

Diversity and discrimination at universities - an exemplary examination of practices of othering and discrimination for the design of anti-discriminatory educational and work processes at universities

Abigail M. Joseph-Magwood, Hochschule Osnabrück

Ayça Polat, University of Oldenburg

Abstract: Based on relevant findings from national and international research, the article deals with the relevance of discrimination and critical diversity strategies at universities. Relevant results from two studies are presented: a study at Kiel University of Applied Sciences from the winter semester 2020/2021, which examined discrimination and the representation of social diversity in the university context within the student body (cf. Polat/Thege 2023)¹, and a study at Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences (cf. Polat/Joseph-Magwood 2024) from the summer semester 2023, which also examined the representation of social diversity in the university context and students' experiences of discrimination. In addition, the results of the survey of employees at Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences will be presented. The surveys were conducted as part of an anonymized quantitative online survey and supplemented with several qualitative problem-centred interviews.

Following on from the research results and the ensuing analysis, relevant action requirements for the design of anti-discriminatory educational and work processes at universities are discussed.

Keywords: Institutional Discrimination and Diversity at Universities; Critical Diversity approaches at Universities; Quantitative full survey

1 Introduction

Universities are institutions in which racist² discriminatory practices take place in everyday processes of interaction and where the continuities of Germany's colonial-racist past have not yet been sufficiently addressed (cf. Heitzmann/Houda 2020, Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Antirassismus 2023, p. 55). As such, the effectiveness and impact of racism cannot be understood without reference to colonialism and National Socialism along with the underlying ideologies and practices of action. Racism constitutes an ideological framework of thought grounded in the concept of 'race', created and propagated within the walls of academia. By

¹ The report is available upon request from the diversity officer (URL: <https://www.haw-kiel.de/wir/organisation/verwaltung/beauftragte/diversitaet/>).

² Racism can be defined as the various 'othering' processes (cf. Spivak 1985), be they intentional or not, of constructing differences between humans through essentialisation, homogenisation, polarisation, and hierarchisation (cf. Rommelspacher 2011, p. 29). Racism is therefore an 'adaptive' and powerful form of marking difference within the context of societal power relations. The foundation of racist thought is based on a "We - They" dichotomy, which is maintained and reinforced through social practices, institutional structures, as well as legal regulations (Scharathow et al. 2011, p. 11).

constructing social, cultural, religious, and other differences as ‘racial’ determinants, it was possible to categorise people into diverse groups within a hierarchical racial order (non-*white* becoming the ‘Other’) and to provide a rationale and justification for imperial European expansion and domination (Arndt/Ofuatey-Alazard 2011, p. 660). Later, it provided a foundation for the atrocities committed during National Socialism. Historical theories of ‘race’ form the ideological basis of present-day (neo-)racism (cf. Ogette 2017), continuing processes of ‘Othering’ whereby people are construed as the ‘Other’ based on, amongst others, attributed ‘cultural’ or ‘ethnic’ differences (cf. Balibar 1991; Spivak 1985).

As a place of independent thinking and knowledge, the university is at the same time a *white* space. A place in which the foundations for racism, in the form of ‘race’ theories, and hence for colonialism, were laid through such academics as Blumenbach, Meiners and Kant (cf. Kelly 2021, p. 19). The university is an institution permeated by power and domination structures (cf. Thompson/Vorbrugg 2018, p. 83). Indeed, when entering the university as a Black Person or Person of Colour (PoC), it becomes apparent that one is entering a “sea of whiteness”, a whiteness that “is invisible and unmarked, [a backdrop] against which others appear as points of deviation” (Dyer 1997; Frankenberg 1993 cited by Ahmed 2012, p. 35).

If we look at the graduation rates at German universities, we become witness to a continuity of the imbalances in the education system (cf. Auernheimer 2013), which continues at universities. Similar to the school system, the disparities between students in higher education are also evident in terms of educational attainment or the socio-economic status of their parents and their ‘migration background’³. This is at least made clear by the results of the 22nd Social Survey of the German National Association for Student Affairs, which show an underrepresentation of students from homes with a low socio-economic status and with a ‘migration background’ at universities (Kroher et al. 2023). According to the study, about 70% of the students did not have a ‘migration background’ (ibid., p. 32) and most of the students surveyed (almost 70%) come from a family in which at least one parent has obtained a university entrance qualification (ibid., p. 26). Students with a ‘migration background’ are statistically significantly less likely to take up a master’s degree than students without a ‘migration background’ (Lörz 2019). In addition, a significantly higher drop-out rate can be found among students who are non-nationals and acquired their higher education entrance qualifications outside Germany ‘Bildungsausländer*innen’⁴ (49%) and “Bildungsinländer*innen”⁶ (48%) compared to students with German citizenship (27%) (Heublein et al. 2020, p. 11, 5). For the master’s programme, too, a comparatively high drop-out rate can be observed among foreign students (32%) and foreign students (26%) compared to students with German citizenship (17%) (ibid., p. 5, 11).

