantage women in German academia for several reasons. Firstly, according to previous studies, both men and women in German research organizations are less likely to become parents if they are only employed on temporary contracts. For example, in 2011, only about 25% of young scientists (PhD students and postdoctoral fellows, aged between 27 and 40) had children at the time of the survey (Möller, 2011). Moreover, German academics tend to postpone or even renounce family formation in an unstable academic working environment, even though they would like to become parents (Gewinner, 2019; Metz-Göckel et al., 2011). Secondly, academia has historically been viewed as a male environment, where the ideal image of a scientist is a man who has devoted his entire life exclusively to science (Gassmann, 2018). This stereotypical image still shapes a conservative disciplinary culture, which is particularly evident in the natural sciences which require controlled laboratory experiments and workplace presence. This view tends to disadvantage women when they are expected to be less flexible or have obligations other than work, such as family. Thirdly, gender norms in German society as a whole can still be characterized as conservative, where women are more frequently expected than men to take over the role of social reproduction, i.e., the responsibility for the household and childcare. This is particularly clear after the birth of the first child, when men continue to be actively employed and women reduce their paid workload for the sake of the family (Gassmann, 2018; Schürmann and Sembritzki, 2017). The proportion of mothers in German academia is therefore low and having a child despite difficult working conditions is potentially linked to the non-academic social background of female scholars and, hence, a traditional high value is placed on having children as a life goal (Gewinner, 2019).

Highly Skilled Post-Soviet Women Migrants in German Academia

Particularly since the beginning of the 1990s, Germany has experienced large immigration flows from the FSU, consisting of not only ethnic Germans, i.e., individuals forcefully resettled to the FSU after WWII and welcomed back to Germany after the fall of the Iron Curtain, but also individuals of Jewish origin. Apart from ethnic migration, educational and labor market migration intensified considerably, attracting (highly) skilled professionals. The latter is especially the case for post-Soviet women who enjoyed a solid education but reached their limits within the labor markets in their countries of origin due to various reasons.

Together with prerequisites for migration embedded into the cultural context, this encouraged them to search for better fortune and opportunities abroad.

The breakdown of the Soviet Union resulted in a collapse of the established social order, which entailed a significant devaluation of intellectual labor and an upgrade of services and trade. Women have long outnumbered men in higher education completion rates (Rosstat, 2021), and those interested in research, but who faced structural inequalities on a day-to-day basis, sought alternatives to continue academic work under different organizational and cultural conditions. Germany has always been deemed an attractive scientific destination in Europe (Shinozaki, 2017) since it offers diverse possibilities for enrollment in master's or doctoral programmes as well as scholarships for both early career and established researchers. Moreover, post-Soviet women academics usually represent a wide range of disciplines, including both science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and humanities, which makes them competitive within the academic labor market in Germany (Bouffier, 2017; Gewinner, 2019; Wolfram, 2017). Migrant academics are often described as diligent, hardworking, and resilient as compared to their native-born counterparts (Mamiseishvili, 2010), which might apply to post-Soviet women in the German academic system.

Regardless of the relatively strong academic profiles of post-Soviet migrant women in Germany, their career trajectories are tightly intertwined with individual family situations (Antoshchuk and Gewinner, 2020; Shinozaki, 2014). Women are not merely driven by the aspiration for career advancement, but much more by their culturally rooted family values, such as motherhood and harmonic family relationships. Previous research found that highly skilled post-Soviet women placed equal importance on both paid employment and family, which greatly pre-determines the modes of their employment and family choices (Gewinner and Salvino, 2021), and as a consequence, of their life satisfaction.

Current State of Research on Discrimination of (Highly) Skilled Migrants in Academia

Discrimination of migrants seeking to gain access to various institutions of host countries has been well addressed in previous research (Düvel, 2016; Keita and Valette, 2020; Kofman, 2000; Kogan, 2012). While the disadvantage of less skilled individuals can be explained by deficits in human capital, soft skills (flexibility, resilience, communication skills), and lack of information about how things function in a new environment, there is less known about the mechanisms responsible for the discrimination of skilled and in particular highly skilled migrants. Examples not only pertain to hiring practices, but also to daily business in teams or career advancement opportunities. Most explanations, positioned at the micro level of agency, assume that social identity and respective unconscious ascriptions result in a great deal of bias toward those who are likely to be “different” (Dietz et al., 2015). The processes of differentiation and othering often go along the axis of social categorization and incorporate not only explicit categories, such as sex, race or ethnicity, or physical appearance, but also implicit ones, such as abilities, traits of behavior or culturally rooted values and beliefs.

