



Discrimination and Reactive Transnationalism Among Recent Italian, Polish, Turkish, and Syrian Immigrants in Germany

RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Reactive transnationalism involves immigrants responding to hostility in the receiving society by increasing their connection and interaction with their origin country. The current study builds upon previous examinations of this phenomenon by considering whether direct experience is the only form of discrimination that matters. It examines whether the mere perception of unfairness—no first-hand experience required—is also associated with transnational behaviors. Data from the 2019 Recent Immigration Processes and Early Integration Trajectories in Germany survey are used to analyze remittance and political transnationalism patterns among Turkish, Syrian, Polish, and Italian immigrants. Results confirm the reactive transnationalism association in the German context and also introduce greater nuance into our understanding. For one, while direct exposure to hostility matters, it is not required. Transnationalism is also linked to the general perception that one's group is treated unfairly. Further, the results indicate that a reactive political transnationalism association is strongest among Turkish respondents, demonstrating significant variation across groups. The implications of these results for future research are discussed.

KEYWORDS:

Reactive transnationalism;
discrimination; immigrants;
Germany; Turkish
migration; Syrian migration;
Polish migration; Italian
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In March 2025, the arrest of Istanbul's mayor, Ekrem Imamoglu—a likely challenger to President Erdogan—ignited mass protests. In response, the government detained more than 1000 individuals (CBS 2025). His arrest also generated protests over 2500 kilometers away among Turkish migrant populations in Germany and Denmark (Bieniek & Müller-Russell 2025; Saracoglu 2025; Welt 2025). Many of these gatherings were organized by the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*), which is the largest opposition party in Türkiye. This is not the first time that a Turkish political entity has generated mass political behavior outside of Türkiye. In fact, foreign politicians are now banned from campaigning in Germany because of security concerns around election rallies in 2017 (DW 2018). Regardless, it shows that, even after emigrating, many Turkish migrants maintain strong connections with their country of origin—strong enough to motivate political action. The current study seeks to understand this behavior and whether discrimination makes it more likely.

Researchers view such practices as transnationalism, which is the idea that, as immigrants incorporate into a host society, they do not completely break connections with their origin, as assimilation-based theories assume (Glick Schiller, Bash & Blanc-Szanton 1992; Levitt 2001; Levitt, DeWind & Vertovec 2003; Portes, Guarnizo & Landolt 1999; Snel Engbersen & Leerkes 2006). Rather, by maintaining socio-cultural, economic, and political linkages, immigrants live transnational lives where they simultaneously participate in destination and origin societies. Recent studies demonstrate a consistent correlation between transnational practices and interpersonal discrimination experiences in the receiving society (AlMasarweh 2022; Dorzadeh 2022; Herda 2025b; Itzigsohn & Saucedo 2002, 2005; Redclift & Rajina 2021; Snel, Hart & Van Bochove 2016; Yoo & Jang 2024). The idea that experience with a hostile context of reception can motivate transnational practices is referred to as *reactive* transnationalism. The current study not only seeks to examine this pattern in a German sample but also to expand consideration beyond discrimination experiences. In other words, can reactive transnationalism emerge from a more general sense of unwelcome in receiving societies? The analysis introduces a measure of perceived general discrimination toward one's group, which does not require a first-hand hostile encounter.

Germany is an important context of reception that may be growing more hostile, placing immigrants at greater risk of encountering or at least perceiving discrimination. The 2025 federal election saw record success for the *Alternative für Deutschland* party, which, for several years, has promoted anti-immigrant positions, often in provocative ways (Kirby 2025). Two years prior, Germany's Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (*Antidiskriminierungsstelle*) logged the highest number of discrimination reports since its founding in 2006 (DW 2024). The most common type was racial discrimination, with many targets being individuals of migrant origin. From the perspective of the Segmented Assimilation Theory, which attempts to understand varying integration trajectories in receiving societies, such circumstances can alter immigrants' integration paths, leading to downward social mobility and the adoption of counter-cultural norms (Haller, Portes & Lynch 2011; Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Portes & Zhou 1993; Zhou 1997). This can also include a thickening of the origin identity, a development of more hostile orientations toward the receiving society, and perhaps stronger transnational connections with their origin.

Germany also offers a large and diverse immigrant population in which to examine reactive transnationalism. There is a sizeable and culturally distinct Turkish community and also many immigrants from Italy and Poland who, as EU citizens, have extensive rights within Germany. Diverging further are immigrants from Syria, whose migration motivations are uniquely based on safety concerns. These different circumstances may predispose groups to varying levels of discrimination or to respond uniquely when it occurs. The current study examines the reactive transnationalism association with a focus on variation across origin groups. While the sample is German, the results will likely be informative for other diverse contexts, like the Nordic countries.

Taken together, this study examines three questions. First, is there evidence for reactive transnationalism among immigrants in Germany? The analysis tests the correlation between discrimination and two transnational outcomes: remittances and political engagement. Second, does reactive transnationalism require a first-hand discrimination experience? Perceived unfairness directed toward one's group, which does not require experience, is considered alongside reported experience in the multivariate models. Third, is the reactive transnationalism association consistent across immigrant origins? Interactions between discrimination and source countries will determine if the aforementioned patterns differ across groups.

