Essentialism and Attribution of Monstrosity in Racist Discourse:

Right-Wing Internet Postings about Africans and Jews

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Abstract:

We investigated a total of 4,997 postings on an extreme right-wing Internet discussion board with regard to the groups and themes mentioned. The most frequently mentioned target groups were Africans, Jews, Muslims, Poles, and Turks; the most prominent themes and contexts were conspiracy, criminality, exploitation, threats to German identity, infiltration, mind control and harassment, procreation, rape, and sex. We analysed in detail postings about Africans/Blacks and Jews, i.e. target groups that were the most clearly connected to particular themes. The analysis reveals that extreme right-wing discourse shows a strong tendency to essentialise the target groups of Jews and Africans/Blacks and to ascribe them immutable group-specific attributes that effectively make them 'natural kinds'. The group of Jews appears as a kind of their own with super-human—or monstrous—powers and influence. Africans and Blacks are despised, firstly because their essential characteristics prohibit them to be categorically mixed with Germans (i.e. to become German by nationality) due to their incompatible essence, and secondly when they procreate with Whites. Such procreation produces 'bastards'— or 'monsters'—that are met with disgust. We argue that essentialist thinking about social and ethnic groups explains a good part of their rejection by right-wing followers and is in line with the former biologistic Nazi ideology.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Social categories

Racism has been with us since time immemorial and remains a pressing issue in our times. Although national and international politics in Europe have seen some success in abolishing open racism in public discourse and official statements, there are some dark corners left in public life where racism—and its weaker form: xenophobia—are able to flourish unimpeded. The political, sociological and psychological reasons for the stubborn persistence of racism in some people's heads are certainly manifold (Winant, 2006), but one cause may well be built into the normal workings of human cognition: the perception of some social categories as natural kinds and the associated attribution of essence. In the present paper, we use qualitative methodology to examine the discourse unfolding on the Internet forum website of an extreme right-wing political party in Germany (NPD). Our analysis shows how thinking in terms of natural kinds and essence leads to attributions of symbolic and biological hybridism that create category problems in the eyes of the forum users.

Since Tajfel's (1981) seminal work on social categories much has been achieved in understanding the cognitive mechanisms underlying group attributions. The author sees the problem of prejudice in the combination of discontinuous classifications such as

"nationalities or racial groups" (p. 132) and continuous attributes such as skin colour, personality traits or intelligence. If a discrete category of humans is attributed an average personality trait or intelligence score, the perceiver is likely to underestimate the distribution of an attribute within the category and to overestimate the variance between this and other human categories. Once the members of a category are additionally perceived as lower in status than the perceiver's, we are confronting a negative social prejudice against the members of the lower status group. This effect has been confirmed in numerous experimental studies (see Brown, 1995, for a comprehensive overview).

While the mechanism of assimilation and accentuation serves well in understanding everyday shades of prejudice in judgment and behaviour, it fails to reasonably account for extreme prejudice and bigotry (Billig, 2002). To explain these phenomena requires to consider emotional, motivational, and ideological components besides purely cognitive ones. The dynamics of these components together would then account for the contents as well as for the affective force, hatefulness and aggression that is usually associated with racist and other bigoted discourse.

The contents making up the despiseable attributes being projected onto social groups in racist discourse may vary to a large extent. The most important and historically old ones are likening the members of target group to animals and thereby projecting the disgust associated with certain animals (Haidt, McCauley, & Rozin, 1994; Royzman & Sabini, 2001); attributing supposed aesthetic aberrances such as ugliness (e.g. Heatherton, Kleck, Hebl, & Hull, 2000); and depriving the members of a group of self-control (Joffe

& Staerklé, 2007). These repertoires of derogations derive from, and in fact are a functional part of, the representational universe of the dominant group, its culture and ways of rhetorics (Billig et al., 1988), serving, at the end, the maintenance of the status quo (Jost, Hunyady, Stroebe, & Hewstone, 2002).

There is, however, also another element that plays a role in consolidating derogative discourse: Attributing out-groups a form of *natural kind-ness*. Tajfel's (1981) model of prejudice depending on the use of discrete categories does not discriminate between categories that might be understood as arbitrary, such as widows versus non-widows, collectors versus not collectors of stamps, or members of the parliament versus non-members of the parliament, on one hand, and categories that lend themselves to be naturalized, such as Asian versus European descendence or woman versus man, on the other. In many cultures and ideologies the tendency to naturalize has to do with projecting essence and following an essentialised form of discourse about social groups. Projecting essence is a sure way to deprive a member of a naturalized out-group of the ability to adapt, to change, and to dominate his or her fate.

1.2 Essentialism, dehumanisation and monstrosity

Connecting to Allport's (1954) insight that prejudiced people believe that groups are endowed with something obscure and mysterious of which all of the group's members are partaking, Douglas Medin and Andrew Ortony (1989) introduced the term 'psychological essentialism'. This term describes the fact that many 'ordinary' people *believe* that things have an underlying essence determining their visible attributes.

