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Conflicting Identities: Cosmopolitan or Anxious? Appreciating Concerns of Host Country Population Improves Attitudes Towards Immigrants*

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Abstract Cosmopolitan or anxious? In order to test the influence of conflicting aspects of identity, German respondents were asked about their attitude towards a Syrian refugee the description of whom was varied in various domains (N=662). Once the refugee is described as being aware of as well as open towards concerns in the German population – regarding cultural change, arising costs and increasing violence – reported levels of sympathy and trust increase substantially, especially for risk averse people. Additional data from a second questionnaire (N=118) show that a German person expressing such concerns is perceived as less cosmopolitan and more likely to vote for the emergent populist right-wing. Combining these findings, we argue that acknowledging concerns of the host population relieves the tension between the anxious and cosmopolitan part of peoples' identities and, therefore, allows them to respond more openly since an aspect of identity that is acknowledged by context (expressing anxieties) has less influence on actual behavior (expressing sympathy). Apart from that, we find that personal experience and the higher willingness to take risks are important for the individual willingness to interact. Our findings highlight the importance of context, identity and individual characteristics for host populations' attitudes towards of refugees.

Keywords: Identity, Immigration, Integration, Migration, Refugees

JEL codes: F22, Z10, Z12

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1 Introduction

The social and economic integration of the many recent refugees is one of the greatest challenges European Union countries currently face. On the one hand, successful integration of immigrants can increase cultural diversity which has been found to be beneficial for long run economic development (cf. Alesina and Ferrara, 2005). On the other hand, lack of integration can breed discontent, segregation and potentially violent extremism as, for example, witnessed by attacks from terrorist with immigrant background across Western Europe. Moreover, heated political debates about the appropriate response to the increased levels of immigration give further indirect evidence of the importance of the issue. Eventually, however, successful integration is not a political decision. Instead, a lot depends on the willingness of the local host country population to interact with and trust the new neighbours. Yet, recent research suggests that host populations often exhibit a tangible in-group bias and can show considerable reluctance to let immigrants benefit from existing societal arrangements (e.g. Dahlberg et al., 2012).

An important question to answer in this context is where this reluctance comes from and how it might be alleviated. In particular, what is it that determines peoples' attitudes towards immigrants? What fosters cosmopolitan openness what affects anxious guardedness?

In order to study these questions, we set out to investigate how attitudes towards immigrants – especially general liking, empathy and trust – as well as the willingness to actually interact vary with the presentation of the situation. In particular, we were interested in how individual reactions towards a Syrian refugee who was introduced on paper depend on the person being described as showing empathy with the host population,¹ the hypothesis being that an empathic statement increases openness. Moreover, as previous research from France shows that a Muslim background is associated with lower integration (cf. Adida et al., 2010 and 2016), we also varied religion (and name) of the refugee between Muslim and Christian. Finally, as a weak proxy for personality traits, we controlled for risk aversion – using a question from the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP) which has been found to correlate as predicted by Lauriola and Levine (2001) with Big Five Personality traits (cf. Lönnqvist et al., 2015) – and self-perception as sociable.

The data show that, once the refugee is described as being empathetic towards concerns in the German population regarding over-foreignization, increasing violence and arising

¹Here operationalized by describing the refugee as showing awareness and openness with respect to concerns in German population regarding “over-foreignization”, increasing violence and arising costs. The German term sometimes “Überfremdung” used in the questionnaire, is sometimes literally translated as “over-foreignization” to ensure that its meaning is well preserved. The word particularly captures fears about the cultural heterogeneity introduced by immigrants and has a negative connotation.

costs reported levels of liking and trust increase substantially. This effect is particularly strong for more risk averse people.² However, willingness to interact (talk to, meet for a coffee, invite home) is not affected by adding an empathic statement to the description of the reference person. Here we find that especially people with non-German close friends or relatives react more forthcoming and that a self-perception as more sociable and low levels risk-aversion are relevant. In particular, more sociable respondents reported to be far more willing to talk to the reference person. The effect of this variable is decreasing, though, for more intensive contact such as inviting home. For such more intensive contact low risk aversion is particularly important. Finally, we find that overall women are more empathic but less trusting and less willing to interact with the refugee.

Interestingly, much of the existing evidence suggests that economic aspects such as the host population's fear of economic competition are far less relevant than what the prominence of this hypothesis in the academic as well as public discussion makes believe (e.g. Hainmueller et al., 2015). In fact, as emphasized for example by Hainmueller and Hangartner (2013), even economically well-integrated immigrants face discrimination based on superficial characteristics such as their country of birth once the host population has to decide on measures of formal integration.³ A possible consequence of such negative attitudes is that minorities remain within relatively homogeneous cultural groups with few links to the majority population, hindering the full integration not only in the short run but even in the case of later generations (e.g. Bisin and Verdier, 2001; Bisin et al., 2011). In line with the contact hypothesis (Allport 1954), however, much of the anxiety of the host population seems to vanish if natives and new immigrants get into contact and the abstract phenomenon of migration is replaced by the presence of actual immigrants, for example due to placement of refugee camps in local communities (Steinmayr, 2016). However, even in relatively small communities, some natives are required to voluntarily make a first step towards immigrants.

