

# Perceptions of Discrimination by Young Diaspora Migrants

## Individual- and School-Level Associations Among Adolescent Ethnic German Immigrants

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**Abstract.** Perceived discrimination is a substantial challenge for immigrant youths trying to adapt to a new home. The present study examined the independent and interactive relations between individual- and school-level variables in determining perceptions of discrimination in ethnic German migrant (*Aussiedler*) youths from the former Soviet Union. Six hundred forty-three *Aussiedler* adolescents ( $M = 15.7$  years) from 28 schools across Germany self-reported their orientation toward ingroup relationships, perceived native segregation orientation, and perceived discrimination. Eight hundred fourteen native German adolescents from the same schools reported their negative attitudes about *Aussiedler*. Natives' negative attitudes about *Aussiedler* aggregated by school were used as school-level predictor variable, together with the percentage of *Aussiedler* students per school. With all variables included in multilevel analyses, the individual-level associations were not significant, but both school-level associations and three cross-level interactions were significant. *Aussiedler* adolescents reported higher levels of discrimination in schools with higher percentages of *Aussiedler* students and in schools with more negative attitudes toward *Aussiedler*. The association between immigrant ingroup orientation and perceived discrimination was stronger in schools with fewer *Aussiedler* students. The association between perceived native segregation orientation and perceived discrimination was stronger in schools with more *Aussiedler* students and in schools with more negative attitudes about *Aussiedler*. The findings indicate the importance of the interaction between individual and contextual variables in understanding the ways in which adolescent immigrants come to perceive discrimination.

**Keywords:** perceived discrimination, adolescent immigrants, school context, Germany

Research with immigrant youths has shown that perceived discrimination is a major source of acculturative stress (Hernandez & Charney, 1998), serves as significant challenge to psychological and sociocultural adaptation (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Vedder, Sam, & Liebkind, 2007), and negatively affects the cultural identity and sense of self of these immigrants (Pahl & Way, 2006; Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001; Sabatier, 2008). Knowing these negative consequences, it is alarming that immigrant youths frequently perceive discrimination across multiple contexts such as cultural media, neighborhoods, the workplace, and, especially relevant to our study, the school (see European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), 2004). While the vast and highly negative consequences of perceived discrimination for immigrant youth wellbeing are well documented in the literature, little is known about the underlying mechanisms leading to variations in the perception of discrimination. Even less is known about how the school context affects perceived discrimination among immigrant youths as an *outcome*. This paper addresses these issues by focusing on two different sources of influence on immigrants' differences in perceived discrimination: (1) individual-level variables

and (2) school-level variables. Furthermore, we examine differences in the association of individual-level variables and perceived discrimination depending on school context. Through the analyses of both levels of variables and their cross-level interactions, we will obtain a much-needed contextual and more comprehensive understanding of acculturation experiences with discrimination (see Birman, Trickett, & Buchanan, 2005).

There is little disagreement in the literature on the wide-reaching negative influences of perceived discrimination on acculturation-related outcomes and on the broader psychological and behavioral consequences in the lives of immigrant and minority youths. When faced with discrimination, these youths show lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of stress (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000; Liebkind, Jasinskaja-Lahti, & Solheim, 2004), evaluate the public regard for their group to be significantly more negative (Seaton, Yip, & Sellers, 2009), and are also at greater risk for depressive and other emotional distress symptoms, and lower life satisfaction (Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006; Mesch, Turjeman, & Fishman, 2008; Noh, Beiser, Kaspar, Hou, & Rummens, 1999; Virta, Sam, & Westin, 2004; Yip, Seaton, & Sellers, 2010). Beyond these psychological consequences,

there are behavioral consequences as well; youths who perceive greater levels of discrimination are more likely to use more illegal substances and do so more frequently (Kulis, Marsiglia, & Nieri, 2009) as well as demonstrate poorer school adjustment (Liebkind et al., 2004), performance, attachment to the school environment (Ogbu, 2003; Rumbaut, 1994; Steele, 1997), and engagement (Verkuyten & Brug, 2003), particularly when discrimination occurs in the school context. Consequences specific to immigrant youths include experiencing higher levels of acculturative stress and homesickness and a decreased sense of belonging to their host country (Tartakovsky, 2007, 2009).

Given the numerous negative consequences of being and perceiving one is discriminated against, it is essential to understand the nature of the relation between the individual and the contexts in which one might perceive discrimination. Development occurs both due to the individual factors and the impact of the greater social and environmental contexts in which one lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Thus, development is driven not simply by personal characteristics but also by the interaction of the individual with the various levels of inter-related societal systems (such as family, school, neighborhood, and national culture) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Stokols, 1996). For adolescent migrants, the *school* environment, particularly its potential overall negative attitude toward immigrants and its ethnic composition as well as an adolescent immigrant's fit within that particular environment, can be assumed to be of significant influence on their acculturative experiences (Verkuyten & Thjis, 2002). Therefore, the current study addressed the following three research questions among a particular group of immigrants, ethnic German Diaspora migrants (*Aussiedler*): First, whether individual-level variables, that is, immigrants' willingness to engage in intragroup contact (immigrant ingroup orientation) and perceptions of natives' push for intra-ethnic contact among *Aussiedler* (perceived native segregation orientation) predict perceived discrimination. Second, whether environmental effects of the school level, that is, aggregate host community negative attitudes toward the immigrant outgroup (negative attitudes about *Aussiedler*) and the share of *Aussiedler* in the school (school ethnic composition) predict differences in aggregate school-level perceived discrimination. Third, whether associations on the individual level (associations assessed in research question one) differ depending on contextual variables.

In this study we focus on one specific group of diaspora migrants, namely ethnic German Diaspora migrants (*Aussiedler*) from the former Soviet Union (FSU) in Germany. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 over 2.5 million ethnic Germans, whose ancestors left Germany mostly in the 18th and 19th centuries, remigrated back to Germany. While *Aussiedler* are granted German citizenship upon arrival, most still feel psychologically remote from the Germany of today (Schmitt-Rodermund & Silbereisen, 2008). Having lived for generations in territories of the FSU, and being forcibly separated from their German ties especially in times of the Cold War, they had to assimilate to mainstream Russian culture. Marriages between ethnic Germans Diaspora migrants and native Russians became common (Dietz, 2006). This often resulted in the loss of German traditions and language abilities, particularly among the younger generation who grew

up speaking only Russian. Currently being in Germany, *Aussiedler* are confronted with similar problems as other immigrant groups. They often find themselves in a less favorable economic situation than expected, because their professional training lacks marketability (Dietz, 1999), and many *Aussiedler* struggle with maladaptation even after longer periods of residence (Schmitt-Rodermund & Silbereisen, 2004; Süß, 1995). Although *Aussiedler* consider themselves to be German, they are often treated as second-class citizens (e.g., Lanquillon, 1993) and are often labeled as "Russians" differentiating them from the native population as well as from other immigrant groups (Münz & Ohliger, 1998; Pfetsch, 1999). The majority of native Germans saw the influx of *Aussiedler* as disadvantageous for German society (Zentralarchiv für empirische Sozialforschung, 1990). This negative view is reflected in reports of *Aussiedler* youths, of which 64% perceived disadvantages because of their group membership (Strobl & Kühnel, 2000). Most discriminatory events happen in the school context, where 39% of all *Aussiedler* adolescents perceived incidents of discrimination (Steinbach & Nauck, 2000). The question of why, in the same contexts, some adolescents perceive more discrimination while others perceive less, however, remains open, as there is variability in this regard.