Identification of hidden mechanisms in the creation and persistence of disparities between “appropriate” and “unsuitable” employees becomes increasingly important for smooth work in multicultural teams and organizations. In recent years, there has been a growing understanding of diversity as a driver of creativity, efficiency and productivity of organizations (Héroux and Fortin, 2016; Hubbard, 2004; Patrick and Kumar, 2012), which is crucial for academic institutions that produce knowledge. Previous research has accounted for individual preferences of “gate keepers,” such as managers, as causes of marginalization and discrimination of skilled migrants from decision making processes or leading positions (Goldman et al., 2006; Sturm, 2001).

Deviation from the “norm” turns otherness into an obstacle to career advancement. This is especially true of minorities in academia, such as women and/or migrants. It is even more challenging to obtain a professorship or a permanent position for those who have double or more disadvantageous factors (Crenshaw, 1989), such as migrant women, compared to the dominant group. Despite their hard work, it is difficult to unequivocally determine for what reason their careers develop more slowly than others – because they are women or because they are migrants? Such impediments to professional paths can be multiple, depending on the social characteristics of the individuals. For instance, language has been identified as a career impeding factor (Śliwa and Johansson, 2010; Tietze, 2008) or even physical appearance and self-representation of migrants (Bauder, 2006).

However, career obstacles cannot only be tackled from the perspective of individual positionality. A look at women’s cultural background, their set of values and beliefs sheds light on additional factors that might explain how women perceive and cope with discrimination. For instance, previous research has found that women who deem paid employment and career a crucial part of their life are more likely to persist in their careers or navigate through hindrances to meet occupational goals (Antoshchuk and Gewinner, 2020). In other words, embeddedness (Ryan, 2018) in the workplace, professional integration and strong ties to the academic community might lead to work satisfaction and career progress.

Although intersectionality helps us to understand inequalities and discriminatory practices in German research organizations, it only addresses the individual level of agency, thus merely shedding light on one part of the story. In recent years, scientific enquiry demonstrated evidence of discrimination based on subtle intra-organizational structures and processes. For instance, considering workplace venues as gendered organizations (Acker, 2012) enriches the perspective on gender differences in talent acquisition and career advancement. Since men have historically been the original founders of academic organizations, the prevailing codes of conduct and unwritten rules of work and evaluation favor them in subtle ways (Hearn, 2020; Steinþórsdóttir et al., 2017).

Incorporating the meso, or organizational level into the conceptual framework of discrimination in German academia provides additional insights into practices of othering and perceptions of discrimination. This approach reverberates that of Yuval-Davis (2006) in combining individual agency within organizations with institutional conditions as constitutive macro context. The latter can be best addressed through investigation of academic disciplinary cultures,

as arenas of complex processes of informal exclusions and discrimination. Analytical examinations of disciplinary cultures can facilitate substantial cultural changes in research organizations, making them more open and diverse. Academic cultures show themselves in the complex structure of routines of practices, attitudes, and implicit rules and rituals that create a certain feeling of belonging and inclusion in the community, which are perceived as natural (Damrosch, 2013; Liebau and Huber, 1985; Ylijoki, 2000). Belonging to a disciplinary culture develops through acquisition of the professional cultural habitus and is validated by established scholars. A shared disciplinary culture means belonging to a certain academic community, yet deviations hold potential for discrimination. For instance, Traweek (2009) demonstrated for physics that it understands itself as an open, culture-free discipline, yet successful academic careers in this area are only attributed to men. Disciplinary cultures also differ in their perceptions of gender-related (traditional) division of labor in work and family, which contributes to the hierarchy of successful careers in mathematics and social sciences (Vogel, 2012).

Most studies demonstrate that across academic disciplinary cultures, women experience more difficulties in climbing up the academic ladder (Banchevsky and Park, 2018; Huang et al., 2020; Van den Brink and Benschop, 2012). The crux of the research thus predominantly focuses on gender as a discrimination category from belonging to academic disciplinary cultures, whereas other social categories and their interactions remain less investigated. There has been some evidence for mechanisms of discrimination based on socio-economic background (Möller, 2015) and race/ethnicity in academia (Clancy et al., 2017; Thompson, 2019), yet not much is known about the perceived discrimination of migrants. This is especially true for German research organizations that have only recently committed to becoming more diverse (Auferkorte-Michaelis and Linde, 2016; Klammer and Ganseuer, 2013).

