

## Experiences of Discrimination and Coping Strategies of Second Generation Academics during the Career-Entry Phase in Austria

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**Abstract :** This presentation addresses marginalization and discrimination as experienced by young academics with a migrant background in the Austrian labor market. Focusing on second generation academics of Central Eastern European and Turkish descent we explore two major issues. First, we ask whether their career-entry and everyday professional life entails origin-specific barriers. As educational residents, they show competences which, when lacking, tend to be drawn upon to explain discrimination: excellent linguistic skills, accredited high-level training, and networks. Second, we concentrate on how this group reacts to discrimination and overcomes experiences of marginalization. To answer these questions, we utilize recent sociological and social psychological theories that focus on the diversity of individual experiences. This distinguishes us from a long tradition of research that has dealt with the motives that inform discrimination, but has less often considered the effects on those concerned. Similarly, applied coping strategies have less often been investigated, though they may provide unique insights into current problematic issues. Building upon present literature, we follow recent discrimination research incorporating the concepts of 'multiple discrimination', 'subtle discrimination', and 'visual social markers'. 21 problem-centered interviews are the empirical foundation underlying this study. The interviewees completed their entire educational career in Austria, graduated in different universities and disciplines and are working in their first post-graduate jobs (career entry phase). In our analysis, we combined thematic charting with a coding method. The results emanating from our empirical material indicated a variety of discrimination experiences ranging from barely perceptible disadvantages to directly articulated and overt marginalization. The spectrum of experiences covered stereotypical suppositions at job interviews, the disavowal of competencies, symbolic or social exclusion by new colleges, restricted professional participation (e.g. customer contact) and non-recruitment due to religious or ethnical markers (e.g. headscarves). In these experiences the role of the academics education level, networks, or competences seemed to be minimal, as negative prejudice on the basis of visible 'social markers' operated 'ex-ante'. The coping strategies identified in overcoming such barriers are: an increased emphasis on effort, avoidance of potentially marginalizing situations, direct resistance (mostly in the form of verbal opposition) and dismissal of negative experiences by ignoring or ironizing the situation. In some cases, the academics drew into their specific competences, such as an intellectual approach of studying specialist literature, focus on their intercultural competences or planning to migrate back to their parent's country of origin. Our analysis further suggests a distinction between reactive (i.e. to act on and respond to experienced discrimination) and preventative strategies (applied to obviate discrimination) of coping. In light of our results, we would like to stress that the tension between educational and professional success experienced by academics with a migrant background - and the barriers and marginalization they continue to face - are essential issues to be introduced to socio-political discourse. It seems imperative to publicly accentuate the growing social, political and economic significance of this group, their educational aspirations, as well as their experiences of achievement and difficulties.

**Keywords :** coping strategies, discrimination, labor market, second generation university graduates

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