Using the 2019 Recent Immigration Processes and Early Integration Trajectories in Germany (ENTRA) survey ([Diehl, Koenig & Kristen 2024](#); [Seuring et al. 2023](#)), the current study examines discrimination and transnational practices among recent Italian, Polish, Turkish, and Syrian immigrants. Regression models show significant reactive transnationalism correlations for both outcomes. Importantly, the belief that discrimination impacts one's group is independently related to transnationalism in all models, indicating that discrimination experience is not required. Lastly, interaction results reveal that reactive political transnationalism is pronounced for Turkish respondents, demonstrating significant variation across origins ([Abadan-Unat 2011](#); [Duru, Favell & Varela 2022](#); [Klok et al. 2020](#); [Snel, Hart & Van Bochove 2016](#)). Overall, the results add further evidence and greater nuance to our understanding of reactive transnationalism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A REACTIVE FORM OF TRANSNATIONALISM

Several recent articles examine the possibility of a reactive transnationalism ([AlMasarweh 2022](#); [Herda 2025b](#); [Itzigsohn & Saucedo 2002, 2005](#); [Redclift & Rajina 2021](#); [Snel, Hart & Van Bochove 2016](#)). This involves transnational practices being triggered or accelerated after immigrants encounter a hostile context of reception. In other words, those experiencing negative or unfair treatment respond by exhibiting greater engagement with their origin society. The assumption is that the unfairness of these experiences causes immigrants to question their place in the receiving society and whether they want to participate fully in it. Decades of research document a long list of emotional, physical, and behavioral consequences for discrimination victims in general ([Mays et al. 2007](#); [Pascoe & Richman 2009](#); [Smith, Allen & Danley 2007](#); [Williams et al. 2003](#)). The impact should certainly be enough to motivate immigrant disengagement from their receiving society and re-engagement with their origin.

The reactive transnationalism concept brings together transnationalism with the idea of reactive ethnicity from Segmented Assimilation Theory ([Haller, Portes & Lynch 2011](#);

[Portes & Rumbaut 2001](#); [Portes & Zhou 1993](#); [Zhou 1997](#)). This focuses on how a hostile receiving society context can cause immigrants to rethink their identities. The more discrimination that they encounter, the more likely they will identify with their origin society or develop identities in opposition to the receiving society ([Celik 2015](#); [Chaney 2022](#); [Doering & Peker 2022](#); [Herda 2018](#); [Herda 2025a](#); [Jiang et al. 2016](#); [Verkuyten & Yildiz 2007](#)). Reactive transnationalism takes this a step further by considering a behavioral consequence. Transnationalism, of course, can exist without discrimination. It is only reactive if it develops in response to receiving societal hostility.

The recent reactive transnationalism research considers multiple samples and data collection methods, each time finding evidence for the hypothesized pattern. [Itzigsohn and Saucedo \(2002, 2005\)](#) conducted early survey research among US-based Colombian, Salvadoran, and Dominican immigrants. Reported discrimination experiences were significantly associated with more remittances sent to the origin, increased involvement in origin culture organizations, and more travel to the origin. [Snel et al. \(2016\)](#) found a reactive transnationalism pattern among middle-class Turkish, Moroccan, and Surinamese respondents in the Netherlands: Those reporting discrimination experience were more likely to maintain contacts with their origin society, remit money, and participate in political action connected to their origin society. In South Korea, [Yoo and Jang \(2024\)](#) found reactive transnationalism among immigrants who perceive their workplace conditions as unfair relative to native-born Koreans. Specifically, perceived unfair treatment moderated the association between human capital and remittances. Those with higher education and income are more likely to remit when they considered their workplace as unfair.

[Herda \(2025b\)](#) confirmed similar patterns among Latin American immigrants in the US. However, this study also provided evidence linking the rise of the anti-immigrant Trump administration to both increased remittances and increased transnational contacts. The results showed that discrimination existing at the structural level can generate reactive transnationalism independently. An interpersonal experience with discrimination was not required.

Qualitative research provides further evidence for reactive transnationalism. In [AlMasarweh's \(2022\)](#) sample of 32 second-generation Muslims in the US, more discrimination was related to greater involvement in local mosques, which connected them to their origin culture. Studies by [Redclift and Rajina \(2021\)](#) and [Dorzadeh \(2022\)](#) considered responses to discrimination among Bangladeshi immigrants in the UK and Baloch immigrants in Qatar, respectively. Both found that the hostility they encountered motivated property investments in their origin. The two studies understood these purchases as a protective contingency, allowing migrants to eventually leave the hostile host country.

The current study replicates this research in the German context, which is an important site for understanding integration patterns. Moving beyond replication, this study also considers different types of discrimination—experienced and perceived—as possible motivators. This permits consideration of whether experience is necessary for reactive transnationalism.

IS EXPERIENCE NEEDED FOR REACTIVE TRANSNATIONALISM?