Myron Rothbart and Marjorie Taylor (1992) broadened the scope of Medin and Ortony's concept to the field of social categories. The authors claim that people believe underlying essences to be the true foundation of social categories. For Rothbart and Taylor, the assumption of an underlying essence is connected to the perception of social categories as natural kinds, which furthermore leads to the illusionary perception of a high inductive potential of these categories. According to Rothbart and Taylor, essentialist categorisations are most likely "… when it is possible to speculate that this essence is related to something like substance, genetic code, innate potential, or molecular structure" (p. 16). Following these ideas, it was possible to show that perceived homogeneity within a group results in an increased belief in an underlying essence; and conversely, that the belief in an underlying essence increases the perceived homogeneity of the group (Yzerbyt, Corneille, & Estrada, 2001; Yzerbyt, Rocher, & Schadron, 1997).

Research on the psychology of hatred-related behaviour shows that dehumanisation is frequently associated with legitimising inhuman acts against others (Bandura, 2002; Bar-Tal, 1989, 1997; Kelman, 1976). But even before aggression takes place, dehumanisation or infra-humanisation can be seen in the perception of groups and their members, who are not actively discriminated against or stigmatised, and even when they are presented as a relatively abstract other. Accordingly, dehumanisation can result from denying targets some typical human or uniquely human qualities (Haslam, 2006; Haslam, Bain, Douge, Lee, & Bastian, 2005; Leyens et al., 2003; Leyens et al., 2000).

In the present context, we link dehumanisation to psychological essentialism in hate contexts. We define the attribution of essence as imagining the existence of some hidden and invisible substance, which is inherent to its carriers and causes them—in the most characteristic attributes—to be as they are. Essence cannot be acquired or dispensed with because it is perceived as discrete and exclusive. It causes the carrier's identity as belonging to a specific natural kind category and not to any other. In this sense, essence is coextensive with 'being natural', and attributing it to group members is equivalent to naturalising a social entity (Holtz & Wagner, submitted). Hence, if the projection of essence is linked to perceiving human groups as natural kinds, then members of these groups possess inherent characteristics that cannot be shed, mixed or diluted by some other essence (cf. Douglas, 1966). As a consequence, their essence makes them members of this unique group and of no other.

Research on the perception of natural and of genetically modified animals has shown that animal species are perceived as constituting natural kinds, possessing an immutable identity that is a consequence of their essence as represented by their genes (Gelman, 2003; Keil, 1992; Wagner, Kronberger, Nagata, & Sen, submitted). When, through genetic engineering, the genes of two different animal species are brought together to produce a transgenic organism, this organism falls outside of any recognisable natural category, and subjects across cultures perceive the organism to be somehow monstrous, i.e. ugly, strange and dangerous. The mixing and muddling of genes or essences seems to be perceived as a breakdown of essence-bound identity and category membership (Kronberger & Wagner, 2008; Wagner, Kronberger, Berg, & Torgersen, 2006) and as a violation of the natural order of living beings.

Anecdotal evidence from John Locke's writings (1689/1975) corroborates the ties between a belief in real essence and the tendency to view the abnormal as monstrous (Cohen, 1996). To the essentialist, something that transgresses the imagined boundaries of nature must appear as godless, demonic, and dangerous – as an affront against God's creation. Locke illustrates this phenomenon with the following story of the French writer Gilles Ménage:

> When the abbot of Saint Martin, says he, was born, he had so little of the figure of a man, that it bespake him rather a monster. It was for some time under deliberation, whether he should be baptized or no. However, he was baptized, and declared a man provisionally till time should show what he would prove. (BK 3, SEK 6, PAR 26)

This hideous little creature finally developed into an important dignitary of the church. The contemporary prevalence of essentialist thinking and the particular image of humanity had almost resulted in the killing of an above average human being and member of society. Just because he looked different than his contemporaries he was considered a monstrosity in their eyes (cf. Daston & Park, 2001).

Given the aforementioned findings, the essentialisation of social groups and the breakdown of category membership in genetic hybrids, we expect to find similar effects in openly racist and xenophobic discourse. First, attributing a social group a particular identity and implying unbridgeable 'essential' differences between the out-group and

the in-group can justify aversive action. Above all, in hate and bigotry-related contexts, the exclusion of a group from humanity—which is usually equated by and large with the in-group—demonstrates the unnaturalness of this group. Basically, it is because the out-group violates the laws of nature by differing from humanity itself. Second, this effect might be even stronger when a person perceives muddling or impurity of essences in others. As was the case with genetically modified organisms, 'hybrids' of social categories deserve to be addressed as monstrous. In both cases, there is then only a small step from attributing monstrosity to justifying violence as a necessary reaction towards inherently malignant, subhuman, or noxious characteristics of people that cannot be altered, since other means such as re-education or coercion cannot re-constitute a pure essence. In this way, an eliminationist mindset can easily be created (Goldhagen, 1996).

In the following we analyse the members' discourse of extremely right-wing organisations like the German NPD (*Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*; National Democratic Party of Germany) with regard to attributions of essence, naturalness and monstrosity.