³ To show the problematic construction and provisional use of the term ‘migration background’, which is part of ‘Othering’ processes, we are setting it in single quotation marks.

⁴ The terms ‘Bildungsausländer*innen’ and ‘Bildungsinländer*innen’ used in German academic and administrative contexts can be seen critically, as they too contribute to ‘othering’ processes which take place in higher education.

⁵ Students who obtained their prior education outside of Germany and then come to Germany specifically to pursue higher education. In English, “international students” or “foreign students enrolled in Germany.”

⁶ Students with a ‘migration background’ who may hold foreign citizenship but who completed their school education in Germany. They are considered part of the domestic student body, even if they are not German nationals.

There are not yet sufficient empirical findings on the causes of the higher drop-out rates. However, the current social survey of the Deutsches Studentenwerk⁷ shows that 47% of foreign students have the highest need for advice on financial topics, while this applies to just under 29% of students without a 'migration background' (Kroher et al. 2023, p. 134). In addition, more than half of the students with a 'migration background' state that they need advice on learning and performance problems as well as on exam anxiety (53%), while students without a 'migration background' report less need for advice (42%) (ibid., p. 134).

From a racism-critical and diversity-conscious perspective, inequalities regarding participation in higher education require a closer examination of admission requirements, study conditions, and power and hierarchical relations at higher education institutions (Karakışoğlu 2016, p. 388). Such analyses must focus on the causes and effects of structural and institutional disadvantage on academic education and identity-forming processes and address the gaps in knowledge about practices of resistance against experiences of discrimination at universities (ibid.). In addition to the study conditions, the employment and working conditions of academic and non-academic staff at universities should also be considered. There are currently hardly any studies on this for Germany.

This article presents relevant findings from two studies: a study at Kiel University of Applied Sciences (UAS Kiel) from the winter semester 2020/2021, investigating discrimination and the representation of social diversity in a higher education context within the student body (cf. Polat/Thege 2023); and a study at the Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences (UAS Osnabrück) from the summer semester 2023, also examining the representation of social diversity in a higher education context (cf. Polat/Joseph-Magwood 2024). Moreover, the study at the UAS Osnabrück looked at the experiences of discrimination of both students and employees from an intersectional perspective. Based on these studies, both institutions intend to develop an anti-discrimination strategy.

Before presenting the results of the studies, a cursory overview of research on discrimination at universities will be given. The article also aims to formulate recommendations for action for a discrimination-critical design of educational processes at universities.

2 Relations of inequality and discrimination at German universities - A cursory overview of the current state of research

While the mechanisms of institutional discrimination and their consequences in the German school system have been the subject of (critical) educational research for a long time and important findings are available (cf. Gomolla/Radtke 2003; Arslan/Bozay 2016, Karakayalı 2020; Gomolla 2023), there are currently only a few studies that deal with the forms and consequences of racialising addressing and devaluation practices at German universities (cf. Gutiérrez-Rodríguez et al. 2016; Klein/Rebitzer 2017). A dominance of quantitative (sociological) studies can be found that deal with the participation and living conditions of 'students with a migration background' in the higher education system, focusing on the representativeness or drop-out rates of 'students with a migration background' (cf. Kroher et al. 2023, Lörz 2019). The category 'migration background' already poses a statistical problem, since, on the one hand, this naming practice marks differences and, on the other hand, not all relevant groups can be recorded (cf. Mecheril 2002). The significance of quantitative surveys is also limited with regard to subject positions of racialised and discriminated persons. This also

⁷ German Student Union.

applies to the analyses of the causes of the higher drop-out rates or longer study periods of students with a 'migration background', as quantitative surveys are often associated with a closed catalogue of questions. With the emergence of a diversity orientation, a higher interest in students' experiences of discrimination (e.g. study barometers or diversity monitoring) can be observed in isolated cases (Klein/Rebitzer 2017; Opitz et al. 2018; Darowska 2019).

Some existing qualitative studies problematise, among other things, Eurocentrism, Othering and the lack of recognition or consideration of the scientific work of scientists and professors of colour, as well as their low representation among professors and lecturers (Aytekin/Mansouri 2022; Popal 2016; Ngubia Kuria 2015). The studies make it clear that at German universities, both at the individual and on the structural level, markers of difference occur that can be traced back to racism. They manifest themselves, among other things, on the individual level in the form of violent language, everyday exclusion, Othering and discrimination by fellow students and lecturers, and on the structural level in the questioning of competencies in the context of application procedures (Ngubia Kuria 2015, p. 25ff.) and a "monolingual habitus" (Gogolin 1994), which results in linguistic discrimination against people. The lack of discussion of the multilingualism of students can be seen as an example of an unquestioned normality in institutional ways of doing things (Kalpaka 2015, p. 256) and equal treatment of all under unequal educational conditions. The desire to maintain equal treatment is also reflected in the controversial discussion among lecturers (which can be confirmed from the author's own experience) about 'disadvantage compensation' for students who have not been socialised with the 'language of education' German:

“Arguments by lecturers who are against an institutionalised regulation to compensate for disadvantages for students with a non-German first language can be seen as moments of being overwhelmed and as a struggle for the ability to act. [...] This addresses the pedagogical framework in which lecturers can act and the working conditions at the university: In them can be seen a shifting of the problem on to the students who are thus considered deficient or unable to study.” (ibid., p. 265).