Most reactive transnationalism research focuses only on first-hand discrimination experiences. The current study assumes that these are important but questions whether they are required. This expectation follows research using General Strain Theory to

understand the connection between discrimination and criminal behavior (Agnew 1992; Herda 2016, 2021; Herda & McCarthy 2018; Unnever & Gabbidon 2011). The theory acknowledges that discrimination can impact individuals in indirect ways, even when one is not a first-hand victim. For instance, anticipated discrimination involves the fear that one may fall victim to discrimination. This indirect variety has proven consequential. In Gordon et al.'s (2020) research, they found that, when respondents expected discrimination in a hypothetical scenario, it was enough to worsen sleep quality as measured through the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index. While discrimination experience mattered, the anticipation effect also held net of controls, suggesting that anticipated discrimination is independently associated with sleep-related consequences.

Also important is vicarious discrimination, which involves witnessing or hearing about the experiences of others. For instance, Wofford, Defever, and Chopik's (2019) research on romantic couples finds that the partner's discrimination experiences are associated with lower self-reported health, higher depression, and greater relationship strain for the respondent of focus. These associations existed net of discrimination experienced by the respondent, suggesting that experience is not needed to bring about emotional and relational consequences. However, is the mere perception that discrimination exists associated with transnational behaviors, even without direct experience?

Notable among the reactive transnationalism research is Itzigsohn and Saucedo's (2002) article focusing on Latin American immigrants. Like the current study, this research considers discrimination experience as well as the perception that one's group is victimized in the receiving society. They measured the latter through an index, which included questions asking whether relations between White Americans and one's own group are friendly, cold, or distant. These questions did not measure discriminatory encounters but rather their perception that overall relations are hostile. Their index also contains measures of perceived general economic discrimination—not necessarily toward one's group—and whether the American lifestyle strengthens families. The inclusion of these other components complicates interpretation, as the variable measures something beyond what the current study seeks to isolate. Regardless, in their multivariate models, both experienced and perceived group discrimination were associated with sociocultural transnationalism (Itzigsohn & Saucedo 2002). Significant coefficients for both net of one another suggest that reactive transnationalism may not require a first-hand encounter with receiving-society hostility.

Regardless, simultaneous examinations of experienced and perceived discrimination are rare. Thus, the current analysis includes a measure of perceived unfairness in the receiving society directed toward one's group as an independent variable alongside discrimination experience. Including these simultaneously allows consideration of whether one or both are linked to transnational behaviors. Both measures are also used in interactions with immigrant origins to determine if the reactive transnationalism association varies across groups.

IS REACTIVE TRANSNATIONALISM CONSISTENT ACROSS ORIGIN GROUPS?

The ENTRA data include four immigrant origin groups: Italians, Poles, Turks, and Syrians. Each presents important cultural differences compared to native-born Germans. They also vary in status, with only Italians and Poles being EU citizens within the Schengen Zone. This brings extensive rights and privileges, including the freedom of movement. Combined with geographic proximity, it further advantages Italians and Poles in terms of entry and exit, while Turks and Syrians are subject to greater distance

and immigration controls. Variation in origin circumstances means that Italians, Poles, and Turks can normally choose to emigrate, whereas Syrians are more likely forced to seek asylum. Any of these differences may produce different potential for reactive transnationalism.

Turkish migrants have a highly transnational reputation (Abadan-Unat 2011; Duru, Favell & Varela 2022; Klok et al. 2020; Snel, Hart & Van Bochove 2016). This may be due to the Turkish government's efforts to foster a passion for Türkiye among its expatriates. Controversially, in 2008 and 2011, President Erdogan himself visited Germany to a 'rockstar welcome' (Ataman 2008; Gezer & Reimann 2011). Facing crowds of more than 10,000, he urged Turkish expatriates, 'Yes, integrate yourselves into German society but don't assimilate yourselves. No one has the right to deprive us of our culture and our identity' (Gezer & Reimann 2011). During the more recent rally, he also announced upgrades to the Blue Card program, which allows former Turkish citizens to maintain many of their former rights (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2022). In destination countries like Germany that do not permit dual citizenship, it allows members of the diaspora to obtain a receiving-society passport but classify as something other than aliens within Türkiye.

Thus, Turkish immigrants might be the most transnational group considered here. Snel et al. (2016) found this, with their Turkish respondents out-pacing Moroccan and Surinamese immigrants in both transnational identification and transnational activities. However, their study did not test Turks' response to discrimination. Their unique transnational infrastructure can be relied upon to easily engage with the origin country both financially and politically if the German society appears unwelcoming. Certainly, the same exists to some degree for Italian, Polish, and Syrian immigrants, but the intentional work done by Türkiye to promote and maintain these connections may provide a unique circumstance. Therefore, it is possible that Turkish respondents in particular will turn toward transnationalism when they experience or perceive discriminatory treatment in the receiving society. This possibility of Turkish uniqueness will be tested through interactions between immigrant origin and both discrimination experience and perceived group unfairness.