To date, the interaction effect of migration background and gender has been controversial. Several studies showed that the two social characteristics that are deemed “negative” in academic context, mutually eliminated one another, thus bringing migrant women scholars career success, meaning one should be strange or different to succeed (Czarniawska and Sevón, 2008; Sevón and Czarniawska, 2005). In that case, building solely female-based networks might jeopardize the status of those women who achieved the highest positions, which forces them to further play a role of a “maverick.” By contrast, Sang et al. (2013) demonstrated in the UK that a migration background makes individuals outsiders in academia, and being a migrant female scholar not necessarily results in double disadvantage (i.e., negative outcome for a career), but in double marginality (i.e., permanent contact with two cultures). The status of an outsider borders on invisibility (Mählick, 2013), which makes migrant women representatives of “marginalised elites” (Riaño, 2016). This significantly echoes the overall position of post-Soviet migrant women in the German socio-economic structure: while in educational terms many of them are equipped with good qualifications, they are unevenly represented in highly skilled positions within the German labor market (Färber et al., 2008; Gewinner and Salvino, 2021; Kogan, 2012). This raises

the question: how do women migrants perceive discrimination in academia and what are the instances they deal with in German research organizations?

Lastly, the macrostructural dimension is linked to the challenges immigrants experience in terms of mobility policy. In contrast to the inner-EU migrants, post-Soviet immigrants face a number of obstacles to enter Germany, such as issue of entry and residence visa and proof of qualifications (Kogan, 2012), which largely impact on job opportunities in academia. Requirements for migrants to prove evidence of sufficient financial resources and a valid job contract represent further legal conditions which are relatively strict in comparison to other European countries.

Methodology and Sample

The average age of the 13 interviewed women was 37.5 years (see Table 39). For the majority of them (nine), Germany was their first and only destination

Table 39. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents.

Category	Sub-category	No. of Cases
Birth cohort	1960	1
	1970	4
	1980	8
Country of origin	Russia	9
	Ukraine	2
	Belarus	1
	Moldova	1
Academic position	PhD student	3
	Postdoc	5
	Researcher	1
	Assistant professor	2
	Full professor	2
Discipline	STEM	7
	Social sciences	5
	Humanities	1
Marital status	Married/in stable partnership	11
	Single	1
	Divorced	1
Children	Yes	5
	No	8

country, others have previously studied and/or worked in other countries prior to moving to Germany. The academic positions of migrant scholars ranged from PhD students to full professors, meaning that only two of them had permanent contracts as full professors. The disciplinary background of migrant scholars was heterogeneous and covered humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, with one woman currently working within the field of information technologies. Of all the study participants, 11 female scholars were either married or in a stable relationship, two were unmarried or divorced. Eight women were childless, three had one child and two had two children, respectively.

To discern perceived discrimination and strategies to overcome it in German research organizations, this study draws upon telephone interviews with 13 migrant women employed at various German universities and research institutes. All women are Russian-speaking natives and originate from post-Soviet countries, mostly Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. They were identified through onomastic procedure and screening of research institutions nationwide in 2019. The former technique derives the regional origin of a person from their name with a certain degree of probability (Liebau et al., 2018). The most typical female Russian names were used in combination with academic degree to search for potential study participants who were then approached by mail and invited for an interview. Thus, single institutions were not screened to identify migrant Russian-speaking women, but the Slavic names were decisive for building a sample, which was the main prerequisite for the participation in the study. Another criterion was a post-Soviet origin and a possession of an employment contract in the German academic system.

Telephone conversations were conducted in 2019 based on an interview guide that included questions on professional activities and steps in occupational career, migration history, as well as private life and its organization. The average duration of the interviews was 50–70 minutes. Key to the interviews was an attempt to understand women's subjectivities including values and life goals that guide their career pursuits and behavior. For this purpose, interviews started with women's migration history and questioned why they moved to Germany. In the next step, conversations addressed current working conditions, academic work in general, and experiences in German research environments. This served the purpose of understanding women's feeling of belonging, including whether they felt different in terms of being a woman and working as a scholar in German research organizations. To condense the insights, respondents were asked about their return or further migration prospects and intentions. Lastly, attention was given to the private life of migrant female scholars, with topics addressing partnership and household activities, children and relatives, as well as overall life scenarios.

All interviews were recorded and analyzed in MaxQDA¹ according to the ethics guidelines for social sciences, in addition the names of all respondents were

¹MaxQDA is a software programme designed for computer-assisted qualitative and mixed methods data, text and multimedia analysis in academic, scientific, and business institutions.

changed for confidentiality reasons (European Commission, 2018). The themes raised in the interviews were analyzed through a culturally sensitive approach by considering artifacts, values, and beliefs of the respondents, and convey a synergy of meanings and experiences of the respondents within the culture. A thematic coding technique (Flick, 1995) was deployed to identify major topics, find similarities in academics' experiences of discrimination, and make generalist statements on factors that exacerbate or help respondents cope with said discrimination. The coding procedure consisted of three steps. First, individual case analysis took place by taking into account socialization context and pre-migration history of women. This was followed by the second stage, namely case-related investigations of women's experiences, with particular awareness of dimensions contributing to experiences with discrimination. This in-depth analysis implied a search for connections between different interview passages and the meanings, and development of a system of categories for each individual case, which was applied to the subsequent interviews and modified accordingly as required. The third step aimed to identify commonalities and differences between respondents. The final generalizations were thus based on the case comparisons and highlighted commonalities and differences between the cases. The findings reflect the micro, meso and macro levels affecting perceived discrimination, and the interaction of them.