Previous research on school teachers emphasizes the importance of empathy – the ability to feel with others in a non-judgmental way (e.g. Noddings, 1984) – in dealing with culturally diverse student groups (e.g. Goodman, 2000; McAllister and Irvine, 2002). Moreover, research from social psychology has shown that attitudes towards immigrants are related to standard categories as the Big Five personality traits (e.g. Gallego and Pardos-

²This is indeed consistent with the aforementioned findings by Gallego and Pardos-Prado (2014), Freitag and Rapp (2015) or Dinesen et al. (2016) on the connection between Big Five personality traits and attitudes towards immigrants.

³Deeper impediments to integration are also suggested by Poutvaara and Steinhardt (2015), who provide evidence that bitterness, measured by the respondents' feeling to fall short of achieving the deserved, jointly increases with worries about immigration in general.

Prado, 2014; Freitag and Rapp, 2015; Dinesen et al., 2016), or personal values (e.g. Sapienta et al., 2010; Vecchione et al., 2012). Such personality traits can be the root of different layers of one's identity. As discussed below in detail, a simple model of two identities, one cosmopolitan and one anxious, can create the observed effect in which the refugee by acknowledging part of the anxious identity (which is a rather negative attribution) increases sympathy and trust. We argue that acknowledging the possible anxiety provides more room for the cosmopolitan identity and thus positively affects the reaction of respondents.

Summarizing, an empathic statement signaling openness to concerns in the population has a positive impact on more general attitudes. Actual willingness to engage in real interaction, however, is more driven by prior experience, self-perception as sociable and risk attitudes. Nevertheless, with respect to real life integration, more positive attitudes towards others, of course, help to create positive experience once occasion, i.e. the interaction, arises. Positive experience apparently is what matters strongly. Accordingly, what the data seem to suggest is that first creating an atmosphere of mutual understanding – including openness for the concerns of the host population – can help to provide a better starting point for later interactions. More generally speaking, the data suggest that taking seriously the concerns of the host populations, even from the side of politicians, is likely to help create a more positive atmosphere. This, we are eager to emphasize, does not mean that one has to give in to the concerns being expressed. What is important, according to our study, is creating a climate where concerns can be expressed and meet a general willingness to listen.

2 Design and Procedures

Design

The study consisted of two standard vignette questionnaires, one of which was the primary study and one was conducted to clarify the interpretation of the data. Both are described below.

Part I (primary study): The first questionnaire was showing a picture of one person with six different sets of information claimed to refer to the person. In all sets, the person was described as being 34 years old, currently living in Hannover⁴ (Germany), being married with two children, job seeking and having worked as a taxi driver.⁵ However, we randomly

⁴The study was conducted in Kiel and Rostock and we wanted a neutral reference.

⁵The country of origin, gender and relatively young age were designed to reflect typical refugees of the recent wave. The age was chosen to be higher than that of the modal migrant who arrived in Germany in 2015 to make the person of average age compared to the expected respondents. Having an age too high for substantial additional education in Germany the refugee's labor market prospects would most likely be in the

varied religion and name between Muslim (Dawud) and Christian (Raphael) while always describing the person as religious. Moreover, we varied whether the person had made a statement in which he showed his openness towards concerns in the German host population regarding over-foreignization⁶, increasing violence and arising costs. Finally, to provide baseline values and better understand the effect of characteristics such as being a refugee, we added one questionnaire describing the person as a devout German Muslim/Christian. A summary of the treatments is provided in Figure 1. A translation of the description can be found in Appendix A.

<i>Nationality</i>		Syrian		German
<i>Openness to concerns</i>		No detail	Is Open	No detail
<i>Religion</i>	Muslim	x	x	x
	Christian	x	x	x

Note: Titles in italics indicate the three dimensions that have been varied.

Figure 1: Overview of treatments.

Following this information, subjects answered the following questions on a 6-point Likert-scale:

1. How much do you like Dawud/Raphael?
2. How well can you put yourself into Dawud/Raphael's shoes?
3. How fast is Dawud/Raphael going to integrate into the German society? (Only for Dawud/Raphael described as Syrian.)
4. Generally, would you trust Dawud/Raphael?
5. Can you imagine talking to a person like Dawud/Raphael about his experiences?⁷
6. Can you imagine meeting a person like Dawud/Raphael for coffee or tea?⁷
7. Can you imagine inviting a person like Dawud/Raphael home?⁷

low skilled segment as for the majority of recent adult refugees.

⁶See Footnote 1.

⁷Note that we only asked about interaction with someone similar to the reference person. This was done in order to avoid a situation where people might expect us to actually present the person to them on the spot – a belief we would have been unable to control for.

The questionnaire concluded with some general questions about the subject's own age, gender, nationality, close non-German friends or relatives, income, socializing attitudes (6-points) and willingness to take risks (10 point scale following the GSOEP).

Part 2: In the second questionnaire, we described a male German citizen – Stefan K., age 35 and living in Hamburg with his wife and two children – and his allegedly expressed opinions on three current political topics: equal opportunities for women in leading positions (positive), strong punishment of tax evasion (positive), situation of refugees from Syria (empathic).⁸ The only variation was whether we also randomized his description as expressing concerns regarding over-foreignization, increasing violence and arising costs through the current immigration or not.