At many German universities, an educational claim still dominates, which, in addition to a "monolingual habitus", is shaped by the self-image of 'national containers' (Glick Schiller 2010). This frame of reference can neither take account of the plurality of languages and life concepts in heterogeneous societies nor of a (self-)critical examination of knowledge production from a postcolonial perspective and can thus hardly fulfil the postulate of universities as places of enlightenment and (re)formation of knowledge and critical reflection (cf. Karakaşoğlu 2016; Mecheril/Klingler 2010).

There is also a selective willingness to accept and recognise 'foreign students' at universities (regarding achievements and degrees already completed at foreign universities) and an internationalisation strategy that is competitive and largely 'de-addresses' issues such as racism and other discriminatory practices at universities (Laufenberg 2016). This economisation of qualifications, which is intertwined with racialising practices of differentiation, is also evident, for example, in the fact that the residence title of students with a refugee background or from third countries is closely linked to the success of their studies and the exploitation of their educational capital for the local labour market. Various studies attribute a negative effect on students' sense of security and academic success to temporary residence status, material obstacles, and the requirement to find a job that matches their qualifications as quickly as possible after graduation (cf. Lambert et al. 2018). These differentiation practices in the application of asylum and immigration law for different immigration groups inevitably

represent an institutionalised hierarchy of refugees and immigrants according to their country of origin and qualifications⁸. Accordingly, in addition to internationalisation, the promotion of diversity and individual inclusion, diversity strategies must also address institutional and structural forms of disadvantage and discrimination and develop more consistent forms of creating equal opportunities, such as by setting up contact points for students and employees who are exposed to or fear discriminatory practices.

In their summary analyses of the state of research on racism and discrimination relations at universities, Van Lück (2020) and Karakaşoğlu (2016) show that there is hardly any institutionalised discussion of racism and intersectional⁹ inequality relations and thus only partially developed strategies and countermeasures to reduce institutional discrimination.

Although the findings so far on discrimination, which have mainly been obtained through standardised survey procedures, can provide a rough overview of the extent of discrimination, forms of discrimination and the composition of students and staff according to certain diversity characteristics such as age, origin, gender and religion, they do not allow deeper insights into the consequences of experiences of racism and the ways in which discriminated people react and deal with discrimination. Studies applying a mixed-method approach are therefore necessary in order to allow more precise analyses of subject positions, ways of reacting and dealing with discrimination, as well as expectations and wishes of people experiencing racism. The present studies aim to address these research needs.

3 Discrimination and Exclusion at Universities – Results of a survey at Kiel University of Applied Sciences (UAS Kiel) and Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences (UAS Osnabrück)

3.1 Background of the surveys and research design

The quantitative online survey of the student body at the UAS Kiel was conducted in the winter semester 2020/2021. The survey is an important part of the diversity audit process, which the university adheres to. The quantitative online full survey at UAS Osnabrück was conducted among students **and** staff in the summer semester 2023. The questionings, which were preceded at both Universities by an explanatory accompanying letter, were conducted anonymously. It was made transparent to the students and employees that the results would be made public in anonymised form and that individual results would be used for scientific purposes. Both the e-mails and the surveys were sent in German and English, so that English-speaking (international) students and staff could also take part in the survey. Many students and employees already gave feedback during the implementation phase that they expressly welcomed the study. The questionnaire of the online surveys, which mainly contained closed questions and some open text fields, were based on the range of topics covered by comparable studies (Teichert 2018; Klein/Rebitzer 2017), the recommendations of the ‘Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes’¹⁰ (ADS 2020) and our own considerations. The questionnaire contained a total of 30 (Kiel) resp.

⁸ Here it should be emphasised that in Germany the close coupling of the liberalisation of residence regulations for third-country nationals or the recognition of foreign qualifications with the demand for skilled workers on the labour market has a long ‘tradition’ in migration policy (cf. Kollender/Kourabas 2020).

⁹ The term ‘intersectionality’ was coined by Kimberlé W. Crenshaw (1989) and refers to how relations of inequality are intertwined and simultaneously interact with and affect each other.

¹⁰ Federal anti-discrimination agency in Germany.

36 (Osnabrück) (students) and 32 (employees) multiple-choice questions, with the possibility of giving several answers, and was divided into sections I: "Assessment of the frequency and relevance of discrimination at the university and actual experiences of discrimination" and II: "Diversity/socio-demographic facts". In section I, an open text field was provided for more detail on discrimination experience, whereby respondents were asked to describe the situation in their own words using a maximum of 1000 characters.