Considering discrimination is the illegitimate and negative treatment of individuals based on their group membership (Allport, 1954), it is best facilitated when two groups, which are clearly defined and differ in status, come into contact in a situation in which group membership is salient. Group salience refers to the degree of prominence and attention the group garners within a given context, and the more salient a group or its low status is to the majority group the more likely discrimination will occur. The more salient the minority group, the greater the awareness of group distinction, which in turn has been shown to activate group stereotype threat and discrimination awareness among minority group members (Devine, 1989; Inzlicht & Ben-Zeev, 2000; Steele, 1998). Empirical evidence supporting this argument demonstrates that minority groups report higher rates of discrimination overall as compared to majority groups (Allport, 1954; Major & Kaiser, 2005). In situations in which group boundaries are salient, not only is the likelihood of actual discrimination by the majority increased (thus, increasing the frequency at which one might perceive actual instances of discrimination), but also the perception of minority members changes in that they will perceive more actions as discriminatory, because ambiguous interactions between members of different groups are more likely to be interpreted by the minority group as discriminating (see Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998; Félix-Ortiz, Newcomb, & Myers, 1994; Major & O'Brien, 2005; Miller & Kaiser, 2001). It is important to note that in this study, *Aussiedler* were always in a minority position in the schools, though to differing degrees. Thus, the salience of their group membership is relatively constant among the *Aussiedler*, yet the school context likely relates to the majority group members' conceptualization of the minority group as a salient and low-status group. Presently, we examine how group salience and hierarchical group status may differ depending on the individual and context.

## Individual-Level Associations

Our first research question addressed individual-level variables among *Aussiedler* as predictors of perceived discrimination. We focused on two individual-level variables, which especially contribute to the aforementioned issues regarding group salience between *Aussiedler* and natives and may therefore explain interindividual differences in perceived discrimination, namely, *Aussiedler* youths' desire to stick to the own cultural group (ingroup orientation) and *Aussiedler* youths' perception that natives want them to stay among themselves (native segregation orientation).

Along these lines, previous research has found a significant positive relation between the desire to maintain one's own separate cultural identity and perceptions of discrimination (Neto, 2002; Portes & Zhou, 1994), most likely because it maintains the original cultural distance between home and host cultures (Spears, Gordijn, Dijksterhuis, & Stapel, 2004) and intergroup distinction is made more salient. We were interested in the relationship between ingroup orientation, rather than ingroup identification, and perceived discrimination because it provides a less abstract indicator of group definition and refers to behaviors that manifest visibly in intergroup settings. For example, actions, such as using a different language, wearing different clothes, or participating in different cultural traditions, clearly define group boundaries. As a result, there is likely to be an increase in actual rates of discrimination as well as an increased sensitivity of the group to perceive ambiguous situations as group-based discrimination. Thus, we expected immigrants with a greater ingroup orientation would report higher levels of perceived discrimination (Hypothesis 1).

In addition, perceived native segregation orientation might also relate to perceived discrimination. Minority adolescents who perceive more strongly that natives want them to stay among themselves can be expected to clearly recognize the hierarchical nature of the group boundaries. They experience a general norm in the host society that denies them access to the higher status group and common activities. This again leads to a greater salience of group boundaries and the lower status of the minority and thus, we expected immigrants who perceived stronger native segregation orientations would report higher levels of perceived discrimination (Hypothesis 2).

## School-Level Associations

One system of particular importance to adolescent development is the school context (Jessor, 1993; Trickett, 1978). Students are socialized within the school context, and peers, school administration, school makeup, and course content transmit cultural ideologies toward intergroup relations (Eccles & Roeser, 2005; Jessor, 1993; West & Currie, 2008). Ethnically diverse schools with integrated populations can provide environments in which intergroup tensions are challenged and social cohesion is promoted (Salzman & D'Andrea, 2001) through education or contact (Allport, 1954). Conversely, ethnically diverse schools with segregated populations can instead enhance intergroup divisions

with discrimination and hardship felt distinctly by the minority population (García Coll et al., 1996; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002).

In the second research question, we investigated the relation between school-level context and differences in school-level perceived discrimination. We assessed the context in terms of school ethnic composition and the aggregate negative attitudes toward *Aussiedler*. These school-level variables were of special interest to us, as they define the extent to which *Aussiedler* may be perceived as a distinctive group at their school and the status *Aussiedler* hold. Thus, depending on school ethnic composition and natives' negative attitudes toward *Aussiedler*, the salience and status of *Aussiedler* as a group are likely to differ as will, accordingly, the experiences and perception of discrimination among *Aussiedler* youths. Previous research (although primarily with nonimmigrant minority groups) has demonstrated that school ethnic climate and makeup significantly relate to actual experiences and perceptions of discrimination and victimization (Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2006; Ogbu, 1993; Postmes & Branscombe, 2002; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002). Yet, little is known about the relation between aggregate school-level negative attitudes toward the immigrant outgroup, school ethnic composition, and immigrant youth perceptions of discrimination.

In school contexts in which immigrant adolescents make up a cohesive and visible minority group, their low status is highlighted (McGuire & Padawer-Singer, 1976) as is the potential threat that the group poses to the majority (Schlueter & Scheepers, 2010). In such cases discrimination may occur more frequently and is likely to be perceived more frequently (Major, 1994; Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002) as compared to school contexts with few immigrants in which they may not be perceived as a group. That is to say, in schools with only a few immigrants, those immigrant adolescents may be individualized by the native students, rather than categorized by their group membership as the group as an entity is less prominent in this context (see Brewer, Weber, & Carini, 1995; Wilder, 1978). Additionally, higher stigmatization can be expected in schools where natives hold, on average, more negative attitudes toward *Aussiedler*. In contrast to the scenarios described above in which the ethnic composition of a school helps or hinders group delineation, in this instance the immigrant group boundaries are already defined and instead it is the status of the group that varies. Thus, we expected that in schools with a high share of immigrant students (Hypothesis 3) and, highly negative attitudes about *Aussiedler* aggregated at the school level (Hypothesis 4), immigrants would report, on average, higher levels of perceived discrimination.