In the analysis, women's age, social background, nationality and disciplinary belonging represent the social characteristics that are important for the determination of positionality. Individual embedding could be grasped through women's values and orientations. To comprehend institutional structures and disciplinary cultures, interviews addressed typicalities in the publishing process, usual steps in the research process, conference behavior, and communication peculiarities.

Findings

Several important dimensions appear crucial for the processes of discrimination in German research organizations. On the one hand, these processes were largely shaped by institutional structures, and on the other hand, they represent women's individual resources and life situations. Together, the interplay of these factors produces a range of possible scenarios and ways of executing and perceiving discriminatory practices that in the worst case can result in a dropout from academia and forced correction of life plans. These factors will be discussed below.

Degree of Internationalization of a Research Institution

In terms of institutional structures and their role in the processes of discrimination, the extent of internationalization of academic organizations turned out to be meaningful for perceptions of discrimination. Large research institutions where migrant women worked, incorporated a variety of technical fields of academic enquiry, such as engineering or natural sciences, and were more likely to establish international co-operation with similar institutions abroad. This not only facilitated a frequent rotation of scholars in research stay schemes, but also hiring

practices of international scholars, which altogether provided a positive image of German research organizations. Female scholars rooted in natural sciences mentioned a friendly welcome culture and campus information was additionally distributed in the English language to increase inclusivity of organizational culture. English was also frequently a working language in large research teams, thus enabling smooth communication between team members.

Ksenia (Full professor): *All my colleagues are German, and this is why we have a typical German work culture. I do not experience any internationalisation. I used to work in very international teams around the world, and I still cannot get used to the German rituals of mistrust towards newcomers and the need to assert oneself in order to be accepted.*

Alina (PhD student): *We have a very nice international team, which makes us normally communicate in English. We work collaboratively, but everyone has one's own agenda as well.*

At the same time, internationalized organizations automatically created spaces for amplified tensions and misunderstandings between single members of work teams. Conflict potential was inevitable especially in cases when different cultural values clashed and, in that way, disclosed very different ethical standards in interpersonal communication and work routine. This was particularly the case for gender-based discrimination, when non-Western scholars refused to work under a woman's supervision and questioned her authority and expertise. One respondent reported multiple cases when men from the Global South refused to work with her and requested her male supervisor instead.

Larissa (Lab director): *As I am responsible for the lab, I am in charge of smooth operational procedures. I arrive early in the morning and check whether everything is clean and ready for the working day, so that staff members can work there. We have a very international team at the institute. Imagine how often I hear the protest from men from the Middle East that they are not going to work under my supervision. They refuse to acknowledge my authority, they even go to my boss and request not to work with me. They do not even understand that they are doing something wrong. Men from China are used to women returning to work after parental leave, so they have a very similar norm of working women as we do.*

Thus, internationalization of research institutions is an ambiguous category that has its shadow effects apart from the positive reputation of creating and sharing knowledge, thus counteracting colonialism. Interview material shows

that affected migrant women overcame certain barriers to manage the discrimination they were exposed to, although this premised a portion of emotional power and resilience.

Disciplinary Culture

Another important differentiation category is academic disciplinary culture. Analysis of interviews disclosed that the openness or closedness of cultures made scholars with a given set of features feel that they belonged to them or not. Contrary to technical fields of scientific enquiry permeated by culturally based reasons for gendered discrimination, humanities and social sciences seem to evoke somewhat different instances of othering and discrimination. Although the knowledge they produce is largely international in its nature, the spatial component of this knowledge comes to the fore in these scientific disciplines. It makes local, country-level events and social processes the primary subject of investigation and theory building. Being recognized as belonging to the country in manifold terms, such as language proficiency, sharing of cultural values and beliefs, and adherence to standards of work, enables one to be eligible to enter and even more so to be considered as established in a respective disciplinary field. Sometimes it is just the career capital that enables further advancement at a new place, followed by further settling in rituals:

Inna (Full professor): *I was lucky to stay at one workplace. Back then, in the early 1990s, my imported knowledge helped me to advance a lot, my boss wanted to retain me and even offered two positions at two different institutes each because of my interdisciplinary profile... After that I put much effort in to learn new things. It is very confusing that in Germany so many professionals have very narrow minds and are rarely able to think outside the box.*

Not living up to the expected standards and prerequisites of belonging induces mistrust and irritations on the part of diverse actors. The latter includes not only peer scholars and established colleagues, but also students. While students explicitly doubt the appropriateness of a migrant scholar as their teacher, most native colleagues demonstrate their suspicion through a reluctance to co-operate. In particular, a lack of publications with colleagues as a sign of established academic networks might result in a serious individual disadvantage in the meritocracy preached research landscape. However, against the background of overall competitiveness in German academic organizations, this disadvantage is often written off as a personal responsibility based on the lack of respective skills or low quality of work. This shows how expectations toward the set of attributes and features of a “proper” scholar are shaped and maintained within academic communities. Closed disciplinary cultures can be characterized as homogeneous and with a high share of native-born scholars. It makes no difference whether an academic discipline has a high or low share of women because competition permeates every field of study.

- Isolda (Assistant professor): *Exclusion and discrimination experience was my daily routine, many colleagues did not want to talk with me back then. I think this was a fact of racism, since in Germany, only Germans can do research on German philology. My attempts to advance as a scholar in this field, being a foreigner, harboured much potential for conflict.*
- Larissa (Lab director): *In my field of study, we started with 120 enrolments, at the end of my studies there were 11 of us. I was the only girl. Blonde. In my job application, I was able to succeed over 46 other candidates, and now, only me and one colleague from Eastern Europe are the only women at our big institute. Yes, we have women at serving positions, such as HR managers or lab assistants, but there are only two female scholars.*
- Nina (Postdoc): *Equal opportunity services are a hypocrisy! Women have even greater competition than men, and try to eliminate rivals in even more sophisticated manners than men do.*

To compensate for insufficient inclusion into academic disciplinary cultures, extra work is a frequent agenda. To achieve a deserved acknowledgment in the community and gain colleagues' attention, migrant scholars reported to having approached various colleagues in the same field of enquiry with the prospect to jointly organize conferences, lecture series or small-scale projects. Another option is publications that make the author visible and her contribution to the body of knowledge indispensable and barely overseen.

Supervisor Support

The type of team leadership and a relationship of trust with the manager constitute another dimension pertinent to practices and perceptions of discrimination in German research organizations. Favorable team conditions and a friendly working climate created an inclusive environment, making migrant women feel accepted in their teams. On the one hand, larger teams in natural sciences who usually work in labs and depend on work continuity had certain conflict potential through a clash of cultures with regard to gender discrimination, since these fields of study are usually more internationalized. On the other hand, international team composition reduced the risk of race discrimination and othering based on ethnicity belonging.

Post-Soviet migrant women usually experienced little support from their supervisors in their countries of origin, since supervision is still understood as a formality (Gewinner, 2017). Moreover, the doctoral programmes in the FSU resemble school lessons and imply less individual work with PhD students. Therefore, the contrast between post-Soviet and German conditions became apparent:

- Larissa (Lab director): *My boss very much supports women in science, supports me. I am lucky to have my boss. At other institutes, women have it worse because they do not have such kind of support. Evil tongues whisper that my boss likes me in a very special way because I wear a skirt (knee length!) and sometimes use a lipstick!*
- Inna (Full professor): *Back then, when I wrote my PhD and the Habil [the German second PhD that yields the status of “Privatdozent” – I.G.], I was greatly supported by both my supervisors. The first one believed in me, the second one adopted this strategy to retain me. Currently, my boss is the dean, but in this case, I do not experience any support, on the contrary.*

In case of tensions between colleagues, supervisor support turned out to be crucial, even if it occurred without an explicit intervention. For the majority of the respondents, a supervisor represented the most significant figure in career course, a point of reference and a source of inspiration for pursuing academic career.

- Inga (Assistant professor): *My second supervisor gave me a lot. He helped me on any occasion, gave me advice, he was a mentor for me who made me believe in myself as a scholar.*
- Isolda (Assistant professor): *At the beginning, I approached my colleagues in order to discuss my problems of being forced to stand my ground in the discipline, but they all reacted in such a way as if I were the problem, not the institutional racism. I then realised that and had to keep these issues private. Only my supervisor called a spade a spade and made me feel for the first time that I was not the source of the problem. It was a huge support and strengthened me.*

Individual Endowment

On the individual level, legal status and language proficiency have proved subtle yet important dimensions of discrimination for migrant scholars in German research organizations. The very notion of not possessing a permanent residence permit for most of the female scholars added to a latent need to justify their stay and the right for a highly skilled job in front of the authorities. Prolongation procedures of temporary residence status require a valid work contract, which makes legal status and work contract become interdependent parts, without one, the other is barely possible. Given the shift in entrepreneurial university with its mainly temporary contracts, this causes anxiety and the need to prove that one deserves the job.