Taking the survey carried out at Kiel University in 2011 (compare Klein and Rebitzer 2017) as an example, the questionnaire was drawn up in consultation with the university management, colleagues from data protection, the Staff Council and the Office for Equal Opportunities and adjustments were made accordingly. In the open text fields, the respondents had the opportunity to describe situations they experienced as discriminatory. These descriptions represented their subjective assessments or individual perspectives. The descriptions of discrimination experienced or observed in the open text fields should be related to the most severe case experienced by themselves or, if not experienced by themselves, then observed. After a pre-test, the questionnaires were reworked and adapted. At the end of the six-week survey phase, the quantitative data was analysed using SPSS.

In order to be able to gain more in-depth insights into students' and employees' experiences of discrimination and their strategies for dealing with or resisting discrimination, respondents were given the opportunity to leave their contact details for a qualitative interview via a separate link (in this way anonymisation was not affected). So as to gain in-depth insights into students' experiences of discrimination and their strategies for dealing with discrimination, problem-centred interviews (Witzel 2000) were conducted with students in Kiel who volunteered for an interview following the quantitative survey. The interviews with students and employees at the UAS Osnabrück are currently being conducted in the next research phase. Since the results of the qualitative research phase are not yet available, this article presents relevant findings of the quantitative online surveys and focuses on racist experiences.

In order to obtain as differentiated a picture as possible of the students at the university, a large number of diversity-related characteristics were asked about in the questionnaire. Although such a categorisation system contributes to the social (re)production of orders of difference, discrimination research is dependent on collecting data on characteristics of difference to be able to investigate their relevance for processes of disadvantage (Kalpaka 2010). For methodological reasons, some categories of difference were therefore given to which the participants could assign themselves, like "Afro-German", "Asian-German", "Jewish", "person with a migration background", "Person of Colour" or "Black". These were explained in detail in the questionnaire. The participants were able to assign themselves to several categories and had also the option to provide no specific information or to formulate a self-definition in an open text field. In the open text fields, participants had the opportunity to describe their experience or a situation in their own words (with a maximum of 1000 characters). For example, in the question "From whom/what did the discrimination originate?".

The representation of faculties varied among students and some areas subordinate to the organisational units were not evaluated due to the insufficient number of cases (so as not to remove the anonymisation). The response rate of 11% at the UAS Kiel and 7% at the UAS Osnabrück were lower than hoped. However, larger-scale studies had a similar response rate and gave us points of reference for the 'quality' of our sample (DeZIM 2022).

At the UAS Kiel we had the special circumstance that the survey took place at a time when students had not been present on campus for ten months due to the Covid 19 pandemic and the associated lockdown. A direct reference to the survey could therefore not be made in the courses. In addition, further surveys were conducted at both universities at the same time, which suggest that students were fatigued by surveys.

The response rate among employees at the UAS Osnabrück was 45%, indicating a high level of interest. A survey among the employees of UAS Kiel was not conducted because the university administration did not want it at that time.

The studies therefore do not claim to be representative, rather, the results are intended to provide orientation on the forms and contents of discriminatory and disadvantageous procedures and structures at the university and thus form an important basis for the development of appropriate countermeasures.

3.2 On the diversity of the samples

Diversity of the sample at the UAS Kiel

In the population of the sample (N= 872), the proportion of women (self-designation) was significantly higher than that of men. In addition, an overrepresentation of students from individual faculties was found. The majority (47.3%) of respondents were between 21 and 25 years old. Just under 72% described themselves as white, 93.2% had German citizenship. 53.3% stated that they had no financial worries and 74.5% were employed alongside their studies. 2.3% of the students came from a country outside the EU. At 51%, more than half of the students stated that they came from a non-academic background. A relatively large proportion of students (40,6%) stated that they had financial worries, 20,4% of students stated that their health was permanently impaired.

Diversity of the sample at the UAS Osnabrück

The population of the sample was respectively 983 students (WS 2022/23 total 13.377, 778 of whom were international students) and 681 employees (total of 1338, 666 of whom were women). The age of the students (S) who participated ranged from 19 to 58 years (average age 24 years). For employees (E), it was between 18 and 78 years (average age 39 years). Almost 62% of students and 58.9% of employees stated "female" as their gender identity, 35% (S) and 38.2% (E) indicated "male" and 3.8% (S) and 2.8% (E) as inter*, trans* or non-binary/a-binary. 86% of students and 73.2% of employees described themselves as white. 11% of students and 7.2% of employees stated that they had a "migration history"¹¹. 2.3% of students and 19.2% of employees identified as People of Colour (PoC). The self-assignment to "Afro-German", "Jewish", "Black" and "Roma/Sinti*ce" and as "Asian-German" was less than 1% among both students and employees. 54.7% of students and 54.1% of employees indicated "Christianity" as their religion, 25.4% of students and 18.4% of employees classified themselves as atheist, and 4.6% of students and 1.3% of employees named "Islam" as their religion. 97.3% of students and 98.3% of employees had German citizenship. 2.3% of the students and just under 1% of the employees came from a country outside the EU. At 51.2%, more than half of the students and employees stated that they came from a non-academic background, which contrasts with the results of the 22nd Social Survey of the German National Association for Student Affairs

¹¹ This term is used as a synonym for 'migration background' and is equally problematic.

mentioned in 1.1 (Kroher et al. 2023). A relatively large proportion of students (35.8%) stated that they had financial worries and 68.8% were employed alongside their studies. 15.6% of students and 16.7% of employees stated that their health was permanently impaired.