1.4 The NPD party

This party was founded in 1964 from a pooling of different right-wing parties and organisations. Following initial successes (especially at the 1969 Federal elections in Germany, when the NPD received 4.3% of the votes), during the 1970s and 80s the NPD almost vanished into oblivion. The 'modern era' of the NPD began when Günter

Deckert was elected chairman of the party in 1991. Deckert, having been convicted of Holocaust denial[1], managed to integrate more and more ideological elements close to traditional National Socialism into the party's agenda. Since 1996, the current Chairman Udo Voigt has been continuing this policy. By further emphasising anti-capitalistic ideas, Voigt was able to integrate different groups of violent Nazi skinheads—the so-called *'freie Kameradschaften'* (free comradeships)—into the NPD party system.

In 2003, the German legislative and executive tried to ban the NPD in a trial before the *Bundesvefassungsgericht* (German Federal Court) due to its anti-constitutional agenda. However, the case was dismissed because the German *Verfassungsschutz* (secret service for internal affairs) refused to disclose the names of its allegedly quite numerous informers among NPD officials, as was required by the Federal Court.

Since 2003, the NPD has rapidly grown in popularity in the Eastern (formerly socialist) part of Germany. In 2004, the NPD gained 9.2% of the votes at the elections for the state parliament of Saxony. In 2006, the NPD received 7.3% of the votes at the state elections in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Staud, 2006; Svoray & Taylor, 1994).

2 Method

2.1 General approach

By analysing the contexts in which different ethnic and religious groups are mentioned in neo-Nazi propaganda, we will explore their function within the neo-Nazis' ideology.

Following this, we will analyse more deeply whether and if and how these groups are essentialized. Furthermore we will analyze how these essentialist categorizations influence the dehumanization of these groups and the attribution of monstrosity towards them.

2.2 Material

The materials to be studied are postings by users of the NFD or '*Nationales Forum Deutschland'* (Nationalist Forum Germany), an online discussion board of the NPD (NPD, 2007a). The NFD was founded by two regional departments of the NPD. The NPD headquarters' address in Berlin is used as the correspondence address in the site information section.

The forum is moderated by a team of administrators. The administrators quickly remove criticism, provocations, or attempts to display deviant political opinions in this discussion board. Discussions are restricted to specific topics within the neo-Nazi body of thought. The introductory page of the forum says:

> In the interest of maintaining the high quality of our forum, we do not welcome appalled, always concerned, do-gooders and offending communists. Who wants to read these notorious inhuman anti-German slogans, insipid contributions and insults by these stick-in-the-muds anyway? […]
> Anybody trying to sneak in under false pretences or breaking the rules in any way will be expelled without further comment and his login will be deleted.

(http://www.nationales-forum-deutschland.de/, retrieved Oct. 5th, 2007; this and the following statements were translated from German into English by the authors)

There are mainly three kinds of topics on this discussion board: party news, general discussions about segments of nationalist ideology, and the presentation of mass media news supposedly in favour of NPD proposals and its point of view.

In view of the large amount of space used for NPD advertisement and announcements, the rigid behaviour of the moderators and administrators, and the typical content, the NFD can clearly be regarded a propaganda instrument of the NPD. Its main purpose is the propagation of extreme right-wing ideology. The fact that engaged controversial discussions occur only rarely and are suppressed shows that the exchange of different opinions is of secondary importance on this discussion board.

At the same time, the forum organisers have to be aware of the German laws against sedition. It is forbidden to instigate hatred against social groups or to call for acts of violence against them. It is also forbidden to offend the human dignity of social groups, for example by using extremely derogatory terms in public. Therefore, if expressions like 'apes' or 'niggers' were used in the discussion board when addressing people of colour, this would most likely be viewed as a case of sedition by the German judiciary and the website would soon be closed down by the authorities. In addition, the denial or justification of the Holocaust is explicitly forbidden. Knowing the law, the administrators and moderators of the forum often correct 'mistakes' by inexperienced

users. Nevertheless, if there is a possibility of 'legally' using clearly derogatory terms, for example through 'codes' only understandable for the inaugurated, the forum users will take it.

For our study, we analysed the 4,997 messages in the 545 threads from the sub-section 'society' (*Gesellschaft*) of the NFD that were started between January 1, 2004 and June 25, 2006 (NPD, 2007b). The messages were written by 317 different users. More than one third of the messages (1,951) were authored by the ten most productive users, and more than half of the messages (2,594) by the 20 most productive users. Many of the most diligent users are themselves administrators and moderators of the discussion board and some of them can be identified at some points as active NPD party members, even though most users use fictitious nicknames.

2.3 The target groups

Our analysis includes the deductively chosen (Mayring, 2000) categories Turks, Muslims, Poles, Africans/Blacks, and Jews. These groups represent a sample of typical out-groups in German neo-Nazi propaganda. Other social groups—such as homosexuals and leftists—which also play a role in neo-Nazi propaganda, were left out. Further ethnic groups such as Roma, Italians, Greeks, and French were not mentioned sufficiently often in the messages (less than 50 times) to enable a detailed analysis. Russians were mentioned mostly in discussions of the status of late repatriates from the former Soviet Union, which constitutes a very specific topic of its own. For the detailed

analysis, we exclusively focused on Jews and Africans due to the abundance of the respective postings.