Olesya (Postdoc): *I have been unemployed several times already, and the only reason why I have not got problems with the foreigners' authorities is because my husband has a continuous employment contract in academia.*

Nina (Postdoc): *With the urge of mobility in academia, it becomes highly critical what passport you have. The years of my doctorate, collected in France, zeroed in when I moved to the UK. In the UK, I did not seek to settle down and never applied for a long residence permit. I had to start from scratch after moving to Germany and now I cannot afford research stays abroad longer than two months because I would otherwise lose my residence status in Germany ... I cannot even go to the US for my next postdoc to advance my career! ... Next, where should I get my pension from, which country should I ask? Mobility is nice, but it is relative, especially for non-natives!*

While legal status is hardly a reason of conscious discrimination on the part of colleagues, language proficiency and skills might cause explicit discrimination. If the working language in teams is German, which is mostly the case for less internationalized institutions and more closed academic disciplines, then a poor command of the German language might induce certain exclusion from the informal communication and networks. This is not necessarily joint lunch or coffee break conversations, but more subtly friendship-like communications, joint activities beyond work and informal requests for help or support in difficult situations. Even accent creates a barrier of otherness that needs to be overcome. This is not an easy business, since access to informal networks requires a first step toward the dominant group from a “newcomer” who is not necessarily aware of this.

Isolda (Assistant professor): *My accent and mistakes disclose immediately that I am not German. This became an obstacle for finding a position, caused many conflicts.*

Anna (Postdoc): *English is my main language and although I learn German, it is maybe enough for a small talk, but definitely not for a conversation and friendship, not to mention scientific discussions.*

Work Ethic, Social Background and Belonging

Several individual factors turned out to have a substantial impact on female scholars' perceptions of discrimination. On the one hand, some of them developed a strong work ethic to compensate for otherwise lacking access to established scientific networks. At some point in their scientific careers, they realized that institutional structures were not necessarily transparent or inclusive, but rather favoring team members of eminently respectable professors with certain symbolic power. This was especially the case for those of them who did not have a prominent

supervisor, a renowned scholar with an excellent reputation who they could easily affiliate themselves with in terms of publications or fundraising initiatives. As a result, these female scholars established a strategy of solo attempts of gaining reputation in the scientific community through publications and conference attendance, hoping that the latter would make them visible and indispensable for the body of knowledge in their area. Not only the nature of intellectual work, but also the less advantageous position compared to men forced women to work more than their contract specifies. Migrant women's strategy of overwork echoes previous research that has demonstrated that women need to be 1.5 times more productive to be rated equal to men in their work (O'Connor and O'Hagan, 2016).

Isolda (Assistant professor): *My colleagues legitimised my person and the arguments I brought about in discussions with students or at conferences just through being there with me. When I was teaching or presenting alone, it had a conflict potential – in their opinion, a non-German person simply cannot teach German. It helped me to concentrate on the work and not let my goals out of sight.*

On the other hand, this strategy fitted the migrant scholars' general work philosophy that was greatly bound to women's social backgrounds. All of them originated from academic families where not only their parents, but also partly grandparents graduated from higher education institutions. This belonging to the class of intelligentsia is tightly connected to ubiquity of intellectual work and certain work profiles, such as medical doctors, teachers, engineers and artists, critical reflection skills and high moral standards. Working hard and seeing (intellectual) work as a life value is key to understanding female scholars' work ethic and decisions regarding academic work in German research institutions. They define themselves through academic effort and consider it a natural part of life, which largely supports the argument of strong work embedding. Being fully involved in academic work in the German academic system, for them, means professional fulfillment, commitment and counterbalance to significant competition. Simultaneously, women are proud of having maintained their social status and see the positions they achieved as a contribution to gender equality and their own independence.

Larissa (Lab director): *My colleagues tell me, I am more German than they are with regard to my work principles. They wonder how I keep things on the run.*

The issue of work ethic and class belonging raises a question on migrant scholars' general sense of belonging and how it fits the general work ethic in German research organizations. Surprisingly, none of the respondents could definitely say whether they felt German or Russian/post-Soviet. Instead, these women articulated to having absorbed the best from both contexts, such as natural curiosity and interest in new things, passion and openness to other people,

and at the same time strict discipline, planning and time management skills. This suggests cosmopolitanism that unites people through joint work and collaboration, making work norms and moral ideals stronger than mere cultural traditions and differences in people.