DATA, VARIABLES, AND METHODS

The current study analyzes the ENTRA survey, whose stated goal is to 'collect data on recent immigrants in Germany, covering immigration and settlement dynamics, as well as integration trajectories' (Diehl, Koenig & Kristen 2024; Seuring et al. 2023). Respondents were recruited with a two-stage sampling design. First, a sampling frame was developed using information from local immigrant registration offices from the five cities¹ with the largest populations of each group—Italians, Poles, Turks, and Syrians. Second, a random sample of each was selected separately, with the goal of obtaining at least 1000 participants per group. The researchers recruited immigrants between 18 and 40 years old who settled in Germany between 2015 and 2019 and did not have German citizenship. Data collection occurred between May and November of 2019.² The final analytical sample includes 4448 respondents.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES: TRANSNATIONALISM

The current study considers two outcomes that measure economic and political transnationalism. The transfer of remittances to the origin country represents a common form of economic transnationalism (Carling 2008). This dichotomous

variable is built from two questions: ‘Since you moved to Germany this time, have you (or your partner) given or sent any money to [origin country]’ 1) relatives or 2) friends? Responses are coded as 1 if they answered ‘yes’ to either³ and 0 otherwise. [Table 1](#) displays sample means and percentages for this variable and all others considered. Across the full sample, 23.71% of respondents have sent money to people in their origin, ranging from 14.21% among Italians to 33.73% among Syrians. Both values differ significantly from the sample average. Turkish and Polish respondents remit at levels no different from the average.

Political transnationalism is an index of three items capturing political interest and engagement in the origin country. The questions read: 1) ‘How interested would you say you are in [origin country] politics?’; 2) ‘How well do you understand the important political issues facing [origin country]?’; and 3) ‘In the last 12 months, how often

	ITALY (N = 1093)	POLAND (N = 1089)	SYRIA (N = 1199)	TÜRKİYE (N = 1067)	TOTAL (N = 4448)
Remittances	14.21%*	22.47%	33.73%*	23.43%	23.71%
Political Transnationalism	-.067	-.056	-.272*	.366*	-.001
Discrimination Experience	.961	1.014	1.010	1.008	.998
Perceived Group Unfairness	1.557*	1.831*	1.542*	1.732	1.662
Gender					
Male	48.08%	35.42%*	65.30%*	56.25%*	51.58%
Female	51.92%	64.58%*	34.70%*	43.75%*	48.42%
Age	28.237	28.905	28.565	28.903	28.649
Income	4.919*	5.419*	2.094*	4.291	4.129
Children	0.158*	0.297*	0.866*	0.391	.439
Education	3.906	4.263*	3.247*	4.002*	3.839
Marital Status					
Married	15.38%*	27.18%*	44.04%*	55.45%*	35.61%
Single	77.08%*	66.46%*	51.77%*	42.58%*	59.38%
Other	7.54%*	6.36%	4.19%	1.97%*	5.01%
Permanent Residence	99.55%	98.39%	95.64%	92.50%*	96.52%
Migration Motivation					
Work	60.42%*	61.85%*	20.30%*	29.88%*	42.62%
Family	13.60%*	29.91%*	17.62%*	38.21%*	24.58%
Safety	8.14%*	17.12%*	82.03%*	25.83%*	34.50%
Education	26.81%	21.55%*	32.33%	38.91%*	29.91%

Table 1 Means and proportions for dependent and independent variables across origins.

* indicates a significant ($P < .05$) difference compared to sample average.

did you typically discuss major political issues facing [origin country] with others?' Response options range from either 1 to 4 or 1 to 5 with higher values indicating greater engagement frequency. Each variable was standardized to have a mean of zero and a variance of one and then combined into a mean index of political transnationalism. The items have a Cronbach's alpha of .81, indicating high reliability. Across groups, Syrians fall significantly below the mean and Turks rise significantly above. The high level of political transnationalism among Turks also significantly exceeds that of Italians ($t = 10.798$; $P < .000$) and Poles ($t = 12.609$; $P < .000$).

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Discrimination experience and perceived group unfairness

The current study examines whether experience is required for the reactive transnationalism process by considering both discrimination happening to the respondent and the perceived level of unfairness directed toward the respondent's group. Transnationalism is reactive when it correlates with either of these discrimination variables. Perceived unfairness is measured with the question: 'Some say that people from [origin country] are treated unfairly in Germany. How often do you think [origin country people] are treated unfairly in Germany?' Response options range from 1, indicating 'never,' to 5 indicating 'very often.' The sample average of 1.66 is between the categories of 'almost never' and 'sometimes.' Polish respondents perceive this significantly more than the average and Syrians perceive it significantly less.

An immediate follow-up measures discrimination experience with identical response options: 'And you personally, have you been treated unfairly since you moved to Germany?' There is no significant variation in discrimination experience across origins. All four have means close to 1.0, indicating 'almost never.' These two discrimination variables are moderately correlated ($\rho = .56$). Logically, experience should make one perceive greater discrimination more broadly. Similarly, greater perceptions may better equip one to identify discrimination when it happens, leading to more reported experience.

Origin country

The four countries of origin considered in the ENTRA survey are measured dichotomously. These are included in the regression models and interacted with both discrimination variables. The origin sub-samples are similarly sized, following the ENTRA design. However, there are slightly more Syrians ($n = 1199$) and slightly fewer Turks ($n = 1067$).

Control variables

The multivariate models include demographic controls that may predict transnationalism or one's likelihood of experiencing or perceiving discrimination. Gender is dichotomous and coded as 1 for women and 0 for men. Age is measured in years and ranges between 18 and 41 years. Monthly income has 10 categories ranging from under 1100€ to at least 5301€. Subjective health has five categories from 'poor' to 'excellent.' Education has six categories from 'no degree' to 'doctoral or equivalent.' Marital status has three categories: married (reference), single, and other. The number of children ranges from one to seven. Residence permit type is coded as 1 for permanent and 0 for temporary or other. Lastly, there are four measures of migration motivation: work, education, safety, and family. All are coded as 1 if the respondent mentioned the motivation and 0 otherwise.