2.4 Themes mentioned in relation to the target groups

The themes in which the groups are mentioned in the messages were identified in a stepwise manner (Mayring, 2000) and were as follows: exploitation, mind control/harassment, conspiracy, German identity, procreation, sex and rape, criminal behaviour, and foreign infiltration[2]. Two independent raters coded a sample of messages in which at least one of the aforementioned groups was referred to in any of the themes. The inter-rater reliabilities (Cohen's Kappa) calculated from 52 messages ranged from $\kappa = .70$ (foreign infiltration) to $\kappa = 1.0$ (sex & rape).

3 Results

3.1 Themes and groups

According to the Federal Statistical Office of Germany (Bundesamt, 2006), approx. 1.7 million people born in Turkey, approx. 360,000 people born in Poland, and about 270,000 native Africans were living in Germany in 2006. According to the same source, 108,000 members of the Jewish religion were living in Germany in 2006. As there are no official records, the number of Muslims living in Germany can only be estimated. Estimates vary between 2,500,000 and 3,500,000. The social group most often mentioned in the messages is the Turks. Surprisingly, the users mention Jews with the

second greatest frequency, followed by Muslims, Africans/Blacks, and Poles (Table 1).

For the present analysis, we use messages in which only one of the five target groups

was clearly associated with one of the aforementioned themes. Messages in which one

theme referred to more than one group were excluded. This makes Africans/Blacks and

Jews the prime target groups.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Jews (N=230) were most frequently mentioned in relation to the themes exploitation,

mind control/harassment (German people are not allowed to say what they think or are

manipulated to think in a certain way) and conspiracy (obscure machinations against the

German people) (f=15.2%, 45.7%, 21.7%, respectively); Blacks and Africans (N=97)

were most often mentioned with respect to the themes German identity (can a member

of this group ever be a real German?) and procreation (f=22.7%, 20.6%, respectively);

Turks (N=289) were most often mentioned regarding the themes sex and rape,

criminality and infiltration (f=9.7%, 29.4%, 62.3%, respectively); Muslims in general

(N=140) were most frequently associated with the theme infiltration (f=64.6%); and

Poles (N=52) were most likely to be mentioned regarding the theme criminality

(F=38.5%) (all effects significant according to Fisher's exact chi-square test).

A correspondence analysis of the cross-tabulating themes by groups illustrates the

relationship between groups and themes. Muslims, Turks, and Poles cluster together in

close proximity to the themes foreign infiltration, sex and rape, and criminality. Jews

form a cluster of their own with the themes mind control/harassment, exploitation, and

conspiracy, whereas the Africans/Blacks cluster in proximity to the themes German

identity and procreation (Figure 1).

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3.2 A kind of their own: the group of Jews

The metaphors used most often when Jews are described are 'the chosen ones' (orig. *die*

Auserwählten; 20 times) and 'USrael' (17 times). While the first metaphor appears at

first glance to refer to the history of the Jews in the bible, it is meant ironically and

actually refers to the supposed wealth and power of the Jews. USrael symbolises the

neo-Nazis' equation between the hated 'political caste' of the USA, especially located

by the neo-Nazis on the East coast, and the Jews. The neo-Nazis want to express that by

secretly taking over the power in the USA, the Jews are now exploiting the Germans.

On some occasions, metaphors like 'long-noses' or 'hook-noses', caricaturing supposed

physical features of Jews, are used. These descriptions obviously bear resemblance to

the embodiment of Jews in Nazi propaganda movies such as *'Der ewige Jude'* ('The

eternal Jew').

Like a virus, the Jewish essence is described as contagious and as infecting other social

groups, for example the US-Americans. For the forum users, a Jew from the USA is

seen as nothing other than a Jew. There are no hints of differentiation between, for

example, religious and non-religious Jews, rich and poor, or orthodox and secular Jews.

In the eyes of the forum users, the Jews may have different faces and live completely different lives in different countries, but deep within they share the same essence.

It is a common opinion throughout the forum participants that the Jews blackmail the Germans by means of the permanent reminder of the Holocaust. Reading between the lines, some extreme forum users even accuse the Jews (disguised as USrael) of planning or having even started to exterminate (sic!) the German people. They are accused of using their economic and political power to induce a mass immigration into Germany. Simultaneously, the Jews are seen as using their power within the mass media to propagate mixed marriages and demoralisation. Taken together, the extermination of the 'pure' German blood is viewed by these forum users as the ultimate goal of this policy.

The supposed Jewish world conspiracy takes centre stage for the neo-Nazis. The feeling of fear that is connected with this idea is displayed very explicitly in the following response of a user to another participant's comment that you cannot blame the Jews for all evil in the world again, which was harshly disapproved of by several users:

> … It's always great to hear people say: "I agree that Muslims are dangerous, the Turks in particular are bad guys, since they conned me with my mobile phone once. But the Jews… no I've never been harmed by the Jews"; they do a lot of things, but they're doing it so cleverly, almost nobody is aware of it …
> *UserA*

Besides the extermination of the pure German blood, the supposed ultimate goal of the Jews is wealth and power. In many messages, the high unemployment rates especially in East Germany are put forward as a result of a process of globalisation, which is instigated and driven by the Jews. The Jews are depicted as greedy and stonehearted exploiters, who prey on the labour force of all peoples of the world.