## Cross-Level Interactions

Finally, in the third research question we investigated whether associations between individual-level variables (see research question one) differ depending on the immigrant adolescents' school context. This rests on the idea that the consequences of our actions and beliefs vary based on the greater context in which they take place (Birman et al., 2005). For both individual-level variables we argued

that group salience is the basic mechanism linking ingroup orientation and perceived native segregation orientation with perceived discrimination. The group salience evoked by the individual's actions and beliefs, however, might depend on group visibility and rates of perceived and actual discrimination might depend on group status in a given context. Thus, the individual-level associations may differ in strength. In the present study, we assumed that school ethnic composition and shared negative attitudes about *Aussiedler* are such contextual school-level variables.

### School Ethnic Composition and Immigrant Ingroup Orientation

In Hypothesis 1 we expected that immigrants with a stronger ingroup orientation would report higher levels of perceived discrimination. However, this association may differ in strength depending on the ethnic composition of the school. The willingness of an immigrant youth to interact with other immigrant youths is of little relevance in schools with a high share of *Aussiedler*. This can be assumed, as the additional influence of an individual's ingroup orientation on group salience is restricted in contexts in which simply the sheer number of *Aussiedler* results in a visible and salient group, for example through their specific language or behavior. Ingroup orientation does little to enhance group salience, as the salience level is already high. In schools with fewer immigrants, the association between ingroup orientation and perceived discrimination is expected to be stronger, because the extent of the salience of group differences depends on the extent of the individuals' ingroup orientation and related behaviors (e.g., preferring contact with other *Aussiedler*). Thus, we expected the strength of association between immigrants' ingroup orientation and perceived discrimination to be heightened for individuals in schools with fewer immigrant youths (Hypothesis 5a).

### School Ethnic Composition and Perceived Native Segregation

In Hypothesis 2 we expected a positive association between perceived native segregation orientation and perceived discrimination. However, this association is also likely to differ between schools with a different ethnic composition. Following the same arguments just mentioned, in schools with higher shares of *Aussiedler*, the perceived native Germans' segregation orientation may play less of a role in explaining perceived discrimination, because *Aussiedler* are already defined as a visible group, again through their common language and behavior and likely experience greater levels of actual discrimination. Whether or not an *Aussiedler* perceives that he should stick to his own group may contribute only slightly more to strengthening group salience. In schools with a low share of *Aussiedler*, the salience of their low-status group membership may not be very prominent. However, the more immigrants perceive that they should stick to themselves, the more they also perceive impermeable group boundaries, which then prime a higher group salience

and related sensitivity in their perceptions of discrimination (Bettencourt, Miller, & Hume, 1999; see Fiske, 2002). Thus, the relation between individuals' perceived native segregation orientation and discrimination is expected to be stronger in contexts with fewer immigrants (Hypothesis 5b).

### School Native Negative Attitudes About Immigrants and Immigrant Ingroup Orientation

Schools not only vary in ethnic composition but also in the aggregate school-level negative attitudes natives hold about *Aussiedler*. Although *Aussiedler* in German society are generally of lower status, native Germans in some schools may actually share attitudes that are explicitly more negative than those of the general population – highlighting and strengthening their lower status. In contexts with high native negative attitudes, intergroup interactions may even be hostile creating an antagonistic situation between groups. In Hypothesis 1 we expected immigrants with a stronger ingroup orientation would report higher levels of perceived discrimination. This association is likely to be exacerbated in schools with highly negative attitudes because, while in a nonhostile context the salience and heightened connection to the ingroup are significantly related to perceptions of discrimination (see Crocker et al., 1998), in a more hostile environment group defined status differences are stressed even more. This means that in a school with highly negative attitudes, the orientation of *Aussiedler* to stick to their own group is interpreted by the native schoolmates as a willingness of the *Aussiedler* to maintain and reinforce their lower status identity and as a rejection of the majority group, warranting discrimination. Further, immigrants' actions and beliefs are then expected to have a greater impact, because even minor infractions can exacerbate intergroup tension and result in more perceived discrimination, as the *Aussiedler* youths are more likely to anticipate discrimination and rejection and perceive their environments with such a bias (Maitner, Mackie, Claypool, & Crisp, 2010; see Major & O'Brien, 2005; Mendoza-Denton, Page-Gould, & Pietrzak, 2006).

In schools with less negative attitudes, the individual ingroup orientation still raises salience, as expected in Hypothesis 1, but this increase is expected to contribute less to explaining interindividual differences in perceived discrimination, because relationships with immigrants are not as negatively loaded. That is, the group status is not viewed with the same level of disregard. Therefore, we expected that the association between immigrants' ingroup orientation and perceived discrimination would be stronger in schools with more negative attitudes about *Aussiedler* (Hypothesis 5c).

### School Native Negative Attitudes About Immigrants and Perceived Native Segregation

In Hypothesis 2 we expected a positive association between perceived native segregation orientation and perceived discrimination. Nevertheless, we assumed this association to be more pronounced in schools with highly negative attitudes

held by the native German schoolmates. Group salience and status differences are exceptionally high in these antagonistic contexts and the more immigrants in such contexts perceive that natives want them to segregate, the more group conflicts are probable. Thus, when *Aussiedler* perceive that natives want them to segregate in schools with high negative attitudes, group and status differences are made salient and more negatively evaluated, discrimination is more likely to occur, and ambiguous incidents are more likely to be perceived as discriminatory. A school context in which the school-level native attitudes about immigrants are less negative instead facilitates a more positive intergroup setting. In these school environments, even if immigrants perceive they should interact primarily with their ingroup, this might not be perceived as hostile and discriminatory, but rather as an expression of a more multiculturalist attitude. Hence, we expected the association between immigrants' perceived native segregation orientation and their perceptions of discrimination to be stronger in contexts with more negative attitudes about *Aussiedler* (Hypothesis 5d).

## Method

### Participants and Procedures

The sample for the present analyses was drawn from the archives of a large multidisciplinary longitudinal research project on adolescent adaptation, focusing particularly on immigrants from the FSU, which started collecting data in the end of 2002. Native and immigrant adolescents responded to carefully translated questionnaires, tapping several topics related to developmental tasks of adolescence, adjustment in social and educational settings, and specific immigration-related questions for immigrants and natives separately. The *Aussiedler* sample in our study received bilingual surveys in both Russian and German languages. Parental consent provided, adolescents were sampled via schools in cities with about 100,000 to 200,000 inhabitants in several federal states in Germany.