Aside from age, the origin countries differ significantly on all control variables, leading to unique sub-sample profiles. For instance, Italians are majority women, while Poles, Syrians, and Turks are majority men. Income is highest among Poles and lowest among Syrians. Education is highest among Poles and Turks but lowest among Syrians. Italians and Poles are the least likely to have children, while Syrians are most likely. Immigrants from Türkiye and Syria are more likely to be married, while most Poles and Italians are single. Nearly everyone has permanent residence, but the 92.5% held by Turks is significantly lower than the average. Motivation varies across origins, with Italians and Poles more motivated by work. Syrians are motivated significantly more by safety concerns, while Turks are more driven by education and family.

METHODS

The analysis presents two multivariate regression tables predicting both political transnationalism and remittance behaviors. The initial models⁴—presented in [Table 2](#)—control for discrimination experience, perceived group unfairness, origin, and demographic controls. Subsequent models—presented in [Table 3](#)—add the interactions between discrimination and origin to examine variation across countries. To aid in the interpretation, the values for these effects are predicted graphically in [Figures 1](#) and [2](#). Missing values are replaced via multiple imputation methods using information from 20 complete datasets.⁵

ANALYSIS

CONFIRMING AND EXPANDING THE REACTIVE TRANSNATIONALISM CORRELATION

[Table 2](#) displays multivariate analyses predicting political transnationalism and remittance behaviors. The control variables exhibit similar associations for both outcomes in some instances, like men and older respondents being significantly more transnational. However, other variables exhibit opposing associations. Years of education and education as a migration motivator are both related to greater political transnationalism but fewer remittances. Conversely, work as a migration motivator is related to less political transnationalism but more remittances. In other cases, variables matter for one outcome, but not the other. Income, single status, and the safety motivation are all related to greater political transnationalism but have no impact on remittances. Conversely, family migration is related to greater remittances but unrelated to political transnationalism. Thus, while both outcomes are forms of transnationalism, they are clearly distinct.

Transnationalism associated with any of these factors is not considered *reactive*. This occurs when it is correlated with discrimination variables, which are the primary focus of the analysis. Starting with direct experience in the political transnationalism model, for each unit increase in discrimination, political transnationalism is predicted to be .031 units higher. Across the entire discrimination scale, this corresponds to about 15% of a standard deviation in transnational political interest. Likewise, in the remittances model, the coefficient of .018 indicates that respondents are significantly more likely to send money back to the origin when exposed to discrimination.

Similarly, the belief that one's group experiences discrimination in Germany correlates significantly with transnational behaviors. For each unit increase in the perceived

	POLITICAL TRANSNATIONALISM		REMITTANCES	
	B	SE	B	SE
Discrimination				
Experience	.031*	.015	.018*	.008
Perceived Group Unfairness	.055***	.017	.025**	.009
Origin Country (Italy = ref.)				
Poland	-.106**	.034	.075***	.019
Syria	-.315***	.047	.238***	.025
Türkiye	.283***	.039	.113***	.021
Control Variables				
Female Gender	-.192***	.026	-.030*	.014
Age	.014***	.003	.004*	.003
Income	.022***	.005	.005	.004
Children	-.028	.018	-.034***	.010
Education Level	.154***	.012	-.021***	.006
Marital Status (Married = ref.)				
Single	.078*	.037	.017	.020
Other Marital Status	-.046	.059	.047	.033
Permanent Residence	.064	.069	-.061	.040
Migration Motivation				
Work	-.154***	.028	.068***	.015
Education	.140***	.030	-.061***	.017
Family	-.045	.033	.052**	.018
Safety	.202***	.033	.008	.018
Intercept				
	-1.191***	.121	.073	.069
R-Squared				
	.179		.060	
F-Statistic				
	52.74***		9.38***	
F-Probability				
	.000		.000	

Table 2 Least squares regression models predicting political transnationalism and remittances (N = 4448).

* $P < .05$; ** $P < .01$; *** $P < .001$.

unfairness, political transnationalism is predicted to be .055 points higher. Across the entire length of the independent variable scale, this corresponds to about 25% of a standard deviation in political transnationalism. Likewise, the coefficient of .025 indicates that those believing that their group is treated unfairly are significantly more likely to send money to their country of origin.