Following this information, subjects had to indicate how cosmopolitan and EU friendly they would judge Stefan K. to be (6-point Lickert scale) and which political party they would assume him to vote for based on the information provided. The questionnaire concluded with some general questions about the subject's own age, gender, nationality, close non-German friends, willingness to take risks (10 point scale following the GSOEP) and degree of worries in 7 different domains (including crime, immigration, and xenophobia).

Procedures

Part 1: The data for our primary study were collected in December 2015 and early January 2016 in Kiel and Rostock.⁹ In both cities, we approached people in the streets asking whether they would be willing to support our research by answering a short questionnaire. In order to sample in comparable settings where a broad variety of people could be found, we decided to go to similar locations (city center where people were shopping for Christmas and a more quiet location close to the sea); these data were gathered in December 2015. In addition, we invited students from different lectures at the University of Rostock to participate in the study; some of these data were gathered early January 2016. In all cases questionnaire versions were distributed randomly. In total, 662 people responded to our questionnaire.

Part 2: The data of the supplementary study were collected among students of the University of Rostock at the end of a lecture on April 27 2016. Again the two versions of the questionnaire were distributed randomly. In total 118 people responded to our second questionnaire.

⁸We chose three different topics in order not to make the focus on immigration too obvious.

⁹Both Kiel and Rostock are old Hanse cities in the north of Germany located at the Baltic coast – Kiel in West Germany and Rostock in East Germany.

3 Empirical Results

In this section we report the empirical results before providing an interpretation and a model that can generate such the most important stylized features of the data in section 4.

Part 1

Summary Statistics

Summary statistics for Part 1 of our study are provided in Table 1. About half the sample (48%) was collected in the street in the cities of Rostock and Kiel and the other half (52%) in lectures at the University of Rostock. All in all, the reference person made the emphatic statement (i.e. appeared as "open") in 34% of cases, was described as Christian for 53% of the sample, and as German for 31% of the sample. Covariates are balanced across treatments (see Table A1 in Appendix B).

Table 1: Summary statistics Part 1.

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N
<i>Outcome variables</i>					
Liking	4.25	0.99	1	6	654
Empathy	3.85	1.45	1	6	661
Would trust	3.99	1.12	1	6	657
Would talk to	5.12	1.17	1	6	661
Would meet for coffee/tea	4.47	1.44	1	6	661
Would invite home	3.77	1.59	1	6	620
Expect fast integration	3.65	1.16	1	6	447
<i>Individual characteristics of respondents</i>					
Female	0.5	0.5	0	1	642
Age	32.62	17.56	10	87	639
Close relationship to foreigner	0.6	0.49	0	1	642
Sociable	4.57	1.06	1	7	640
Willingness to take risks/General risk attitude	5.79	1.98	1	10	640

Notes: Summary statistics reported in this table refer to all observations. All scales are 6-point except the risk scale which is 10-point. The question about fast integration was not included for in the "is German" treatment. Unequal sample size due to answers such as "Don't know" or failure to answer

General Treatment Differences

For our main analysis, we use an ordered logit model for estimation. The baseline for all estimations is the Syrian, who is a religious Muslim and gives no further indication of openness to concerns of the host population.

A first analysis without controlling for personal characteristics shows that the "openness" treatment, i.e. describing the refugee as being aware of and open to anxiety in the host population, makes him significantly more likable (Table 2). Furthermore, participants in the "openness" treatment show significantly higher levels of reported ability to put themselves

Table 2: Treatment effects for Syrian refugee including the “German” treatment.

	(1) likable	(2) empathy	(3) would trust	(4) would talk to	(5) would meet for coffee	(6) would in- vite home	(7) expect fast integra- tion
<i>Treatments</i>							
Is Open	0.363** (0.172)	0.355** (0.169)	-0.017 (0.173)	0.011 (0.181)	0.025 (0.173)	-0.205 (0.176)	0.326* (0.172)
Is Christian	0.082 (0.144)	0.019 (0.138)	0.254* (0.141)	0.019 (0.148)	-0.174 (0.141)	-0.008 (0.142)	0.216 (0.171)
Is German	0.148 (0.177)	0.004 (0.172)	-0.248 (0.174)	-0.358** (0.177)	-0.355** (0.167)	-0.202 (0.177)	
Observations	654	661	657	661	661	620	447

Notes: Estimates from an ordered logit model with the reported regressors. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The baseline vignette is a Muslim refugee from Syria who does not provide the statement about openness to German concerns. The question about fast integration was not included for in the “is German” treatment. The sample size in column 6 is smaller because there had been a printing issue on the first day of field work. This is not driving any results. Differences in observations result from some subjects not answering all questions.

into the reference person’s position and also expect the refugee to integrate significantly faster. However, there is no effect on generalized trust or the reported willingness to interact with the refugee by talking, meeting or inviting him due to his signaling “openness.” Thus, while making the reference person more likable and subjectively easier to understand, the openness treatment does not affect the reported willingness to interact.