This study included adolescents from 28 schools in nine different cities. School selection was based on stratified sampling in close collaboration with local boards of education to ensure that all educational tracks and varying levels of ethnic composition in the schools were represented in the

sample. Based on these criteria, the local educational boards identified a selection of schools most representative of the greater educational system and the variation in educational track and school ethnic composition. Approximately 90% of the contacted schools participated. Among them were three secondary schools from the lowest track, four secondary schools from the intermediate school track, and six secondary schools from the highest track leading to a university entrance degree. Nine schools were secondary comprehensive schools, which included all secondary school tracks. Furthermore, the sample included six vocational schools. The number of students at those schools ranged from around 300 to around 2,500 with a mean of 950 students. On average, the percentage of *Aussiedler* at those schools was 9.04% ( $SD = 7.97$ ), ranging from 0.14% to 38.40%.

Native adolescent participants were selected based on age, class, and school type in order to have a native sample that is highly comparable with the *Aussiedler* adolescents in the study. This selection was carried out in collaboration with school principals who identified students representative of the school population who best matched the *Aussiedler* sample. On average, we sampled about 7% of the students of the selected schools. The percentage of *Aussiedler* among the students who participated in our study per school correlated to .71 ( $p < .000$ ) with the percentage of *Aussiedler* at that school, indicating that our samples from each school reflect the respective school compositions quite well.

Overall, 643 ethnic German migrant adolescents from the FSU (*Aussiedler*) and 814 native German adolescents participated in this study. The sample was approximately evenly divided by gender with 48.1% boys (for descriptive characteristics by group refer to Table 1). The mean age of the students was 15.3 years ( $SD = 2.3$ ). *Aussiedler* adolescents were on average a little more than half a year older than native Germans, because they are often enrolled in grades below their actual level or they enter school at older age. Their average length of stay was 7.1 years ( $SD = 3.8$ ), ranging from a few months to 16 years. All of our participants were first-generation immigrants, though a few came at a very young age, that is, 1 to a few months old. Their average age at immigration was 8.7 years ( $SD = 4.5$ ,  $Min = 0.1$ ,  $Max = 18.1$ ). The majority of *Aussiedler* youths emigrated from smaller cities (54.7% came from cities not larger than 50,000 inhabitants), mostly from Kazakhstan (46.1%) or Russia (38.7%). Russian was the first language for 68% of the immigrant sample.

Table 1. Descriptive characteristics

	<i>Aussiedler</i>	Native adolescents	Significance
Age	15.69 (2.1)	15.05 (2.5)	$F(1, 1410) = 26.75^{***}$
Gender (% males)	47.3%	48.8%	$\chi^2(1) = 0.29$
Grade	8.55 (1.8)	8.60 (2.1)	$F(1, 1372) = 0.22$
Parental education	2.42 (1.4)	2.29 (1.3)	$F(1, 1318) = 2.93$
Family finances	3.61 (0.8)	3.74 (0.8)	$F(1, 1392) = 9.36^{**}$
Perceived segregation orientation	3.92 (1.5)	—	—
Immigrant ingroup orientation	5.17 (1.2)	—	—
Natives' negative attitudes about <i>Aussiedler</i>	—	2.87 (1.2)	—

Notes. Reported are means and standard deviations (in brackets); \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

## Individual-Level Measures

*Perceived discrimination* was assessed by a subscale of a multidimensional instrument for the assessment of adolescent acculturation-related hassles (Titzmann, Silbereisen, Mesch, & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2011). *Aussiedler* reported how often in the previous 12 months they had experienced six situations related to having been treated badly because of being an immigrant, for example, “My classmates/colleagues didn’t talk to me because I’m an immigrant” or “I was teased by others because I’m an immigrant.” Responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale: 1 = *never*, 2 = *1–2 times*, 3 = *3–5 times*, 4 = *6–10 times*, 5 = *more than 10 times*, higher scores thus indicating more perceived discrimination. The scale’s internal consistency with a Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of .83 was quite high and the scale mean for each individual was used in subsequent analyses.

*Perceived native segregation orientation* was measured by three items adapted from the Vancouver Index of Acculturation (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000) and asked the immigrants how they perceived the majority’s attitudes toward their acculturation. The items read: “Natives would prefer me to socialize with other *Aussiedler*,” “Natives would prefer me to have *Aussiedler* friends,” and “Natives would prefer me to have an *Aussiedler* partner.” Responses were given on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *do not agree* to 6 = *do agree*. Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  was .86, indicating a high internal consistency. In subsequent analyses the individual’s scale mean was used.

*Immigrant ingroup orientation* was also measured by three items adapted from the Vancouver Index of Acculturation (Ryder et al., 2000), this time asking the immigrants to rate their own attitudes on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *do not agree* to 6 = *do agree*. The statements were: “I would be willing to have a romantic relationship with an *Aussiedler*,” “I like to do things together with *Aussiedler*,” and “I can well imagine to have *Aussiedler* friends.” The internal consistency with a Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of .81 was high and the scale mean for each individual was used in subsequent analyses.

## Control Variable Measures

*Family finances* were assessed by a single item stating, “In your opinion the financial situation of your family here in Germany, is ...” The answering options were 1 = *very bad*, 2 = *bad*, 3 = *neither bad nor good*, 4 = *good*, and 5 = *very good*. This measure was used as a reflection of the overall financial status of the family, as in recent immigrants, job status and unemployment status might not yet reflect the overall situation well, and might also be subject to change quite often. Family finances correlated meaningfully with the status of the job of the *Aussiedler* adolescents’ father and mother, ranging from 1 = *blue collar* to 3 = *higher white*

*collar*, Pearson’s  $r = .16$ ,  $p < .001$  ( $N = 393$ ), and  $r = .15$ ,  $p < .01$  ( $N = 322$ ), and with the employment status of the parents (0 = *employed*, 1 = *unemployed*),  $r = -.18$ ,  $p < .001$  ( $N = 526$ ) and  $r = -.20$ ,  $p < .01$  ( $N = 578$ ).

*Parental education* was measured by asking for the highest educational qualification of each parent on a 6-point index varying between 0 = *no formal school qualification*, 1 = *basic school qualification*, 2 = *apprenticeship*, 3 = *advanced technical college*, 4 = *university degree*, and 5 = *more than one university degree*. The highest reported educational level achieved by either the father or mother was used in the analyses.

*Gender* was assessed through a one-item self-report measure (coded 0 for girls and 1 for boys). *Age* was calculated from date of birth (month and year) and date of assessment (month and year). *Length of residence* was calculated as the difference of date of assessment (month and year) and date of immigration (month and year).