In the following message, which actually deals with the immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe to Germany, the metaphor of the locust is used to characterise the Jews. The first message comprises a subtle denial of the Holocaust, which was nevertheless very well perceived and praised as a very funny remark by other users.

> Where do all the Jews come from? *UserB*

> That's hard to tell. It's the same with locusts. *UserC*

In accordance with recent research by Finlay (2007), the instigated hatred against the Jews helps the forum users to deal with the question of why the majority of the German population does not support their ideology. The larger part of the population is manipulated by the Jews through the mass media and the educational system, which is underpinned by a relatively small group of corrupt traitors. These politicians, scientists, teachers … directly benefit from their cooperation with the supposed Jewish lords of the world. Even the slightest account of Jewish ancestry or of relations to organisations that are supposedly controlled by the Jews like freemason lodges, ivy league colleges, and US-American companies, is sufficient to delegitimise political opponents.

Goldmann, how interesting! This classical Jewish name makes me think of some lodge brother. *UserD*

Another example can be found in the following two messages. They are reactions to the news that the former German foreign minister Joschka Fischer from the Green Party took a post as a visiting professor at Princeton University in 2006:

I think Joshua Fishman, as some people call him, has simply been admitted to the right lodge. After that everything is arranged among brothers. *UserE*

Well now he has found his (at least: spiritual) homeland: the East coast of the US. *UserF*

The category label 'Jew' in anti-Semitic propaganda has been interpreted by different researchers (Boesch, 2005; Holz, 2001, 2005) as an indicator that an individual falls outside normal ethnic or racial categories. The label Jew is semantically constructed by the anti-Semites as something 'other' then us and them, where 'Jewishness' can either be defined by religion, race, ethnicity or geographic descent (Israel; US east coast). By doing so, ironically, the anti-Semite takes up and generalises elements of the Jews' own cultural construction of identity as being determined by matrilineal descent and by religion (Hertzberg, 1999; Jones, 1996).

The board users' uncertainty of what makes a Jew a Jew is an important element in the attribution of a particular essence to the Jews. Whereas a German is only a real German if he has 'pure' German ancestry, if he lives in Germany like his forefathers did, and if he shares 'typical' German values, every possible trace of 'Jewishness' makes someone a Jew.

Essentialist thinking based on nominalism has been identified in adults and children who are able to draw inferences across exemplars of animals, allowing them to override perceptual similarity if it competes with belonging to a natural kind. Essentialist thinking insists on non-obvious or internal properties that define the overall structure of a set of attributes of an organism (Gelman, 2003; Keil, 1995). Taken together, essentialist thinking naturalises social groups and their members by attributing an innate and non-obvious basis, stable category membership, and sharp boundaries.

As a consequence of this thinking, Jewish essence is constructed as mutually exclusive not only with the German essence, but with ordinary human essence itself. If somebody's name is Goldmann, he consists of the Jewish essence. In this case, everything he says and does must be interpreted against the background of the Jewish world conspiracy, or he does not consist of Jewish essence. Only in the latter case do normal human categories apply to him. He may nevertheless be a political opponent, but in this case one can try to convince him, befriend him, or if necessary fight him. If he consists of the Jewish essence, the case is different. He represents the eternal natural enemy of all people, a force that always was and always will be opposed to 'us'. The

logical conclusion of this construction of Jewish essence is that all means necessary are allowed in man's desperate fight against this superhuman threat.

The "… hidden aspects in the seemingly 'normal'" (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 162) often convey a sense of monstrosity. As it is hard to tell by appearance alone that a person is Jewish or has Jewish ancestry, Jews appear to the neo-Nazis to be especially dangerous and intimidating. The secrecy of the supposed machinations of 'the Jews' also increases the forum users' fear of Jews.

To the neo-Nazis, the world seems to be infiltrated by parasitic strangers who may look quite like 'us'. While walking among us unrecognised, they try to rule the world or at least to benefit from other's labour by skilfully pulling the strings of our society. In this way, the assumption of this monstrosity challenges our concept of the world and of distinguishable ethnic entities struggling for scarce resources. Whereas the Turks may fleece you or the Poles may steal your car, the Jews are, in the eyes of the neo-Nazis, the secret agent behind these events. The Jews can be used as a scapegoat for all evil within the Germans and within the anti-Semites themselves (Fenichel, 1940, 1946; Girard, 1986/1982).

Despite all the fear and aversion felt towards the Jews, their supposed skilfulness in manipulating and 'mind-controlling' the societies they have infiltrated also invokes curiosity and interest, another characteristic of monstrosity (Daston & Park, 2001). This makes Jews the most prominent victim of neo-Nazi propaganda. Not for nothing are the Jews the second most frequently mentioned social category in the messages, only

slightly outnumbered by the Turks, whose community in Germany is at least 17 times larger than the Jewish community.