Moreover, random assignment of the religion has no statistically significant effect on most outcome variables. Only regarding trust, being Christian has a statistically significant effects. This increases the log odds of reporting a higher trust by 0.25. This seems plausible given the importance of a shared frame of reference for mutual understanding and the fact that the number of Muslims in both Kiel and Rostock is comparably small.¹⁰

Finally, describing the reference person as German Muslim or German Christian has no statistically significant effect on attitude scores. Yet, reported willingness to talk to or meet him is lower. This may, for example, be due to a generally higher interest in the refugees and more openness towards recent arrivals than towards a German person with migrant background.

¹⁰Official data in Germany do not cover the religion of citizens for historical reasons. Estimates can be provided using the distribution of religion in countries of origin, but these are inherently biased in several ways. Generally, the share of Muslims and the foreign population in general are lower in the East than the West of the country. Official estimates based on the 2011 census state that Kiel had a share of foreign population of 7.8 percent, Rostock of 3.7 percent (destatis, 2014). Further tests show that the effect of religion is strongest among university students in Rostock, the group with the lowest likelihood of having personal experience with Muslims. This would be compatible with the idea that experience, i.e. a broader frame of reference, is important.

Influence of Respondent's Characteristics

Once individual characteristics, context dummies and an interaction term between openness and risk aversion are added, we are also able to say more about the different treatment effect, see Table 3;¹¹ regression results without the interaction term are reported in Appendix B.

Most importantly, we find that the positive effect of describing the reference person as open for the concerns in the German population remains highly significant. Yet, it strongly interacts with individual risk aversion. In particular, both reported liking and willingness to trust show a strong positive correlation with describing the reference person as open. Moreover, as can be seen from the interaction term between risk and openness, the effect is particularly strong for risk averse individuals (recall that risk aversion is measured on a 1 to 10 scale with high numbers indicating a high willingness to take risks).¹² Also more generally, higher levels of risk tolerance have a highly significant positive effect on all attitude variables in their own right.

More generally, we find that self-perception as sociable is strongly positively associated with likeability and empathy in columns 1 and 2, that women are more empathic but less trusting, and that close relations to a foreigner have (weakly significant) positive effect on trust. Note that the latter observation is consistent with our interpretation of the positive effect of the Christian-Treatment on trust as it again indicates the positive impact of a shared frame of reference on trust. Moreover, older people report higher levels of empathy. Respondents in Kiel reported to be more trusting both than people in the street in Rostock as well as compared to the university students in Rostock, which is in line with the many studies finding persistent differences between West and East Germany, for example summarized in Brosig-Koch et al. (2011).

Furthermore, regarding the different variables measuring a willingness to interact, we find that self-reporting as more sociable is strongly positively correlated with the willingness to interact with the reference person. However, the effect is far less pronounced when it comes to the question of inviting him home. By contrast, the respective coefficients for respondent's risk attitude – columns 4 to 6 – increase towards the right of the table and reach higher levels of statistical significant the closer the contact referred to in the question becomes. Thus, the data suggest that more sociable people are more willing to have some contact with the a person such as a refugee. However, if a sociable person is at the same time risk averse, he or she would not be more likely to invite the person. The reported

¹¹Adding an interaction term of sociable and open does not have any effect, which is why we do not report results in the following.

¹²The interaction effects can be shown to be robust using tests for non-linear interaction terms in ordered outcome models.

Table 3: Treatment effects for Syrian refugee including the “German” treatment as well as an interaction of risk attitude and openness of the refugee.

	(1) likable	(2) empathy	(3) would trust	(4) would talk to	(5) would meet for coffee	(6) would in- vite home	(7) expect fast integra- tion
<i>Treatments</i>							
Is Open	1.748*** (0.585)	0.776 (0.614)	1.377** (0.541)	-0.141 (0.548)	0.384 (0.523)	0.294 (0.520)	0.340 (0.568)
Is Open × risk	-0.249*** (0.096)	-0.074 (0.096)	-0.239*** (0.086)	0.018 (0.089)	-0.063 (0.086)	-0.091 (0.083)	-0.004 (0.097)
Is Christian	0.088 (0.148)	0.046 (0.142)	0.263* (0.147)	0.097 (0.157)	-0.146 (0.146)	-0.038 (0.153)	0.198 (0.177)
Is German	0.196 (0.182)	0.036 (0.177)	-0.154 (0.183)	-0.359* (0.188)	-0.253 (0.174)	-0.112 (0.183)	
<i>Individual Char.</i>							
Female	0.010 (0.156)	0.297** (0.146)	-0.335** (0.151)	-0.054 (0.160)	-0.265* (0.153)	-0.340** (0.151)	-0.215 (0.184)
Age	-0.043 (0.031)	0.048* (0.027)	-0.013 (0.030)	0.057** (0.027)	0.116*** (0.029)	0.090*** (0.031)	0.031 (0.037)
Age squared	0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.001** (0.000)	-0.001*** (0.000)	-0.001*** (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Close to foreigner	0.254 (0.156)	0.147 (0.148)	0.289* (0.154)	0.519*** (0.163)	0.425*** (0.153)	0.552*** (0.158)	-0.000 (0.182)
Sociable	0.197** (0.078)	0.255*** (0.082)	0.101 (0.083)	0.398*** (0.087)	0.222*** (0.080)	0.097 (0.076)	0.145 (0.092)
Risk attitude	0.186*** (0.052)	0.110** (0.055)	0.223*** (0.050)	0.056 (0.048)	0.126*** (0.045)	0.178*** (0.050)	0.038 (0.061)
<i>Context</i>							
Data from Kiel	0.163 (0.243)	-0.192 (0.218)	0.717*** (0.223)	0.290 (0.229)	0.207 (0.217)	0.362 (0.253)	0.309 (0.262)
Data from Uni	-0.542** (0.256)	-0.308 (0.237)	-0.136 (0.260)	0.007 (0.266)	-0.048 (0.241)	-0.134 (0.257)	-0.105 (0.319)
Observations	628	633	630	633	633	593	429