## School-Level Measures

*Negative attitudes about Aussiedler*, held by native Germans and aggregated at the school level, were assessed by seven items tapping the agreement to several common prejudices toward minorities, such as “*Aussiedler* just want to live at the expense of Germans” or “*Aussiedler* tend to violence and criminality.” These items were derived from a scale developed for use with native German adolescents (Förster, Friedrich, Müller, & Schubarth, 1993). The *Aussiedler*’s native schoolmates (on average about 29 native students were assessed per school) could rate their agreement to these statements on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *does not apply* to 6 = *does apply*. The internal consistency was high with a Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of .88. After calculating the individuals’ scale means ( $M = 2.87$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ,  $Min = 1$ ,  $Max = 6$ ), they were aggregated at the school level, indicating the average level of prejudices toward *Aussiedler* at the respective schools ( $M = 3.00$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ,  $Min = 2.10$ ,  $Max = 4.04$ ). In order to estimate how well the aggregated native negative attitudes reflect the actual school context, we calculated the generalizability coefficient reported by O’Brien (1990). The generalizability coefficient indicates, similarly to a reliability coefficient, the extent to which the same mean value for a school would emerge, if another random set of students were used as respondents (p. 477). O’Brien’s generalizability coefficient was .81, indicating that our aggregate measure of native negative attitudes reflects the actual school-level negative attitudes of all native students quite well.<sup>1</sup>

*School ethnic composition*, or the share of *Aussiedler* youths per school, was provided by the school principals according to their enrollment statistics. They also indicated the *type of school*.

<sup>1</sup> Lüdtke et al. (2008) report another formula for calculating the reliability of aggregated data based on the average number of respondents per aggregate and the intraclass coefficient. We obtained a reliability coefficient of .82, using this formula, quite similar to the generalizability coefficient we obtained based on O’Brien’s formulation (1990).

## Statistical Analyses

As the participants were clustered within schools, data were analyzed by means of multilevel modeling, using the statistical software package HLM 6.08 (Raudenbush, Bryk, & Congdon, 2005), which takes into account such multilevel structuring of data. Also it allows for missing values on the first level of analyses, thus fully utilizing all available data. On the first level we included the individual *Aussiedler* adolescents, and the individual-level variables perceived discrimination, perceived native segregation orientation, and own ingroup orientation, as well as the covariates such as length of residence, gender, parental education, and family finances. On this level, relationships between those variables could be interpreted just as in common OLS regression models, but the shared variance at the aggregate school level is taken into account. At the second level, which in our case was the school level, variables that pertain to different schools were added. This included the school ethnic composition, the type of school (1 – indicating being on a lower track school vs. 0 – another), and the aggregated negative attitudes about *Aussiedler* of the native German adolescents per school. At this school (or second) level, differences

between *Aussiedler*'s average perceived discrimination at different schools as well as differences in relationships of individual-level variables could be predicted by school-level variables, such as the percentage of *Aussiedler* at school.

## Results

Before testing our hypotheses, we analyzed the mean level of discrimination and we estimated an intercept-only model (Model 1) without predictors. On average, participants reported low levels of discrimination, experiencing discrimination at most only once or twice in the past 12 months ( $M = 1.44$ ,  $SD = 0.67$ ). The deviance statistic for the intercept-only baseline model with three parameters to estimate was 1248.94. The deviance statistic is an indication of model fit, however, without clear cut-off criteria, and is mainly used for comparing models of different complexity (Raudenbush et al., 2005). The intraclass correlation was 0.06, indicating that about 6% of the variance was explained by the school level. In the second step, we included all individual-level predictors (Model 2). In this level the predictors

Table 2. Unstandardized regression coefficients

	Model 2 (individual-level variables)	Model 3 (school-level variables)	Model 4 (all predictors included)
Level 1 – individual level			
Intercept	1.48***	1.46***	1.44***
Sex	–0.01	–0.02	–0.03
Age	–0.02	–0.02	–0.02
Length of residence	–0.01	–0.01	–0.01
Family finances	–0.19*	–0.22**	–0.23**
Parental education	0.01	0.01	0.01
Immigrant ingroup orientation	0.01	0.01	0.02
Perceived native's segregation orientation	0.07*	0.07*	0.05
Level 2 – school level			
Lower school track		–0.18*	–0.16
School ethnic composition		0.01**	0.01**
Natives' negative attitudes about <i>Aussiedler</i>		0.16*	0.23**
Cross-level interactions			
Immigrant Ingroup Orientation × Ethnic Composition			–0.01*
Perceived Segregation Orientation × Ethnic Composition			0.01*
Immigrant Ingroup Orientation × Natives' Negative Attitudes			0.02
Perceived Segregation Orientation × Natives' Negative Attitudes			0.09**
Residual variances			
For intercept	0.0386	0.0309	0.0365
For immigrant ingroup orientation	0.0026	0.0028	0.0016
For perceived native's segregation orientation	0.0035	0.0023	0.0032
Fit			
Deviance (no. of parameters)	922.47 (24)	917.37 (27)	912.44 (31)

Notes. All indicators entered grand-mean centered; \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . Gender was coded: female = 0, male = 1.

were centered around the grand mean. Level 1 associations were specified as random, that is, as varying between schools, for our predictor variables, ingroup orientation and perceived native segregation orientation. The covariates were entered as fixed effects except for length of residence and financial standing, given that statistical associations between predictors and outcomes can vary in different phases of the acculturation process (Titzmann, Raabe, & Silbereisen, 2008) and because family finances can have markedly different effects depending on the context. The deviance statistic for this model with 24 parameters to be estimated was 922.47, which was significantly better than the intercept-only model (Model 1),  $\chi^2(21) = 326.48$ ,  $p < .001$ . In the third model, we added the grand-mean centered variables of the aggregate level, namely school track, school ethnic composition, and natives' negative attitudes (Model 3). The deviance statistic of this model was 917.37 with 27 parameters to be estimated. Although this model did not improve model fit significantly as compared to Model 2,  $\chi^2(3) = 5.10$ ,  $p = .165$ , two predictors reached significance. In the final model, the cross-level interactions were added (Model 4). The deviance statistic of this final model was 912.44 with 31 parameters to be estimated and also did not improve model fit significantly compared to Model 3,  $\chi^2(4) = 4.93$ ,  $p = .295$ . Nevertheless, various significant cross-level interactions qualified the main effects on the individual level and thus added information. The results of all four models are shown in Table 2.