4 Experiences of discrimination by students and employees

4.1 Experiences of discrimination by students at the UAS Kiel and UAS Osnabrück

To get a picture of the mood and opinion of the students, they were asked at the beginning of the survey how widespread they consider discrimination to be in general at the university. While over 22% of respondents at the **UAS Kiel** believed that discrimination never occurred, only 5.4% of students and 6.8% of staff at **UAS Osnabrück** believed that discrimination against students or staff never occurred. This significant discrepancy between the two universities reveals differing perceptions and possibly varying degrees of awareness of the issue of discrimination. The forms of discrimination specified in the questionnaire were categories according to the ‘Allgemeine Gleichbehandlungsgesetz’ (AGG)¹² i.e. ‘race’ or ‘ethnic’ origin, gender, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual identity, as well as other forms of discrimination, such as appearance (lookism), social origin (classism) and parenthood. Multiple answers were possible.

At the **UAS Kiel** 31.5% of the participants had personally experienced or observed one or more forms of discrimination either once (9.8%), several times (18.6%) or regularly (3.1%). Of these 272 students, 36.4% had personally experienced discrimination, while 59.6% had experienced or observed it indirectly.

33.1% of the students who took part at the **UAS Osnabrück** had experienced discrimination themselves. 15% stated that they had observed discrimination against others once a month, 4.7% once a week, 12.6% once a year and 1.4% daily.

The following tables provide an overview of the observation, the most common forms and types of discrimination at both Universities.

¹² General Act on Equal Treatment.

Table 1: Observed Discrimination and manifestation of discrimination

	UAS Kiel	UAS Osnabrück
Observed discrimination against others		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several times/Once a month • Regularly/Once a week • Once/Once a year • Daily 	<p>18.6%</p> <p>3.1%</p> <p>9.8%</p> <p>-</p>	<p>15.0%</p> <p>4.7%</p> <p>12.6%</p> <p>1.4%</p>
Most common manifestations (self-experienced; multiple responses allowed)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexism • Religion/belief • Racism • Lookism • Social background • Age • Sexual boundary violation 	<p>33.3%</p> <p>12.5%</p> <p>33.3%</p> <p>22%</p> <p>17.9%</p> <p>13%</p> <p>15.8%</p>	<p>28.5%</p> <p>12.3%</p> <p>10.0%</p> <p>10.0%</p> <p>9.2%</p> <p>8.5%</p>
Most common manifestations (observed discrimination; multiple responses allowed)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexism • Racism • Religion/belief • Social origin • Lookism • Violation of sexual boundaries 	<p>29%</p> <p>27%</p> <p>8.5%</p> <p>17%</p> <p>17%</p> <p>19%</p>	<p>22.6%</p> <p>21.4%</p> <p>10.4%</p> <p>9.5%</p> <p>8.1%</p> <p>6.9%</p>

Table 2: Most types of discrimination

Type of experience	UAS Osnabrück	UAS Kiel
Belittlement/Exposure	25,8%	44,7%
Reduction of academic achievements	24,6%	17,2%
Discrimination/design of procedures	11,1%	24,9%
Social exclusion	9,7%	28,9%
Ignoring limiting obstacles	9%	27,1%
Sexual harassment and violence	10,2%	11,4%

Context of discrimination and way of dealing with discrimination

At the UAS Kiel the direct or indirect experience of discrimination was most common in the teaching context (64.5%), with 62.3% of the cases coming from fellow students and about 48.7% from lecturers. 9.5% of the cases were caused by administrative staff (all multiple answers). The figures at UAS Kiel are comparable with the results of the survey at Kiel University in 2011 and show many parallels (compare Klein and Rebitzer 2017).

With regard to dealing with experiences of discrimination, the following insights were gained: 60.4% of those affected by discrimination talked about it with friends, acquaintances, and/or relatives, 24.2% "ignored" or 13.2% "downplayed" the incident, while 30.8% tried to "avoid the situation/person in the future." Finally, 8.4 % blamed themselves for the incident. Defensive strategies dominated the handling of experienced discrimination, but 20.1% openly addressed the discriminatory behaviour or situation. The least common 3.3% was filing an official complaint with the AGG complaint office at UAS Kiel, and only 4.4 % had officially reported or filed a complaint about an incident. 6.6% subsequently sought professional help/counselling outside the university of applied sciences, and a similarly small proportion of 5.9% took advantage of the official counselling services offered by the university. Multiple responses were also possible here.