Notes: Estimates from an ordered logit model with the reported regressors. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Please note that the question about fast integration was not included for in the "is German" treatment. The base outcome for context is data gathered on the street in Rostock. Differences in observations result from some subjects not answering all questions.

willingness to establish such close contact is systematically more strongly linked to risk aversion than to sociability.

Moreover, respondents with close relationships with foreigners through friends or family are far more willing to get into contact with someone similar to the reference person. In fact, the respective outcome variables, which seek to measure the willingness to actually becoming actively integrating, have particularly large point estimates.

A further point that deserves a brief mention is that none of the variables shows a statistically significant correlation with the expected speed of integration. The reason for this might simply be lack of experience on the side of the respondents.

Finally, there are some more general results regarding personal characteristics. In spite of reporting higher empathy women are significantly less willing to meet or invite the reference person. The documented pattern of women being just as likely to meet without strings on neutral turf, while reporting a markedly lower willingness to invite home is in line with perceived barriers to get into close contact with the opposite gender as well as with avoiding the higher risks faced in such one-to-one situation with strangers. Furthermore, while reported empathy increases with age¹³, our evidence suggests that the willingness to involve closely with the refugee has an inverse u-shape in age, i.e. the highest values for working age adults and lower values for the young and very old.

Part 2: Summary Statistics and Treatment Differences

For the second questionnaire, we obtained 118 responses (45.8% women; mean age 21.26 years); see Table A4 in Appendix B for detailed summary statistics.

Most importantly for the purposes of the present discussion, we find that describing Stefan K. as expression concerns decreases his assessment as cosmopolitan on a 6-point scale from 4.64 to 4.23 ($p=.01$; Wilcoxon rank sum test). Moreover, regarding the expected vote of Stefan K at the next election, expressing concerns significantly increases the perception of him being a supporter of the German equivalent of the right-wing parties that are emerging across Europe (see Tables 4 and 5).

4 Discussion

As the analysis in the previous section has shown, being described as demonstrating openness for the concerns in the German population improves reported levels of liking and trust for the reference person. Moreover, if a German himself expresses the respective concerns regarding immigrants, he is judged to be less cosmopolitan and more likely to support the

¹³Many elderly respondents have personal experience of becoming displaced. Between 30 and 40 percent of the population of the state of Schleswig-Holstein in which Kiel is situated consisted of refugees in 1949.

Table 4: Party association. Absolute numbers by treatment.

	Treatment	
	T(no concerns)	T(concerns)
Center left (SPD)	21 (34.4)	16 (28.1)
Center right (CDU)	15 (24.6)	15 (26.3)
Left wing (Linke)	14 (23.0)	4 (7.0)
Right wing (AfD)	2 (3.3)	14 (24.6)
Greens (Grüne)	5 (8.2)	4 (7.0)
Liberals (FDP)	1 (1.6)	2 (3.5)
Others	0 (0.0)	2 (3.5)
Total	61	57

Notes: Assesses association with political parties; absolute numbers (percentages in parentheses).

Table 5: Change in assessed party association through treatment.

Outcome	CDU	Linke	AfD	Grüne	FDP
Treatment (concerns)	0.272 (0.493)	-1.175* (0.647)	2.219*** (0.826)	0.049 (0.748)	0.965 (1.279)

Notes: Estimates from multinomial logit with different outcomes reported vertically in the order of frequency. Base outcome of the dependent variable SPD (most common option). No mentioning of other parties. The base outcome of the independent variable is the treatment in which no concerns are uttered.

populist far right (attributes we would judge to be comparably undesirable). Put together, the results raise the question how a person can become more likable if he, albeit indirectly, attributes undesirable characteristics to the respondent's in-group. As we will argue below, one way to interpret our results - and to rationalize the finding of our primary study - is in terms of economics and identity (cf. Akerlof and Kranton, 2000 and 2005; Wichardt, 2009).

Quoting research from psychology and various compelling everyday examples, Akerlof and Kranton (2000) argue that people aim to act in accordance with their identity (our sense of self; the values and norms we associate with) and demonstrate the wider ramifications of such tendencies and how they affect general decision making. They argue that behavior which is inconsistent with a person's identity causes some form of disutility. In fact, even behavior of others can affect behavior via this route as external threats to one's identity can trigger self-affirmative actions even at some economic cost (cf. Akerlof and Kranton, 2000, p.728ff).