	Y = POLITICAL TRANSNATIONALISM				Y= REMITTANCES			
	DISCRIMINATION EXPERIENCE × ORIGIN		PERCEIVED GROUP UNFAIRNESS × ORIGIN		DISCRIMINATION EXPERIENCE × ORIGIN		PERCEIVED GROUP UNFAIRNESS × ORIGIN	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Discrimination								
Experience	-.008	.026	.032*	.015	.014	.015	.018*	.008
Perceived Group Unfairness	.055***	.017	.054	.030	.025**	.009	.017	.017
Origin Country (Italy = ref.)								
Poland	-.137**	.048	-.052	.078	.067*	.027	.062	.042
Syria	-.349***	.057	-.310***	.074	.236***	.031	.225***	.040
Türkiye	.196***	.052	.220**	.077	.109***	.028	.091*	.042
Interactions								
Disc. Experience × Poland	.033	.034	—	—	.008	.019	—	—
Disc. Experience × Syria	.037	.032	—	—	.002	.018	—	—
Disc. Experience × Türkiye	.089*	.035	—	—	.005	.019	—	—
Group Unfairness × Poland	—	—	-.030	.041	—	—	.008	.022
Group Unfairness × Syria	—	—	-.004	.037	—	—	.008	.020
Group Unfairness × Türkiye	—	—	.036	.041	—	—	.014	.022
Intercept								
	-1.156***	.122	-1.185***	.126	.076	.070	.085	.071
R-Squared								
	.180		.179		.060		.060	
F-Statistic								
	45.26***		44.39***		12.41***		12.36***	
F-Probability								
	.000		.000		.000		.000	

Table 3 Interaction models predicting political transnationalism and remittances (N = 4448).

* $P < .05$; ** $P < .01$; *** $P < .001$.

In both models, the perceived group unfairness association is larger than reported discrimination experience. However, overlapping 95% confidence intervals indicate that the slopes are not significantly different. Thus, both experienced and perceived discrimination exhibit independent associations with transnational practices of comparable magnitude.

DIFFERENTIAL EFFECTS ACROSS IMMIGRANT ORIGINS

Table 2 shows that both outcomes vary across origin groups. All remit significantly more than Italians. This is especially true for Syrians, who follow the bivariate patterns in Table 1. Turks are significantly more politically transnational than those of the other origins (versus Poland: $F = 107.36$, $P < .000$; versus Syria: $F = 225.26$, $P < .000$)—also following the patterns in Table 1. Both Poles and Syrians are significantly less politically transnational than Italians.

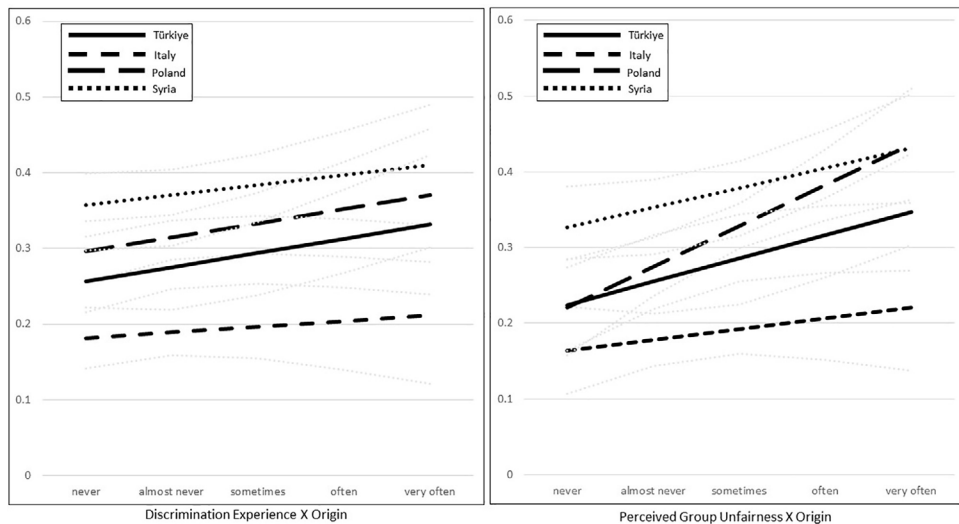


Figure 1 Interaction patterns predicting remittances.

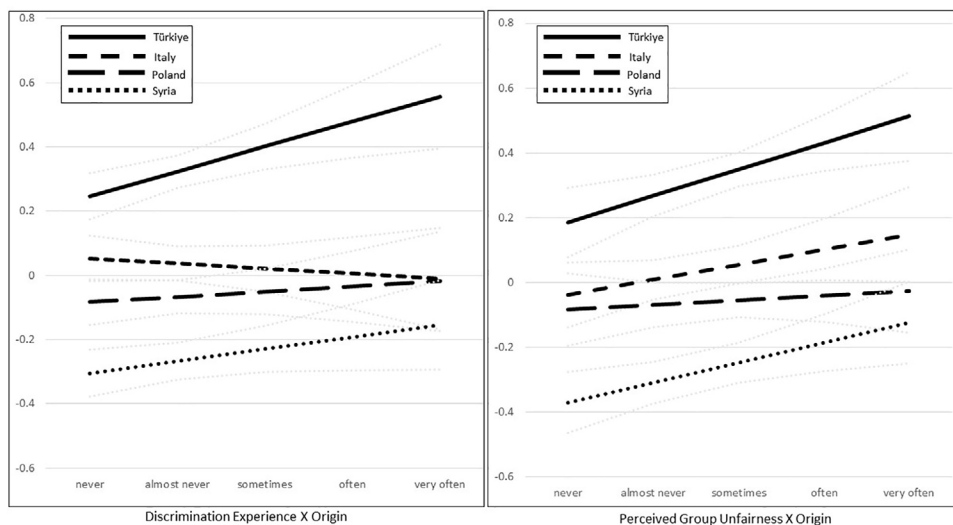


Figure 2 Interaction patterns predicting political transnationalism.