At the UAS Osnabrück the direct or indirect experience of discrimination was also most common in the teaching context, at 52.3% and 65.2% respectively, with 40% and 49.6% of the cases coming from lecturers and about 33.5% and 32.1% from fellow students. When dealing with the direct experience of discrimination, just over 20% of the students said they talked about it with friends/acquaintances/relatives, another 20% said they ignored the incident, and about 16% avoided the situation or avoided the person in the future. In the case of the indirect discrimination experience, 29.7% of the students stated that they had talked about it with friends/acquaintances/relatives, 16.3% supported the discriminated person and 13.4% ignored the incident.

4.2 Results of the employee survey at the UAS Osnabrück

47.8% of employees stated that they had experienced discrimination themselves. Just under 12% stated that they had observed discrimination against other university members once a month. 5.3% once a week, 17.8% once a year and 1% daily. Among employees, the six most common manifestations of discrimination experienced were sexism (27.9%), age (15%), parenthood (12.5%), social background (8.2%), sexual boundary violation (7.1%), racism and lookism (with 6.1% each) (multiple answers were also possible here). While for the observed manifestations of discrimination sexism (25.2%), racism (14.3%), parenthood (11.7%), age (9.6%), sexualised boundary violation (8.3%), lookism and religion/belief (6.1%) were most frequently named. The five most common types of self-experienced or observed discrimination included degradation/disparagement of performance (32.4%), discrimination/design of procedures or rules (13.8% and 12.7% respectively) and withholding of information (11% and 9.2%). The work context played a relevant role in the direct and indirect experiences of discrimination. This was stated in 39.6% of the cases of direct discrimination and 38.8% of indirect discrimination experiences. The most common direct and indirect experiences of discrimination were experienced by colleagues (26.1% and 34.3%, respectively) and lecturers (23.5% and 26.9%).

The most common ways of dealing with the direct experience of discrimination were talking to friends/acquaintances/relatives about it (24.9%), avoiding the situation or avoiding the person in the future (18.4%) and addressing the behaviour/situation openly (14.8%). In the case of indirect discrimination experience, the most common strategies for dealing with the person being discriminated against were: supporting the discriminated person (26.8%), talking about it with friends/acquaintances/relatives (23.2%) and addressing the behaviour/situation openly (13.2%).

In the following, the central results on experiences of discrimination due to racism will be discussed in more detail.

5 Racialising Discrimination Practices at Universities

Both studies are based on an understanding of racism that sees racialising practices and structures as a system that attempts to legitimise and constantly reproduce unequal power relations (Rommelspacher 2011). Everyday racism is often implicitly interwoven in everyday structures, practices and routines of marginalisation and exclusion and manifests itself on different levels (individual, institutional and structural). Racist discriminatory practices are not only important at the individual level, but also institutionally and structurally powerful (Gomolla/Radke 2003). Institutional racism or discrimination only becomes visible when one takes a closer look at the regulations, routines and decision-making structures of institutions, state systems and organisations (ibid). It can be found, for example, in the education system, on the labour market, in authorities or in the police ("racial profiling"). Structural racism includes institutional racism and exists "when the social system with its legal concepts and its political and economic structures causes exclusion" (Rommelspacher 2011, p. 30). Racism often 'works' at the institutional level non-intentionally, indirectly or covertly, which makes it difficult to eliminate (Fereidooni 2011, p. 23). Therefore, at the institutional level, not only active forms of discrimination and disadvantage must be taken into account, but also the ignoring, allowing, tolerating and non-perception or de-thematisation of structures and regulations that can have a racist and discriminatory effect (Leiprecht 2001). Many of these forms can be found on the individual level when looking at interpersonal interactions.

In **Kiel**'s study, racism, together with sexism, is stated to be the most common form of self-experienced or observed discrimination. In addition, 12.5% stated that they had experienced discrimination in connection with their religion or belief. By asking students in parallel about their experiences of discrimination and their specification on diversity categories, information can be provided on the risk of discrimination of persons with certain "characteristics". Of 22 people who identify as a "Person of Colour" (PoC), about 27% stated that they had been racially discriminated against because of this diversity feature. Of 25 people who named Islam as their religion, 16% were discriminated against because of their religious affiliation, while the risk of having been discriminated against for another reason was 36%.

Our regression analyses showed that at the **UAS Osnabrück** in addition to the skin colour PoC/"Black" (self-designation), the gender identity "female", health restrictions and financial worries are relevant risk factors for discrimination (predictors). For employees, the gender identity "female" plays a major role, followed by parenthood (employees without children feel discriminated against less often) and health restrictions (employees with disabilities feel discriminated against more often).