In the present setting, we believe that it is fruitful to think of respondents as being triggered on conflicting aspects of their identity - a case which is not explicitly considered by Akerlof and Kranton but which we believe can still be addressed using their approach (see, for example, Wichardt, 2009, for a discussion of effects of conflicting identities). In particular, assume that respondents of our questionnaire like to see themselves as cosmopolitan and willing to help, but still are to some degree anxious about the consequences of the current immigration. Degrees vary from person to person. For the sake of parsimony neglect all other aspects of identity, although some of them may arguably be relevant too. Thus, we consider a case where a person's identity has two components: cosmopolitan and anxious.

Moreover, assume that the cosmopolitan identity goes with generally positive attitudes towards any unknown person including foreigners such as the reference person whereas the anxious part is more hesitant to express such attitudes. Acting in accordance with one's own identity then would imply expressing attitudes in a way that balances both aspects. More formally, let $s \in [0, 1]$ denote the degree of sympathy expressed by a certain response and let $u(I_c)(s)$, $u(I_a)(s)$ and $u(I_c, I_a)(s)$ denote the agent's utility expressing a degree of sympathy s with respect to his cosmopolitan, anxious and overall identity, respectively.¹⁴

¹⁴Restricting identity to two aspects of cause is done for expositional purposes only.

Then, assuming diminishing marginal effects, we have

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial u(I_c)(s)}{\partial s} > 0, \quad \frac{\partial^2 u(I_c)(s)}{\partial^2 s} < 0 \\ \frac{\partial u(I_a)(s)}{\partial s} < 0, \quad \frac{\partial^2 u(I_a)(s)}{\partial^2 s} > 0 \end{aligned}$$

and the optimal response s^* would be characterized by

$$\frac{\partial u(I_c, I_a)(s)}{\partial s^*} = 0.$$

Expressed in this way, the average effect of the treatment describing the reference person as acknowledging anxieties in the host population can be stated as

$$s^* < s_t^*,$$

where s_t^* denotes the optimal response in case of the treatment. In terms of the present toy model, the reason for this shift would be that the treatment improves the positive effect of expressing sympathy for the cosmopolitan identity, that it dampens the (negative) effect of doing so for the anxious identity or a combination of both.¹⁵

In our view, the cosmopolitan part of identity appears to be a rather unlikely source of the effect, though. The reason for this is straight-forward. “Cosmopolitan” usually refers to wider experience with different cultures reflected in the absence of strong attachments to local ideas or prejudices.¹⁶ Thus, a cosmopolitan identity can show and generate utility when expressing sympathy for someone who is different. The empathic statement of the reference person, however, arguably reduces differences. Hence, while certainly likable in itself, the statement should rather decrease the marginal benefits from expressing a certain degree of sympathy regarding the cosmopolitan self.¹⁷

Things change if we focus on the anxious part of identity, though. As the second part of our study demonstrates, expressing the concerns which are acknowledged by the reference person in the treatment conflicts with being perceived as cosmopolitan. This is highlighted by the German person’s association with the new right-wing AfD party, which is anti-immigrant and nationalistic, once the same kind of concerns are uttered on the vignette.

¹⁵That the effect size is different for expressed liking and willingness to trust is supposedly due to the reduced two-item view of identity followed here.

¹⁶<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/cosmopolitan>

¹⁷This is not to say that the person is not becoming more likable by the statement. It only says that the source of increased levels of sympathy is unlikely to be increased benefits from expressing a certain level of sympathy derived from a cosmopolitan self-perception.

However, crucially, the treatment changes the context in a way that any related concerns a respondent may have are already acknowledged by the context and need not be accounted for by a more cautious response regarding the presented refugee. Moreover, acknowledging anxieties is commonly believed to relieve their influence (see, for example, Hofmann and Otto, 2008). Thus, there is reason to believe that the marginal benefit from reducing the expressed degree of sympathy as derived from the anxious part of the identity is smaller in the treatment.

To summarize: the marginal utility of expressing more sympathy for the cosmopolitan identity remains constant (or even decreases) and the marginal utility of expressing less sympathy for the anxious identity decreases – both for any given level of s . Thus, as the overall degree of expressed sympathy is increasing, a decreased influence of the anxious part of identity is a possible explanation.

Of course, other aspects of the additional statement associated with the reference person in the treatment might have increased expressed levels of sympathy. Yet, we find it difficult pin down any. Eventually any alternative explanation would have to clarify why suggesting the respondent of the questionnaire has characteristics which are not in themselves perceived as positive increases expressed levels of sympathy.¹⁸

For the time being, we therefore take our data as cautiously suggesting that if we want to improve general attitudes towards the incoming refugees in order to facilitate their fast and successful integration, taking seriously the concerns of the host population is important. Expressed in terms of the above argument: the more concerns related to the current inflow of refugees are acknowledged in the general discussion, the more room exists for cosmopolitan attitudes to prevail in individual behavior.

5 Concluding Remarks

The civil war in Syria and the unstable political situation in the region at large have driven a large number of refugees to Western and Central Europe. The most pressing questions for the internal political stability and of the receiving countries in the near future is integrating the many newcomers who are going to stay.