These origin indicators are included to determine if the reactive transnationalism associations differ across groups. This requires interactions with the discrimination variables, which are displayed in [Table 3](#). For the remittances model, none of the interactions reach statistical significance. These non-significant patterns are displayed graphically in [Figure 1](#). The significant country main effects are reflected in the different heights of each line. The non-significant discrimination experience main effect suggests a flat trajectory for Italians. The non-significant interactions indicate that the other origin group trajectories are equivalent to parallel with that of Italians. These results suggest that experiencing discrimination and perceiving one's group as being victimized have consistent, positive correlations with remittance behaviors.

[Table 3](#) includes interactions between discrimination experience and each origin. The large and positive interaction for Turks is statistically significant. The analogous

interactions for Poland and Syria are half the size and non-significant. [Figure 2](#) charts the predicted values. The trajectory for Italians is relatively flat, reflected by the near-zero discrimination experience main effect. Discrimination has little impact on Italians' political transnationalism. The trajectories for Poles and Syrians are statistically equivalent to that of Italians.

Conversely, Turks exhibit a more dramatic upward slope. The interaction of .089 suggests that their trajectory is significantly different from the reference category. Turks' higher starting point reflects their higher average levels of political transnationalism in [Table 1](#). The steep slope demonstrates a stronger reactive transnationalism association. In fact, the flat lines for the other groups suggest that a reactive transnationalism is unique to Turkish immigrants for the political outcome.

The final model of [Table 3](#) considers the interaction between origin and perceived group unfairness. Like the remittances models, none of these reach statistical significance. Thus, while perceiving that one's group is treated unfairly is associated with transnational practices, these patterns are consistent across immigrant groups. The associations are displayed graphically in [Figure 2](#). While the interaction patterns are similar to those of discrimination experience, the lack of significant associations indicates that the trajectories are statistically equivalent to parallel.

DISCUSSION

Segmented Assimilation Theory identifies discrimination as an important external factor that can alter the integration trajectories of immigrants ([Haller, Portes & Lynch 2011](#); [Portes & Rumbaut 2001](#); [Portes & Zhou 1993](#); [Zhou 1997](#)). Such experiences can make them question their place in their new society and whether becoming a part of it is worth the effort. They can motivate introspection and change how immigrants view themselves ([Celik 2015](#); [Chaney 2022](#); [Doering & Peker 2022](#); [Herda 2018](#); [Herda 2025a](#); [Jiang et al. 2016](#); [Verkuyten & Yildiz 2007](#)). According to more recent research ([AlMasarweh 2022](#); [Dorzadeh 2022](#); [Herda 2025b](#); [Itzigsohn & Saucedo 2002, 2005](#); [Redclift & Rajina 2021](#); [Snel, Hart & Van Bochove 2016](#); [Yoo & Jang 2024](#)), they can also motivate strengthened connections with their origin country. This process of moving from unfair treatment to heightened engagement with their origin is the reactive transnationalism phenomenon. The current study sought to examine this pattern in a new context, with a diverse sample of immigrant origins and with two ways to consider discrimination.

The results confirm the reactive transnationalism association found in recent studies ([AlMasarweh 2022](#); [Dorzadeh 2022](#); [Herda 2025b](#); [Itzigsohn & Saucedo 2002, 2005](#); [Redclift & Rajina 2021](#); [Snel, Hart & Van Bochove 2016](#); [Yoo & Jang 2024](#)). The pattern was evident for both remittances and political transnationalism. Further, and following [Itzigsohn and Saucedo \(2002\)](#), the current study found that, while direct experience matters, it is not the only form of discrimination linked to transnationalism. Simply viewing one's group as receiving unfair treatment is also associated with both remittance frequency and political transnationalism. Lastly, the results confirm that the reactive transnationalism association differs across immigrant origin groups. The interaction results show that, while Turkish immigrants are no more likely to experience discrimination compared to Italians, Poles, and Syrians, their experiences are much more related to transnationalism than other groups. Thus, reactive transnationalism patterns may not be universal. Overall, these findings present several areas for future research.

WHAT IS NEXT FOR REACTIVE TRANSNATIONALISM RESEARCH?

The current analysis adds Germany to the list of countries where evidence for reactive transnationalism has been found. There are other contexts that might be worth exploring, including Nordic countries, but we now have strong evidence that this pattern exists. An important next step is to move beyond the simple correlation and begin examining other aspects of the phenomenon.

The old adage about correlation not implying causation is relevant here, as well as with previous reactive transnationalism research. Since these studies rely on cross-sectional evidence to examine an inherently longitudinal process—experience and perception *causing* transnational behavior—there is a risk of reverse causality and unobserved confounders. It is possible that highly transnational migrants more readily interpret interactions as discriminatory, which is a reverse of the assumed causal sequence. They are more oriented toward their origin and may view the receiving society with more skepticism. With ENTRA's longitudinal structure, it is possible to partially test causality with discrimination experience through a difference-in-differences approach. Discrimination experience can be grouped into four categories indicating whether an incident was reported at the initial and subsequent waves. Those reporting discrimination for the first time prior to the second wave (but not the first) are of particular interest. Their change in status could be evidence for a causal pattern should their discrimination be associated with a change in remittance or political transnationalism across the waves. However, no significant changes in transnational behaviors were observed (see Appendix⁶), leading to an inconclusive result. Regardless, future studies should consider the causal sequence of reactive transnationalism through longitudinal and experimental approaches.