The present analysis supports Rensmann's (2004) concept of 'modernized anti-Semitism' and to an even greater extent Frindte's concept of deliberately 'staged' anti-Semitism (2006; Frindte, Wettig, & Wammetsberger, 2005): the contemporary Nazis try to transport the old prejudice against the Jews into our times. In this process, some old anti-Semitic constructions are presented in a new fashion. As the Jews have almost disappeared from German community life following the Holocaust, the image of German Jewish tycoons supposedly 'enslaving' the German workers is no longer presented, but the hidden and noxious machinations of the Jews are today sought in the American 'imperialism', taking up leftist positions from the 1960s and 70s. In this respect, anti-Semitism is connected with a crude form of anti-Americanism.

3.3 The danger in mixing categories: Africans

3.3.1 Mixing essentialised categories on the nominal level

Most likely due to the legal issues discussed above, humiliating metaphors for Africans or people of colour are rarely used. The term *Neger* (negro) is used most frequently (93 times) whenever Africans or Blacks are mentioned. This term is considered impolite and politically incorrect in Germany, but it does not constitute a case of sedition as would 'ape' or 'nigger'. Nevertheless, in two messages there are references to the

ape/jungle metaphor and two messages bear a clear reference to the term 'nigger' (like "… these damn nig…").

At least since the Middle Ages, the humanity of different African ethnic groups or Blacks in general was at times denied and they were viewed by laypersons as well as philosophers at that time as a kind of mixture or hybrid between man and ape (Jahoda, 1999). Today, in spite of all of the enlightenment and scientific advances, this type of thinking is still to be found among racists (Billig, 2001).

The racist considers people of African descent as infrahuman, that is, a natural kind with its own essence. In their eyes, this is justified by Africans' conspicuous skin colour and by their supposed behaviour of excessive sexual appetite, idleness, and stupidity. This, however, constitutes only part of the board users' aversion to Africans, as indicated by only a small number of respective references in the messages. There is a more prominent reason for the importance of this group in the neo-Nazis' ideology: the fear of symbolic and biological hybridisation.

Shortly before the world soccer championships in 2006, a group of German media companies launched the large-scale social-marketing campaign 'You are Germany' *(Du bist Deutschland)*. On billboards and in television advertisements, the campaign featured various famous Germans, including the German national soccer team player Gerald Asamoah, whose parents are of Ghanaian origin. This topic was discussed in the NFD at length, especially after right-wing media coined the slogan 'No, Gerald, you are not Germany'. All forum posters agreed that the presentation of Asamoah as a

representative of Germany was ridiculous. One used this situation to make the following pun:

> If he calls out to me "You're Germany"—I absolutely agree. If he had said "I'm Germany", I would have been surprised. But as he put it this way…
> *UserG*

Because of their conspicuous skin colour, Blacks do not seem to instill as much fear in the forum users as, for example, the Jews. Nevertheless, the possibility of Blacks being equally worthy and talented members of German society challenges the racists' traditional ways of understanding human nature. Labelling a black person 'German' is a categorical contradiction of sorts, creates a symbolic hybrid of incompatible essences, and challenges the order of the world and its 'natural' racial differences.

Therefore, the achievements and prominence of Germans of African origin pose a cognitive threat to the neo-Nazis. The forum users cannot ignore Asamoah's abilities as a sportsman and his merits within the German soccer team. This is exactly why they react to his statement to be 'Germany' so aggressively. Being African by descent and German by nationality, the more conspicuous category, African, takes precedence over the other and Asamoah is deligitimised as a person lacking backbone, because he does not play for Ghana, the land of his fathers. Instead, he is depicted as a kind of mercenary within the German soccer team. In this respect the forum users ignore the fact that Asamoah, who has lived in Germany since his childhood, indeed considers himself a patriotic fully fledged German.

Note that this 'cognitive mess' can also be attributed to the Jewish world conspiracy. Without globalisation and without the propagation of interethnic marriages in the supposedly Jewish-dominated mass media, Asamoah would proudly play for Ghana and the German soccer team would consist only of pure Germans. In this way, Asamoah as a German icon is presented as an unnatural categorical confusion comprising the danger of exterminating the German race.

3.3.2 Mixing essentialized categories on the biological level

The most interesting aspect of the depiction of Blacks on this discussion board is the forum users' horror of the procreation of Blacks and Whites, which is the biological reification and natural consequence of categorical or symbolic hybridisation. Hybridisation, in which two incompatible natural essences are merged in one organism, creates disgust in the realm of animals and humans, particularly for the racist. The resulting hybrid of such merging is perceived as monstrous, which is a "…cognitive statement about the being not belonging to any accepted category of things" where normal patterns of categorisations do not apply (Wagner et al., 2006; Wagner et al., submitted). In a sense, "the monster is the harbinger of a category crisis" (Cohen, 1996) and hybrids are rejected in a highly affective way and must be physically removed:

> If my daughter ever had a relationship with a *** [pejorative term for a wide
> range of "southern foreigners"], it would be the end. She knows that. So I can

only congratulate UserM who managed to avoid such a situation of

bastardisation. … Bastardisation really disgusts me. *UserE*

Those women who became involved with a *** [pejorative term for "southern

foreigners"] have had bad experiences, and rightly so, that must hurt really bad.

… I hope we can see the day where such 'race disgrace' things (the bastardised

children and their parents) will be deported to the country of the cameleer's …

origin. Once a ***, always a ***. *UserF*.