In this paper, we have presented data from a survey of German citizens surveying their attitudes towards a reference refugee as well as their willingness to interact with him. In order to identify the effects of different kinds of information provided about the reference person, we have randomized part of his description. As we have argued, attitudes are more

¹⁸Note that also saying that simply expressing empathy is likable first of all begs the question “why?” (here the answer would be: because it relieves the pressure on me to make my concerns seen) and, moreover, leaves unanswered why attributing negative characteristics has a positive effect.

positive if the description of the reference person states his openness and understanding of concerns in the German population regarding over-foreignization, increasing violence and arising costs. This effect is particularly strong for more risk averse people.

Of course, integration requires not only positive attitudes but real interaction. Here the data reveal that willingness to interact (talk to, meet for a coffee, invite home) is not affected by adding an empathic statement to the description of the reference person. Instead, we find that positive prior experience, i.e. a non-German close friend or relative, greatly enhances the willingness to integrate the reference person actively. Furthermore, self-perception as more sociable and higher willingness to take risks have a positive impact, with being sociable having a stronger impact on more distanced and risk tolerance on closer contact. Taken together, the results of the present study, thus, suggest that the willingness of the host population to integrate the many refugees could benefit greatly from creating an atmosphere of mutual understanding and openness for each other's concerns.

From a practical or policy point of view, we therefore believe that what is important in the current situation is to remain open for everyone's concerns and to educate both groups – foreigners and host country populations – in this respect. Note that this does not mean that one has to give in to all concerns raised, especially not if based essentially on unfounded prejudice. Yet, what the data seem to suggest is that being open and signaling this openness improves attitudes towards each other. Once people meet, be it on the street or in some formal institutional context, more positive attitudes are likely to trigger more positive experience with each other. And that, it seems, is what fosters a general willingness to interact, which is so important for successful social and economic integration.

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Summary of empirical result

Result 1 (General Treatment Effects) *Results from an ordered logit model show that, without adding controls, treatments have the following average effects on reported answers relative to the reference person being described as faithful Syrian Muslim:*

- *The reference person being open to concerns has a significant positive effect on reported levels of liking, empathy (both $p < .05$) and expectation of fast integration ($p < .1$).*
- *The reference person being Christian has a significant positive effect on the reported level of trust ($p < .1$).*
- *The reference person being German, has a significant negative effect on reported willingness to talk to or meet him (both $p < .05$).*

Result 2 (Effects on Attitudes) *An ordered logit regression including controls shows the following main patterns in the data (cf. Table 3):*

- *The reference person being open has a robust positive effect on reported levels of liking ($p < .01$) and willingness to trust ($p < .05$). Both effects are stronger for more risk averse people, though ($p < .01$).*
- *Women are more empathic and less trusting (both $p < .05$).*
- *Self-perception as sociable has a positive impact on reported levels of liking ($p < .05$) and empathy ($p < .01$).*
- *All attitudes show a positive correlation with stated willingness to take risks.*

Result 3 (Determinants of Willingness to Interact) *An ordered logit regression including controls shows the following main patterns regarding the reported willingness to talk to, meet or invite someone similar to the reference person (cf. Table 3):*

- *Having close relations to a foreigner has a strong positive impact on all three categories of interaction (all $p < .01$).*
- *Being more sociable has a positive effect on willingness to talk to or meet ($p < .01$). There is no effect for invite home, though.*
- *Being more willing to take risks has a positive effect on willingness to meet and invite home (both $p < .01$).*

Result 4 (Gender and Age Effects) *An ordered logit regression including controls shows the following patterns regarding personal characteristics (cf. Table 3):*

- *Women are more empathic ($p < .05$), but less trusting ($p < .05$), and less willing to meet ($p < .1$) or invite ($p < .05$) someone similar to the reference person.*
- *Older people are more trusting ($p < .1$) and more willing to interact with someone similar to the reference person ($p < .01$ for meet and invite; $p < .05$ for talk to).*

Result 5 (Effect of Actually Expressing Concerns) *Expressing concerns regarding immigrants decreases perceived levels of being cosmopolitan and increases associations with right-wing parties.*

Appendix A

Description of Refugee (Translation): Muslim, open, Syrian



The photo shows Dawud M. (34, native Syrian). Until recently he lived with his wife and his two children in Syria and worked as a taxi driver. Because Dawud M. repeatedly criticized the current regime in Syria he had to flee despite his strong bond to his homeland (*literally: "Heimat"*).

Dawud M. describes himself as a devout Muslim, for whom family is very important. Currently, Dawud M. and his family are housed in Hannover, where he hopes to find work again soon.

Regarding the situation in Germany, Dawud remarked understanding for anxiety on the German side, for example with respects to “over-foreignization”, arising costs or increasing violence. Alluding to these (*i.e. the anxiety*) was (*indirect speech*) important for mutual respect and a good community spirit (*literally: "Miteinander"*).

Notes: The original photo did not feature a bar across the eyes. The translation is literal to ensure that as much of subtle connotations as possible are preserved.

Description of German (Translation): Mentioning worries

Stefan K. (35) is married and lives with his wife and two children in Hamburg. He works as a bank clerk at the savings bank. In his free time he spends a lot of time with his family and likes to travel to foreign countries.