Ksenia (Full professor): *[...] I learnt to approach other people and establish co-operations, since it helps a lot in Germany ... I'm happy to be disciplined and to have time management skills, this is indeed how things work here.*

Physical Appearance and Sexual Harassment

Although being an independent subject, physical appearance acts as a cross-cutting theme not only across the interviews, but more importantly, across all other categories of differentiation. Being a woman, having blonde hair, being of a younger age than the average of staff, and/or wearing a skirt is enough to be exposed to processes of discrimination or mistrust.

Larissa (Lab director): *Dark haired women definitely have it better in academia than blonde ones. At least you stop being a subject of jokes, and no one tells you dubious gags about blonde women and science.*

Ksenia (Full professor): *[...] Once, I was really angry that my colleagues would rather drink coffee and chat than do the job, so I just met the decisions on my own instead of waiting for them again. It was necessary because we were running out of time and I could not wait any longer. I was so upset when I understood that this event made them realise that I am not a girl who is different, but an equal colleague they should take into account. Some of them approached me and said, "You know, I thought you were just a young girl, but now I see what you can do, can we work together?" Others just hardened their fronts and talked about me in a condescending manner ...*

Not fitting the ideal of the typical appearance or being in a numerical minority can lead to sexual harassment. Not all respondents experienced it or addressed this in the interviews, thus making the real extent of sexism in academia nebulous:

Nina (Postdoc): *After I pushed back some male colleagues' overt discrimination attempts who told me, I would not have scientific identity and I am simply nothing and should become a mother instead, some of them initiated flirt attacks, tried to touch me.*

Larissa (Lab director): *One French colleague offered me to look at his baguette... Another one told me he wrote an erotic novel featuring me and asked whether I'd like to read it. I have not taken action against this because I knew he would retire soon and I would have to continue my work here. The numerical number of women is not the problem. I believe, this behavior is an expression of a lack of education or socialisation in very traditional contexts that are counterproductive.*

As established, competition in academia can sometimes mutate into sexual harassment. In this case, men deliberately humiliate female colleagues to discredit them and their reputation. Competition between women occurs in such a way that women who are not affected tend to distance themselves from the issues of harassed female colleagues and act as if nothing happened. Even equal opportunity officers seem to have no power or personal interest to communicate these structural issues.

Family Situation

Family is a crucial factor in understanding practices of work of female scholars in Germany. An in-depth analysis of patterns of interpretation and individual behavior reveals the powerful influence of the cultural contexts in which the respondents were socialized. Russian-speaking female academics in Germany partly retain the norms of the gender contract of “working mother” despite the change in cultural context through migration. Both motherhood and work still play an important role for them, indicating the parallelism of life events. However, the fact that only a few scholars had children at the time of interview indicated a certain adjustment to the German context of mainly childless female scholars, thus making motherhood a category of difference.

Oksana (Senior researcher): *We are an unconventional family in every sense – we both work in different cities, we constantly agree on plans to take care of our son and consider it normal. We try to spend more time together, then it's an island of relaxation for us. But from the perspective of the mostly childless colleagues, we are just crazy.*

Nina (Postdoc): *In France, I would have already had three children. In Germany, I cannot afford this. I know I would lose my partner if I go abroad where I can have both work and children, he would not move together with me.*

Experiences as a mother disclosed structures of inequality and discrimination migrant women faced in German research organizations. If the family was not able to accommodate childcare, women were forced to seek institutional support,

which sometimes turned into a subject of clear discrimination. This is best portrayed in the experiences of Isolda, a mother of a pre-school child, who does not have relatives in Germany and shares childcare with her husband:

Isolda (Assistant professor): *There is a MiniCampus, where I leave my son about 15 times a year. The lady who organizes it spreads rumours saying what a bad mother I am, constantly leaving my child all day with strangers.*

The notion of not being able to reconcile both work and parenting is omnipresent in German research organizations, which turns parents into outsiders regardless of their effort and de facto better organization of work. Alternatives to dominant models of work–life arrangements are silenced. This demonstrates how much support actions and significant role models can change:

Inna (Full professor): *I treat my PhD students as my supervisor treated me when I got my first child: I tell them that it is possible to combine work with parenting. Once I had a PhD student who told me she was pregnant and already expected that I would deprive her of her dissertation topic. The opposite was the case. I always tell my students that they bring children at 7pm to bed and then they have an evening to work if needed. In retrospect, many of my mentees were grateful that they could receive a doctorate and become parents.*

Although the practice of work in the evenings is controversial, it does not necessarily mean additional working hours. Rather, it might signify a certain restructure of a working day and a flexible, individual work organization, which does not necessarily correspond to a rigid culture of presence at a workplace. This, in turn, might have a substantial impact on sustainability of academic work.