### Individual-Level Associations

In our first hypothesis we expected that immigrants' ingroup orientation and immigrants' perception of natives' segregation orientation would relate to higher levels of perceived discrimination. Gender, age, length of residence, financial situation of the family, and parental education were also included in the analyses as control variables on the individual level. Of these control variables, only the financial background of the family reached significance. Independent of all other variables including Level 2 variables in Models 3 and 4, immigrant adolescents from families with better financial standing reported fewer incidents of discrimination (Model 3:  $b = -.22$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

With regard to the hypothesized individual-level associations, only perceived native segregation orientation was significantly related to perceived discrimination in Models 2 and 3. Thus, the more an *Aussiedler* adolescent perceived that native adolescents want immigrants to stick to their own group, the more frequently these adolescents perceived incidents of discrimination ( $b = .07$ ,  $p < .05$ ). While it was Model 2 that was intended to test this main effect, after the cross-level interactions with aggregate school-level variables were entered (Model 4), this association failed to reach significance. The main effect of immigrants' ingroup orientation relating to perceived discrimination did not reach significance in any of the models. Thus, Hypothesis 1, referring to the immigrants' desire for intra-ethnic contact, was not supported by the data, whereas Hypothesis 2, referring to

the perceived native's segregation orientation, received at least some support in Models 2 and 3.

### School-level Associations

In the third model, variables representing the school context for adolescents were included. Additionally, a control variable was entered, which specified whether the adolescent attended a lower school track (*Hauptschule*) or any higher school track. This control variable did reach significance only in Model 3 ( $b = -.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ), indicating that less discrimination is reported in lower school tracks. This association disappeared, however, after entering the interactions (Model 4). Hypotheses 3 and 4 predicted that on average adolescents would report higher levels of discrimination in schools with a higher share of *Aussiedler* and in schools with more negative attitudes toward *Aussiedler*. Both, Hypotheses 3 and 4, were supported by our data (see Table 2, Models 3 and 4). Even when we accounted for the cross-level interactions (Model 4), discrimination was reported on average more often in schools with a higher share of *Aussiedler* ( $b = .01$ ,  $p < .05$ , Models 3 and 4) and in schools in which natives reported on average more negative attitudes toward *Aussiedler* (Model 3:  $b = .16$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Model 4:  $b = .23$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

### Cross-Level Interactions

In addition to these main effects of the school context characteristics on school-level perceived discrimination, three cross-level interaction effects emerged in the fourth model (see Table 2). The first referred to the association between the immigrants' ingroup orientation and perceived discrimination, which was moderated by the ethnic composition of the school ( $b = -.01$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This moderation effect is

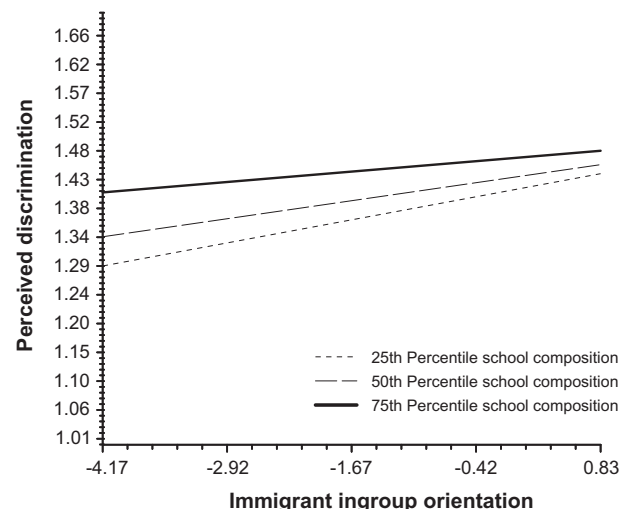


Figure 1. Cross-level interaction: Ingroup orientation and perceived discrimination moderated by school ethnic composition.



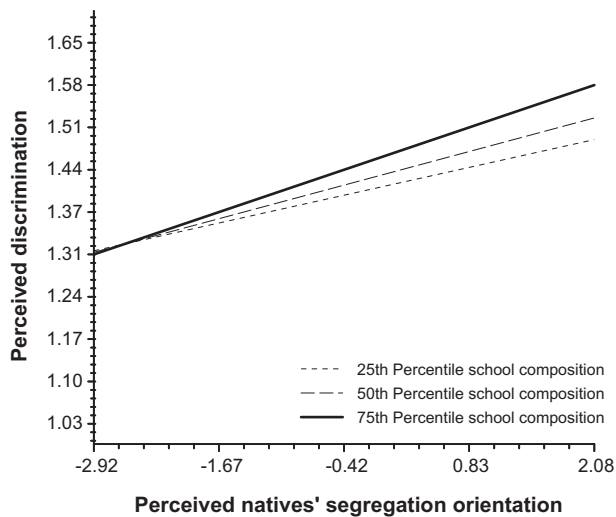


Figure 2. Cross-level interaction: Perceived natives' segregation orientation and perceived discrimination moderated by school ethnic composition.

depicted in Figure 1. The three lines in all figures represent the regression lines for the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentile of the concentration of *Aussiedler* in school (i.e., 5.3%, 9.8%, and 11.6% *Aussiedler* in school, respectively). As can be seen in Figure 1, the associations between immigrants' ingroup orientation and discrimination varied depending on the ethnic composition of the school: The association between immigrants' ingroup orientation and perceived discrimination emerged, but only in schools with lower percentages of *Aussiedler*, supporting our Hypothesis 5a. In addition, a second significant interaction (see Figure 2) indicated that the natives' segregation orientation as perceived by the immigrants related positively to perceived discrimination experiences, but this effect was stronger in schools with higher shares of *Aussiedler* ( $b = .01, p < .05$ ). In this regard, the results do not support Hypothesis 5b.

The final significant interaction referred to the association between natives' segregation orientation as perceived by the immigrants and perceived discrimination. This association was moderated by the negative attitudes about *Aussiedler* of the native students in the respective schools (see Figure 3). The three lines in this figure represent an average negative attitude of 2.6 (25th percentile), 2.9 (50th percentile), and 3.2 (75th percentile) as reported by the natives in the school. In schools in which natives shared more negative attitudes about *Aussiedler*, there was an association between perceived native segregation orientation and perceived discrimination, whereas such an association was much weaker for school contexts in which natives did not share negative attitudes toward *Aussiedler* ( $b = .09, p < .05$ ). This significant moderation effect is in line with our expectations of Hypothesis 5d. The final interaction between immigrants' ingroup orientation and perceived discrimination, which was expected to be stronger in contexts in which natives share a rather negative attitude toward *Aussiedler*, was not found. Therefore, Hypothesis 5c was not supported by our data.