Asked about several current political debates, Michael K. underscored the importance of equal opportunities for women in leadership positions. Furthermore he supports tough punishment of tax evasion and containment policy against tax havens. Regarding the inflow of refugees he reported his worries about the situation of people in Syria. However, he also mentioned substantial worries of "over-foreignization" due to the large immigration of refugees (*literally "Zuwanderung von Flüchtlingen"*) to Germany, the associated cost and increasing crime.

Notes: This vignette did not feature a photo.

Appendix B

Further Statistical Analyses

Table A1: Balance of covariates across treatments (p-values).

	Treatment		
	T(is Christian)	T(is open)	T(is German)
<i>Covariate</i>			
Female	0.47	0.22	0.69
Age	0.49	0.88	0.51
Close relationship to foreigner	0.60	0.98	0.82
Sociable	0.73	0.45	0.75
General risk attitude	0.26	0.86	0.31

Notes: Sample comparisons are conducted using a two-sided t-test with H0 of no difference in means. The reported numbers are p-values. There are thus no statistically significant differences in covariates across treatments.

Table A2: Treatment effects for Syrian refugee excluding the “German” treatment.

	(1) likable	(2) empathy	(3) would trust	(4) would talk to	(5) would meet for coffee	(6) would invite home	(7) expect fast integration
Treatment(is open)	0.365** (0.173)	0.351** (0.167)	-0.017 (0.169)	0.012 (0.178)	0.022 (0.168)	-0.202 (0.174)	0.326* (0.172)
Treatment(is Christian)	0.182 (0.173)	0.010 (0.166)	0.263 (0.170)	0.113 (0.179)	-0.089 (0.168)	0.073 (0.173)	0.216 (0.171)
Observations	450	456	454	457	456	417	447

Notes: Estimates from an ordered logit model with the reported regressors. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Please note that the question about fast integration was not included for in the "is German" treatment.

Table A3: Treatment effects for Syrian refugee including the “German” treatment with covariates.

	(1) likable	(2) empathy	(3) would trust	(4) would talk to	(5) would meet for coffee	(6) would invite home	(7) expect fast integration
<i>Treatments</i>							
Is Open	0.302* (0.175)	0.339* (0.173)	-0.019 (0.180)	-0.040 (0.191)	0.022 (0.181)	-0.236 (0.183)	0.314* (0.178)
Is Christian	0.084 (0.147)	0.045 (0.142)	0.260* (0.147)	0.097 (0.157)	-0.145 (0.147)	-0.046 (0.152)	0.198 (0.177)
Is German	0.173 (0.182)	0.027 (0.176)	-0.174 (0.182)	-0.357* (0.189)	-0.257 (0.174)	-0.121 (0.183)	
<i>Individual Char.</i>							
Risk Attitude	0.101** (0.044)	0.085* (0.047)	0.140*** (0.042)	0.062 (0.041)	0.105*** (0.039)	0.146*** (0.041)	0.036 (0.048)
Sociable	0.219*** (0.077)	0.261*** (0.081)	0.124 (0.083)	0.396*** (0.086)	0.226*** (0.080)	0.106 (0.076)	0.146 (0.091)
Close to foreigner	0.263* (0.156)	0.156 (0.148)	0.302* (0.155)	0.518*** (0.163)	0.430*** (0.154)	0.558*** (0.158)	0.145 (0.182)
Female	-0.020 (0.155)	0.292** (0.146)	-0.356** (0.153)	-0.051 (0.160)	-0.275* (0.153)	-0.356** (0.150)	-0.215 (0.184)
Age	-0.040 (0.031)	0.049* (0.027)	-0.012 (0.030)	0.057** (0.027)	0.116*** (0.029)	0.091*** (0.030)	0.031 (0.037)
Age squared	0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.001** (0.000)	-0.001*** (0.000)	-0.001*** (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
<i>Context</i>							
Data from Kiel	0.146 (0.242)	-0.207 (0.216)	0.684*** (0.223)	0.293 (0.228)	0.204 (0.217)	0.364 (0.254)	0.307 (0.260)
Data at Uni	-0.527** (0.254)	-0.310 (0.236)	-0.140 (0.260)	0.007 (0.266)	-0.048 (0.241)	-0.130 (0.257)	-0.106 (0.318)
Observations	628	633	630	633	633	593	429

Notes: Estimates from an ordered logit model with the reported regressors. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Please note that the question about fast integration was not included for in the "is German" treatment. The base outcome for context is data gathered on the street in Rostock.

Table A4: Summary statistics for Part 2.

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Treatment	118	0.483	0.502	0	1
Openness	118	4.441	0.948	1	6
EU	118	3.085	0.902	2	5
Age	118	21.263	2.772	18	32
Female	118	0.458	0.500	0	1
German	118	0.983	0.130	0	1
Close foreigner	118	0.610	0.490	0	1
Risk attitude	117	6.000	1.805	2	9
Worries: econ	118	2.195	0.559	1	3
Worries: self	118	2.034	0.640	1	3
Worries climate	118	1.720	0.738	1	3
Worries: crime	118	2.110	0.760	1	3
Worries: cohesion	118	1.805	0.731	1	3
Worries: immigration	118	2.110	0.701	1	3
Worries: xenophobia	118	1.466	0.595	1	3