Since this article is intended to deal with experiences with racist practices, we will retell some descriptions of students and employees from the open text fields of the online survey to illustrate this. The cases described by the students in the open text fields represent an important supplement to the descriptive data. For example, one participant described the following experience with "Othering", whereby her/his level of language was used to construe her/his 'Otherness' during an exam situation:

"A lecturer(!) used her position of power during an oral exam. She complained that my language level was so low. Furthermore, she said, 'I don't know why you are studying here at all with such a language level, who admitted you to the programme in the first place'. I experienced the conversation as verbal violence and had a panic attack during it. The lecturer said, 'you don't need to cry like that here. After that, I was so psychologically stressed that I seriously considered dropping out of university.'" (Description in the open text field of the online survey)

This description shows what psychological (and physical) effect 'Othering' can have and how it sets people apart, 'disenfranchising' them, construing them as the 'Other' that does not belong and is incapable (cf. Kilomba 2021). The more precise effects of experiences of discrimination and the students' reactions were examined in the context of the problem-centred interviews. One participant in an interview emphasized that racism "is not a problem of the people affected, but of white people" and structural racism must be named: "But white people sometimes act as if it doesn't exist. And they would see all people the same and so on...". She perceives her knowledge of German as an important resource of resistance against racism and feels a responsibility to become active on behalf of others who have experienced racism:

"And yes, that was simply frustrating for me and at the same time I was also proud of myself for somehow saying what I think. And I know that I am in a privileged situation in the sense that I simply speak fluent German, German is my mother tongue and I can articulate myself. Maybe I can also do it for others who might not be able to, who don't have access to it."

One participant stated that a lecturer defended the "N-word" during a lecture and made an inappropriate remark about a person wearing a headscarf. Another described the following situation:

"I was told that I can speak German well for a 'foreigner' and that normally few foreigners study at the university because of their IQ."

This described situation is a further example of 'Othering', in which the 'IQ' of the respondent is questioned, grouping her/him in the lower echelons of the hierarchical racial order and making it clear that s/he does not belong 'here' and her/his intended place is in fact outside the university.

One student described another observed experience with "Othering":

"One lecture was about cultural differences in companies, work and corporate governance in other countries. In my course, there was a dark-skinned person who the lecturer approached and said: 'You look African to me, where do you come from?'. The fellow student said that she was German, whereupon she was asked where her parents came from. She said that her parents are from Nigeria. The lecturer then asked the question: 'What is it like in your country?', as if she were being denied her German citizenship. She was visibly overwhelmed by the situation and didn't know how to react and respond. All fellow students who were not affected were also very surprised by the behaviour and question of the lecturer and felt that this was very inappropriate. It was clear that it was about cultural differences, yet there are more appropriate examples or ways to illustrate this."

This shows an 'othering' process involving 1) the racialisation of the student, whereby she is attributed and reduced to phenotypical characteristics ("You look African to me"); 2) the delegitimisation of self-identification, in which her statement of being German is rejected by asking her where her parents come from; 3) the exclusion of the student by finally positioning her as the foreign 'Other' and asking "What is it like in your country?".

The descriptions of the students in the open text fields also indicate discriminatory practices in group formation processes in the context of lectures:

"Very often in group work, it was very difficult for me to find a group. I was very often the one left over, actually we, the foreigners of my course, are always the ones who remained. Normally that's why we do the group work together, which is not really a problem. But it doesn't feel so good when no one wants to be in a group with us, because they think that they will get a worse grade if we are in their groups. It's a terrible feeling when the groups are divided, that you'll have trouble finding a group again. It is also very difficult for us to make contacts if we do not know our fellow students. The random principle of group allocation would give us the opportunity to get to know more people."

This demonstrates 'Othering' mechanisms whereby 'foreigners' are excluded on the perceived basis that they are incompetent, not clever enough to achieve good grades. This categorisation can again be compared with the hierarchical racial order developed as part of 'race' theories (s. 1.1).

Another student wrote:

"The German fellow students didn't want to work in a group with me because I didn't have a good knowledge of German and because I was slower than them. One lecturer always ignored the international students and did not answer any questions. Sometimes he even said that we would not pass the exam. In a study group, a colleague didn't want to work with international students and said that we were a burden for him."

Here, similarly, 'Othering' processes in the form of linguisticism are carried out by German students, and lecturers, excluding 'foreign' students from group work on the 'grounds' of them not speaking German fluently enough and working too slowly. Construing them as the 'lower intellect Other'.

Furthermore, an employee wrote about a colleague:

"For each 'foreign'-sounding name, the lecturer would ask where the person is from, comment on the name a là 'that's exotic/unusual/hard to pronounce' and ask if it was okay for them to use nicknames (e.g. Mohammed – 'No one can pronounce that, can I just call you Momo?'). In my opinion, she was disproportionately stricter and more impatient with the students who did not speak perfect German and urged me not to be 'too soft on *them*.'"