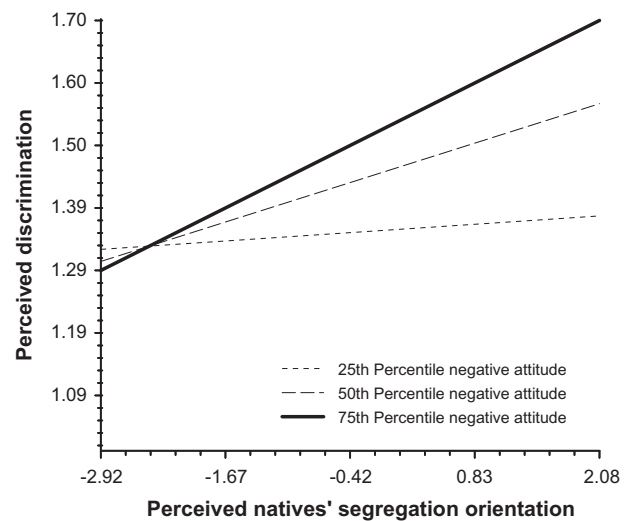


Figure 3. Cross-level interaction: Perceived natives' segregation orientation and perceived discrimination moderated by natives' negative attitudes about *Aussiedler*.

Taken together, only some of our hypotheses were supported by the data. Especially on the individual level the associations between predictors and perceived discrimination were not significant. With regard to the context variables, however, we found several expected associations, which underscore the role of the context in the acculturation of immigrants. A higher share of *Aussiedler* in school and more negative attitudes about *Aussiedler* held by the native Germans in school have unique effects on the levels of perceived discrimination in school. Also, the associations of individual acculturation attitudes and perceptions of immigrants regarding natives' segregation attitudes are differently related to perceptions of discrimination, depending on the context.

## Discussion

Overall, the results provide mixed evidence for our hypotheses. Regarding the individual level, we did not find the expected main effects. Namely, we did not find that the *Aussiedler* adolescents would perceive more discrimination when they perceive a higher native segregation orientation, and when they have a stronger orientation toward ingroup contact. The cross-level interactions indicate, however, that such relationships depend on the school characteristics, namely ethnic composition and natives' negative attitudes. Furthermore, the two school-level variables were related to differences in aggregated perceived discrimination between schools as expected. Perceiving more discrimination was significantly related to more normative negative attitudes of the natives toward the *Aussiedler*, and to higher shares of *Aussiedler* at schools.

Before going into detail more, it is important to consider that the average level of reported discrimination was rather low. The participating migrant youths reported that they

had experienced such incidents only once or twice in the past 12 months, on average. Although this is good news on the one hand, we also need to consider that even relatively rare events of discrimination can have long-term consequences as found in longitudinal studies (e.g., Greene et al., 2006). Thus, discrimination is a substantial challenge, detrimental to the development of immigrants in any amount and we must account for immigrants' ranges of experiences with discrimination. The fact that significant effects of our variables emerged, lends credence to the fact that the predicting variables play a significant role in defining how immigrant youths experience and perceive discrimination in their schools. One might ask if *Aussiedler* youths are perhaps better off than other immigrant groups in Germany and experience less perceived discrimination because of the implied shared ethnic foundation between *Aussiedler* and native Germans. As a result, further research should not only examine these associations among diaspora immigrants, but also among immigrant groups that differ in their cultural distance to the receiving culture.

### Individual-Level Associations

Only partial support was established by the data for the two individual-level associations tested in this study. First, the *main effect* of willingness for ingroup contact (immigrant ingroup orientation) on perceptions of discrimination was nonsignificant in all tested models. It is possible that this association was nonsignificant because a high ingroup orientation and an ingroup inclusion bias is rather typical for young people (Bellmore, Nishina, Witkow, Graham, & Juvonen, 2007; Brenick & Killen, 2011), and thus, generally speaking, ingroup orientation of *Aussiedler* is not necessarily viewed as segregating per se. However, our cross-level interactions show that ingroup orientation can facilitate demarcating ambiguous group boundaries in certain contexts. In our study these exceptional contexts were found to be schools with only a few *Aussiedler*, as discussed later. Second, the main effect of perceived native segregation orientation on perceptions of discrimination was significant in Model 2 as predicted. The results of Model 4 that included the cross-level interactions, however, indicate that in certain school environments these associations are stronger than in others.

Of the individual-level control variables, only higher family finances were significantly related to lower discrimination. While lower socioeconomic status has been found to relate to higher levels of perceived discrimination (Borrell et al., 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), one must question why in our results financial standing was significant while other individual-level variables were not. Perhaps it is due to the multifaceted role of financial standing for lowering immigrant youth status throughout the acculturative process. Lower socioeconomic standing in a community may result in an actual increase in the experiences of discrimination (in turn, increasing perceptions of discrimination as well) based on superficial outcomes, such as not fitting in because one does not have the money to buy the trendy clothes and gadgets, or based on behavioral outcomes, such as not mastering quickly the new language and culture because of inaccessibility of resources available

to those of higher socioeconomic status. Thus, youths' multiple subordinate group memberships in immigrant group and lower socioeconomic status facilitate a "double jeopardy" scenario in which they are likely to experience increased discrimination (Epstein, 1973).

### School-Level Associations

Both main effects at the school level, school ethnic composition and natives' negative attitudes, were significant as predicted, and the school-level control variable, school track, was significant before the cross-level interactions were included. This indicates that individuals in the higher school track reported higher levels of perceived discrimination. One explanation might be that individuals in higher school tracks may more readily perceive and experience discrimination as it hinders their high educational aspirations. Reported discrimination was found to be higher among individuals with more promotion opportunities, as discrimination is a barrier for personal advancement (Hirsh & Lyons, 2010), and higher school tracks may be contexts with more opportunities. Still, our measure of perceived discrimination included items that were both specific to the school context as well as more general. Future studies could include scales that differentiate the domain of discrimination and assess the role of individual and contextual variables to both context-specific as well as generally perceived discrimination and do so in relation to measurements of group threat, availability of resources, and opportunities for advancement.

### Cross-Level Interactions

With the emergence of three significant interactions out of four, our findings clearly indicate the importance of considering the fit between individual and context in immigrants' experiences of discrimination. The school ethnic composition played a moderating role in the individual-level associations of *Aussiedler* adolescents. First, as predicted, the association between ingroup orientation and perceived discrimination was stronger in schools with fewer *Aussiedler* students. While in schools with higher shares of *Aussiedler*, an *Aussiedler's* individual orientation to interact mainly with fellow ingroup members may go relatively unnoticed in the larger context, when the share of immigrants in a school is lower, it is the very act of engaging with the ingroup that lends a sense of entitativity to the immigrant group. In schools with higher shares of *Aussiedler*, the group is instantly visible and defined, whereas in schools with fewer *Aussiedler* they are individualized at first glance, whereas when their relationships form primarily with ingroup members those interactions define an entitative group and yield categorization instead (see Lickel et al., 2000). It is through the act of delineating group boundaries that the lower status of the immigrant group again becomes salient, increasing sensitivity for perceiving discrimination (Crocker et al., 1998; Mendoza-Denton et al., 2006) and actual increases in discrimination (Newheiser, Tausch, Dovidio, & Hewstone, 2009).