EXPERIENCE IS NOT NEEDED FOR REACTIVE TRANSNATIONALISM

The finding that non-experienced discrimination is also related to transnational behaviors has significant implications for future research. It suggests that an unwelcoming receiving society reputation alone may influence immigrants' behavior. Simply hearing about discrimination happening to other people may be consequential. It also suggests that any intentional act of anti-immigrant discrimination will have ripple effects beyond the intended victim.

This finding provides opportunities for future research. There is nuance to the unexperienced forms of discrimination that are not captured by single-item measures. More intentional measures of vicarious and anticipated discrimination can show which form is more consequential. Further, the frequency and intensity of either type may also be important ([Gonzales, Lee & Marchiondo 2019](#)).

NUANCE IN REACTIVE TRANSNATIONALISM ACROSS ORIGIN GROUPS

We now have evidence indicating that the reactive transnationalism association differs across immigrant origin groups. The fact that Turkish immigrants focus on origin country politics more when they experience receiving-society hostility may result from the transnational infrastructure that is accessible to them. Efforts by the Turkish government to keep its diaspora engaged are likely influential. Turkish

politics can serve as an accessible refuge if immigrants see a need to disassociate from German society. While opportunities to connect with Italy and Poland also exist, these countries are easier to return to if hostility becomes unbearable. This discussion is speculative since survey data do not provide sufficient context. Future research should continue to examine reactive transnationalism with qualitative approaches to understand immigrants' feelings and explanations behind their actions.

At the same time, there was no nuanced pattern for remittances. It may not be the case that previous research has missed variation. Rather, it likely depends on the specific outcomes and circumstances under consideration. Nevertheless, future research should distinguish between groups when reporting reactive transnationalism. The current study likely only scratches the surface regarding group differences. For instance, diversity within the category of 'Turkish'—Kurds, Assyrians, etc.—may hide additional patterns. Certain groups may be immune to discrimination, or certain transnational behaviors may be especially triggered by hostile encounters. Exploring this nuance is an important task moving forward.

ADDITIONAL LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While the current study offers some useful findings, there are additional limitations worth noting. For instance, the ENTRA data focuses only on recent immigrants, specifically those present in Germany for under five years. This includes respondents living in the receiving society for less than one year. Such recent immigrants may be more prone to send remittances or focus more on origin politics, and this tendency might wane with more time in the destination country. Whether the current findings reflect patterns among more established immigrants is unknown, but it is something that future research should consider.

Also notable is ENTRA's focus on destination cities, which does not produce a representative sample. Smaller cities, towns, and rural areas are excluded. Whether these individuals are different than those residing in Berlin or Hamburg is unknown, but this would be an avenue for future research.

CONCLUSION

It is becoming clear that reactive transnationalism is yet another consequence to a hostile context of reception. For immigrants, exposure to hostility from the receiving society—a discrimination experience or a general perceived sense of unfairness—is related to a greater orientation toward the origin society. This can involve the transfer of funds and more focus outside of the country of settlement. The current study provides important nuance that helps us to understand this phenomenon more fully. It is important that researchers dig further so that we may learn more about how immigrants integrate into new societies and what other unforeseen consequences may result from a hostile context of reception.

NOTES

- 1 The Italian and Turkish samples are from Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, Cologne, and Stuttgart (Seuring et al. 2023). Poles are from the same cities, save for Bremen instead of Stuttgart. Syrians were drawn from Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen, Essen, and Dortmund.

- 2 The ENTRA survey includes an additional wave collected between November 2020 and April 2021. The current study focuses only on the larger, initial wave, which contains the most relevant questions.
- 3 Remittances for personal savings is a third category in the ENTRA survey but something qualitatively different from sending money to another person. Personal savings could indicate a greater intent for return migration. Including such responses does not meaningfully change the results. Models that consider personal savings remittances only (8.2% of respondents) yield no significant associations with the discrimination variables.
- 4 Remittance behavior is estimated using a linear probability model instead of logistic regression because of weakness in the latter when comparing models with different independent variables (Mood 2010). However, logistic regressions (not shown) generate similar conclusions as the results presented.
- 5 More than two-thirds (68.37%) have complete data. Income has the most missing cases (14.59%). This is followed by perceived group unfairness (14.03% missing), remittances (6.61% missing), and education (4.16% missing).
- 6 Longitudinal models work for discrimination experience because the text in this initial wave specifies 'since coming to Germany' and the subsequent wave specifies 'since the previous survey.' This directs respondents to specific time spans. Similar text is missing for perceived unfairness, making the time spans ambiguous.

ADDITIONAL FILE

The additional file for this article can be found as follows:

- **Supplementary material.** Appendix Table 1. Difference-in-differences models predicting remittances and political transnationalism across two ENTRA waves. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33134/njmr.1077.s1>

The lack of associations in these difference-in-differences models yield inconclusive evidence for the assumed causal patterns in the existing literature.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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