Another 'Othering' mechanism involving exclusion ('where are you from?'), exoticisation (commenting on the person's name), degradation (giving the person a nickname, being stricter and impatient). These 'Othering' examples are racist discriminatory practices that take place in everyday processes of interaction and are testimony to a structural problem within universities.

The results of the quantitative online survey illustrate the need for a critical examination of speech and action practices that cause discrimination and exclusion. This process is to be understood as ongoing, which also examines the involvement of lecturers and decision-makers at universities in discriminatory and discrediting routines in more detail. In the following, some recommendations for change processes are formulated.

6 Diversity-conscious and anti-racism education at Universities

The findings from these and other available studies make it clear that the establishment of sustainable anti-discrimination work is to be regarded as an important goal of diversity work at universities. For the development and implementation of the goals and measures, a participatory process is recommended, which includes the consideration of different status groups and higher education policy levels in the planning and implementation of an anti-discrimination strategy. This could take the form of an anti-racism and -discrimination commission, whose formation and ongoing tasks are officially embedded in the constitution of the university. Accordingly, a special task is assigned to the university management, which can characterise the further development of diversity orientation and anti-discrimination policy into the profile-building feature of the university within the framework of normative management. In addition, lectures as the central places of study and teaching, meaning the adaptation of curricula so that elements are integrated into all modules, as well as the decentralised and centralised counselling and support services and processes must be considered. At all three levels, it is important to record the status quo of the already existing measures and to develop them further, if necessary, e.g. adapting accreditation processes so that curricula have to meet certain anti-racism/-discriminatory and diversity-sensitive requirements. For the planning and implementation of measures, a steering group should be formed, which, in addition to representing the relevant

status groups of the university, consists of representatives of all faculties/departments, relevant practice and application partners (e.g. inclusion officer, equal opportunities, internal university complaint and arbitration bodies and personnel development), representatives of the Senate, the staff representatives and the university management. This could be part of the above-mentioned commission's tasks. Since it is not possible to go into detail about individual measures here, some goals and measures are formulated below that are considered imperative for structural and institutional change processes.

Goals and measures of a diversity-conscious and racism-critical university

- Development and recognition of anti-discrimination and -racism work and diversity competence as a cross-sectional task of the university and anchoring it in studies and teaching.
- Appointment of anti-discrimination/-racism/diversity officers and establishment of a commission and steering group "Anti-Discrimination, Anti-Racism Work and Diversity Awareness" at the university.
- Cross-faculty and cross-degree curricular anchoring of diversity competence and criticism of discrimination and racism in working aids for course development.
- Sensitisation of all university members to anti-discriminatory and anti-racism perspectives, attitudes, speech and procedures and inclusion in the training catalogue for staff and lecturers as well as in the guidelines for personnel management.
- Interlinking the instruments and processes of promoting and supporting students and employees who have experienced racism and discrimination with empowerment and resilience-building approaches.
- Integration of a counselling and support service into existing human resources management services for university members with experience of racism and discrimination.
- Integration of a survey on diversity and experiences of discrimination of students and employees at the university into existing quality surveys, so as to continuously record trends and developments and to be able to 'follow them up' from a discrimination- and racism-critical perspective.
- Recruitment procedure for employees that is critical of racism and discrimination (e.g. anonymised application procedures).
- Collection of diversity characteristics/demographic data (on a voluntary basis) for new hires and admissions.

Our surveys show that discrimination occurs in various forms and contexts in everyday university life. Some of the descriptions of individual incidents in the open text field of the surveys are shocking. It is clear that it is particularly important to raise awareness of the existing support and counselling structures at universities and to continue to adapt them to identified needs. Universities have a responsibility to contribute to the social advancement of students. They should take into account the diversity of their members and affiliates and, in particular,

ensure that all members and affiliates, regardless of their origin and ethnicity, gender, age, sexual identity, disability, or religion and worldview, can participate equally in research, teaching, study, and continuing education within the scope of their tasks, rights, and obligations within the university. They must also counteract sexual harassment and violence (AGG). With these comprehensive surveys, we aim to contribute to the debate surrounding the collection of data on diversity characteristics among university members and the monitoring of experiences of discrimination at universities. As places of knowledge transfer and development, teaching and research, transfer, responsible shaping of society, and as employers, universities have a special responsibility to actively counteract discrimination against their members and affiliates. The recommendations formulated presuppose that universities are prepared to provide resources for the development and implementation of these measures. Without time, personnel and financial resources, the implementation of the above goals is not realistic – at least not in the form that could meet the requirements of practice and the demands on universities as places of social change and development.

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Author's Address:

Ayça Polat, Prof. Dr.
Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg
Center for Migration, Education and Cultural Studies
ayca.polat@uol.de
<https://uol.de/ayca-polat>

Author's Address:

Abigail M. Joseph-Magwood, Postgrad. Dipl.
Hochschule Osnabrück
Fakultät Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften
a.joseph-magwood@hs-osnabrueck.de
<https://www.hs-osnabrueck.de/abigail-m-joseph-magwood-postgrad-dipl/>