Second, contrary to our hypothesis, the positive relation between perceived natives' segregation orientation and perceived discrimination experiences was significantly stronger in schools with higher, not lower, shares of *Aussiedler*. We did not expect this result, but in hindsight, it can be explained when thinking about the differences in the two individual-level variables studied. While immigrants have agency in deciding to interact with their fellow group members, the perceived native segregation orientation is rather imposed upon them and may already be an indication of intergroup tensions. These tensions may more easily translate into group-based discrimination in contexts in which a critical mass of immigrants exists. Having a higher share of *Aussiedler* draws attention to these students as a group, highlighting their lower status, but also creates an environment in which there are a high number of opportunities for native Germans to engage in intergroup relationships. If in these contexts the *Aussiedler* perceive, however, that natives believe they should stay to themselves and not build intergroup relationships, tensions and related discrimination can develop between the groups (García Coll et al., 1996). Perhaps, this unexpected finding results from the fact that the larger size of the immigrant group makes rejection harder to attribute to individualized reasons and is seen strictly as discriminatory in and of itself.

The school-level native negative attitude toward *Aussiedler* also played a moderating role in the individual-level associations. As predicted, the positive association between *Aussiedler*'s perceptions that native Germans want them to stay among themselves and their perceptions of discrimination was stronger when the school-level attitudes toward *Aussiedler* were more negative. The potential mechanisms underlying this relation were already defined in the Introduction. More interestingly though and contrary to our hypothesis, the cross-level interaction between ingroup orientation, negative attitudes toward *Aussiedler*, and perceived discrimination did not reach significance. Thus, it did not matter whether *Aussiedler* were in a more or less negative environment – the association between ingroup orientation and discrimination remained insignificant. As mentioned above, the willingness for ingroup contact on the part of the *Aussiedler* might be normative (e.g., Brenick & Killen, 2011), and even in schools with more negative attitudes toward *Aussiedler*, ingroup orientation might be considered a desirable status quo and thus the interaction fails to reach significance.

## Limitations and Implications for Future Research

As with all studies, the present research is not without limitations. First, we assessed a specific group of immigrants, ethnic German migrants (*Aussiedler*), within a specific context, Germany. These adolescents, like many other diaspora migrants, may hold different rights afforded to them (easier paths to citizenship) and expectations demanded of them (similarities in cultural tradition) in their host communities than do other immigrant groups. However, these may differ from country to country and such differences must be

assessed systematically before the results can be generalized to other groups. Moreover, we cannot disregard the potential of a spillover, generalization effect of native German attitudes toward foreigners as a whole to their attitudes toward the more recent *Aussiedler* immigrant group. Historically speaking, guest workers have long been center stage in the story of immigration in Germany and long been the target of significant discrimination. While the current findings offer great insight into the experiences of *Aussiedler* youths in Germany, it would also be interesting for future research to compare these experiences to those of other foreign immigrant groups also living in Germany. Future research should also address the unique contributions of the negative regard for foreigners versus the negative regard for specific groups of foreigners.

The inclusion of school-level variables and cross-level interactions assessed with a hierarchical linear modeling technique is a significant contribution to the literature on acculturative experiences among diaspora migrants. The current study sampled from 28 schools and sometimes had a limited number of native German participants (though our reliability estimates indicate the school samples are representative of the greater school populations). Typically, we would want to randomly select and include more schools as well as larger native samples in such analyses, however those included are representative of the greater German school system and social demographic makeup. Future studies, however, can aim to include even more schools as well as a greater number of participants from multiple groups, and may also sample on the school class level, which would allow for more complex models to be assessed.

Our aim was to show how context and individual adaptation interact with one another, and as such we focused only on the victim's experience of perceived discrimination in this study. The important role of the majority member as potential perpetrator was beyond the scope of the current study, but must be examined in future studies. We do not know if a lack of negative attitudes in a school is due to the lack of salience or differentiation between groups or if it is due to a lack of negative feelings and assertion of lower status toward a group that is still differentiated.

Related to this, we extended past research by also including attitudes reported by native German peers as an external source of data on the school level. However, our assessment was limited in that only students provided ratings of the negative normative attitudes of the schools. While peer group norms serve as a significant source of influence on evaluations of complex intergroup interactions (Brenick & Killen, 2012), future investigations of the school influence could include broader assessments of curriculum approaches and school climate, such as teacher and administration attitudes, and direct evaluations of group status hierarchy from the minority group(s) and majority group perspective, including other ethnic groups, within the school as well. This yields more in-depth, multi-perspective analyses of intergroup dynamics in the school reflecting the influence of school climate and the complex interplay between multiple groups of various social statuses. Further, future studies may try to sample schools and classrooms in which the immigrant group comprises a numerical majority and the native Germans a

numerical minority, as this paradigm shift may serve to correct the imbalance in status and power of these groups. The inclusion of these measurements also explores components of Allport's (1954) conceptualization of optimal conditions for facilitating positive intergroup relations, namely authority sanctioning and equal group status. In addition, our study was cross-sectional. Caution must be exercised when interpreting the results where causal relations might be inferred. Examining these relations longitudinally assesses another aspect vital to the development of positive intergroup relations (see Pettigrew, 1998) and allows for a clearer understanding of the development of these relations.

## Conclusion

The present study contributes significantly to the literature on immigrant youths' experiences of perceived discrimination in two primary ways: First, we utilized a hierarchical linear modeling approach for the analysis of our data. This allowed for the assessment of not only individual-level variables in relation to perceptions of discrimination, but also school-level variables and cross-level interactions. The inclusion of multiple levels of influence is, as of yet, underutilized in this field of research, even though it provides a more comprehensive understanding of the fit (or misfit) between individual and context as it relates to immigrant youths' navigation of discrimination. Second, unlike previous research in this field, we focused on perceived discrimination as an *outcome* variable. While there is a wealth of knowledge on the negative effects of perceived discrimination, little is known about the role of school context and individual variables in leading to the perception of discrimination.

Discrimination is one of the most substantial barriers for successful adaptation and psychological functioning of immigrant adolescents (Greene et al., 2006). Understanding the manner in which discrimination emerges is vital for the German society that is confronted with the task of successfully integrating a few million *Aussiedler* immigrants. Perhaps, the most interesting finding of our study is that *Aussiedler* youths' perceptions of discrimination are significantly influenced by the fit between the individual immigrant and the receiving context. The significant interaction between context and individual characteristics indicates that measures for successful integration should not only address immigrants or reduce negative attitudes in the host population, but can also achieve much more if immigrants and natives are targeted. As adolescents spend much time at school, this might be an ideal setting for such measures.

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