Discussion and Conclusion

Interviews with Russian-speaking migrant female scholars in German research institutions revealed patterns of coping with perceived disadvantage and discrimination. They depended on the interplay of institutional conditions and individual characteristics and embedding (Ryan, 2018) in the workplace and host country in general. Extending the body of theoretical knowledge on perceived discrimination in organizational contexts, these dimensions provide valuable insights into the processes of othering in highly competitive academic contexts, which challenges the normative discourse of meritocracy and draws a more finely tuned picture from the perspective of migrants. Practices of discrimination depended on internal organizational culture, degree of internationalization of the research organization, and research discipline on the part of the institutional context, and residence status, language proficiency, work ethic as well as social background,

sense of belonging, and family situation on the part of individual characteristics. These factors can be understood as categories of differentiation, thus largely contributing to the subtle practices of othering in the German academic system. As demonstrated, institutional or individual aspects do not solely contribute to marginalization and perceptions of discrimination in academic contexts, but interaction of both levels of agency. Especially disciplinary cultures and micro team composition create spaces for facing practices of othering, but also settling mutual approximation. Likewise, imported individual cultural values and the feeling of belonging condition communication at the workplace and the perception of discrimination at work.

Three noteworthy general arrangements become visible with regard to perceiving and coping with discrimination, simultaneously providing implications for practice. Firstly, the feeling of belonging to both work and the country takes a great deal of commitment to academic work and intention to stay in academia. This embeddedness into work which female scholars were socialized with, is facilitated through women's adherence to the unwritten code of conduct in German research organizations. Strong resilience and the superiority of work instead of conflicts drive Russian-speaking female scholars in German research organizations. The more factors of othering emerge, there is less of an individual perception of discrimination in the new environment. Strong welcome culture, compulsory information sessions for people with different cultural backgrounds, and social events might represent the means for teambuilding and reduction of discrimination.

Secondly, tied to the first observation, migrant scholars' perceptions of work in general determines how they face and perceive disadvantages, and potential discrimination in the workplace. If work represents a life goal and a certain value that implies self-realization, independence, and self-esteem, then discrimination is perceived as an unlucky accident, and the initiators of discrimination, such as men from women-unfriendly societal contexts, as uninformed agents with a lack of soft skills and openness toward diversity. The combination of work and family as a general strategy of balancing two important life values induces tensions and requires not only an egalitarian partner, but also good (time) management skills to harmonize work and private life without creating a perceived substantial imbalance. Ensuring different models of work and parenting are made visible might serve as role models for the dominant group and facilitate reduction of discrimination toward scholars with children.

Thirdly, physical traits and appearance in public can greatly deceive the environment and cause mistrust and discrimination of migrant scholars merely based on superficial characteristics. A skirt or a dress, or accent do not disclose anything about one's expertise, productivity or work ethic. Using physical appearance for the assessment of one's competence and building a judgment of a colleague's skills based on these aspects play a role in German research organizations as long as a newcomer exhibits the traits indicated as different or atypical for the dominant environment. Communication and further internationalization of research teams might represent a partial solution to an otherwise homogeneous academic environment.

The findings suggest that internationalization of higher education barely influences diversification and smoothens the inequalities rooted in cultural traditions. Migrant women seem to adapt quickly to new environments, and their work ethic is shaped around the intrinsic goals, not power games. Yet, they are exposed to the latter in competitive environments, where cultural traditions are at stake. Gender equality can hardly be achieved if policy measures only address the quantitative side by merely increasing the number of women employed in academia. Qualitative and individual measures for newcomers appear as a better solution, such as targeted team conversations that incorporate clarifications of how work-related issues function in Germany or elsewhere, and what organizational culture and teamwork mean. However, these measures imply additional effort on the part of the managers and team supervisors and can only succeed if one of the actors (in this case international scholars) is willing to adjust to the values and cultural traditions of the others.

One of the main limitations of this study is the small sample size and the need to conduct further studies with larger samples. Another limitation is the focus on only one migrant group of scholars in German academia. Russian-speaking women embody a rather specific social group with a strong academic background and diligent work style, both beneficial for career advancement. It is conceivable that women and men with different social and migration backgrounds perceive discrimination in German academia in dissimilar ways. Therefore, future research should explore these potential differences in a comparative manner, not only including interactions between natives and non-natives, but also between different groups of migrants. Moreover, cultural belonging and career progression after migration might be another promising research avenue, particularly addressing various disciplinary cultures.

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