As shown here, children with a mixed ethnic background are unanimously depicted in a
very negative way. In three messages, extreme hostility is expressed using 'action
words' such as a phrase indicating that the author feels like throwing up. In one
message, children of Blacks and Whites are called 'miserable creatures', because they
will not be able to live a fulfilling life. They can never develop a complete human
identity, which is based on the heritage of one's culture. At one point, the procreation of
people with dark skin and people with light skin is called 'barbarianism'. In this view,
unnatural 'half-breeds' will in the long run replace the German 'race':

According to statistics, the Germans will be exterminated in approximately 50

years. At least every German is going to be a half-breed by then [Quotation

from an earlier message by *UserH*].

Half-breeds – they are exactly what I am dreading! Every day I can see those

naïve immature brats messing around with some black guy…often they're

already pregnant. It makes me feel sick; mostly they're on their own by the time their child is born. At least the black can stay in our country and can bring along his family from Africa. Well done you silly idiots. Some even more naïve German can bring up that Negro child of yours. 'Mishmash-mishmash'. *UserJ*

The forum users believe that this 'new race' of 'half-breeds' might ultimately replace the pure 'German blood'. In their future plans for a restored 'Reich', Germany will be cleansed of all impure 'passport-Germans' *(Passdeutsche)*, no matter how integrated they are in the German culture.

To the neo-Nazis, the joint progeny of Blacks and Whites is violating the eternal laws of nature. But what if nature does not punish man for his misdemeanours? The world view of the racist, including his division of people into Blacks and Whites is challenged because children of a mixed ethnic origin grow up to be completely sane and adequate human beings. The importance of this issue was also demonstrated in a study by Glaser and colleagues (Glaser, Dixit, & Green, 2002). In semi-structured interviews with participants in White racist Internet chat rooms, they found interracial marriages to be more threatening to the racists than in-migration of Blacks into their neighbourhoods, which was itself seen as more threatening than job competition with Blacks. For example, in the interracial marriage condition, 9 out of 13 participants expressed advocacy of violence or extreme violence (e.g. proposing to kill the black person), whereas in the job competition condition, only 1 out of 14 participants indicated a disposition towards violence.

The extreme negativity towards the children of Blacks and Whites is a strong indicator that for the neo-Nazis, there appear to be separate, mutually exclusive Black and White essences. This also becomes clear through the fact that Blacks can by no means ever become real Germans. The mixture of the two essences leads to a category breakdown. The carriers of this impure and muddled essence are considered 'miserable creatures' or even monsters. They fall outside accepted categories of human beings. They are perceived and depicted as something monstrous that threatens the existence of the well-defined and distinct races.

3.4 The role of other ethnic groups in neo-Nazi propaganda

Seventy-six of the 545 analysed threads start with a reference to media reports on crimes committed by 'foreigners'. Often, statistics on the ethnicity of delinquent adolescents in particular are also presented as evidence for the malicious consequences of the presence of immigrants in Germany and, of course, as evidence for the superiority of the law-abiding Germans. Many users report their personal experiences with the 'multiple culture zoo' (*Multikulti Zoo).*

> That's not unusual anymore. Yesterday evening I went to a soccer match. Huge place, lots of seats. My guess: 10 % of the audience were Germans, 90% foreigners (Moroccans, Turks, Serbs, etc.). That's awful. *UserK*

In most of the messages, there is not much differentiation between Turks, Poles, Russians, Italians, etc. They are all presented as foreign elements, which just take the jobs of Germans and disturb the social peace in Germany. Common stereotypes within the German society, such as the aggressive Turkish gangster and the Polish car thief are summoned.

Turks, Poles, and Muslims are perceived as less threatening than Jews and Blacks and the children of black and white mixed couples because, in their eyes, they are not a singular natural kind with a potent essence. They are dehumanised 'to varying degrees' as lacking some uniquely humane characteristics such as moral sensibility and intelligence (Haslam, 2006; Leyens et al., 2003; Leyens et al., 2000): They are 'other'— though less deserving—humans who play the role of the adversary in a struggle for scarce resources, such as jobs in Germany.

5 Conclusion

The present study shows that at least a part of racist thinking is characterised, if not determined, by a prominent belief in essence and a projection of natural kind-ness onto Africans and Jews. The belief in natural groups being incompatible in terms of essence creates exclusion of the Other and a rejection of both: symbolic mixing of social categories and procreation by ethnically or culturally mixed couples. In this thinking the Jews, being perceived as a threatening natural kind with super-human powers, become the agents of harassment and mind-control, dominating unsuspecting 'normal' humans. Blacks, on the other hand, endanger the purity of Germans and other Whites by either

becoming citizens—thereby combining categories that are incompatible—or by procreating across the 'natural boundary between races' and violating the supposedly discrete essences of ethnic groups.

While different shades of these beliefs may be widely shared across Germans, Europeans and the people of other continents, it is a question of which role essence-related categorisations are given within the political and ideological system of individuals and societies. Extreme right-wing ideology is certainly one of the most fertile grounds for essentialist thinking because its provides easy justification for denigration and maltreatment of others. This allows hate talk to be maintained across generations (Billig, 2002) and poses a threat to peaceful living together in an increasingly 'flat' world of interdependent economies and societies.

Notes

Note 1:

Deckert was accused and convicted of sedition and Holocaust denial several times (e.g. 1992 by the state court of Mannheim; the judgment was partly revised by the German Federal court; BGH, NJW 1995, 340). In 1995, after having temporarily left Germany, he was arrested upon his arrival at Frankfurt airport and remained imprisoned until 2000.

Note 2:

In the revision process, we decided to leave out some other context categories because of lacking reliability (inferiority, deformity). Other contexts were mentioned too rarely (references to Nazi Germany) or too frequently (hostility). Some context categories turned out to be redundant and were merged with other categories (brutality merged into criminality; favouritism into exploitation; treason into conspiracy)

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TABLE 1

Prevalence of Social Groups in Germany and References to them in Neo-Nazi

Propaganda

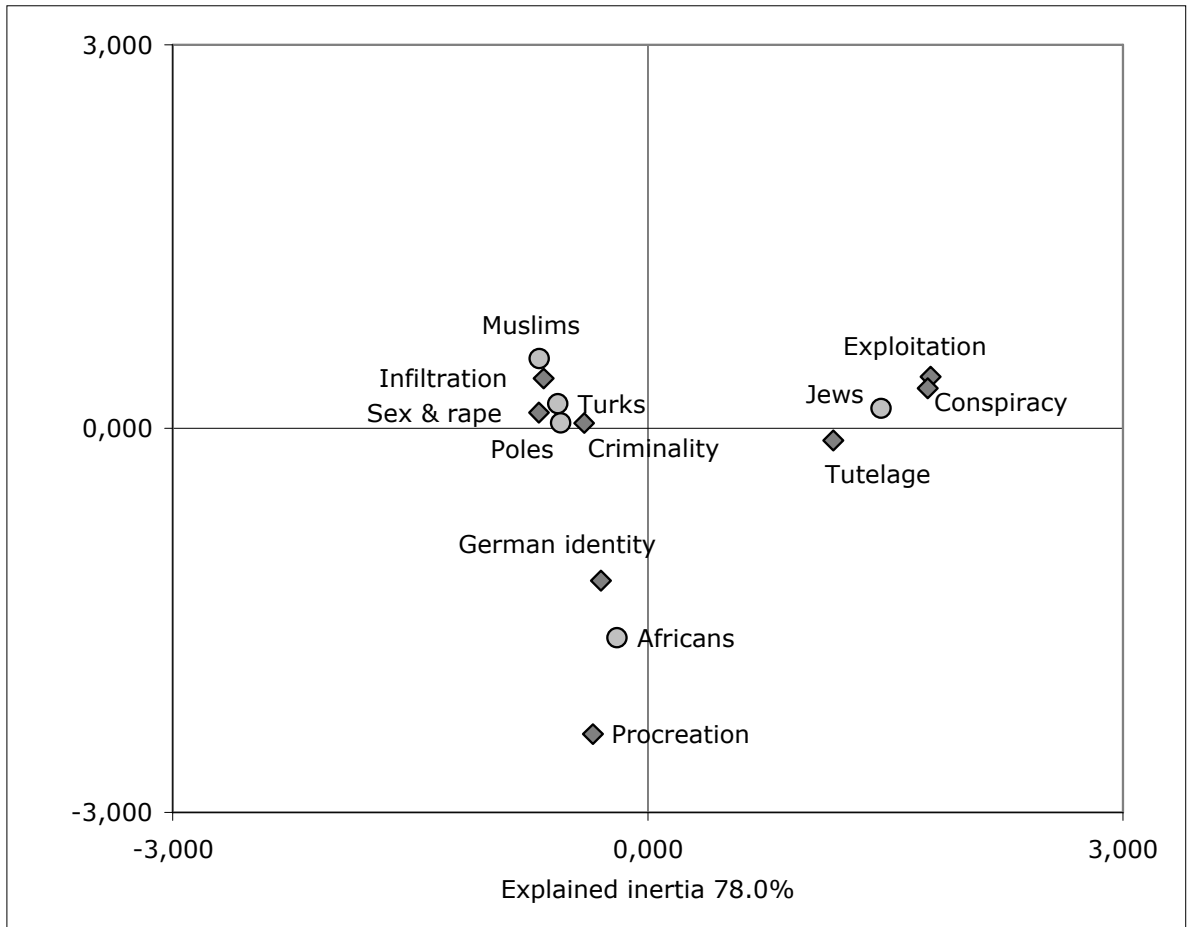|	Number of Messages Mentioning these Groups	Number of People in Germany (2006)
Turks	397	1,738,831
Jews	276	108,000
Muslims	216	~3,000,000
Africans/Blacks	159	272,376
Poles	72	361,696

Figure 1

Figure Caption

Figure 1:

Correspondence analysis of matrix cross-tabulating ethnic groups and themes. Circles

indicate the position of groups; diamonds indicate the position of themes.

Note: The fact of Jews being contrasted to other ethnic groups along the horizontal axis,

explaining 78% of inertia, reflects the high importance given to this group in the forum.